

World isn't more dangerous after Iraq war, says Powell

The Star - 17/6/2005

BY PAUL GABRIEL

KUALA LUMPUR: Former US Secretary of State Colin Powell takes exception to those who say the world is a more dangerous place because of the American military action in Iraq.

"I take issue with people saying that the world has become a more dangerous place after our military action in Iraq.

"Our objective is to promote peace around the world, and we are achieving our objectives. There is increasing stability around the world," he said in his keynote address entitled "Leadership Redefined: Clarity, Charisma and Character" at the Palace of the Golden Horses here last night.

Powell said he believed that the "worst of times" was over.

He cited the examples that the Soviet Union no longer

existed, the Warsaw Pact nations had become democracies, and Asia had been peaceful for several decades.

Powell, who had also served as the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was to focus his speech on leadership attributes but reverted to defending the US' record following opening remarks by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who criticised the US-led war on terror and the use of force to quell terrorism.

Powell said he appreciated the concerns expressed by Dr Mahathir, but said the United States was committed to protecting its citizens at all cost.

"I agree with his views that we should not be so obsessed with our safety that people are stopped from going to the US. We welcome visitors to our country," he added.

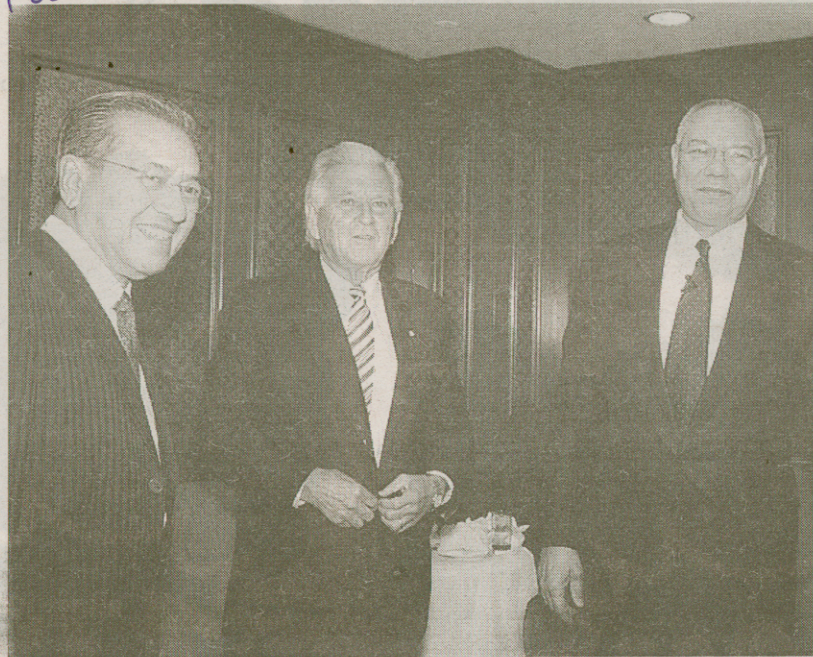
Powell, however, concurred that there would be no real peace until the Palestinian conflict was resolved.

"If a genie gives me three wishes, that would be one of them. But it's not so easy as picking up the telephone and telling (Israeli Prime Minister) Ariel Sharon to end the occupation (of Palestine)," he said.

"But believe me, we are working very hard towards a peaceful resolution."

Former Australian prime minister Bob Hawke, who had a testy relationship with Dr Mahathir, when both served as heads of government, provided the other highlight of the night.

He buried the hatchet when he described Dr Mahathir as a true leader and statesman of the world who had done much for his country and "spoke up for the world."



FAMILIAR FACES: (From left) Dr Mahathir, Hawke and Powell posing for a photograph during the leadership dialogue session in Kuala Lumpur last night. — Bernamapic