



Interview by Tony Snow and Brit Hume on Fox News Sunday

Secretary Colin L. Powell

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MR. SNOW: Here to help us assess Saddam Hussein's capabilities and sketch out potential allied response is Secretary of State Colin Powell. Easy for me to say. Let us take a look at Saddam's capabilities first. There seems to be a lot of controversy. He possesses significant chemical and biological stocks, correct?

SECRETARY POWELL: There is no doubt that he has chemical weapons stocks. We destroyed some after the Gulf War with the inspection regime, but there is no doubt in our mind that he still has chemical weapons stocks and he has the capacity to produce more chemical weapons.

With respect to biological weapons, we are confident that he has some stocks of those weapons and he is probably continuing to try to develop more. And biological weapons are very dangerous because they can be produced just about in any kind of pharmaceutical facility.

With respect to nuclear weapons, we are quite confident that he continues to try to pursue the technology that would allow him to develop a nuclear weapon. Whether he could do it in one, five, six or seven, eight years is something that people can debate about. But what nobody can debate about is the fact that he still has the incentive, he still intends to develop those kinds of weapons. And as we saw in reporting just this morning, he is still trying to acquire, for example, some of the specialized aluminum tubing one needs to develop centrifuges that would give you an enrichment capability.

So there's no question that he has these weapons. But even more importantly, he is striving to do even more, to get even more. That's why he won't let the inspectors back in. That's why he has frustrated the will of the international community and that's why he has been violating all of these resolutions for all these years.

MR. SNOW: I want to get to all that, but still a couple more questions on his capabilities. If he were able to deploy right now his chemical and biological stocks, how many people could he kill?

SECRETARY POWELL: I don't know. It depends on how he deployed them, where he deployed them. Chemical weapons are different from biological weapons. And let's just recognize the fact that he has them, he has used them before, and he has killed thousands of people in their use.

MR. SNOW: Has he, since inspectors left, improved his technology for disseminating those kinds of weapons?

SECRETARY POWELL: We know that he has been working hard on developing a means to disseminate those weapons. He had artillery, he had rockets, and I'm sure he is looking at other technologies. We have evidence that he has been looking at aerial vehicles.

MR. SNOW: Drones?

SECRETARY POWELL: Drones. He is looking for ways to disseminate it because just having it in a stockpile doesn't do you any good; you have to have a means of delivering it. And that's what concerns us. We know he's working on the means to deliver it against his neighbors certainly, and I have no doubt that he is probably trying to figure out if he could develop ways to deliver it against us. And that's why we have to be concerned.

MR. SNOW: Agreements at the end of the Gulf War limited the range of missiles that can employ to 150 kilometers. Has he extended the range of his missiles?

SECRETARY POWELL: We believe that he has some scuds left over from the war. How many, we can't be sure, but we're quite sure he has some scuds that have greater range than the 150 kilometers permitted by the United Nations. And we also know that on some occasions in recent years he has tested missiles that went beyond the 150-kilometer range limit of the United Nations. And we also know that he has people around the world trying to determine whether or not they can bring into Iraq weapons that have greater capability and greater range.

MR. SNOW: All right. Scott Ritter is in Baghdad today. He addressed the Iraqi parliament, such as it is. I want to play a quote from him and then get your response:

"The rhetoric of fear that is disseminated by my government and others has not to date been backed up by hard facts that substantiate any allegations that Iraq is today in possession of weapons of mass destruction or has links to terror groups responsible for attacking the United States. Void of such facts, all we have is speculation."

SECRETARY POWELL: We have facts, not speculation. Scott is certainly entitled to his opinion, but I'm afraid that I would not place the security of my nation and the security of our friends in the region on that kind of an assertion by somebody who is not in the intelligence chain any longer. There is no doubt in my mind that he does have capacity and he is trying to improve that capability and build upon that capability.

And it's debatable as to how much and where it is and all sorts of questions can be raised, and they should be raised and should be debated. This is an important issue. But there can be no debate about the fact that he is in violation of the obligations he entered into at the end of the Gulf War. And if Scott is right, then why are they keeping the inspectors out? If Scott is right, why don't they say: "Anytime, anyplace, anywhere, bring them in. Everybody come in. We are clean"?

The reason is they're not clean. And we have to find out what they have and what we're going to do about it. And that's why it's been the policy of this government to insist that Iraq be disarmed in accordance with the terms of the relevant UN resolutions, and we believe the best way to do that is with a regime change. And that's why that has been US policy, even though it's not United Nations policy.

MR. SNOW: All right. Now one more question on that and then I want to get into regime change and UN resolutions and so on. Saddam has all this stuff. How determined is he to use them and how much of a danger is he to American interests right now?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think he is a danger to American interests right now, our interests in the region, and in due course

interests elsewhere as he develops the capability to deliver this kind of weapon at greater ranges. But I don't think we should just sit around and wait to see whether he does it or not. He has certainly indicated over the years that he wants to move in this direction and believes it will make him a bigger power than the tin pot dictator he is now. And I don't think, as the President has said and as Prime Minister Blair said yesterday, doing nothing is no longer an option.

MR. SNOW: You would like to see Saddam out of power?

SECRETARY POWELL: Of course. Who wouldn't? There isn't anybody in the whole world, frankly, any civilized leader of the world, who would not like to see a change in regime. There is concern about how it happens. There is concern about what would happen after. But even those who are speaking out most boldly about let's not do anything certainly would breathe a sigh of relief if Saddam Hussein was no longer in Baghdad.

MR. SNOW: Help us out now in deciphering what administration policy is. The President says he'd like to get inspectors in. But it's also clear, as you've pointed out in multiple interviews, that there have been nine UN resolutions since the end of the Gulf War; Saddam has violated every one of them. Why on earth do we give him a tenth chance?

SECRETARY POWELL: There's a number of reasons that one should at least consider this, and that's what the administration is doing. We are committed to the disarmament of Iraq so that they don't have these kinds of weapons. It's what they agreed to.

The issue is not inspectors or inspections. That is a tool. It is a means, a first step. But disarmament is the issue. And we will stay focused on that and we believe that regime change is the surest way to make sure that it's disarmed, that you would not get another leader in Baghdad who would be as committed as Saddam Hussein.

But the United Nations has an inspection regime standing by ready to go in. We have been part of the support of that inspection regime. Everybody should be suspicious about inspections, as to whether they can do the whole job for you, and some of the debates you've been hearing within the government have to do with the degree of effectiveness that such inspections could really bring to the table.

So you should have a skeptical attitude as to how much inspections can do, particularly in the presence of a regime that's going to do everything they can to hide things from inspectors. But we are going to discuss all of this with our friends and colleagues and the President will make a statement with his conclusions as to what he thinks we should do to move forward as a community, as an international community.

It's important for me to make this point now, Tony: Saddam Hussein is not just offending the United States; Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime, by their inaction, by their violation of these resolutions over these many years, is affronting the international community, is violating the will of the international community, violating the will of the multilateral United Nations.

MR. SNOW: When the President goes to the United Nations General Assembly, is he going to say, as many suspect: You've put together all these resolutions regarding Iraq; we are still technically at a state of war but there's a ceasefire, and he's even violated the provisions of that; you need to enforce your own resolutions; if not, we may have to take action?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, I think I'll wait and let the President make his statement before I tell you what might be in that statement. The President has spent a great deal of time in recent days talking to his advisors. We were all up at Camp David Friday night and Saturday. He met with Prime Minister Blair, talked to a number of leaders, and he is putting his message together.

One thing I will confirm is that he will certainly point out in his speech that Saddam Hussein has been in violation of all of these resolutions and the conditions within these resolutions, conditions in resolutions that were passed by the United Nations, by the Security Council of the United Nations, over a long period of time, and therefore the United Nations should feel offended, the United Nations should feel that something has to be done.

MR. SNOW: Well, the United Nations probably should have felt offended the last four years, but it hasn't done anything.

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, the President will, no doubt, give them a strong message that it's time to do something.

MR. SNOW: All right. There have also been reports, including and probably today, from a former mistress of Saddam Hussein that the Iraqi Government has had regular contact over the last 15 years or so with Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida. Have there been Iraqi/al-Qaida links preceding last September 11th?

SECRETARY POWELL: There have been reports of such links and it wouldn't surprise me that such links existed. I mean, who knows who's speaking to whom over a long period of time? So I would not dismiss the fact that there may have been contacts. I can't confirm anything about this previous mistress's statement, whoever she is.

MR. SNOW: Fair enough. On the other hand, the graver concern is: Is it possible that Iraq has been working with and supporting al-Qaida in its mission to kill Americans?

SECRETARY POWELL: We cannot yet make a definitive conclusion that such a thing has occurred. We know that there is some al-Qaida presence in Iraq but we cannot come up with the kind of evidence and smoking gun case that some people would like to see. But I can assure you we're devoting a large amount of our intelligence and other assets to determining whether or not there are any such links.

MR. SNOW: There has been a lot of talk, as you know, about possibly military action against Iraq, and many people have many scenarios. I want to present a few to you. First, former Secretary of State James Baker. He has said, and we'll provide a quote here, he has some suspicions that if the United States goes in militarily, it's going to lead to a long commitment. Let's look at the quote from Secretary Baker. It says:

"The only realistic way to effect regime change in Iraq is through the application of military force, including sufficient ground troops to occupy the country (including Baghdad), depose the current leadership and install a successor government. Anyone who thinks we can effect regime change in Iraq with anything less than this is simply not realistic."

Also in there is the implication that it would require some occupying force for a period of time. Do you think that would be correct?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, let me answer it this way, and I certainly have enormous respect for my colleague and dear friend Jim Baker. He lays out a scenario that has to be thought through carefully. If you start to think about the requirement that might exist -- and no decision has been made by the President -- but a requirement that might exist in the future for military action, you have to think it all the way through. How would you do it? What would the after look like and how would you deal with the after? How would you put together a better system than that which you are replacing?

The President is considering all of these things and we spend a great deal of time talking about the political options, the diplomatic options and the military options. And as the President has said to the nation just a few weeks ago, he is patient. He knows what needs to be done. He has spoken clearly about that. But he is patient as he thinks through the options that are available to him, and his national security advisors are spending a great deal of time with him in this process of looking at the options and making sure we understand the advantages and disadvantages as he focuses on what he wants to do and the decisions he has to make.

MR. SNOW: Brent Scowcroft, with whom you and I both worked in the first Bush administration, has some thoughts about the after. Let's take a look at something that appeared in an op-ed piece he wrote not so long ago:

"An attack on Iraq at this time would seriously jeopardize, if not destroy, the global counter terrorist campaign we have undertaken."

Is action against Saddam Hussein directly at odds with the war on terror?

SECRETARY POWELL: No, I think that consideration of what to do about Saddam Hussein is very consistent with the war against terror. There is no question that in addition to developing weapons of mass destruction Saddam Hussein has also supported terrorist activity over the years and in fact was responsible for a terrorist attack against President George Herbert Walker Bush, Bush 41, as we call him. And so for us to continue our campaign against terrorism, it's absolutely correct for us to be looking at Saddam Hussein and his regime as well.

And what makes this so difficult is that he does have a proclivity toward terrorist activity and he is developing weapons of mass destruction that he might use or perhaps could make available to other terrorist organizations. So I don't think it goes against the campaign against terror; it's very consistent with the campaign against terror.

And what we have to do is talk to our friends and allies. That's why we're spending so much time on it. That's why it's important for the President to hear from other leaders in the world. And that's why I think Brent Scowcroft has made a useful contribution to the debate, because all of these things have to be thought through. And that's why the President is showing the patience that is characteristic of him.

MR. SNOW: If Saddam Hussein does not permit inspectors or does not permit them in the way that we think fulfills United Nations resolutions, would it then be appropriate for the United States to take preemptive, or what you have in the past called protective, action directly against Iraq?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think it is always an option for the United States, and for that matter, it's an option for the United Nations. Preemption or prevention is a concept that's been with us all along. It is not anything that's new and revolutionary. I think it has risen in the hierarchy of thinking these days because it's a different world after 9/11. It's a different world where you don't have state actors coming at you and you can see their armies forming and you know what's going to happen. But when you can intercept a terrorist act that is heading your way or you can deal with a regime or a situation before it comes to a crisis level and threatens you, then it is an option that you should keep in mind and on the table.

MR. SNOW: Do UN resolutions and congressional resolutions as well grant the President the authority to do that right now if he deems necessary?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think there is a sound legal argument that the President, if he felt it was necessary to do something now, can find the authority within existing UN resolutions. But I'm not saying that that's the way he would go. I think what the President conveyed to the American people last week was that he wants to consult with the Congress, and as he said, he will go to the Congress for what he thinks he may need. And I am confident that he will be speaking to not only the UN General Assembly, but many other leaders in New York this week, and discuss with them what the options are.

MR. SNOW: Secretary Powell, we're going to take a break. Stay with us. We will be back in a couple of minutes. Don't go away.

(Commercial break.)

MR. SNOW: And we are rejoined by Secretary of State Colin Powell. Also here, Brit Hume, Washington Managing Editor of Fox News. Brit.

MR. HUME: Mr. Secretary, Members of Congress have already expressed misgivings or doubts that Saddam Hussein threatens the United States. You hear this from Senator Levin, Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, for example. When you say that he threatens us, do you mean that he threatens us on our mainland directly or he threatens us, our interests or our allies, what?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think he certainly threatens our interests in the region and he threatens our allies, and he has demonstrated that previously by invading Kuwait. And we also saw during the Iraq-Iran War that he was quite willing to use chemical weapons against Iran. Now, we weren't a party to that one. And we also saw that in order to control his own population he was willing to use chemical weapons.

And so if he's willing to use weapons in this way, should we say, well, we're too far away for us to worry about this? Or should we assume that with this kind of individual and with this kind of capability, he may eventually find a way to deliver it to the United States mainland? Now, this I think is one of the concerns we have and it's what's driving the President and all of us on this issue.

MR. HUME: The argument is made that if he ever were to achieve the ability to have a nuclear weapon that he would most likely not use it for a first strike attack on a nation like ours because he would be annihilated if he did, which creates a setting in which it is argued that the only circumstance under which he would ever use such a weapon is if he were attacked, so that's a very good reason not to attack him, ever apparently.

What's your answer to that?

SECRETARY POWELL: My answer is that we don't want to face this decision tree that you just laid out with a person like Saddam Hussein. He has not acted rationally in the past and we should not expect him to act rationally in the future. It is better that Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime not be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons.

MR. HUME: It sounds as if from what you're saying here and what other administration officials have been saying is if inspections of some kind are going to be given or may be given one last chance. Vice President Cheney was fairly emphatic in his comments about inspectors. He said, you know, that they not only were unsuccessful the last time they were in there, as we later found out from defectors and others, but that they create a sense of security that may be false and thereby make them dangerous.

Do you disagree with that?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think what the Vice President was doing was expressing a great deal of skepticism with respect to inspectors, and it's well-deserved skepticism. They did quite a bit of good work, but we also discovered that once defectors came out they told us more information that the inspectors never had found. But with that additional information, inspectors were able to do more.

But we shouldn't rest our total policy and give full confidence to any inspection regime, and no inspection regime would be of any use, based on our experience, unless it's anywhere, anytime, anyplace, anybody. And any regime, if somebody were to put up an inspection regime to go in, if there was some way to do that, it would have to be with something far more robust and aggressive than we saw last time. But right now, all of these issues are under consideration.

MR. HUME: Let's assume for a moment that such an inspections regime were proposed and the United Nations was prepared to send it in there, perhaps one like the one that was talked about this week from the Carnegie Endowment where it would be backed by a very large and capable military force. The United States policy remains one of regime change. The question that is raised

about that, sir: Therefore, what incentive does Saddam Hussein have for allowing intrusive inspections of that kind when the greatest superpower in the history of the world remains bent on his removal?

SECRETARY POWELL: The incentive he has is to come into compliance and perhaps start to lead his country in a new direction. We don't believe that he is the person to lead his country in a new direction. That's why we continue to believe that regime change is appropriate. But the United Nations policy is not regime change.

Keep in mind that we came to a policy of regime change in the previous administration, supported by the way, by the Congress. Many of the Congress Members who now are nervous about regime change were all for it when the law was passed some years ago. And the reason that the previous administration came to that conclusion and we support that conclusion is because we think the best way to achieve the disarmament that everybody has been looking for is with a new regime.

MR. SNOW: Secretary Powell, I want to revisit just briefly the whole notion of urgency here. Vice President Cheney has said time is not on our side. He wants Congress to act before it leaves town. Do you think that's important?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think it would be useful for Congress, if the President asks them to act, I think it would be useful for them to act as quickly as possible after he has made a specific request of them.

MR. SNOW: But is it essential? Is the timeline with Saddam Hussein so constricted that if there is not action by the end of the year, there could be terrible consequences for us or our allies?

SECRETARY POWELL: I can't answer that. I can't say that there would or there would not be. I just know that time is not on our side. It is not in our interest to let this issue linger indefinitely, as it has lingered for the last several years. Congress -- the President will be addressing this issue in greater detail with Congress after he has spoken to the United Nations, and at that point we will make a judgment and you'll see what the sense of urgency is that we believe is appropriate, and will ask Congress to act in accordance with that sense of urgency.

MR. SNOW: Do you expect the President then to make an appeal to Congress before the end of the year?

SECRETARY POWELL: I don't want to speak for the President now, but I would be surprised if we have not indicated to the Congress before the end of the year what it is we will need from them in order to pursue whatever policy choice the President settles upon.

MR. SNOW: You and the national security team met with the President, as you pointed out, Friday and yesterday, then Tony Blair came. He is reported to be putting together another dossier, this time on Saddam Hussein. When our allies see that dossier -- the French who have been somewhat skeptical, the Germans who have been openly skeptical -- do you think they're going to change their tune?

SECRETARY POWELL: I can't answer that. I haven't seen the final British dossier and --

MR. SNOW: But you've seen the intelligence.

SECRETARY POWELL: I've seen the intelligence and I think the intelligence is persuasive. And the French have their own intelligence systems and means, as do all of the others. They know what we know. We've shared with them over the years. It is no secret --

MR. HUME: Do they know all we know?

SECRETARY POWELL: Probably not. I don't think -- I hope nobody ever knows all we know. But I think they know enough to come to the same conclusion that he has this capability and he continues to develop it. I don't think you'll find any of these leaders who will say to you right now that Saddam Hussein is not a threat, he doesn't have any of these weapons, we don't have to worry. What they're saying is he may have these weapons, we don't know how much, we don't know how urgent it is, and let's find a way short of conflict to solve the problem. That's what they're all saying.

The question is: What are we going to do in the immediate future to deal with this real threat? And we're putting cards -- we're putting the cards on the table for our friends and allies. This is the time to deal with a problem that's been there for years -- violation of international law, violation of the will of the international community.

And the United States, often accused of being unilateral, is now bringing the problem back to its original source, the United Nations, and saying here is the case. They have violated all these resolutions, all of these conditions within the resolutions, and we can no longer turn away. It is no longer an option, as the President has said and as Prime Minister Blair said; it is no longer an option to simply ignore this and do nothing.

MR. SNOW: We have seen in recent days the dissemination of satellite photos that indicate action that a phosphorous plant, which can be used to extract uranium, as well as a nuclear plant where there's new construction, it's expected that that possibly can be linked to the construction of nuclear weapons.

Can we rule out right now Saddam's having a nuclear weapon?

SECRETARY POWELL: I would not want to give you an intelligence judgment on that. Our best information right now is that he is working hard on it, but we cannot confirm that he has one. But we are absolutely certain that he continues to try to develop one or obtain one.

MR. HUME: Now, you suggest here that the President and the administration are going to say to the United Nations this is a man who lives by violation of resolution after resolution, it is time for something to be done, and in a sense put the ball in the court of the United Nations.

Does the administration have a goal in mind, a policy in mind, an approach in mind, that it would like to see the United Nations take? And what would that be?

SECRETARY POWELL: I am sure that the President will describe the approach that he has in mind to the United Nations on Thursday. But it is not just a matter of saying it's a ball in your court and we therefore lose our option to do what we might think is appropriate to do. Even though the United States, the President, when he goes to the General Assembly will be presenting this case to them as a violation of their resolutions, the President will retain all of his authority and options to act in a way that may be appropriate for us to act unilaterally to defend ourselves.

MR. SNOW: We've talked a fair amount about the international community. There's a widespread expectation, as reflected this week, Amra Moussa of the Arab League saying that the "gates of hell" would open if there were military action. We've had statements from the Prime Minister of Turkey and elsewhere. A number of people seem to have the expectation that the United States is going to use force or is in one way, shape or form going to remove Saddam Hussein.

You know the Middle East well. If we do not do that, do we lose respect among allies as well as enemies?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think it is important for the United States to speak clearly about its goals and objectives and then to act

on them. And what we have said clearly is that this is a regime that must not be allowed to retain weapons of mass destruction. This is a regime, at least the United States believes, should be changed. Our friends in the Arab world know it. The leaders in Turkey know it. I met with the President of Turkey earlier this week. They are all anxious to see whether or not the UN will be involved in this. There is a desire for the international community to act.

And I think it's important for us to stick to our principles and stick to the policy objectives that we have out there. And it may not be the gates of hell opening; it may be the gates of promise opening when Saddam Hussein finally leaves the scene.

MR. SNOW: Is the Iraqi opposition capable of putting together a functioning democratic government?

SECRETARY POWELL: We believe that in due course the Iraqi opposition, plus individuals within Iraq, both those outside and those inside, with the support of the international community, after the departure from the scene of Mr. Hussein, have the potential and the promise of putting together a better system of government that reflects the will of all the people of Iraq and is based on some concept, a solid concept, of democracy. Sure, why not?

MR. SNOW: How do you rate George W. Bush as Commander-in-Chief?

SECRETARY POWELL: He's an excellent Commander-in-Chief. I enjoy working with him. We saw his determination and his decisiveness after 9/11. What is very pleasing to me with respect to working with the President is that he listens to all the options, he allows us to debate the pros and cons of all the options, and then he makes his decision.

MR. SNOW: So we've heard.

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, that's the way it should be. That's the way it should be. We're dealing with serious issues. We're dealing with matters of life and death and the security of this nation. And it is our obligation as national security officials and cabinet officers to make sure that the President gets all of the options presented to him, the tone and the tint, the color, the sharp edges. This isn't any problem within an administration; it's what the administration hoped for. And I'm pleased that President Bush encourages it, welcomes it, and then he makes his decision and we execute it.

MR. SNOW: It's reported that Saddam Hussein is more afraid of this President than he was of the first President Bush. Should he be?

SECRETARY POWELL: I have no idea what Saddam Hussein thinks, but the answer is he should be afraid of this one, just as he should have been more afraid of the first one.

MR. SNOW: All right. There have been a lot of rumors -- you know -- that you're going to leave. Have you told anybody that you would leave?

SECRETARY POWELL: No, of course not. This, you know, this is late August media hysteria of the kind I have seldom seen before in all my career. I'm minding my own business, trying to enjoy a week's vacation in Long Island, and you would think the whole government had collapsed. This is nonsense.

MR. SNOW: The implication, too, is that you're the kind of guy who, if you lose an argument -- we don't even know if you have -- that you just go off and quit in a huff.

SECRETARY POWELL: That's ridiculous. What have I ever quit?

MR. SNOW: That's the answer I wanted. Okay, Secretary of State Colin Powell, thank you.

(Laughter.)

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