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INTERVIEW

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell  
Roundtable with Print Journalists

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(4:35 p.m. EDT)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Since there are so many of you, in the interest of time I won't make an opening statement. I'll just dive right in and make my opening statements off your questions.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, the State Department's Human Rights Report defines torture as -- I don't have my glasses with me -- "an act of intentionally inflicting severe pain, whether physical or mental." General Taguba in his report wrote of sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses, and listed a whole series, including the use of dogs that, in at least one case, attacked a detainee.

Doesn't this fit the definition of torture?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Since these matters are now before military authorities for determination of what charges might be proffered and what might be appropriate, I don't want to get into categorization of a specific title to a specific set of events or offenses.

But I will say that whatever you call it, it was absolutely reprehensible. It was inconsistent with their code as soldiers, it was inconsistent with anything they should have learned in their community about how to treat fellow human beings, and it was deplorable. And it is being investigated.

It has caused me a great deal of difficulty, as you might appreciate, in my diplomatic work. What I have said to the Arab leaders I have dealt with, or other leaders in other parts of the world who are just as disturbed by this, is that we are sorry for this, we apologize for it. And now you will see how a democratic nation such as ours deals with something like this. We're the most powerful nation on earth, and you will see that we will not sweep this under the rug, we will not pretend it didn't happen. We acknowledge it did happen. Congressional committees are looking into it. The free press is looking into it. This should happen in a democracy.

It was the free press that gave it such visibility with the *60 Minutes* show. The military will examine it carefully and where accountability lies, then responsibility lies and action will be taken. But I don't want to characterize a particular set of events with a title of the kind you're

describing, because I'm not sure what that might mean under the Uniform Code of Military Justice or other regulations.

**QUESTION:** Well, you spoke of being -- the need to be forthright. And you've also said that the -- there were a stream of Red Cross reports that came here last year, maybe starting fairly early last year, in addition to where --

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Actually, you're putting words in my mouth. I didn't say they may have come early last year.

**QUESTION:** You were asked, I think, on Fox about last year --

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Early last year is early 2003. I'm not sure I know when reports started coming here.

**QUESTION:** But as the -- as the reports accumulated and Amnesty was making a series of reports as well, and letters here, and they met with people here in the building, why did it take a young soldier slipping a disk under a door in January for a full investigation to be launched? You said you brought it up at Principals meetings, the President was made aware of what the Red Cross was reporting. Why wasn't this investigated much earlier?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** First of all, you say it was all brought here. That's not an entirely accurate statement with respect to time. It was all given to the command in the region. The way the International Committee of the Red Cross works is they don't bring it here. They, first and foremost, bring it to the place that they are investigating. Because of the nature of the countries they find themselves in, their way of operating is to take it directly to the immediate commander, the immediate owner of the facility.

And so everything that ultimately came to my attention in the way of conversations with Mr. Kellenberger or specific reports that came into my hands had long before coming into my hands been placed in the hands of those who were directly responsible for the facilities or to their superiors in the Pentagon. And when I received the information, either from Mr. Kellenberger or from my staff who had been in touch with the ICRC, we, on a regular basis, raised it in our Principals meetings.

But what we didn't have was a specific set of charges against a specific set of individuals at a specific place, Abu Ghraib. It was generalized statements that the ICRC was concerned about the treatment of detainees in Guantanamo, in Iraq and in Afghanistan. In every instance, they had made those problems known to the commanders, and I was made aware of them at some point later. We raised them, and the responsibility was on those commanders to respond, or their superiors, to respond to the ICRC.

For example, the famous report, that February report, it was delivered to Baghdad, to the authorities in Baghdad on the fifth of February, I think -- forgive me if I'm a week off one way or the other -- early February, but I did not get a copy of it until sometime in March after it had been

presented to those in charge and their superiors. It was not until March that I was made aware of it and got the report and made sure that everybody in the government here in Washington had a copy of that report.

**QUESTION:** Are we going in order? I guess. Okay. I have two questions, if I may. First, some Republican legislators, like Hagel and Lugar and so on, have been saying recently that the President is dangerously isolated in terms of whom he gets advice from, that he's reliant on a very few people. He doesn't just call up spontaneously, without his aides standing there, a Hagel or a Lugar or a Democrat, and talk to them. Do you have any evidence to the contrary that he's not isolated?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Sure. I just left him -- if I can be considered an advisor. And I had Ambassador Frank Ricciardone with me. He's our Ambassador to the Philippines who I brought back here for the last five months now, I guess, to work on Iraq transition. Ambassador Ricciardone and I spent from 3:30 to ten after four with the President talking about our transition planning, talking about the standup of our embassy.

I discussed with him the construction of the new embassy. I discussed with him how many of my ambassadors -- his ambassadors I have pulled out of embassies around the world to work on Iraq -- we've got five ambassadors that are no longer where they were; they're all working on Iraq in one way or the other -- and how many people have volunteered for the positions in Iraq, how many people would stay on after the 1st of July, where the embassy was going to be located, how long it would take to build the final chancery from the temporary one.

I also discussed with the President the UN resolution: prospects, the discussions we'd be having with our Security Council colleagues over the next couple of days, how it would roll into the Normandy events coming up, how we would roll out into the G-8 summit, the NATO summit, at the same time we're getting ready to transfer sovereignty.

So it's the second time I've been with him today, so he's certainly getting a steady stream of advice from me. With respect to Congress members, if I am not mistaken -- and Richard can check this, I'm sure -- it was about ten days, two weeks ago\*, where he had, I think it was members -- leading members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee into the Oval Office for a conversation. And if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Lugar was there and so was Mr. Biden. I can't be absolutely sure, but I think Mr. Hyde and Mr. Lantos were there, too.

**QUESTION:** Okay, rather than follow-up on that, I'll just ask you my second one, if I could. A year ago, we won a startlingly impressive and quick military victory in Iraq. And we over -- and today, we're engaged in a tough slog, a tough battle, and we don't really know what's going to happen. We overthrew a brutal tyrant who killed hundreds of thousands of Muslims. Today, there's --

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Killed what?

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\* The meeting took place May 12, 2004.

**QUESTION:** Killed hundreds of thousands of Muslims.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** No, we didn't.

**QUESTION:** Saddam Hussein?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Oh, who -- who *he* killed.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. We've overthrown --

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I thought I heard you say "we killed."

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

(Laughter.)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I'm sorry. Forgive me.

**QUESTION:** And yet today, according to public opinion polls, there's not a country in the world, outside of probably Israel and maybe the U.S., where the people support what we have done since then. How did -- what went wrong militarily and diplomatically?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** It was a fast destruction of an army as it was constituted -- I'll explain what that means in a minute -- and also rapid destruction of a political system. It all collapsed. The political infrastructure, the governing infrastructure, it was all Baathist-centered, it was all Saddam Hussein-centered. And when he went, it went, and the army ceased to function. So we were faced with the challenge of taking control of a very large place of 25 million people and beginning a rebuilding process.

What has caused us the greatest difficulty, I think, is that the army, as constituted, left remains of itself in the society that have regathered. The place is an absolute warehouse of weaponry, and not just in bunkers and caches but hidden in smaller caches around the country and in people's homes. They have been able to come out and engage the coalition and have become effective in the course of the spring, as you saw by the activities in April and May.

It's taken us a while to get together a political process that would return sovereignty and that would also allow us to accelerate the rebuilding of the new military -- Civil Defense Forces, as they are called, ICDC, and an army and police forces -- and taken us a while to come to grips with the political way forward.

As the President laid out the other night, we now have a clear political way forward. The resolution we've tabled takes us in that direction. I'm waiting for Mr. Brahimi to finish his work, working with Iraqi authorities and Ambassador Bremer and Ambassador Blackwill. I hope that

will happen in the very near future, as the President indicated, and then we'll have a group of individuals to work with who we can return sovereignty to.

Fourteen ministries have been turned over as of today from the CPA to individual stewardship under Iraqi cabinet ministers. So the transition is already beginning.

But I think we were taken aback by the ability of the anti-coalition elements to reconstitute themselves, and with the entrance into the country of foreign fighters and terrorists. So our military has had to make changes to their original plans for this time of the year. And, as you know, they kept a higher strength-- they were supposed to go down to 115,000 and now they're going to keep 138,000 -- and they're going to respond to this new environment that they find themselves in.

**QUESTION:** Did the military miscalculate? Did they need more troops?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** The military doesn't think so.

**QUESTION:** What do you think?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** They think that -- I don't give military opinions anymore. I used to.

**QUESTION:** Maybe you should.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, I am the Secretary of State, and when I do have a military opinion, I give it in private.

But they thought that going down to 115,000 was prudent based on the activity that they were seeing earlier in the year and based on the fact that we were training Iraqi ICDC units. But they discovered last month, they found last month that the resistance was greater -- suddenly became greater than they had anticipated; and so they've adjusted and kept on the two units that the President made a reference to in his speech the other night, and are making those necessary adjustments also to accelerate the training and equipping of Iraqi forces.

The ultimate solution is Iraqi forces being trained and equipped to protect themselves, to protect their own country.

**QUESTION:** And my last part was, why doesn't any country in the world, as far as people, support what we're doing in Iraq?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Because there is an uneasy feeling in the world. Many people in Europe and in the Arab and Muslim world did not support as a public proposition the action that we took. But many governments did. You say no one supports us. Well, there are about 30 countries that are supporting us in one way or another, at considerable risk to their political leaders because it tends not to be a popular thing. Nobody likes war, nobody wants to see a war

start. And everybody in this age of television is disturbed when the consequences of war appear on your television screen every night.

I'm still of the view, I'm confident of the view that if we get an interim government in place by the 1st of July and we get these reconstruction dollars flowing and Iraqis start taking over responsibility for their own future again, we can turn this around. If we did not run into this security problem, which is more severe than we anticipated, and security was completely under control, people would be throwing awards at us and we would have turned it around already. But nobody likes to see what they are now seeing, and you can see it reflected in the polls, the polls here at home and overseas.

But watch this space; this game is not finished. And the President is determined to keep going forward, as we all are, and get a sovereign government in place, support that government with our troops, with the other troops of the coalition, with the funds that the Congress has generally provided, with a resolution. And we will start to see success along that path, and then I think attitudes will start to change.

And let me just speculate for a moment that we are completely successful: we have the elections, everything goes well, the transitional government is in place, the constitution is written. And then people can look and see whether this is a better country than the country that was (inaudible) by Saddam Hussein who put hundreds of thousands of people in their graves. I don't think they approved of that either. We didn't approve of it and we did something about it. We have been at it for a year, and there are some difficult days ahead.

But we're still convinced we did the right thing. Those hundreds of thousands of graves will not be replicated any time in the future, and people have been slow to give us credit for making sure that that doesn't happen again. But I think in due course, they will.

**QUESTION:** Thank you, sir.

**QUESTION:** The Bob Woodward book and the *GQ* article portray you as being somewhat apart from the war planners in the Administration on the plan to go to war, and as being somewhat at least at odds with them about it all. Can you talk a little bit about your relations with Secretary Rumsfeld, with Wolfowitz, some of the others, and sort of how -- whether those portrayals in the Woodward book and the *GQ* article are accurate?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I can't talk about the *GQ* article; I haven't read it yet. I'll get to it someday.

We have all known each other in one capacity or another for years and years -- in some cases, decades. I feel it is my job to give the President my best advice on every foreign policy issue that is before us. With respect to Iraq, I felt just as strongly as my colleagues that this was a dangerous regime that was a threat and that had steadily violated UN resolutions for a period of 12 years. I had no love for this regime; I know this regime well. I fought it once before, as you recall. Therefore, there was no lack of understanding on my part what a miserable, dictatorial,

horrible, tyrannical regime this was and the danger it presented to itself and to the region, perhaps ultimately to the world, if there was a nexus with terrorism.

At the same time, I felt the President had an obligation to make the case to the international community through the United Nations. I felt that the President should try to see whether or not a political diplomatic solution was possible through the United Nations before going to war, if war was what it was going to take to solve this problem once and for all.

I've been characterized as a reluctant warrior, the general that doesn't want to go to war. Well, you're right. Say it again. Please, write it down, a reluctant general. I don't want to know any generals who ain't reluctant. I don't want to have anything to do with them. War is a very serious matter. We send young men and women to battle, to perhaps give up their lives in the service of their nation, and so we should always see it as a last resort. The President has always seen it as a last resort. And that was my advice to him, and it's fairly well documented in assorted books, to include Bob's.

The President took that advice, and my other colleagues in the Administration concurred in that recommendation, and the President went to the UN. Once he went to the UN, he set himself on a course and he set the international community on a course to deal with this problem. In my own role as Secretary of State, I knew that as we went down this road -- diplomatic road that I recommended, it might work and it might not. And if it didn't work, the President would have to make a decision at what point he wanted to go down the fork that led to war. It was always my certain understanding that whichever fork he took, I was going down that road with him all the way, with my recommendation that took us to this point.

When he made the decision that diplomacy had gone as far as it could and that reluctantly, we had to use force, then it was my job to do everything I could to get as many coalition partners to join us as possible; and that's what I did.

The President has always welcomed different points of view from people in his Administration who have strongly held different points of view. Most of the time, we are in agreement. When we are not in agreement, you guys sell newspapers. (Laughter.) And people write books. And surprise, surprise, sometimes we are in disagreement. A great deal of attention is paid to me and my position and my feelings and well-being and what we're getting accomplished in or out, up or down, in the loop or out of the loop.

Today's a good day. We just finally got an agreement signed between the Sudanese Government and the SPLM in the south. And we succeeded through diplomacy on the part of a lot of people, but especially this Administration, to start to bring to an end the 20-year civil war. It won't get a lot of attention tomorrow, but it is a significant achievement.

HIV/AIDS and the \$15 billion the President has allocated to that with the Congress is important. It won't get as much attention as Iraq, but -- and we all did that together. Millennium Challenge Account, \$5 billion a year beginning in '06 -- ramping up to '06, to help developing nations onto a path of democracy and freedom. Won't get a lot of ink, but it's the most significant foreign

assistance program since the Marshall Plan. And while we're doing that, we also doubled our AID budget -- almost doubled, about 80 percent -- our AID budget, the funding we normally get for development assistance.

The best relationship with China. We stopped a war between India and Pakistan. Helped Liberia get rid of a tyrant. We helped the Haitians get rid of a tyrant. My budget problem right now, it's how to find money for all the peacekeeping operations that are breaking out because peace has been brought to a number of regional crises.

So we have a very active -- excuse me for going off your question a little bit -- but we debate these issues, we argue these issues. Should we go into Liberia with some level of strength when we're already overcommitted around the world? The President decided yes, after hearing the arguments. We did it with a very small use of force and it produced some highly leveraged results. Same thing in Haiti.

And so the President is served well. And every President I've worked for -- and I've for, directly for four, I guess, I mean at a senior level -- is well-served when he has advisors who are willing to walk in and argue with his other advisors. He gets elected to decide foreign policy, not me, not Don, not Condi, not the Vice President -- he does. He does it in the name of the American people. My responsibility to him and my responsibility to the American people is to give them the very best, give him the very best advice I can and to offer the very best advice I can to my colleagues in the Administration. And to give you guys something to write about.

**QUESTION:** We thank you for that.

**QUESTION:** Secretary Powell, in the second --

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I'm very well, and I'll show you my dimly lit offices. (Laughter.) It's the only thing I read in the *GQ* article. (Laughter.) I went and got a lamp, by the way. (Laughter.) No, I'll show you it.

**MS. MILLER:** This room's bright.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yeah. Well, it's supposed to be. This floor is the 18th century. It's not like downstairs, if you noticed coming in. This all was redone to look like the 18th century. So I'll show you the candles in my office later. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Sir, in the second Bush-Gore debate, then-candidate Bush said, "I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building." Would you describe or ascribe some of the fact that his approval ratings are now down 30 percent because we are, in fact, doing just that: nation-building in Iraq?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Whose approval ratings are down to 30 percent?

**QUESTION:** President Bush's. Aren't they now?



**SECRETARY POWELL:** No.

**QUESTION:** They're pretty low in terms of approval of the conduct of the war.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** They are lower than they were, but I think they're above -- above that.

**QUESTION:** What do you think about that? He was running for President, no nation-building, and this looks an awful lot like a nation-building effort.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, if you want to go right to the debate -- it was the second debate, at Wake Forest, I think, if I'm not mistaken.

**QUESTION:** I'm not sure. I know it was the second debate.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I think was Wake Forest -- where a specific question was raised about Africa. And the President responded that, you know, be careful about getting all these nation-building events and it was sort of, I think, expanded into a total reluctance to do nation-building.

I must say, though, that when we came into office and looked at a lot of these, we started to see how many of these we really should be doing, and at what level. The first one we faced was, should we have troops in Bosnia, in Kosovo. We took a look at it, realized our international obligations, and I think I was the first one to coin the phrase at a NATO meeting, "Hey, we went in together to Bosnia and Kosovo and we'll come out together. The United States is not going to walk away from our obligations." And the President supported that and began using the same phrase. And we're still there. We're not walking away from our nation-building obligations in Bosnia and Kosovo. We've been able to do it with fewer troops as we have scaled down over the last several years, but we're still there.

And when you use military force to resolve a problem, you pick up a responsibility to then do something about the problem. You resolve it, because military force usually isn't the final solution. You then have to get into what is often called nation-building. And we have an obligation to help, and we do. We help with funds very often. We pay 27 percent of all UN peacekeeping bills. We sometimes do it with the presence of our troops. We sometimes support other nations.

We are about to launch a new initiative to help Africans train selected battalions in Africa on peacekeeping missions so they'll be able to do them better, and equip them so that they can be more readily available when a peacekeeping mission in Africa comes along so we don't have to go. But, by paying for that, is that nation-building? Yes. Is it a good investment? Yes. Why? Because nations need rebuilding.

And so we think we should be selective about it, and we think, to the extent possible, we should help others do it. The United States Armed Forces are uniquely equipped to win wars. Nobody else has that kind of capability to deploy forces, to be able to go from here 7,000 miles away and put a division down. Nobody else can do that. And so we should sort of protect that capability and, to the extent possible, use others for the more steady-state nation-building missions that are out there. But it doesn't mean that we don't participate in them.

And I think the President's remarks that evening were, I think, exploded out of context. If you look at what he's been doing, we have been doing recently, that support of the creation of democratic nations in places that did not know it before.

Haiti is a good example. We faced a challenge there a couple of months ago, tried to find a political diplomatic solution, realized one wasn't achievable, suggested to Mr. Aristide that he really ought to look at how best to serve his nation, and he elected to depart. We have been accused of having forced him out and that we shot-gunned him out of an airplane. That's not true, because I did it that night and it was at his request. I'm also the one who helped put him in, back in office, in 1994.

And since then we put our troops in for a short period of time, and now peacekeepers have volunteered to come in and replace our troops and French troops and Canadian troops and Chilean troops over time. So Brazilians are going to come in, Argentineans are going to come in, and continue with the nation-building effort.

I've done this other places. I did it in Panama in 1989. We took out the government in 12 hours, but it took us months and months and months to help them rebuild the nation and to get back on a democratic track. And they've just had a successful election. So it does work, if you stick with it.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that --

**QUESTION:** Can we keep moving along?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yeah, well, do you want to finish your same thought?

**QUESTION:** Well, actually, a different thought. It was just one quick thing on weapons of mass destruction. Do you feel that your credibility and the American credibility in the world is diminished because no WMD were found?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, I'm very disappointed that what I've -- all that I said was not accurate. Not all that I said was inaccurate, but some parts of it were not accurate. I think the part about the mobile vans turned out to be not based on good intelligence, but we thought it was at the time I said it.

**QUESTION:** What part was that?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** The mobile lab, biological vans. And we have not found the stockpiles that we thought were there.

But I think we have established that he had never lost the intent to have weapons of mass destruction, that he had the infrastructure for it, that he had dual-use facilities that could have converted themselves quickly to weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological, if he was ever released from the pressure of UN resolutions and international pressure, and that's what he was trying to do. So that, I think, has been established: intent, infrastructure, capability, and not giving that up. We did not find the stockpiles, haven't found them yet. Don't know if anything will be found.

But I put forward the best information that the intelligence community had, and I spent four days at the CIA drilling them and getting the best information I had. They believed in what they gave me. I believed in what they gave me. I presented it to the United Nations on behalf of my country. And to the extent that it was not accurate, I'm disappointed. Does it affect credibility? Sure.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, I want to ask you --

**QUESTION:** The tapes --

**QUESTION:** Mark, can we -- let's -- can I get one in?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Let me do these two --

**QUESTION:** One quick thing. The tapes that you played during that meeting --

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** -- did they prove to be everything that you thought they were at the time?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** We can't find those guys. I don't know who those guys were. But the tapes were real tapes. We didn't make them up.

**QUESTION:** But you can't find those guys?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** No, I don't -- I don't know that we ever knew their names. We were using intercepts.

**QUESTION:** I wanted to thank you for having us here, first of all.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** And I wanted to ask you about some of the news today. The Attorney General has come out and given us some more really dire warnings about what to expect this summer.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** What do you think, feel in your gut? Do you think that, I mean, we're in for some serious trouble with terrorism this summer?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I think you have to assume, as the Attorney General and Mr. Ridge have said, that there are people who are out there who want to strike us. They hit us before. We've been fortunate we haven't been hit since 9/11. We've done a better job of protecting our homeland and making it harder for these guys to come in and do that without drawing up the drawbridge, pulling up the drawbridge.

So we have to assume there are people out there. And when you see some of the events that are going to be taking place here over the next several months -- two conventions, the Memorial ceremony this weekend -- where you have a large group of people assembled and a lot of leaders there, you just have to assume that somebody notices that, and if they could strike, they would. I don't think -- I didn't see what the Attorney General said today. I don't think we have any specific information about the threat (inaudible). But we ought to raise our level of alert and caution without going into a bunker in our house and not coming out again. I always, in the same paragraph, say we just can't be scared into not coming out, because then they win. They don't have to do anything; they've won. And so we have to be prudent and protect ourselves, we have to realize there are people out there who want to hurt us, and then go about our business in a prudent, safe, cautious way.

It's a particular problem for the Department because I've got a couple hundred missions out there and we take it very seriously when we get a threat. Some of my missions are on drawdown status, meaning we've brought the families home. Other missions are in only essential personnel, which means we've brought most of the workers out as well. And we've had a few instances -- incidents, really -- recently, where, after having done that, drawn down, bombs have gone off. So it was the right, prudent thing to do. Saudi Arabia, for example.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) on the question of credibility, so let me try to bring it back to the start. How would you assess -- I mean, what's your overall assessment of the standing of U.S. credibility diplomatically and U.S. effectiveness in the world diplomatically right now given, as you noted, that some of what you presented to the United Nations was not accurate. The perception of the world is that the reasons initially given for the United States to invade Iraq, you know, did not -- proved to be erroneous, and given the stain about that prisoner abuse scandal, give me a characterization, an assessment, of where we stand in the world diplomatically.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Our public standing has been hurt by the prison problem at Abu Ghraib. We were challenged by the weapons of mass destruction stockpiles not being found. I think we've dealt with that by describing the fact that there was an intention and a capability. Most reasonable people that I talk to understand that this was not a regime that was just out making baby milk factories and diapers, diaper plants; but it was a dangerous regime whether we found the stockpiles or not.

It was not just the United States. Every Western intelligence agency that looked at this came to the same conclusion, and that conclusion was the only safe assumption you can make is that they have stockpiles. So it was not just the United States looking for a war. The UN inspectors -- if they didn't think they were there, why did they keep passing resolution after resolution after resolution for 12 years? President Clinton felt strongly enough about it, based on the intelligence he got before we got there, to go bomb it all in 1998 under Operation Desert Fox for a period of four straight days.

So it was not just this Administration coming in and cooking the intelligence. There was a solid body of international intelligence that supported the proposition that he had the intention, he had the dual-use capability, and we should assume he had the stockpiles, because there were a lot of unanswered questions that he did not answer when he got the chance to after the first resolution was passed, 1441.

Also, a little bit of evidence that would cause you to be sober about such matters: He used them before. He gassed Iranians. He killed 5,000 of his own people on a March day in 1988.

So you take all of that, and the same guy is there and he's using the same deceptive techniques and he's still not answering the international community, and you have this body of intelligence that's been built up over the years and he's not answering the questions, then you can come to a different conclusion. The President chose not to look the other way and come to a different conclusion.

I can -- I make this case around the world. People tend to understand it. They still think it would have been better -- so do I -- that stockpiles were evidence in Exhibit A. But they're still working. They're still not through with this. The Iraqi Survey Group is still at work and there's still some evidence coming forward that might point out what happened or did not happen.

Now, with respect to how that affects us in the world, it doesn't affect us positively, but it doesn't stop us. I am received anywhere I go in the world, in any part of the world, as the American Secretary of State, and we do business. We did business today in the Sudan. We did business two weeks ago when we announced 16 countries that we were going to support for Millennium Challenge Corporation funding. And I've gotten letters from all of them thanking us for our willingness to work with them.

We have passed three straight resolutions unanimously since the so-called "failed second resolution," three in a row, all 15-0, supporting our reconstruction efforts in Iraq. I am confident that the resolution we have before the Security Council now, when we go through the resolution process -- see, you guys are going to get edited by a number of people in your papers. I get edited every time I put down a UN resolution.

**QUESTION:** I bet it's better than ours, though. (Laughter.)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I think they're tougher than yours.

**QUESTION:** I guess that's one --

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, let me just finish my thought.

And so we'll work through this. What I have discovered is all of our friends, both those who supported us and those who vigorously opposed us last year, don't want us to be unsuccessful now. Success is important for the international community, and we're going to use that to assist us as we move forward.

And so, yes, we've had some disappointments in this; but American diplomacy is hard at work achieving successes, whether it's eliminating trade barriers, whether it is such issues that get attention once and then nobody writes about it again, such as finding a way to move forward on providing generic and combination drugs for anti-retroviral purposes on HIV/AIDS, which we did last weekend.

So foreign policy isn't always, you know, a big page one story or on television every night. It's what my predecessor, George Shultz, used to call "tending the garden." And if you tend it hard enough, you pull out all the weeds, and you just stick with it, someday a flower blooms. And sometimes it's called a deal between the Sudanese.

**QUESTION:** Just one quick follow-up. The next time, though, that the United States believes there's a bad guy out there with weapons of mass destruction, how much harder is it going to be to sell, not just to people that don't like us, but how much harder is it going to be to sell to the Tony Blairs of the world to say, you know, we need to go in there and invade now? What happens with our credibility in that respect?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I'll answer that two ways. First, there are guys out there who have weapons of mass destruction or are trying to get them, and we are dealing with them right now. In the case of Iran, we have mobilized the IAEA. We've gotten our EU buddies, three of them, particularly the French, the German and British foreign ministers, to play a lead role with us in telling the Iranians it has to stop. The Iranians are under enormous pressure right now-- they haven't abandoned it, but they're under enormous pressure.

The Libyans took one look at the world, saw what their weapons of mass destruction were doing for them, realized nothing; they were pariahs of the world. And one day, Muammar Qadhafi, as only a non-democratic leader can, turned on a dime and said, you know, I've got a better idea. Let me just give up all this stuff.

Now, what motivated him? The realization that he wasn't getting anything for his people? Or, gee, you know, look what the Americans and the British are doing in Iraq at the same time? Lots of things motivated him. But we solved that one diplomatically, and all of his weapons of mass destruction are now in Oakridge, Tennessee -- something I thought I'd never see. And he keeps giving -- he keeps giving us everything that they find over there. They want to get rid of it now. It's now a waste disposal problem. Better get DFI, not the CIA.

And with Korea, North Korea, we have gotten four neighbors of North Korea to join us in a concerted effort to make this regime understand that we all want a denuclearized peninsula. It's slow going; we've been at it for a little over a year -- 14, 16 months, something like that. And we're going to keep pressing it. North Korea now realizes that it has no supporters in its effort. And so we're going to keep applying diplomatic pressure. We have no hostile intent. We don't intend to start a war over this. We never rule out any option for the President, but right now we're bringing pressure to bear.

The first choice is always diplomatic. Now, it can also be the case that sometimes you have to use military force to deal with a particular problem. It may not always be weapons of mass destruction. And you have to make the case to the international community or to a willing coalition. Haiti wasn't a huge military problem, but a couple of phone calls with my French colleague, which whom I had such trouble last year, and it took me about three phone calls to arrange with French authorities, and the President talking to President Chirac, that they would join us on the 29th of February, 1st of March, in a military operation in Haiti. And they're still there. And when I went to Haiti on the 5th of April, I met with the French commander, who was reporting to an American general.

So what is inescapable is that America still remains the leader of the world that is free and wants to be free. It still has political, economic and military and moral authority that remains respected, even if, at some times, it does not -- is not seen as that popular. But it is respected and we have many friends and allies around the world, mostly friends and allies around the world, who wish us well and want to work with us. They may not agree with us on every issue, they may not support us on every issue, but by and large, when you look at the -- if I were to take you back into my office and we pull out a UN book and look at the 191 countries around the world and go down that list with you, I think you'd find that almost -- most of them, except for one or two, I could call pretty good friends. And, frankly -- well, I won't tell that joke.

**QUESTION:** How bad? Okay.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** When I was Chairman at the end of the Cold War and I was testifying one day, I said, well, you know, the Soviet Union is gone, the Warsaw Pact is gone, you know, I'm running out of enemies. And it was a whimsical way of saying that I have to redesign the Army and the whole Armed Forces of the United States because everything we had been focused on for 30, 40 years was going away. And I said I'm down to Kim Il-Song and Castro.

And as a result of that, I reduced, with Secretary Cheney and, of course, President Bush 41, we reduced the military by 500,000 troops -- 250,000 civilians and 250,000 reservists -- because our enemy had changed. And so if you look at the column of those who are our enemy, there is really nobody -- you know, it's -- well, there are a couple, but they barely qualify. We're not threatened by world war anymore.

But if you look at the column of those who used to be on the other side of an Iron Curtain or the other side of the Bamboo Curtain, where they are now standing now that both of those curtains are gone, many of them are now our allies -- not just friends, they're our allies in NATO. Or we have such a good economic relationship with them that it trumps any other problems that have come along, within reason -- China, Russia. These are two nations with whom we have super relations, the best in years.

Nobody worries about conflict between the United States and Russia now, or the United States and China. There's a caution that I have to put in here because Taiwan is an issue, but, you know, we're not -- we're working with them peacefully to solve regional problems. We're working with Russia and China to improve trading relations and economic relations. We have security interests in Asia that we talk to the Chinese about. We don't want to see any conflict in Asia. We don't want to see any conflict in the world that can be avoided. And working with people that used to be considered adversaries of ours, or competitors of ours, is a fundamental difference over the last 10 or 12 years.

When India and Pakistan mobilized their armies -- 18 months ago, or was it two years ago?

**QUESTION:** Two years.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Almost two years ago. A million Indians marched to the border, and everybody was writing about the possibility of war between India and Pakistan the summer of 2002. There was a great deal of discussion and commentary about these two nuclear powers that were this far apart along the international border and the line of control of Kashmir. There was a great deal of concern. It was international diplomacy led by the United States that went to the task of talking to these two nations. I went there several times. My French colleague went there several times. My British colleague went there several times. My European Union colleague, Javier Solana, went there several times. The Canadians went there. We were in constant touch with the Chinese Foreign Minister and Chinese leadership about this danger.

As a result of all of those efforts, we were able to bring caution and prudence to the equation and found a way for that situation to be defused. And after more diplomacy on our part and the part of our friends and colleagues, working with them internationally, in an international framework, we were able to persuade the Indians and the Pakistanis that they should start talking to one another again. In January of this year, they produced a framework agreement. And then bus travel started and air travel started and the two leaders got together recently. And they have a plan as to how to go forward and deal with all their outstanding issues. But it takes time and it isn't always a breakthrough. It's just sort of steady; it's a steady ground game. Others get to do the air game. I have to play the -- I play the ground game.

**QUESTION:** So what do you see your --

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I'm no longer a wide receiver. I'm a running back. (Laughter.)



**QUESTION:** Just really quickly. What do you see your role in the future Republican Party, looking ahead to the elections?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** What a question. (Laughter.)

As you know, the Secretary of State does not participate in partisan political activities at all. Neither does the Secretary of Defense and a couple of others of us. So the President has made it clear my job is to do my job. I have never been an active political figure, as you know, nor do I intend to be one, if that is the fat worm on the end of your hook. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Sir, you've indicated a tremendous familiarity with American Idol being on tonight. Are you going to be watching?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, I either will watch it or TiVo it. I'm not sure which.

**QUESTION:** Yeah?

**QUESTION:** Is Brahimi going to make his deadline?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** What's the deadline?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Brahimi hasn't set his deadline.

**QUESTION:** End of May?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I can't answer that. He's hard at work and the lists are shortening. We pretty much have the population of people that he's working with.

**QUESTION:** Have you talked to any of your English colleagues about the Blair statement about sovereignty being important?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Oh, yeah. Quite a bit. You mean --

**QUESTION:** With the control of the armed forces? You said that's what sovereignty's all about.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yeah. No, I've talked to my British colleague, Jack Straw, about it. We talk almost every day so we talked yesterday and we talked twice today.

**QUESTION:** Are they going to issue a retraction on that?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** No, no, no, no, no. The Prime Minister got a question in question time, and he answered it in a way that made it clear that there is no real disagreement here.

**QUESTION:** Really? Between the U.S. and Britain?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I didn't -- yeah.

**QUESTION:** That's what transfer of sovereignty means? That means Iraq can have control over any American military operation? You agree with that?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I don't think he quite said that.

**QUESTION:** Well, I have it, that's what the transfer of sovereignty means, that if Iraq didn't want -- Iraqi leaders didn't want a specific military operation --

**SECRETARY POWELL:** You said American.

**QUESTION:** I said American.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yeah. Did Mr. Blair say that?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I think you better watch the exact quote.

**QUESTION:** Is that right?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Look at what Blair said to the House of Commons today. I think that was --

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yeah, his definitive statement is what he said at the House of Commons today.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** And it wasn't that stark a difference. I was just -- when he said what he said, and then I got asked about what he said out front yesterday, and I made a simple point that nobody really would disagree with -- he won't disagree with me -- and he knew it at the time of his statement yesterday. And that was that no sovereign nation ever gives up command of its troops, and that's what he said in the Commons today. He said we will set out our strategic goals and objectives with the Iraqis and then --

**VOICE OUTSIDE OF ROOM:** Oh, man.

(Laughter.)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Who was that?

**MR. BOUCHER:** That's Marjorie.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Who am I boring? (Laughter.) I'm the Secretary --

**QUESTION:** We'll edit that out of the tape.

(Laughter.)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Oh, Emily -- (laughter).

**MS. MILLER:** Oh, sorry about that. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Too bad it's not on radio. (Inaudible.)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** No, my secretary. I was only supposed to give you 30 minutes and now it's almost an hour. And so this -- the simple answer is that no -- no President or Prime Minister ever gives up sovereignty over his own forces. And so the only point I was making yesterday, which I think is now consistent with what everybody's saying, is that if there's ever a problem where a commander feels he has to act in accordance with his national commander, probably the President, he will do so.

But I don't expect this to be a problem because we've been in situations like this on and off for 50 years -- Korea, Germany, France, Belgium -- everywhere we have troops. The President never, never relinquishes command of American troops. He can allow them to work with somebody else and they will take instructions from that somebody else and try to accommodate that somebody else, but never do you yield command authority or total sovereignty over American troops to any other sovereign.

Now, does that mean Iraq doesn't have full sovereignty? No. It means that it has full sovereignty, but in that small-loop circumstance it understands that American troops are under the American President, just as the Ukrainian troops in Iraq are answerable, ultimately, to the President of Ukraine, as are the Romanians, the Bulgarians and the Spanish, as you saw, clearly were under the sovereignty of --

**QUESTION:** Just like U.S. troops in Germany.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yes. U.S. troops in Germany is a good one. We -- they are under the command of President Bush, but they are under the control of NATO for (inaudible) purposes, and if the Germans ever said leave, we'd leave. We're not going to stay over an allied sovereign nation. But while we're there performing our role in this alliance, they never lose their command line back to American commanders to the President. And Mr. Blair today, in question time, which Mr. Straw and I talked about considerably before question time.

**QUESTION:** Right. (Inaudible.)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yeah. Well, we're very close and he was -- what he said was, you know, we're going to work with the Iraqis; they have sovereignty, full sovereignty. We'll work

with them on the strategy that we're following, but obviously, as these actions take place on the ground, I never give up command of UK troops, nor would the U.S. give up command of U.S. troops. But for operational purposes, they're out there working with Iraqis. Nor do the Iraqis ever give up command authority over their troops, even they -- although they may be working with us. But it all gets worked out by the commander on the ground.

**QUESTION:** But what does it say that you spend more time with us than the President? Are these (inaudible)? (Laughter.)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** It's just that -- my enormous respect for the Fourth Estate (inaudible), and my responsibility as a public servant to assist you in the performance of your duty. (Laughter.)

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