SPEAKER: Ladies and gentlemen, please, if you take your seats. Thank you very much, would you please take your seats. Thank you. Jim?

MR. LEHRER: Hello everybody. I'm Jim Lehrer and this is Colin Powell.

(Applause)

MR. LEHRER: And for the record, I would like for all of you to know that neither of us is or has ever been a member of a teachers' union. A quick reminder about this man. He was born in Harlem of Jamaican parents. Grew up in the Bronx. Graduated from the City College of New York. In 1958, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Army. Served in the army for 35 years as an infantry officer. Later was deputy national security adviser, chairman of the Joint Chiefs Of Staff under President George H. W. Bush and afterwards he was secretary of state in the first term of President George W. Bush. General, Mr. Secretary good afternoon.

MR. POWELL: Good afternoon Jim. Thank you, good afternoon everyone. Thank you. Thank you.
MR. LEHRER: A while ago Lee Hamilton said there is no good solution to Iraq. Do you agree?

MR. POWELL: Let me expand my answer beyond that simple question. I thought the panelists did a good job of laying out different positions. But let me put that in the context that I know well and that is of an infantry officer in how you go about a problem like this. When you look at a problem like this the first thing you have to do is understand the situation and not pretend it is a different kind of situation in order to make it easier to handle. What we are facing in Iraq now, and what causes Mr. Hamilton to say things like that, in my judgment, is a civil war. It is a civil war that really broke out in the beginning of last year with the bombing of the Golden Mosque.

Until that point we were fighting an insurgency that we really didn't acknowledge was an insurgency. So we kept saying, well we can start to draw down, we can do this, we can do that. And then it became a full-scale, in my judgment, civil war. The administration doesn't agree with that judgment but if you look at the national intelligence estimate, which reflects the unanimous view
of all the 16 intelligence agencies of the government;
they call it something more complex than a civil war.
With all of the essential elements of a civil war and it
is a deteriorating situation. What is the war about? It
is a war that is about power and survival. And it is a
war between the minority Sunnis and the majority Shi'ites
with the Kurds watching to see whether they want to be
part of whatever results from this civil war or not be
part of it. And we have to understand that because it is
that kind of a civil war it's not a civil war that can be
put down or solved by the armed forces of the United
States. Many people talk about General Petraeus but the
one thing that Dave Petraeus, who I have known since he
was a First Lieutenant, has said all along is that this
cannot be solved militarily.

Well, then what is the military part of the
surge about? All it really can do is put a heavier lid on
this pot of boiling sectarian stew. But only the Iraqis
can turn down or put out the fire. When the surge was
announced late last year, earlier this year my immediate
concern with the concept of a surge is that it didn't seem
like it was strategically synchronized. It had three
parts to the surge as I think you heard from the panelist earlier, one, increase the number of American troops by 25 or 30,000 as it turned out to be. Secondly, build up the capacity of Iraqi security forces both military and police forces. And third, make this government effective. It is the Iraqi political system that has to come together and start to remove the causes of the civil war.

In the military we say you pick the decisive attack. What is the main attack? What will really solve this problem? And the main attack is this political component; what the Iraqis have to do. What we're doing with General Petraeus is a supporting attack. Building up the Iraqi security forces is also a supporting attack because we don't know yet whether those security forces are going to turn into armed militias to keep the civil war going or whether they will be loyal to a government that they believe in and they believe represents the dreams, ambitions and aspirations of all the people.

A lot has been said about Al Qaeda. But you notice it wasn't talked about that much by the panelists. The administration talks about it all the time. The President constantly says it is a problem with Al Qaeda
and we have to fight them there or we will fight them here. But the considered view of the intelligence community is that Al Qaeda only constitutes perhaps 10 percent of all of the belligerents in this conflict. It is a nasty 10 percent. It is a 10 percent that is focusing on killing American troops. And they are the most effective 10 percent with their enhanced IEDs and the way they go about it. But it's still 10 percent. General Keane just said two different things. At one point he said Al Qaeda is not going to be able to make it because the Sunnis now are going after them and the Shias really wouldn't tolerate them in the first place. But then a little later he said we don't want to leave an opportunity for Al Qaeda to take root there. The fact of the matter is the Sunnis will go after them but we shouldn't rejoice in this initially because the Sunnis are not necessarily then going to be on our side. They are the ones who are the source of the insurgents that were killing us, before what as the civil war turned out to be the case, last year.

And so Al Qaeda is something that has to be dealt with. And I understand why the administration wants
to focus on it. Why the military wants to focus on it.

But even if you got rid of Al Qaeda you're still going to have the civil war that can only be solved by the Iraqi political leadership. Much was said about Mr. Maliki and his government. It's a government that hasn't extended its authority outside of the Green Zone to any large extent. It is a government that is as much organized around sectarian interests within the parliament, within the Cabinet, as it is a government that has come together for a single national purpose. Everybody says we've got to go make sure that Mr. Maliki has the will. So the Vice President has gone over and told him you've got to have the will. The Secretary of Defense has gone over. The Secretary of State has gone over. Everybody has gone over and delivered the same message. And Mr. Maliki always says yes. But that is not the right question. The question that should have been asked at the beginning of the surge, as we move in with all of our troops, not only does Mr. Maliki have the will to do the political part of it, does he have the means, does he have the ability? And the answer so far is a flat no. He does not yet demonstrate that he has the ability or the means to
exercise that ability.

And so we have this lack of synchronization.

Five brigades went over and as General Keane said they have quieted things down in certain places. But will those places remain quiet when our troops go away if we haven't solved the underlying causes of the disquiet? And my judgment is that it's not going to happen unless the Iraqi security forces really become competent very, very quickly; and they have not demonstrated that yet to the level needed to secure the country. And in the absence of a national government with capability and with the will and knows what to do, and can make it happen, and that will marry that security force to it as a national army then I think we are in difficulty and I think that is what Mr. Hamilton is saying.

Well, then where does this all lead to? Where does this all take us? The civil war will ultimately be resolved by a test of arms. The Shias will ultimately prevail because they are 60 percent of the population. And their militia can be pretty violent. They will prevail also because they are determined not to be ruled again by a Sunni the way they were ruled under Saddam
Hussein. The Sunnis are struggling for power and survival and it's going to be resolved in a test of arms. It's going to be very ugly. It's not going to be pretty to watch. But I don't know any way to avoid it. It's happening now and the only reason it isn't more explosive is because of the presence of American troops. I think that as you get to the end of the year with all of these mystical lunar deadlines; September, October, November -- Petraeus. Now, we're sending General Jones, a great soldier over. He is going to evaluate the Iraqi security forces because the Congress doesn't trust the administration to do it. This is strategic incoherence. (Applause)

So what I think will occur is all the reports will come flowing in towards the end of the year. If the American government of the President and the Congress have not seen significant improvement with respect to the political situation and what the Iraqi government is able to do and significant improvement in the Iraqi security forces, I think our government will have to start saying, "Okay, let us back off and see if we can contain this in a way that Lee Hamilton described." General Keane says he
thinks we have until sometime next year. That may be the case. But I don't think we have any later than that. And one of the principle driving reasons is that the United States Armed Forces, meaning the United States Army and the United States Marine Corps, cannot sustain this. It is a volunteer force, these young officers and sergeants and enlisted men are going back for their second, third and fourth time. It is a very married army. And they can't keep doing that. So I don't think the surge can be repeated over and over. So all these things will come together and force decisions at the end of the year, unless there is a significant improvement in the political environment on the ground.

A lot was also said with respect to the neighborhood, the region, what will happen. I'm not sure how much of a spill over there will be and whether it will result in wars in other parts of the region. But nobody can guarantee that. I think we should be talking with Syria and Iran. I talked to Syria, I visited Damascus twice, met with President Assad. It is a difficult conversation just as Lee Hamilton used to have with the Russians. I used to get criticized for going to Damascus.
But nevertheless, I went because I thought it was important. On one occasion I was in Jerusalem and Prime Minister Sharon said to me, "Colin, let us talk." We go in a private room, he says, "I don't want you to go to Damascus. I don't think it serves the interests of peace, and we don't like it here in Israel when you go to Damascus." I said, "Ariel, thank you very much but I am going anyway. I am Secretary of State of the United States of America and not the foreign minister of Israel. I'm going to Damascus." And so he laughed and he said, "Well, since you are going --

(Laughter)

-- do me a favor." The rockets had just started to come across the northern border from southern Lebanon. Sharon says to me, "Tell President Assad that we have enough trouble down here. The situation is very volatile and he should use his good offices to see if he can stop it." I went to Damascus and had a long conversation with President Assad. It is always a difficult conversation with him and his ministers but at the end of the conversation I pulled him aside and I passed the message and he just nodded, he didn't say anything. And the
rockets stopped that night. Then Mr. Sharon thanked me the next day. Diplomacy isn't always out in the open. And it is difficult. As George Mitchell once said when he was negotiating the Northern Ireland agreement, "I failed for 744 days and then on the 745th day, I succeeded."

That is what diplomacy is all about. We should be talking to Syria and Iran. And you can't have negotiations or discussions when you put preconditions down that are the results you want. They will not do it. You can't say to the Iranians, let us talk about your nuclear program and suspending enrichment before we talk, but I will only talk to you if you suspend enrichment. They are not in a weakened position. They are in a very strong position right now, and they will not negotiate under those terms. You can't say to the Syrians, we won't talk to you or we don't want to talk to you because you will want compensation. Well, so far they haven't asked for any compensation and if they do, as Nancy Reagan used to say, just say no. But you have to talk with the people you perhaps dislike the most in this dangerous world we are living in. Particularly, when with respect to Iraq we need this help from outside. And so, our wonderful young
men and women are doing everything that the nation asks of them. We should be so very, very proud. Tom Brokaw and I talk about this a lot, you know, it was the greatest generation at World War II. I'm telling you these kids are part of a great generation and we should be proud of what they do for us every single day.

(Applause)

But we have to face the reality of the situation that is on the ground and not what we wish it to be. And I don't think we have done that well enough in the last several years. We had a real high when Baghdad fell. On that April morning everybody thought it was terrific and for several weeks after that ratings were sky-high, everybody looked brilliant, looked terrific, and then the second phase of this war began. And from that point on we did not respond by facing the reality that was on the ground as opposed to facing just wishful thinking and buying into it. Now, at this point in our history and in the history of Iraq we have to face the real reality on the ground and not turn away. I will stop at that point because I am not supposed to give a lecture.

(Applause)
MR. LEHRER: I have got about 35 follow-up questions to what you just said. But you mentioned, for instance, the strategy of was wrong, this was mishandled, they didn't do the diplomacy right. One thing after another you just went through that was mishandled. How could so many important things be so mishandled?

(Applause)

MR. POWELL: I don't think -- I think it begins with not wanting to see things as they were. When the insurgency started and we all started saying look at this, what are we going to do? The decision was made at that time not to have additional troops sent in and in fact the troop flow was stopped, when we could have more troops we stopped pouring troops.

MR. LEHRER: Were you in favor of more troops in the beginning?

MR. POWELL: Yes.

MR. LEHRER: A lot of more troops?

MR. POWELL: Yes.

MR. LEHRER: Were you in favor of the Powell Doctrine, which would have been to send more troops in there to win the thing?
MR. POWELL: I am always in favor of the Powell doctrine. Really. The Powell doctrine doesn't exist in any military document. It is something that was ascribed to me by a reporter, of all things, but nevertheless -- I will take it.

MR. LEHRER: So it had to be -- yeah, yeah right.

MR. POWELL: Makes it even more powerful if it was in the Washington Post not the Military Manual. But it essentially says choose your political objective carefully, use all the tools available to you, economic, diplomatic, political -- and as a last resort use the military. Because then we're putting young American lives at risk and young lives on the other side as well. And when you decide we have to use military force then do it in a way that is decisive. That you are sure of the outcome and you have anticipated what could happen that might require force. And we had this debate, General Franks and I discussed it, even though I was no longer on the defense side of it I was the Secretary of State, but I called Tommy Franks as a fellow general and we talked about it. And he was comfortable with the troop level and
we then argued it out in front of the President and the
Joint Chiefs of Staff and General Franks and the other
military leaders were satisfied with the troop level and
on the Ninth of April it looked like they were exactly
right. Because the regime had collapsed. Baghdad was
ours. And then the circumstances that hadn't been planned
for began to occur.

MR. LEHRER: As a practical man, I know you hate
these kinds of questions, but I'm going to ask it anyhow.
It is a what-if question. If the Powell doctrine had been
-- or forget Powell doctrine -- let's say 500,000 troops
had been sent in there and the plan was -- the advanced
planning had been done with the knowledge that hey this
thing might fall apart if we're not careful. Let us send
500,000 troops in there would we be talking about a
different situation today?

MR. POWELL: A different situation but I'm not
a fortune teller and I can't say that everything would
have been solved. But when we became the liberator of
Iraq and the Iraqi people on the Ninth of April we also
became the occupier. We became the government. And we
were responsible for imposing order on that society. And
that society started to shatter because we had broken the civil structure. The military was dissipated at that time and then disbanded; improperly in my judgment. And the whole civil service went away. So there was no civil society, there was no governing structure. And it was our responsibility at that point to become the governing structure. And we did not have that as a political -- as part of our political plan, political will to do that. And we did not plan well enough for that. And we then did not have enough troops to impose order. And the troops that were there, were not clear whether they were supposed to start shooting people, for example, who are burning down ministries. That was a time when you needed to be rough, when you needed to impose order. You needed to impose martial law -- everybody in their homes until we sort this out. And that didn't happen and then ministries started to be burned down; the very ministries we were planning to use to reconstitute an Iraqi structure. And we did not respond in a proper way, in my judgment.

MR. LEHRER: General, one of the things that you said many times, one of the lessons you had learnt from Vietnam was that without public support for military
action it ain't going to work. Do you concede that that
is now -- we are now at that point on Iraq?

MR. POWELL: Clearly, we are. But remember
where we were in the fall of 2002. The Congress had
passed a resolution that gave the President the support he
needed to continue the diplomatic process and if necessary
Congress certainly implied a sense of the Congress that if
military action was necessary the Congressional support
would be there. And then in the initial phase after
Baghdad fell, everybody thought this was terrific. The
President was running at 65 percent popularity and the
American people were fully behind that. And they were
fully behind it, I think, for the next year or so. But
then when you didn't see the Iraqi government start to
kick in, when you didn't see these claims about the
competence about the Iraqi security forces to be real, and
when it didn't start to gel the American people started to
drop off with respect to their support. And then I think
it really hit a tipping point with the Golden Mosque. The
American people were no longer shielded from anything and
they saw in brilliant colors the nature of this country
and these people and what they were prepared to do with
each other in order to retain power or gain power and
survive. When we didn’t see any improvement, that is when
public support really started to drop off. Public support
might stabilize if the surge would have shown some
improvement in not only quieting things down a bit, but in
actually demonstrating to the American people that the
Iraqis are now stepping up to the task. But right now, I
think, the support has tipped over to the point that you
know -- you saw the kind of audience reaction you got
earlier when people were talking about -- some of the
panelists were saying Senator Feinstein or others saying,"Well, you know we have to think about leaving by the end
of the year." So, I don't know how you're going to be
able to right that ship -- that ship of support by just
saying that it's Al Qaeda and they are coming here. I
don't think that will do it in and of itself. Because the
American people understand that Al Qaeda is a danger, it
is a threat but that threat is still also in the Western
regions of Pakistan and perhaps parts of Afghanistan where
the real problem may be. And the American people have not
connected Al Qaeda or Iraq to 9/11 in the way some in the
administration would like and the American people, I
think, now see this as a civil war.

MR. LEHRER: But wouldn't it be a fair statement that if an American people just listened to your opening comment laid out the situation and the possibilities and this and that and whatever they would say wouldn't you not be -- would you not understand why an American people would say, “Forget it, get this thing over with it is not worth anymore American blood and resource.

MR. POWELL: I think that is what they are starting to say.

MR. LEHRER: Is what they are saying,

MR. POWELL: I think we're seeing that reflected in our body politic. Andrea Mitchell gave us a report earlier that another very prominent senior Republican senator has said we've got to change. And I think it is reflected in last fall's election. It is reflected in the President's standing within the country and it is reflected within the general feeling sort of on Iraq where over 60 percent of the population, and now close to 70 percent, say it's time for us to figure a way out. Now, we can't just blow a whistle one morning and all 180,000 troops leave. That isn't sensible. It has to
be a gradual kind of reduction of forces with the strategies associated with it. And I think you heard the panelists talk about this earlier. We just don't get the train to leave. We say okay we are going to step outside the major areas of conflict and see if we can stabilize the rest of the country and protect it from intervention from outside, while the Iraqis try to resolve this. It will be a test of power. Maybe it will reach a point where there is sufficient exhaustion on both sides, as we have seen in Northern Ireland and other places, where they say, "Okay, let us come together. We are all Iraqis, let us figure out a political solution for all of this." One danger that is seldom talked about but is very real is down in the southern part of the country where you don't have the kind of violence that you see in the center; triangle of death, so to speak, or at Anbar and Diyala and those places. But the southern part of the country isn't under great government control either. It is being run by tribal sheiks, by groups that have come together and made their deals among the tribes and it's going to be a long time before that part of the country, even if the central part is resolved, how you bring that into a federated
system where they start to think in national terms and not sectarian terms.

MR. LEHRER: I think would it be fair to say that the end result of what you just said is not an optimistic view?

MR. POWELL: Well, there is -- it is hard for me to be optimistic. But what is it that I see at the end of the -- the end of the game. I see a country that has probably stayed together. Its three constituent parts stay together -- the Sunnis, the Kurds and the Shias, and it will have a Shia dominated government that hopefully, will be sensible enough to give the Sunnis a piece of the action with oil revenues, political presence, participating in the government in a real way. It will be a Shia regime that will be more fundamentalist than we would like. It will be a Shia regime that will probably be linked more closely to Iran than we would like to see. But it will not be Iranian dominated. Because we still have an eight-year war between them that is recent history. And it is the difference between Shia Arabs and Persian Shi'ites. So there is that difference.

MR. LEHRER: Let me ask you --
MR. POWELL: I don't know how much that will spread and contaminate other parts of the region. One thing we could do which was touched on by the panelists, as well, is to see if there is anything that could be done and it's hard to be optimistic at the moment because of the weakness of the parties but the Middle East peace process underlies all this as contributing to the overall instability in the region. So I wish President Bush and Dr. Rice and their colleagues all the best as they try to get something started with respect to the Israelis and the Palestinians.

MR. LEHRER: A personal question. The conventional wisdom I would guess in this hall and the majority opinion in this country, among all citizens whether they be Republicans or Democrats whatever how will they view the war is that you could, you personally could have stopped this from happening. What is the truth? I don't know -- I'm just saying that, that is what people think. That is what people think.

MR. POWELL: I know, people say that to me.

But --

MR. LEHRER: What do you think, what do you say
when people say that to you like I just did?

      MR. POWELL:    Well, I just asked you how I could
3  have -- I could have -- I tried to avoid this war.  I went
to the President in August of 2002 after coming back from
a trip and seeing all the planning that was underway and
we had a long meeting upstairs in the residence.  Dr. Rice
was there but it was essentially a conversation between
President Bush and myself.  And for the better part of two
and a half hours I took him through not only the military
planning that was being done in the Pentagon but I took
them through the consequences of going into an Arab
country and becoming the occupiers.  It is said that I
used the Pottery Barn Rule I never did it, Tom Friedman
did it, he is next, he's the one who did that.  But what I
did say to him, once you break it you are going to own it
and we're going to be responsible for 26 million people
standing there looking at us.  And it's going to suck up a
good 40 to 50 percent of the army for years.  And it's
going to take all the oxygen out of the political
environment.  And you need to understand this and the
expense is going to be enormous.  And he took it all
aboard and he said, “What should we do?” And I said,
"Well, we should take it to the United Nations. Because they are the offended party. It is their resolutions that have been offended." And I briefed other members of the Cabinet over the next day or two and we then had a meeting a week or so later and every member of the national security team agreed with the judgment that we take it to the UN. And we worked for seven weeks after taking it to the UN in September and got a resolution unanimously approved by the Security Council with some get-out clauses for Saddam Hussein to avoid the conflict. And I said to the President, if we can solve this diplomatically are you prepared to accept that outcome, even if it means that we have a “changed regime” in Baghdad with Saddam Hussein still there, but no longer a danger or a threat but we wouldn’t have a “regime change.” And it was not something that he was immediately attracted to. But he said yes, he would have to and we tried. But at that time I made that point to him I also had to say to him that you are the President, you will have to make the ultimate judgment, and if the judgment is this isn't working and we don't think it is going to solve the problem, then if military action is undertaken I'm with you, I support you. And
frankly, when military action was undertaken it looked
like it was extremely successful. It was a lack of
planning for these latter phases and the things that got
out of control that really has brought us to this point.
And so, could I have stopped it by quitting? I assure you
that would not have done it. And to quit while it was
underway was not my way of doing business in serving in
the administration. And so I stayed till 2003 and then in
early 2004 in a conversation with the President, I told
him I thought it would be wise for him to make some
changes in this team at the end of 2004 after the
election, and that it would be the time for me to leave.

MR. LEHRER: Pick up on another point you made.
You praised the young military, mostly young military, of
today that are fighting in this war and their families.
And much has been said about, they are the only ones who
have paid any price for this war. Only people in America
who have made any sacrifice or even been asked to make any
sacrifice. Do you agree with that?

MR. POWELL: There is some truth to it. I
mean, this is a very serious conflict and we are paying a
lot of money, we are all paying a lot in taxes. But they
are the ones who are paying with their blood and a lot of

tears. And we have not fully mobilized the nation so

there is no draft of course. But we have not fully

mobilized the nation behind this effort. We're very proud

of these youngsters and they are not all just poor kids

who had nothing else to do. These are wonderful young men

and women who were looking for opportunity but more than

anything else they want to serve their country and they

want to serve their buddies. And they want to do the

right thing. And they believe they are doing the right

thing over there. But it's not a large enough force to

handle all the responsibilities they have there or

elsewhere in the world. And I don't sense that in the

American public there is a willingness to sacrifice much

more or to do things that might make the burden easier. I

don't see the American public putting that pressure on

their members of Congress or on the administration. And I

think that the American people, including those in this

room -- believe it was initially successful, but it hasn't

gone well since, and we have done the best we could do,

and it's time now to figure out how to turn it over to the

Iraqis, to stand back, to try to contain it, to try to
help them, train their troops as you heard from the panelists earlier. We can do a lot of what was in the Baker-Hamilton report. And I think that would probably be after the surge is over the best contribution we could make to helping the Iraqis. And that is to train their troops up to take over these responsibilities. The American soldiers cannot sit there forever even if there was another 100,000 of them. We can't sit there forever sitting on this lid of boiling sectarian stew.

MR. LEHRER: A related issue. There was a discussion here at the Festival this morning about the specific subject and it went like this. The conclusion, one of the conclusions was of one of the speakers was that the volunteer army has made it too easy for the leaders of this country to engage in military action. Because they are too -- and they are not connected enough to the populace. They are not -- do you agree with that?

MR. POWELL: Well, we didn't have a volunteer army during the Vietnam War. I mean, no, I don't think the evidence is there. I was a lieutenant colonel when we got rid of the draft. All of us lieutenant colonels and junior officers were mad. We thought the American people
were walking away from us by ending the draft and it took us about eight years to realize that we could create a force that was far superior than any other force America has ever put in the field. But it was understood that, that force would be of limited size and capability, maybe to handle two small wars in two different parts of the world. But if we ever got to the point where something more was needed then you bring up the guard and the reserves and if you needed more than that then the nation would have to face the possibility of going back to the draft. I don't think you can get any kind of a draft through the Congress right now because the nation does not feel that level of threat and challenge. As the Reverend Butts said in his powerful presentation, Iraq is over there and it is a problem but we have got problems here in America and I think Americans are starting to see now how do we deal with problems we have at home. Haven't we spent enough treasure and lives trying to stabilize this? Isn't it now the turn of the Iraqi leadership, the tribal leaders, Prime Minister Maliki and all of the others to now take on this burden. We have given them one last chance but the surge can't be continued. And if the surge
doesn't have the effect that General Keane and a lot of others thought it would have then we have to move on. You have to remember that last summer the generals in charge, General Abizaid, came before the Congress and I'm sure that Senator Feinstein may remember this and said, he has talked to all the division commanders and we don't want any more troops coming over. We don't want anything like a surge and he wanted to start handing over greater responsibility to the Iraqis at that time. The administration did not believe that that was the right solution. They did a number of studies, they consulted the think tanks, talked to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and decided that they had to try the surge as a way of seeing if we could stabilize things so that the political process could work and Iraqi forces could start to take over. But as also noted, even Mr. Gates is now saying because he knows the pressure on the armed forces, Secretary Gates is now saying we will have to start drawing down in the not too distant future.

MR. LEHRER: Follow-up on the voluntary military issue. You have to take my word for this but I have it on good authority that President Bush said a year ago to a
group -- small group of outsiders that if there had been a
draft he would have been impeached by now because of what
happened with Iraq. Do you agree with that?

MR. POWELL: Well, I don't know that he said
it. You have --

MR. LEHRER: But you agree with the premise, do
you agree with the premise?

MR. POWELL: No, I don't know --.

MR. LEHRER: Has it been that serious?

MR. POWELL: Well, I'm going to play a word
game with you.

MR. LEHRER: Okay.

MR. POWELL: If we had a draft we probably
would have had a much larger army and maybe it would not
have turned out the way it has turned out. But the way
I'm reading the point here is that the public would have
been so involved, and more interested in this from the
beginning --.

MR. LEHRER: The public might not even happened.

MR. POWELL: -- by coming back to the Congress
passing a resolution. They don't like to talk about it
now but they did by a handy majority reflecting the will
of the people at that time this problem had been dealt with. And in the initial stages nobody was talking impeachment everybody was talking this is terrific. And one of the points that often gets overlooked. If we had not dealt with this problem the way in which President Bush decided to deal with it by using military force, and I supported him on that, and it just went by the boards and the resolutions were ignored and Saddam Hussein was free to do what he wanted. There were no stockpiles. He had the capability, and believe me, he had the intention. Is anybody sure that we wouldn't be seeing those weapons and stockpiles now. This was a man who was determined to threaten his own people, to threaten the region. He had such weapons in the past and he had used them in the past. A lot of them were destroyed in Desert Storm and in the aftermath of Desert Storm with the UN inspectors. But he had not changed who he was. And so President Bush felt strongly that this was a problem that had to be dealt with now, either through peaceful means, by the changing the nature of the regime, or by military means, a regime change totally.

MR. LEHRER: Change of subject. Go back to what
our mutual friend Reverend Butts said about the country generally. Do you share his feeling about the things -- that the things are really broken in this country that go beyond Iraq?

MR. POWELL: The Reverend Butts and I are good friends and I have been to some of his facilities and spoken to his students. And I share all the concerns he has. But I would also want to put those concerns in context. Because just above Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem sits the City College of New York, was my alma mater. And in the City College of New York there is the Colin Powell Policy Center for Policy Studies, which I'm very proud of. And you should see these kids, the college is 90 percent minority. 50 percent of the students are immigrants, not their families, the kids themselves. And they come there every day and are killing themselves working hard coming from poor families, coming from homeless situations. We had a kid who came from Russia and was living under the George Washington Bridge and now he's a Rhodes Scholar with CCNY. So it's still that place of hope and opportunity. It's still the place that notwithstanding all the problems that Reverend Butts spoke
about and he is absolutely right and I believe it's still the place -- America is still the place using the imagery that the Reverend gave you about the Statue of Liberty, you go to any embassy or consular office of the United States anywhere in the world today you're going to see a line of people and they are all standing there and they are all saying the same thing, "I want to go to America."
So we're still that same place, we haven't changed.

(Applause)

MR. POWELL: This is a story I love to tell Alma will get mad at me but I got to do it. Every time I go to New York I love walking up one of the great avenues. And I will always stop at a corner and buy a hotdog from a hotdog stand peddler. You know New York hotdogs with the red onions, I love them. And I always have to have one going up Madison, Park or Fifth. I used to do it when I was Secretary of State. I'd come out of the Waldorf start up and I'd stop at a corner. It was a little trickier then because I had five bodyguards and three New York City police cars running alongside and the hotdog peddler would take one look and go, "I've got a green card, I've got a green card, I've got a green card."
MR. POWELL: But I do it alone now, all by myself. And I'll walk up to the guy and I will order my hotdog, with lots of mustard, and a lot of the onions, a lot yeah. And he will prepare it and we will be talking to each other and it will be an accent from a faraway place. And he will hand me the hotdog. I will take it. I will start to hand him the money and almost every time the same thing happens. Aren't you that guy on television -- you are General Powell. Right, I am General Powell. And I hand him the money and he will say no, I won't take your money. You've already paid me. I'm here.

(Applause)

MR. POWELL: Same spirit that brought my parents here. So while Reverend Butts and the panelists who just left are absolutely right that America has problems, think of where America was 49 years ago, when I was the young soldier and I entered my career as a second lieutenant. We were facing two great empires, one in Europe and one in Asia; Soviet Union and China. And they said they were superior in every way; economic, militarily and they were going to challenge us and they were going to
beat us. And we had this strategy for containment and
everybody thought that we were on our last legs. Think of
the early 70s from 68 to 74, when we lost Dr. King on that
Memphis balcony on April 4, 1968, and we lost Bobby
Kennedy about two months later. Think of the race
troubles we had in the late 60s and early 70s. Think of
what we were going through with the Vietnam War then. This
is peanuts compared to what we were going through then.
Think of the disgrace of a Vice President, leaving office,
a President leaving office. Think of that evening, April
4, 1968 when we had to put buses around the White House,
bumper to bumper to keep the people of Washington, D.C.
from burning down the White House, in our nation's
capital. We were really shaken as a people, more so than
any other time in my life. And then suddenly we
stabilized ourselves and this man of simple Midwestern
virtues and values, Jerry Ford, came along and kind of
reminded us of who we were. And we still went through
some difficult times but by the early 80s we had come
through that and we had restored our confidence in
ourselves. And as I ended my military career I watched as
this enemy I prepared for all these years went away. And
we were able to start reducing our armed forces, reducing our nuclear weapons. So it is that America that is still here. It is that America that people are a little unhappy with right now. You know the polls -- everybody says they are mad at America. I think they are mad at some of the things we have done, they are mad at some of our policies. They are mad at some of our personalities. But I'm telling you the world still looks to America to solve its problems. They still trust us. They still trust America even though they may have differences. And when you talk about the problems within the country that Calvin captured so beautifully. I travel around the country a lot and I see a lot of communities at ground level just the way the Reverend Butts described them and we all try to do what we can with the wonderful programs he runs and what my wife and I have been doing with the America's Promise Alliance, with a lot of youth programs, with educational programs. We try to do what we can. But I also go to lots of other places in this country. I have spoken to probably 100,000 people in the last month and a half. And I go to trade associations and companies and mass audiences and I come back to Washington somewhat renewed. People are hard at
work. American people still believe in the American people, still believe in America. And they have seen tough times before. We have come through racism. We have come through segregation. We have come through a civil war. We have come through lots of trials and tribulations. Don't sell ourselves short. As the Reverend said, "just keep pushing, keep pushing."

(Applause)

MR. LEHRER: General Powell, Mr. Secretary, thank you very much.

MR. POWELL: Thank you, sir.

(Recess)