



Interview on SkyNews with Kay Burley

Secretary Colin L. Powell

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MS. BURLEY: In the run up to the war in Iraq, one moment was a turning point -- the day the U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell went to the United Nations to make the case for war. Millions around the world watched as he laid out the evidence that Saddam Hussein was in possession of weapons of mass destruction. This is what he had to say at the time -- well, in fact, let's hear from him personally. He'll tell us in a little bit more detail.

The Secretary of State Colin Powell joins us now live.

Mr. Secretary, thank you very much, indeed, for joining us here on SkyNews this afternoon, appreciate your time.

Straight off the bat, weapons of mass destruction, where are they?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, as you know, we're still looking to see if there are any stocks of weapons of mass destruction, but there is no doubt in our mind that Saddam Hussein had the intent. He had the history of using weapons of mass destruction. He had the programs to continue developing them, and we believe that he had in his possession weapons. And we're still looking to see whether or not those weapons continue to exist or not.

But the fact of the matter is, he was a danger to the world, previous Administration -- President Clinton -- felt the same way, so many other nations felt the same way, and more importantly, the United Nations felt the same way, so that for 12 years they passed resolution after resolution after resolution, and Saddam Hussein could have cleared this matter up if he had come clean.

We gave him one last chance with Resolution 1441. He submitted a false declaration. He didn't come clean. He was in, again, material breach of his obligations and he has now paid the consequences; he is in jail. The Iraqi people are looking to a brighter future of democracy without mass graves or people being tortured and abused by their own leaders.

MS. BURLEY: Do you concede that you might never find weapons of mass destruction?

SECRETARY POWELL: No, I don't concede that. What I say is that this was a regime that, as I said on the 5th of February of last year, had a history of gassing its own people, had a history of gassing its neighbors in war, had the intention to have such weapons, was doing everything to get out of UN sanctions, and, in my judgment, would have built up their programs even more. They kept the programs going. They kept the infrastructure together, and what we did was ask questions that all they had to do was answer.

We knew you were doing this. What happened to those weapons? What happened to those programs?

We knew that there was a disconnect in the -- in what you told the UN inspectors previously about what you had done with anthrax and botulinum and other terrible, terrible weapons and account for that, and they did not, and they refused to. And President Bush and Prime Minister Blair and other leaders boldly said, we cannot take the risk that we'll wake up one morning and not discover them in Iraq, but discover them in our own backyard because they got in the hands of some terrorists.

MS. BURLEY: Okay. We could bat this one around forever, but we're very short on time, I know. So I'm going to have to park that there. Let's talk about Saddam instead. You've got him. What's he told you?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, he hasn't told us a great deal. He's still, I think, pondering his own future and plight. And we're in conversations with him and he is speaking, but he hasn't given us a great deal of information or intelligence that's useful yet.

MS. BURLEY: He has been described as very cocky. That's what they described him as when he was arrested. What sort of attitude does he have now?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, I don't know that I can speak to that. I haven't been in the interrogation room with him. But the reports I have read suggested that he is someone who knows the trouble he is in. He knows he is going to stand trial. And I think he is trying to protect himself and justify his despicable actions during the time that he was the dictator of Iraq.

MS. BURLEY: "Axis of evil," let's talk about that. Syria. Should that be on that? And President Assad, is he the new bad boy on the block? Is he the new Saddam, as far as you're concerned?

SECRETARY POWELL: We had not characterized Syria as one of the members of the "axis of evil," but we are concerned about some of Syria's policies with respect to supporting terrorists activity, with respect to what they might be doing with weapons of mass destruction. And we have made it clear to the Syrians that we are not looking for trouble with them, but that it is time for them to stop supporting terrorist activities that inflame the Middle East and make it more difficult to find a solution between the Israelis and the Palestinians. And they should live in peace with their neighbors and not develop those kinds of weapons that might cause people concerns.

They should follow the example of other nations in the region, especially Libya, made a very important and positive judgment that they were gaining nothing from developing weapons of mass destruction except getting the condemnation of the whole world, being denied political openness, being denied economic opportunity, and it was useless for them and Colonel Qadhafi made the decision to get rid of them.

And I would hope that Syria would review its policies, in light of the changed situation in Iraq, and in the rest of the region.

MS. BURLEY: Now there is much speculation as to whether you would want to stand again, or, certainly, represent President Bush if he is reelected. When you -- that's much speculation, as I said. When you do finally retire from office, would that be the time that you might admit that you had concerns about invading Iraq?

SECRETARY POWELL: Everything -- there is nothing for me to admit. I mean, the suggestion is that I believe something now that I won't believe after I leave office.

Everything I have done in support of President Bush's bold decisions, I did because the facts led us to that conclusion. We tried to find a peaceful solution. We took the problem to the United Nations. The United Nations laid out a clear declaration, as to what Saddam Hussein should do. He didn't do it, and he has now paid the consequences. And I can assure you that President Bush benefited from the advice of all of his advisors, and we fully stand behind the decisions that he has made.

There will be no tell-all story or book coming from Colin Powell because I was part and parcel of this Administration. I know how the President worked to try to avoid war.

MS. BURLEY: And as I said, I was asking in that question, you have been rather poorly. We can see that you're on the mend. Would you serve a second term in office?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, I have only one answer to that question, and that is that I serve at the pleasure of the President, and I'm confident he will be reelected. I serve at his pleasure, and so that's as far as we go. Unlike your system, I don't stand for election in a constituency. I just serve at the pleasure of the President.

MS. BURLEY: Mr. Secretary, thank you very much, indeed, for joining us here on SkyNews this afternoon. Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you.

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