

New York, 16 September 2001 - Interview with Tom Brokaw of NBC (unofficial transcript)

Brokaw: Mr. Secretary, first of all, thank you very much for joining us here tonight. Are you hearing any objections to the United Nations political coalition from your members?

SG: No, Tom. I think the members have been quite united. The Security Council acted promptly, issuing a very strong resolution. It was followed by a resolution by the General Assembly urging all nations around the world to cooperate in getting to the bottom of this and to fight against terrorism as we move forward. There has been some remarks coming from across the Atlantic, saying that one has to also be cautious and it should be handled in such a way that it does not become divisive within and between nations.

Brokaw: The French, for example, are stepping back just a bit tonight.

SG: They have said, and I think the British have also said, that we need to be careful and this is not a blank cheque. And I notice the Russians have also made other statements. Just before I came here I got a letter from President Khatami, offering his condolences and indicating that they are prepared to join the fight against terrorism.

Brokaw: Is the Administration keeping you up to date on its plans, broadly speaking, they are not going to give away military operations or other secret political moves, but by and large are they keeping you up to date on what they have in mind?

SG: Yes, I am in touch with them, but I don't think we have got to the stage where they have shared any information with me as to details of their plans. But what is important is that they are determined to work with other governments to ensure that there is political pressure, there is information sharing, there is logistics, and even in the financial areas, cutting off financial supply to terrorists. I think there is a lot that they are doing with other countries, and can do with other countries.

Brokaw: Pakistan, plainly, is going to be a key player in all of this. The United States is, according to all reports, offering to lift some economic sanctions that it has imposed on Pakistan. Have the Pakistanis been in touch with you asking for UN sanctions for any kind of an operation?

SG: Not yet. Pakistan has not made that request, but what it has indicated is that it will cooperate fully with the United States and the international community in the fight against terrorism. And so I think the US will be dealing directly with Pakistan on this.

Brokaw: Mr. Secretary, as you know the terrorist cells are not concentrated just in Afghanistan or in the outlying countries near and around Afghanistan, but around the world. Do you think in fact that the United States and even an international political coalition can be successful in wiping out terrorism?

SG: I think it is going to be a long fight. We can succeed if the governments come together and work together if no one gives them sanctuary or supports their activities. I was discussing this with my colleagues the other day, and we made the analogy between thieves and receivers - that some judges would tell you that there would be no thieves if there were no receivers. I think if the terrorists were not given shelter and people were not supporting their operations and governments came together to work as one in fighting this scourge, I think we will make progress, but it is going to take time. And in fighting the terrorism I think we also have to be careful not to create the impression that they all come from one religion or one region, because the leaders in the Middle East themselves have been victims of terrorism and they are against terrorists. So I think they can be very good partners in the coalition that one is putting together to fight the terrorists.

Brokaw: Mr. Secretary, a friend of yours, the former United States Ambassador to the United Nations, thinks it would be a good idea if we indicted the suspects as war criminals. That would give the United States then legal cover to go after those countries that are harbouring them, that's the suggestion from [inaudible]. Do you think that is a good idea?

SG: I think we have indicted a few people, quite a few political and other military leaders since the Bosnian war and the Rwandan war, but of course you have to come up with a Tribunal. In all these cases, we had to set up ad hoc Tribunals, one for Yugoslavia, one for Rwanda, and now we are talking of one for Sierra Leone and possibly one for Cambodia. This of course links up with attempts to set up a standing and permanent International Criminal Court, where people who commit crimes against humanity can be brought before these courts and be prosecuted.

Brokaw: UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, thank you so much for being with us tonight.

SG: Thank you very much, Tom. *****