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CBS News

FACE THE NATION

Sunday, March 28, 2004

GUESTS: COLIN POWELL
Secretary of State

KAREN TUMULTY
Time Magazine

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FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
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BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

An exclusive interview with Secretary of State Colin Powell. Washington is roiling in the aftereffects of former counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke's claim that the Bush administration was not sufficiently concerned with al-Qaida in the days before 9/11. Is it true? Are all the Bush administration attacks on Clarke justified or are they character assassination? And what is the state of the fight against terrorism today? These are the questions for Secretary of State Powell. Karen Tumulty of Time magazine joins in the questioning. And I'll have a final word on another story that should not be forgotten, the latest misadventures of the US Park Service. But first, Secretary of State Powell on FACE THE NATION.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: And good morning, again. With us in the studio, the secretary of State.

Thank you for coming, Mr. Powell.

And joining in the questioning, Karen Tumulty of Time magazine.

Mr. Secretary, as you well know, Washington has been consumed by these criticisms that have been leveled by Richard Clarke, who formerly headed the president's anti-terrorism office, veteran of four administrations. The criticism, it seems to me, comes down to this: That the administration was simply asleep at the switch in the months before 9/11, that it disregarded and misunderstood the rising threat of terrorism which Clarke says he was trying to let them know about. Your own deputy, Rich Armitage, said the administration had not developed a military option to fight terrorism until just before 9/11. The CIA told this commission that's investigating, that is, the warning spike in June and July, there appeared to be little sense of alarm in the White House. That sounds as if Clarke's criticisms have some credence. What's your response?

Secretary COLIN POWELL (State Department): Well, I disagree with his characterization. I've known Dick Clarke for many years, over three of those administrations, and--and he is a public servant who feels strongly about these issues. But when I looked at what he said before the commission this week and when I looked through his book and when I also looked at what he had said to the Congress in 2002 in the background press briefings he gave, there are inconsistencies and contradictions between what he is saying now and what he said then.

For example, now he is saying that we did not devote sufficient attention and urgency to this problem. I was announced to be the secretary of State on the 16th of December, on a Saturday, in Crawford, Texas. Just four days later, on the 20th of December, my very first briefing to get ready to become secretary of State was from Mr. Clarke and all of the other counterterrorism experts at the CIA, the FBI and in my own new Department of State. And we talked about terrorism, we talked about al-Qaida. So this wasn't a lack of interest, certainly on my part. And I think all of my colleagues in the administration--Secretary Rumsfeld, Condi Rice, the president--immediately started receiving when he became president daily briefings from the CIA director himself or one of his principal assistants. This was something President Clinton had not been doing.

And as we went through the spring and summer and the threat level rose and we got more and more information suggesting something was afoot, we responded to that. I issued many

warnings to our embassies, to our traveling public. The CIA did likewise. Mr. Rumsfeld made sure that our fleets were safe by moving them away from dangerous ports. We just didn't know that the threat was a domestic one, an internal one.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me go back to what you said, that--that first briefing you had. Did he express a sense of urgency about this growing threat at that point? Because now he says he did and nobody was listening.

Sec. POWELL: What--how does--what does he mean nobody was listening? I was sitting there listening to him, the CIA, Mr. Coffey-Black, who's now counterterrorism effort at the State Department, I even brought the fellow who did it from the CIA over to the State Department to now do it for me. We were listening. We did respond.

SCHIEFFER: But did he say it was an urgent threat that needed to be dealt with immediately?

Sec. POWELL: I--I can't remember. it was a threat. We all knew it was a threat. We didn't--really didn't need Dick Clarke to tell us that terrorism was a threat. The Cole had been blown up three months earlier. I became secretary of State knowing that two of our embassies had been blown up in 1998. So it wasn't as if we weren't aware of this threat. Clarke certainly conveyed what he believed the threat was to us, and we listened to him. We took it into account.

Within a few days of becoming national security adviser, Dr. Rice started to initiate actions within the National Security Council to deal with this. That's why the president started getting regular briefings from the CIA, why I made myself available every morning at my staff meeting to my counterterrorism expert and to my intelligence people. We were not ignorant to the threat. Mr. Clarke's claim seems to be that, well, we didn't have enough meetings of the kind that he liked.

Condi Rice and Don Rumsfeld and I spoke every morning at 7:15. I met with my experts every day at 8:30. We put out warnings throughout that period; so did the CIA. We began to review the bidding, with respect to where we were on the 4th of September. By the time we got to the 4th of September, there was a comprehensive plan. And there might have been some confusion about what Mr. Armitage was saying, but there was a military component to that comprehensive plan. It was in one of the--one of the annexes of the body of the plan as well. And so even while we were working on this plan, which was finally agreed to at this meeting on the 4th of September, it didn't mean we were doing nothing else in that eight-month period. We were doing a lot.

SCHIEFFER: Well, does this just mean he--what he is now alleging was simply not true?

Sec. POWELL: Wh--what I'm saying is that if you look at everything that was going on, if you look at everything he has said--not just this week and not just what he has put in his book--but what he said to Congress in 2002, what he said to the press over those periods of--of time after 9/11, he was essentially saying that the Bush administration was acting, was responding, was looking at this in a comprehensive way. It is Dick Clarke who is saying that we had shifted to the elimination of the threat from al-Qaida. So these are not words that would be put in his mouth. And--and you can't simply say, 'Well, you know, I was an administration official. I had to say that at the time.' He was more than just an administration official being given a script. He wrote the script. He was the one responsible for this.

The suggestion is--is sort of being left there that the Clinton administration were doing certain things that we sort of forgot all about when we came in and that's not the case. They weren't out bombing Afghanistan and invading Afghanistan and we suddenly said stop. They were not flying an armed predator and we said stop. There was no armed predator at that time. They were not arming the Northern Alliance and we said stop. All of those things began to happen during this administration after a period of seven to eight months, things that did not happen in the previous administration.

Ms. KAREN TUMULTY (Time Magazine): Well, Mr. Secretary, a lot of people would, in fact, like to look at everything that was going on at the time. And the Republican leaders on the Hill go farther than you did. They say that there are not only inconsistencies with the testimony that Mr. Clarke offered two years ago vs. today but that he actually perjured himself. And they have called upon the administration to declassify that testimony. Mr. Clarke said this morning that not only should his testimony be declassified in its entirety but so should his memo of January 2001, all of his e-mails back and forth with Condoleezza Rice, and the final directives seven days before September 11th as well. Do you think--this is the administration's call--do you think that all this should be laid on the table, made public, so that people can make up their own minds on what to do?

Sec. POWELL: I think we should put out as much as we possibly can. Now I can't speak to a specific document and say declassify it because somebody classified it. And I ca--I don't have that authority. But I think that we should try to put out everything that we can. I think we should work with the commission. The commission has all of these documents. And if the commission believes there's a particular need for something to be declassified, ask us to do it. I think that the whole record should be out there.

We should also take note of the fact that the commission has interviewed 1,000 people. It has thousands of pages and thousands of hours of transcripts. It's not just Mr. Clarke. It's all of us who have testified before the commission. And as the commission chair and vice chair said earlier this morning as well as earlier during the week, 'Let's wait until the commission finishes analyzing all of this information before we go to judgments and conclusions and--and decisions as to who might have done something right and who might have done something wrong.' This is the role of the commission, not the role of Mr. Clarke and Mr. Clarke's testimony.

Ms. TUMULTY: Well, one person who we haven't heard from in public is Condoleezza Rice, who says that she would like to testify. The administration makes the argument that officials who--who are not confirmed by the Senate should not be forced to go in front and tell publicly what their advice is to the president, but the fact is when Tom Ridge was in a similar situation two years ago, the administration made that same argument and then they changed their mind and they allowed him to testify. Do you think they should do that now?

Sec. POWELL: I'm not sure it was quite the same. I think it was a different set of circumstances and what he actually did when he went on the Hill is quite different. And what Dr. Rice is being asked to do, she's being asked to appear before congressionally mandated commission under oath. And there is a--a presidential authority problem here. I have been a national security adviser and a deputy national security adviser. And I wouldn't have done it during the time I was there working for President Reagan.

The president has to have a--a unique and confidential and private relationship with his immediate staff. That does not apply to those of us who are confirmed by the Senate or appointed by the president with the advice and the consent of the Senate. And that's a long-standing rule. It's a

long-standing tradition and precedent and I think it served us well.

However, Condoleezza Rice has given four hours of testimony as the commission chairman and vice chairman said this morning. She answered every question. She was open.

Ms. TUMULTY: But...

Sec. POWELL: She's willing to spend more time before the commission. The president is going to spend time with the commission. And the vice president is going to spend time with the commission in private and so I think that's a--that's--that's the answer. She has answered all of their questions.

Ms. TUMULTY: But Lee Hamilton, who is the chairman of the commission, said this morning that he believes that the--the public interest in this issue overrides the legal arguments, the precedents and the other arguments that the administration has been making to keep her from testifying in public. You don't agree with that?

Sec. POWELL: Well, I do understand Mr.--Mr. Hamilton's position. And--and I respect his position. And he said it was the view of all of the members of the commission. But the president has to preserve the office of the presidency and not just, you know, his personal tenure in that office but the prerogatives of the presidency. And the president's judgment right now and--and the judgment of his legal adviser is that this precedent should be kept.

SCHIEFFER: Mr. Secretary, may I just go back to what you were talking about, declassifying these documents. And I want to go through them one at a time here. I understand what you're saying, that the--the agency that classified the--the--the material is the one that has the right to declassify it. But on the memo that Mr. Clarke says he sent warning the White House about this, that the terrorist threat was grave and needed to be dealt with, from what you know about it, you have no problem with declassifying that.

Sec. POWELL: Well, I don't--I don't--yeah.

SCHIEFFER: I understand if you--if you--the authority to declassify may not be yours but you don't have a problem with that?

Sec. POWELL: I'm not familiar with the specific memo. I'm not sure I've read this specific memo you're making a reference to. But my bias will be to provide this information in an unclassified manner not only to the commission but to the American people. We're not trying to hide anything.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Sec. POWELL: But we do have to protect sources and methods.

SCHIEFFER: But--and, again, I take it you have read the--the information, the briefing that he gave to the commission that is now classified, the--the briefing that he gave in private.

Sec. POWELL: No.

SCHIEFFER: You would not from what you know of it...

Sec. POWELL: I-I have not read that. I have no access to what he might have said to the commission.

SCHIEFFER: OK. He says let's go ahead and declassify the national security directive that the president issued. Would you have a problem with declassifying that?

Sec. POWELL: I-I personally would not. But this is something that has to be in--it's in the hands of the White House.

SCHIEFFER: Again, that's not--you don't have the authority. But you don't have a problem.

Sec. POWELL: I think--no. And my--my--I can't speak to any specific document. My bias is, and my recommendation will be, put out everything we can because the American people should be able to read it and see it and not just those of us who have clearances or the commission.

SCHIEFFER: The vice president says that Condoleezza Rice is getting a bum rap on all of this. Do you agree with that?

Sec. POWELL: Yes, I think--I think Dr. Rice is getting a bit of a bum rap. It's--it's been set up as, you know, I--I told her everything that we needed to do and she ignored it all. That's not accurate. Condi was on this from the very beginning. She took action. We were aware of it. There were meetings. We regularly talked about this. When the director of Central Intelligence got back in the habit of briefing the president every day, when you see what the commission has found out on a very, very regular basis. The director, Mr. Tenet, or Mr. McLaughlin, as deputy, we were--they were presenting the president information about the terrorist threat. And we were responding to that information.

Unfortunately, we never got the information or intelligence that we needed to tell us that these 19 guys were in the country and already there was a plot under way. And all the bombing of Afghanistan and the chasing of Osama bin Laden, all things that we should do and we turned our attention to that with a comprehensive plan, would not have affected the fact that these 19 guys were already in the country plotting to conduct 9/11. Even Mr. Clarke has said he does not believe that it would have stopped that.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Let's take a break right here. When we come back, we'll talk about this some more and a couple other things.

Sec. POWELL: OK.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Back with the secretary of State.

Mr. Secretary, a group called the Center for American Progress has posed this question: If, as the administration claims, the White House did make terrorism a priority, why did Vice President Cheney wait five months to establish a terrorism task force which then never met?

Sec. POWELL: We were working the problem all along. It was being worked within the Department of State as I responded to the threat levels and as we prepared a diplomatic strategy to put more pressure on the Afghanistan regime and the regime in Pakistan. Mr. Rumsfeld was doing things to secure his forces around the world in response to the Cole. I was taking action to protect our embassies in response to our two embassies being blown up

in 1998. There were a lot of actions under way and ongoing. The deputies were meeting on a regular basis. And it all came together when we had this NSPD ready on the 4th of September. But before the 4th of September, there were a lot of things that were taking place with respect to the task force. I--I--I can't answer the specific question. I'm not familiar with the--with the document...

SCHIEFFER: The vice president says that the--that Mr. Clarke was out of the loop. How could the anti-terrorism chief be out of the loop?

Sec. POWELL: I think the--the c--the context in which Vice President Cheney said that was that there was a new loop that was in place and that it was the director of Central Intelligence who was speaking to the president every morning and giving him his intelligence information, and not just a book being sent in, as had been the case, I believe, i--under the Clinton administration.

SCHIEFFER: But would...

Sec. POWELL: So the--there was a--there was a--there was a--a loop now that included the direct input of intelligence information, to include threat inter--intelligence information, to the president of the United States, the vice president of the United States. And everything that the president saw every morning, the vice president saw, I saw, Condi saw and Don Rumsfeld saw.

SCHIEFFER: But why would...

Sec. POWELL: We all saw it.

SCHIEFFER: Why would you not want the man who is supposed to be heading the anti-terrorism efforts to know about that?

Sec. POWELL: I'm not...

SCHIEFFER: Why would there be a new loop?

Sec. POWELL: I--I--I have no idea what he--what he claims not to know. I mean, he was doing his job. And this is where the inf--this...

Ms. TUMULTY: Well, that was the vice president who claimed...

Sec. POWELL: Well...

Ms. TUMULTY: ...that he did not know this stuff.

Sec. POWELL: Well, it--you--then I'll--I'll let--I think I've explained what the vice president had in mind, but I'm sure he--he'd be willing to--to expand on what I've said. But--but--but here's the thing. He said that Mr. Clarke was--was not part of this system yet. Mr. Clarke was the key action officer, the key staff person in this, and he was making statements, providing testimony, giving background brief--briefings. And if you look through 2002, the documents that have been made reference to, he was essentially being complimentary about the work that he was doing as part of the Bush administration and that the Bush administration was doing. And that's where I think there are some contradictions and inconsistencies that I hope will be explained as the commission finishes its work.

SCHIEFFER: Karen?

Ms. TUMULTY: You...

Sec. POWELL: But we really have to wait for the commission to finish its work. This shouldn't be--this shouldn't be a matter about Dick Clarke and his book. This should be a matter about what the commission is doing, and what the commission is doing to find out what really happened, what mistakes might have been made, what was done well, what was not done well, but more importantly, even, for the commission to tell us what we should be doing differently in the future.

Ms. TUMULTY: Well, Mr. Secretary, you say this shouldn't be about Dick Clarke, and you say--you have said that you know of no campaign to personally discredit him. And yet you have the president's official spokesman referring to this as Dick Clarke's American grandstand. Both--both the press secretary and the vice president have suggested that this is motivated by the fact that Dick Clarke didn't get the job he wanted. The press secretary has also said that this is putting book sales and politics over policy. Are those warranted? And doesn't this amount to a campaign to discredit Dick Clarke?

Sec. POWELL: To some extent, whenever you have a book come out in a--in a time of high interest and tension, you--you have to say--I mean, how much of this is for book promotion or not? I--I really don't know. I can't answer that question. I do know that there are inconsistencies and contradictions here, and I do know that when these inconsistencies and contradictions are latched onto by people, as you saw them latched onto earlier this week and even before he testified, it is appropriate for those of us who are at the wrong--on the wrong side of these inconsistencies to respond to them.

Ms. TUMULTY: And--but do you think your fellow administration officials, including as high as the vice president, should be attacking Mr. Clarke's motives in doing this?

Sec. POWELL: I don't know what his motives were. I don't know what--what the--the vice president feels about this now. He and I have not talked about it. I think right now what we ought to do is get through this week of high drama and--and--and high tension with respect to Mr. Clarke's testimony and with respect to his book and let the commission get on with its work, continue interviewing people, see what they have learned from the thousand of in--people they've already interviewed, the thousands of pages of documents that they have. It's been--it's been a fascinating week of--of charge/countercharge debate back and forth. Now I hope we can get beyond this and let the commission get back to its work.

SCHIEFFER: Well, what would you say, Mr. Secretary, is the most serious inconsistency that you have found?

Sec. POWELL: In my judgment, it is the charge that somehow the administration that was leaving office, which focused on law enforcement and diplomatic activities, was dealing with this problem with greater energy and urgency and immediacy than the new administration coming in. I'm s--I'm--I'm sorry, that is not the case. Mr. Clarke may not have been happy with the kinds of meetings that were being held, which meetings he went to, but this president was seized with the problem.

And you've seen this one little--little statement from the president where a few months in

when we were going over this, he said, 'I'm tired of swatting flies.' He s-he said this in response to the intelligence information he was getting from the directors. He said, 'Come on. Let's go, let's go,' and we did. I mean, it may sound trivial when I say that, well, I was putting out threat advisories, but that is what you do in response to--to terror threats. We did not ignore the threat as we understood the threat to be. And we understood that threat during the spring and summer of 2001 to be principally an externally directed threat against our traveling public, against our facilities overseas, against our ships at sea or in port and that's what we were responding to.

SCHIEFFER: Let me--let me ask you, there is a report this morning that Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of Defense, is being considered as the first ambassador to Iraq. Would that be a good appointment?

Sec. POWELL: We--we--I'm not going to discuss appointments of that nature. This is speculation.

SCHIEFFER: Do you believe--all right. Do you believe that at this point Iraq is safe enough that we can actually hand it over to Iraqi control on schedule, which is less than a hundred days from now?

Sec. POWELL: I think we're moving along well. We have an administrative law in place. It's kind of a precursor to a constitution. People still debating it, but it's in place, approved by the Governing Council. Ambassador Brahimi, the very distinguished UN representative, will be heading back soon to begin conversations with the pol--Provisional Authority and the Governing Council on what the nature of the interim regime should be. And I'm hard at work with my staff right now planning on transitioning to an embassy structure on the 1st of July.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think the assassination of the Hamas leader by the Israelis increases the threat of more terrorism?

Sec. POWELL: The threat of terrorism is always there. Hamas is a terrorist organization. And I was troubled--as we said, we were troubled by this assassination because we are concerned about the consequences of the assassination. And we said so. And we have said to both parties, this is a time to--to end this--this--this cycle. People don't like to say it's a cycle, but I'm afraid that's what it is. It's time to end this but, it has to begin with greater effort on the part of the Palestinians to bring terror under control.

SCHIEFFER: We have to stop there. Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for a very candid interview.

Sec. POWELL: Thank you. Thank you, sir.

SCHIEFFER: Back with a final word in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, when a big story like the terrorism hearings comes along, it consumes Washington. Other good stories get pushed aside and forgotten. Well, here is one of those lesser stories that should not be pushed aside because it is just so outrageous. The US Park Service, the agency that guards our national monuments and takes care of our national parks, has come up with an idea to save money. The agency brass asked park superintendents to draft plans to close the parks on national holidays. Yes, you heard right--

close the parks on days when people are off work and have an opportunity to use them.

But that's just the stupid part. Here's the outrageous part. It turns out that one reason the Park Service is short of money is that Park Service officials have been doing a lot of traveling. They spent \$44 million on official travel at home and abroad just last year. And that includes stops in such exotic locales as China, South America, France and Italy. Park Director Fran Manella was hauled before Congressman Charles Taylor and Norm Dick's House committee last week and ordered to cut the travel and keep the parks open. She promised to comply. From now on, she said, no more overseas trips.

Well, that is a start, but it is just the latest chapter in a tale of Park Service mismanagement in which multimillion-dollar projects have been launched without congressional approval and authorization and the Park Service police chief was fired for revealing she didn't have enough police officers to guard the national monuments. So I have another travel tip. Give the Park Service brass their walking papers. They shouldn't be out of work long. They can hire out as clowns.

Well, that's it for us, and don't forget to watch "60 Minutes" tonight when correspondent Ed Bradley interviews national security adviser Condoleezza Rice.

We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.