

Colin Powell Remarks: National MED Week 2002

SPEECH INFORMATION	
Speaker:	Secretary Colin L. Powell
Where:	Omni Shoreham Hotel Washington, DC
When:	September 27, 2002
Time:	September 27, 2002
Released:	(9:15 a.m. EDT)



Thank you very much. Good morning. Thank you very much. (Applause.) Thank you so much. (Applause.) Thank you, you are very kind. (Applause.) Thank you so much, ladies and gentlemen. (Applause.) Thank you, thank you. (Applause and Cheering.) You all need to cut it out. I've got to get back to work. (Laughter.)

It is a great pleasure to be here this morning. And Ron [Langston], I thank you for that most kind and gracious introduction, and especially for invoking the thoughts and words of one of my great heroes, George C. Marshall, a man who gave such selfless service to this nation for so many years and remains an inspiration to all Americans.

I am very pleased to be here today and I want to congratulate you, Ron, as well as everyone at the Minority Business Development Agency, Small Business Administration and others, for the good work and support of Minority Enterprise Development. This wonderful MED Week Conference, the 20th annual, is just the latest example of your commitment, as well as Secretary Evans' commitment and President Bush's commitment to doing everything we can to create an environment in which minority business can flourish. I can assure you that I am working hard at that down at the State Department, and we have had significant increases in the last year with respect to making contracting easier and more available to small businesses and especially minority businesses.

People ask me whether I spend a lot of time on these kinds of issues in the midst of what is a busy day of world crises and world leaders coming in and out. And the answer is yes, because I believe very, very strongly that as Secretary of State my obligation, first and foremost, is to assist the President in executing the foreign policy of the United States, but I have a responsibility also to make sure that the Department is run in a way that is efficient, in a way that represents the whole country.

So with respect to recruiting people to come into the Department so that the Department looks like America -- and it's a wonderful image to send out to the rest of the world, a Department that looks like all of America -- it is also important to me to make sure that as I am spending the taxpayers' dollar as provided to me by the Congress, we should reach out and make sure that those funds go to all Americans and everyone who needs help

getting into the State Department. With respect to applying for contracts, it is my obligation to make it easy, it is my obligation to make it fair, it is my obligation not just to sit back and let it happen, but to work aggressively to make it happen. I want to assure you that that is a commitment we all strongly feel at the Department of State. (Applause.)

I must also say to you this is something of a welcome break to be here with you this morning. (Laughter.) It won't last long. I've got visitors coming from different countries in the course of the day and I have to get back to issues relating to the Middle East peace plan situation or what's going on in Iraq, a number of calls I'll have to make in the course of the day, a number of meetings that I will have to hold as a result of some of the crises that are before us as a nation and before the free world. And it is very easy to linger on a crisis, to talk about Iraq or to talk about the tense situation between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

But this morning, just for a few moments before I turn back to those crises, I want to give you a different kind of message. I want to give you a message of a world that is beset with these troubles, but a world that is also facing enormous opportunity, enormous opportunity because of the end of the Cold War some ten-plus years ago, enormous opportunity because of the advance of free trade, the advance of new nations coming from behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains, nations that are committed to democracy, nations that want to find out how the free enterprise system works.

I'm not a businessperson, except for a short period of time between leaving the military and coming back into the State Department. I was a businessperson just briefly -- not serious like you all. (Laughter.) I'm a soldier. I was a soldier for 35 years. So I sit in my office and visitors come from all over the world, and I greet them from the perspective of someone who spent 35 years of his adult life, more than 35 years of his adult life, studying military matters and war. This is my whole training, my whole background, my whole experience.

Now people come and sit in my office, and we don't talk about war, we don't talk about the Red Army that used to be poised to come across the plains of northern Germany, we don't talk about generals running countries in South America anymore, we don't talk about superpower confrontation in the countries of Africa. Most of the leaders who now come to my office, especially from the developing world, they want to talk about economics, they want to talk about trade, they want to talk about quotas being reduced or eliminated to make it easier to trade with them, they want to talk about what is necessary for them to imbed their democracies on a firm foundation, and that is trade, commerce, jobs for people.

So I have had to change my whole way of thinking about these matters. I find that I don't have to spend as much time thinking through how I would fight a tactical battle or what the next new tank is going to look like, or should I concentrate on what a new airplane should look like, a new fighter plane. Instead, I'm spending my days with tuna quotas -- (laughter) -- textile imports, banana quotas. How do I get more nations in Africa involved in the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act? How do I work with Congress to protect our

industries, but at the same time protect our industries in a way that is not so protective that we do not let other nations trade with us? We are a trading nation, and trade works when it goes in both ways; it benefits both nations.

How do you integrate into a world community a nation like China, that over the last 20 years has come out and become an economic power, with 40 percent of its exports coming to the United States? And in turn, we are shipping services and goods to China. So the old context of China being an enemy that we had to face on a battlefield is different now. China is part of a global community of economic powers, and hopefully as a result of this relationship of going back and forth with trade and visits and diplomacy, we can keep China moving in a direction where we never have to think of it as an enemy. We will watch it. It is a system different from ours. China does things that we don't agree with. We have disagreements on human rights. We have disagreements on weapons proliferation.

But at the same time, there are many areas where we do have agreement, where we have seen them welcomed into the World Trading Organization. As a result, we have opportunities to build a more stable relationship and to continue to show them that if they move in this direction of democracy, open trade, they can generate wealth, wealth that will benefit not just a few cities along the eastern area of China, but out into the most remote areas; the creation of wealth through trade, the creation of wealth through jobs.

I have had so many leaders come into my office who used to be communists. They used to be tyrants running countries or they were in countries that had tyrants. They have been able to flush that out. Even some who ran repressive regimes realized it doesn't work anymore and they have managed to make the transition into some form of democracy and they have managed to get elected. And they come to my office and they sit and they talk and they say now that we've been elected, we're answerable to the people; and the people are not so much interested in the ideology that we espouse, they're interested in jobs, they're interested in education for their children, they're interested in a roof over their heads, they're interested in enough food on the table, they're interested in healthcare, they're interested in the same things that you are interested in for your family; show us how to do it, show us how to imbed our democracy firmly on the rule of law, show us how to make our economic systems transparent and accountable, show us how to put in place a judiciary that will watch it all, show us how a free press works that watches over the whole thing to make sure that the government is accountable to the people. Because after one or two free elections, the people are expecting a better life, not just another election.

That better life comes from economic development. It comes from sustainable development. It comes from trade. It comes from the export of goods and services and technology. And it comes from people like you. It comes from people like you who have skills, who are willing to take risks, who are willing to teach others how to take risks, who are willing to look at a developing nation somewhere across an ocean and see an opportunity that others may not see; and you are willing to invest there and you are willing to see if you can go there and provide a service, a product, and make a profit that

you can return back to the United States or you can reinvest there.

That's what it is all about. That is what is going to make the 21st century successful. We will deal with the crises that are out there. Crises come, get dealt with, and they go. But the real promise of this new century that we are all living in is to push democracy forward as the only political system that really works. Communism is gone. Fascism is gone. There are other systems out there that are being tried, but what really works is democracy because it is democracy that gives you the entry into the globalized system of trade and economic development and free economics that will bring you the wealth you need to bring all of your people up.

This is nowhere more the case than in the developing nations, in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa and the Western Hemisphere. President Bush is seized with this. President Bush has committed his Administration, and each and every one of us, to do all we can to make trade freer. That is why he worked so hard to get the Trade Promotion Act passed so that he could enter into free trade arrangements with individual countries or into groups of countries, with the Central American Free Trade Agreement, with the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, trying to get a free trading area all the way from the top of our hemisphere to the bottom of our hemisphere in order that products can flow, and with products, knowledge and wealth.

That is why President Bush put forward a historic proposal last year called the Millennium Challenge Account. We are going to increase the amount of funds, the amount of aid we give to developing nations, by 50 percent. We are making the first request to Congress now and it will take three years to build up to the increase that we're looking for of \$5 billion additional dollars, 50 percent more than I now have available. Roughly, we give out \$10 billion in aid. This will add another \$5 billion every year.

But it will be added in a very special way. It just won't go out the door to countries that have a particular need. It will be directed toward those countries that have made the kinds of commitments that I've just spoken of. Those countries that have demonstrated that they are committed to democracy, those countries that have put in place the rule of law and are routing out corruption and have committed themselves to the right kinds of economic policies, policies that can use aid as a way of developing their infrastructure so they can attract trade, so that they can attract investment, so that private capital can come in -- private capital being 80 percent of the resources that are available to developing nations.

This Millennium Challenge Account is going to be very exciting as it kicks in, and more and more countries realize the promise of this account and are coming to us and saying we want to start moving in the direction of democracy, of the rule of law, of transparency -- all the other things you talk about; and when this money is available, we want to use it for education of our young people; we want to use it to create an infrastructure of roads, rail links, whatever it takes to move products, to move people; we want to use this money to fight HIV/AIDS, one of the great catastrophes facing the world; we want to use this money for healthcare systems so that we can have a population that is educated, that is healthy and is ready to participate in a globalizing world.

The President is committed to this proposition and he is committed to the simple proposition that as we go forward, as we start to share this treasure of ours with nations in need, and as we start to award contracts and as we start to do more, we do it in a way that opens it up to all of America's businesses, especially small businesses, especially to minority business activities. In my Department, we're spending almost a billion dollars a year on embassy construction, and I have a great leader in charge of that program, retired General Chuck Williams, who is a master builder. And he is determined, through his office, to make sure that contracts are available to be bid by minority entrepreneurs who are willing to meet our very difficult standards and are willing to go to some difficult places to do that work. We have already awarded several \$100 million contracts for this purpose to minority businesses.

So these are exciting times. People say, "Do you sometimes get worn down by the problems that are out there?" Sometimes they do wear you down a little bit, but I just wake up the next day recognizing the opportunity that's there, recognizing the destiny that awaits the United States as we are looked to as the leader of the world that wants to be free, the opportunities that exist for us to help nations in need, the opportunity that exists for us to keep nations moving in the right direction, the opportunity that exists for us to help people around the world -- black, white, green, blue -- become more successful in life, to achieve their dreams, to recognize that God has given all of this success and wealth to the United States of America not just for our own use, but for us to use our position of influence, our position of economic power, political power, the power of our system, to help other nations who want to be helped. This is a value that is deeply embedded in the American psyche. It is a value that we make sure all of our ambassadors at all of our missions around the world understand. As they go out to all of these nations, they carry that value system with them -- not to lecture, not to preach, but to let it be a light that will shine into the darkest corner. And people can see that light and see whether or not it applies to them and how they can use it. It is a value that I think fuels what you are doing here today.

I'm anxious to see how you can improve your businesses, anxious to see how you can get the venture capital you need to expand your businesses, but I hope you also do it in the knowledge that you have so much to contribute not only to our society, but you have so much to contribute to all of those nations around the world who are in need and who are looking to the United States for inspiration, for support and for investment, and for an example of what is good in this world and what is right in this world. And we as a nation must always be there for them, and I know that you will help us in what I believe is a noble cause of helping all the people of the world live a better life.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

[End]