

**Press Conference following Quartet Meeting at the Waldorf Astoria
(unofficial transcript)**

New York, 16 July 2002

SG: Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. As you know, we've just concluded a meeting of the Quartet.

We deplore today's tragic killing of Israeli civilians, and reiterate our strong and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism, including suicide bombing. We express our increasing concern about the mounting humanitarian crisis in Palestinian areas and our determination to address urgent Palestinian needs.

We strongly support the goal of a final Palestinian and Israeli settlement, as expressed by President Bush in his 24 June statement, and we agree with him that, with an intensive effort on security and reform by all, this could be reached within three years. We welcome the President's commitment to active U.S. leadership toward that goal. We remain committed to implementing the vision of two states, Israel and an independent, viable and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. We pledge all efforts to realize the goals of reform, security and peace and reaffirm that these efforts in the political, security, economic and humanitarian and institution-building fields must proceed hand-in-hand. We again welcome the initiative of Saudi Arabia, endorsed by the Arab League Summit in Beirut, as a significant contribution towards a comprehensive peace.

We welcome the strong Palestinian interest in reform, including the 100-Day Reform Program, as well as the willingness of regional states and the international community to help Palestinians build institutions of good government and democracy, in preparation for statehood. We agree on the importance of a coordinated international campaign to support reform. The new Task Force on Reform includes, besides our own representatives, those of Japan, Norway, the World Bank and the IMF. It will work under Quartet auspices to develop and implement a comprehensive reform action plan.

We commit ourselves to help the parties renew dialogue, and we welcome the recent high-level ministerial meetings between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

We agreed on the need to build efficient Palestinian security capabilities to combat terror, on sound bases of unified command, transparency and accountability.

We also note Israel's vital stake in Palestinian reform. We call on Israel to take concrete steps to support the emergence of a viable Palestinian state. Recognizing Israel's legitimate security concerns, these steps include easing internal closures and withdrawal of forces to their pre-September 28, 2000 positions as security improves through reciprocal steps.

Moreover, frozen tax revenues should be released. In addition, Israel must stop all new settlement activity as recommended by the [Mitchell Committee](#).

We reaffirm that there must be a negotiated permanent settlement based on Security Council resolutions [242](#) and [338](#). There can be no military solution to this conflict. The Israeli occupation that began in 1967 must end, and Israel must have secure, recognized borders. We reaffirm our commitment to a comprehensive peace between Israel and Lebanon, and between Israel and Syria.

We are looking forward to our talks with the Foreign Ministers of Jordan, Egypt and a representative of Saudi Arabia later today, and we will be talking to other regional partners very soon. We will continue close consultations among ourselves, as we agreed in the Madrid declaration. Our envoys will continue their work on the ground to help restart a political dialogue and to reach a solution to the questions at the heart of the conflict. We express support for the convening of a further international Ministerial meeting at an appropriate time.

And finally this morning, Prime Minister [Ariel] Sharon told me that he wanted to see a worldwide humanitarian operation to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people. Of course, we shall have to find out more details about that. But meanwhile, the Quartet agreed that full humanitarian access would be the fastest way to begin improving the plight of the Palestinians and, as such, was welcome, though it is not a substitute for all the other steps that the international community has been urging. The UN, with the full support of the Quartet, agrees to lead this effort.

Thank you very much. We will now take your questions.

Q: That sounds pretty much like the President's policy, except there's no reference to Yasser Arafat. Mr. Secretary, could I ask you if there was any discussion of Yasser Arafat's future? The United States seems to be alone in thinking it would be wise for him to step aside, with you recently, twice now, suggesting that maybe there's some role for him. So, could you tell us if you discussed Arafat's future and what do you personally think that future might entail?

US Secretary of State Colin Powell: We didn't discuss his future. Obviously, he was mentioned in our discussion. But the bulk of our discussion dealt with the Palestinian people and the path that we have laid out to get to a settlement. Our concern right now is not about an individual, but about a difficult situation where people are in need.

We welcome Prime Minister Sharon's offer early this morning to the Secretary-General to see if we can get an international effort underway to help the Palestinian people. And we spent most of our time talking about the task force that we have set up, the working groups that will be within that task force. I reported on the security work that we have been doing under [US Central Intelligence Agency] Director [George] Tenet, and how we're ready to operationalize that security plan and get with the two parties and bring it into being, to help the Palestinians restructure their security forces. So most of our time was spent on more concrete things and we did not spend a great deal of time on personalities.

With respect to Mr. Arafat, this is a choice, a decision that would have to be made by the Palestinian people. As the (US) President has said, the leadership that they have enjoyed in recent years has not brought them any closer to a Palestinian state.

Once again, we saw this morning the effect of this kind of terrorist activity which takes the lives of innocent Israeli citizens and, at the same time, damages the hopes, if not destroys the hopes, of the Palestinian people to achieve a state of their own. And we once again condemn this kind of terrorist activity. So this is about finding a way forward and not about personalities.

SG: You sounded like the President. Perhaps what you meant is the fact that we all share the end objective of two states, living in peace, side by side. What we have to do is to work out how we get there. What is the operational pathway that gets us to that road in three years' time? And this is what part of this effort has been.

As for Arafat, we all have our respective positions. The UN still recognizes Chairman Arafat and we will continue to deal with him until the Palestinians decide otherwise.

Q: Did you discuss in detail some sort of a roadmap to that path for the settlement, Mr. Secretary, you referred to it, and Mr. Secretary-General, what you called "operational". Have you agreed as to how do we go from here to the endgame -- that you said 67, the end of occupation, 67 parallel approach -- or not? Is it still security first or are you doing political?

Powell: There have to be three tracks going forward. There has to be a security track; there has to be a humanitarian and economic development track; and there has to be a political track. Everything really though begins with creating a better sense of security, a better handle on the security situation in the region. And so that's the one we'll be moving out more aggressively on in the days and in the coming weeks. But this is not to say that we are ignoring, in any way putting in secondary position, the need for the humanitarian and economic track. And as you have heard the Secretary-General discuss, we've created a task force, working groups, and a schedule for those working groups to move forward with their transformation activities and will start to make presentations to the Palestinians as to how we think we

should move forward.

With respect to the political track, we have a position that is out there that we all agreed to, to see if it is possible to get to a final settlement in three years. But it begins with finding a more stable situation with respect to security.

So all three tracks are there. I wish they could all move in parallel. But until we get a better handle on the security aspect of it, until we get a little more movement on the humanitarian side of it, they will be parallel but they will not exactly be in synchronization with one another. But all of them are important. And we know that ultimately we must arrive at a political settlement to this conflict because as we all agree, and as the Secretary-General said a moment ago, there is no military solution to this conflict.

S-G: Now I think that what I will add, I agree with everything that Secretary Powell has said, but only to add that we all agree that we should work on security, but even if the security track gains some traction, unless we show some progress on the other two tracks that will not work - that would also fail. So in effect, in answer to your question, yes, we are moving on security, but we also need to show progress on the other tracks.

Q: For Secretary Powell, who says when enough progress has been made on the security front for Israel then to take the steps that others have been calling for it to take? And we have heard also from the Secretary-General. I would like to ask the Russian Foreign Minister and the European representatives - if you could comment on whether or not you think Yassir Arafat should go, as the US has called for. Thank you.

Powell: Obviously, we will have to see improvement of the security track and then in consultation with all the parties, and I hope that as we begin to operationalize the security arrangement that we have in mind, the plan that we have in mind, we will be able to develop confidence between the two sides so that they can begin talking to one another again with the help of outsiders assisting them from the United States and other nations and I think that process will put in place conditions that will allow all of us to make a judgement as to whether or not it is appropriate for Israel to respond in kind.

Obviously, Israel is a sovereign country and will have to reach its own decisions and make its own conclusions, but from what I know of the Israeli attitude and my conversations with the Prime Minister and others and just making reference to the conversation that the Secretary-General had with the Prime Minister earlier, he is anxious to move forward as well. I don't think he wants the Israeli Defence Force serving as an occupying force with all the responsibilities that come with that kind of a role for the indefinite future. It is in his interests to find a way to move forward, just as it is in our interests and the interests of the Palestinian people.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov: It is only for the Palestinians to decide who they want to have as their leaders. It is the sovereign right of the Palestinian people. As for Chairman Arafat, he is the legitimately elected leader of Palestine and while he is in this capacity, we will continue to maintain our relations with him. Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller: We talk to the leader of the Palestinian people and it is up to the Palestinian people to decide who is their own leader. Now they will have an election and then we will see who will become leader after the election. But whoever is the leader is the person the European Union will be talking to. Then, let me comment upon this track. It is very important that the security track is developed, it is very important, the United States engagement in this security track. But I think too that it is important that people who have committed those atrocities in Nablus can not stop the process towards security, political reform and better social lives in Palestine. So I think that it is very important that those people who are trying to destroy the peace because they will not accept the existence of Israel cannot win the day. So that is why we must keep the security and the reform and the social progress approximately side by side, otherwise it will turn round once more and once more and once more again.

Q: You said that you support President Bush's initiative. Does that mean that you also support what President Bush has been saying, that eliminating Arafat out of his place, that he is not the leader or anything like that?

S-G: I think that we have answered that question already, but basically we are talking about the objective of two goals, two States living side by side, end of occupation, end of settlement, end of terror and suicide bombing, reforms, including elections, is the package of goals we have agreed on.

Q: I have a question for Foreign Minister Ivanov and Secretary Powell. Have you discussed or are planning to discuss the issue of Iraq and to what extent do you think any factor of destabilizing the region would be dangerous and how the Arab/Israeli conflict would affect the issue of Iraq. And Secretary Powell, do you see the US moving regardless of any advice from friends like Russia or the international community in regard to a change of regime in Iraq?

Ivanov: Well, the Iraqi settlement issues were not on the agenda of today's meetings, therefore we did not consider this subject, but we maintain a constant permanent exchange of opinions on the Iraqi settlement issue and the Russian Federation undertakes efforts to find a political solution for this matter. We believe that, based on the relevant resolutions by the UN Security Council, we have an opportunity and we should make maximum use of this opportunity to find a political solution for the settlement of the situation which would stabilize the situation in the Persian Gulf and in the Middle East as a whole.

Powell: President Bush has said all along that he would consult closely with our friends on the subject of Iraq and we have stayed in close consultation with our Russian colleagues and Presidents Putin and Bush have discussed this, but we have not discussed it this morning as part of this conference.

Q: Secretary Powell, could you give us some more details about what you mean about operationalizing new security arrangements. George Tenet hasn't been in the region in some time and I am not aware of any activity that has been going on. Also, did you raise with your colleagues concerns about money going to the Palestinian Authority, did you ask the EU in particular to stop funnelling money through the PA and what was the response?

Powell: With respect to the comment on operationalizing security arrangements, we have been making plans - we have been putting together some concepts that we have shared with others. It doesn't always require a trip by somebody to go some place in order to get something done. And Mr. Tenet has been deeply involved in it, as have other members of his staff, and so we have some rather concrete ideas that we will be presenting to the sides in the very near future. But we did discuss the issue of funding, but I would yield to my European Union colleagues for whatever they would wish to say about that.

EU High Representative for European Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana: The second part of the question - the only thing I want to tell you is that the donor community resources that go to the Palestinian Authority, including the European Union, has more controls than any other donor community contributed to any other country in the world - that I think answers the question.