



## Remarks After Interview With NBC's Meet the Press

**Secretary Colin L. Powell**

Washington, DC  
May 4, 2003

(9:30 a.m. EDT)

**QUESTION:** Good morning, Mr. Secretary. Can you tell us what offices you asked the Syrians to close and what else you want them to do, and what's the message that you --

**SECRETARY POWELL:** We specifically made reference to Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. There may be others as well. It was a general statement that they should not allow organizations that are actively supporting terrorist activity to continue to operate in Damascus.

**QUESTION:** Sir, as a former military person, how do you feel that the war was conducted?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** It was done brilliantly and I am very impressed at the way in which the commanders responded to changes on the battlefield. Within the first few days of the war, it was obvious to me that the Iraqis were not putting up a coherent defense across the country. There were pockets of resistance. There were people attacking in the rear areas. And our commanders didn't allow themselves to get distracted by that. They kept pressing on the central objective, which was Baghdad.

And then, over time, they dealt with the pockets of resistance in various cities that they had initially bypassed. They dealt with the rear area security problems. And it was a proud thing for me to watch how they integrated the air component and the land component in what we in the Army called an air-land battle. It sometimes confuses people watching. To say, well, the tanks have stopped, they're not moving, so there's something wrong. No, the air power is picking it up. And then they start moving together again. This is the way battles are fought now.

I was especially proud of the Fifth Corps that was leading the charge to Baghdad. I once upon a time commanded the Fifth Corps so I was very proud to watch my own Corps in action, and the 101st Airborne Division, another one I was...

**QUESTION:** Sir, the rationale to go to war was to find weapons of mass destruction. We have not found them yet.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** We will.

**QUESTION:** They went to a site today and they found it had been looted. Now, what does that mean?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I don't know. I don't know whether there was anything in the site that was of particular concern to us. I'm still -- I'll wait for the intelligence community to give us an assessment of that. I just saw a *Washington Post* report about it.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that the rationale has changed?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** The rationale was the same. There was the weapons of mass destruction. Let's be clear. The basis of UN Security Council Resolution 1441, was a judgment on the part of all 15 members of the Security Council, that the Iraqi regime had been in violation of its obligations under all sorts of previous resolutions to account for its weapons of mass destruction. All 15 nations agreed when they passed that resolution. And I'm absolutely sure that there are weapons of mass destruction there and the evidence will be forthcoming. We're just getting it just now.

Thank you.

**QUESTION:** When and where are you going to meet with the new Palestinian Prime Minister?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** We'll announce my travel schedule in due course. Thank you.

Released on May 4, 2003

