



## **U.S. Embassy Belize** *Press Release*

May 26, 2004

### **Powell Vows Justice on Iraq Abuse, Continued Effort on Middle East Peace** **By Colin L. Powell** **U.S. Secretary of State**

Our many friends around the world share the anguish of all Americans about the revelations of abuse that recently occurred at the Abu Ghraib military prison. I can tell you straight from my heart: we will deal with this. We will see that justice is done. The President has expressed an apology on behalf of the nation. We will reinforce that apology.

I can tell you as a former soldier of 35 years service to the United States that what we have seen is deeply disturbing. It was also inconsistent with what I have seen during my years as a soldier. Those detainees in our custody, no matter their guilt or innocence, should never have been subject to such abuse.

We are not hiding from what happened. The senior leadership of the Department of Defense has been before the U.S. Congress, in open hearings, to answer questions before the world. Six separate investigations have been directed by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

America's strength will be demonstrated in our response to these allegations. We will set an example of openness and accountability in ensuring that those responsible are held accountable and that such abuses do not happen again. The world will see that we are a nation of justice, and the values that we have always held dear will be the values that we will follow to make sure that justice is done in this instance.

While we address these issues forthrightly, we also are moving ahead to restore Iraqi sovereignty and help Iraqis build a secure and prosperous nation. We are working with the people of Iraq, the United Nations, and our Coalition Partners to set the way forward. We fully support the United Nations' effort in Iraq, under Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, to consult widely with leading Iraqi figures throughout the country to create a fully sovereign Iraqi Interim Government to take power on June 30. We are working with our partners in the UN Security Council to build support for the new government.

This Iraqi government, working with the UN and the rest of the international community, will lead Iraq to free, fair, and open elections early next year. Elections that will give all Iraqis a voice in the government and future of their country.

When Ambassador Bremer departs at the end of June, he will not be replaced. The Coalition Provisional Authority will dissolve, and authority - all authority - will pass to the Iraqi Government. U.S. Ambassador to Iraq John Negroponte will establish an embassy that will work in partnership with the Iraqi government and further the rebuilding well underway.

We will stay the course in Iraq and are committed to success. A success, which allows Iraqis to determine their own future in a secure and peaceful environment. The murderers of Mohamed Bakr al Hakim, Sergio Vieira de Mello, Izzedine al Saleem and other innocents will fail in their efforts to return Iraq to tyranny.

While Iraq has dominated much of our thinking, we are reaching out to our Arab and Israeli friends to jump-start the Middle East peace process. Until we get movement on this issue, it will always be a weight on the region, a weight on our ability - and the ability of leaders in the region - to accomplish our shared goals for prosperity and freedom.

President Bush is absolutely committed, with no change whatsoever, to the vision that he presented in June 2002, when he spoke of the creation of a Palestinian state that would live side-by-side, in peace, with Israel, as friends and as neighbors, and live in peace together forever. He committed himself to that goal and we took action on it.

Prime Minister Sharon came forward with an opportunity: the elimination of settlements in Gaza and the beginning of the elimination of settlements in the West Bank. This was an opportunity we felt we should seize, because for the first time we were seeing the removal of settlements and not the addition of settlements. Everything that is done as we go forward has to be consistent with the Roadmap.

I met with Palestinian Prime Minister Qurei, and we want to show him that we are there to help.

In my conversations with Palestinians, I have encouraged them to start thinking now about how they would take charge in Gaza, how they would get ready for this transformation that is coming. How they would provide security. How they would work to end terrorism, how the international community can help them, and how their Egyptian and Jordanian friends can help them.

The United States of America wants to be a friend and a partner to every nation, and to every people in this part of the world. The United States of America intends to finish the work that we have started in Iraq. We intend to help the Iraqi people build a government and build a society that rests on a foundation of law, a society that will be a proud member of the Middle East and Gulf-area family. We also will not step back from our commitment to trying to find a solution to the Middle East's problems. We will not stop working with our Palestinian and Israeli colleagues to move this process forward.