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CBS News

FACE THE NATION

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GUESTS: COLIN POWELL
Secretary of State

CAROL BELLAMY
Executive Director
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

DOYLE McMANUS
Los Angeles Times

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FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
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BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, Secretary of State Colin Powell on the aftermath of one of history's most devastating natural disaster. One week after the tsunami swept ashore in 12 countries and killed more than 140,000 people, aid from all over the world is beginning to pour in. What is the state of the relief effort now? Is the United States doing enough? We'll talk with Secretary of State Colin Powell, and we'll get the latest from our correspondents in Thailand and Indonesia. We'll also go to Sri Lanka to talk with Carol Bellamy, executive director of UNICEF. Doyle McManus of the Los Angeles Times will join in the questions, and I'll have a final word on a tragedy too enormous to comprehend.

But first, the secretary of State 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. We begin this morning with Lee Cowan in Banda Aceh on the western tip of Indonesia, the hardest hit population center of all.

Lee, you've been on the scene there about two days. Have you ever seen anything to match what you're seeing out there now?

LEE COWAN reporting:

I think it is almost beyond description, not only in terms of the devastation, which is complete--acre after acre after acre after acre--but in terms of the number of those killed that just seems to go up every time we turn around. They've buried about 10,000 people here just over the last seven days, but they think just here in this city that they've got about 30,000 more bodies that they've got to go through. And just to give you an example of the scope of this, the government's goal here is to try to round up about 6,000 bodies every single day to be buried. That would still take this recovery effort another week, week and a half, two weeks. And even that, by most people's estimates, is pretty optimistic.

SCHIEFFER: Now what about aid coming in from the outside? Is it getting there? Have you seen any impact yet?

COWAN: It's--what happened today and starting yesterday was really the first time that some of the aid was able to get to some of the places that were cut off on the island of Sumatra. Basically, these are places that the roads are washed out, bridges have washed out, they've been cut off for essentially the last seven days. US naval helicopters were taking part in that airlift today, getting some limited supplies in there. What we expect over the next week or so is that we're going to get a better assessment of just how bad the damage in those areas was.

The death toll is only likely to go up, it would seem, but the extraordinary thing here is despite the amount of devastation, everything has been rather orderly. This is a very tiny airport that is handling a huge amount of traffic in very good fashion. There is--the aid that is coming in is getting out at least to the area here relatively well. We haven't seen any food riots. Pretty extraordinary in an area that's seen so much civil war the last two decades here. It seems that people are using this opportunity to try and come together as best they can, but just the thought of the rebuilding effort here is daunting, to say the least.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Lee, it's a story you're going to be on for a while, it seems. We thank you very much. Keep up the good work.

Barry Petersen was in China when the story broke. He went immediately to Thailand, one of the areas where so much of the devastation took place. He has been there ever since.

Well, Barry, bring us up to date. What's the latest situation in Thailand this morning?

BARRY PETERSEN reporting:

Well, Bob, I'd say there's some good news and some bad news. The good news is, around the Phuket area, things are getting back to normal. We drove by hospitals. There are far fewer people there now. We were in the city of Phuket. People are out. The shops that are, of course, not affected, they're open. There is street life.

It's a very different story when you go north of there, and that is the area hardest hit, an area called Khao Lak. It is so difficult to get in, the Thais have now brought elephants in to help clear the debris. The elephants are normally trained to haul logs out of the forests, and they, of course, are far more able to get through the debris and the stuff that is on the ground, but we must say, sadly, the main reasons for going through the debris is to still find the missing and the dead.

Bob.

SCHIEFFER: Even though it is so difficult in Thailand, Barry, from what we can tell from the reports coming in from other places, Thailand does seem to be coping somewhat better than some of the other countries. How is that happening?

PETERSEN: I think two things. One, it's got a much more advance infrastructure. The military was able to react more quickly. But I also have to say the other reason is that the people of Thailand just poured into this area to help. Hundreds and hundreds of volunteers; people came from all over the country to help translate, to help make lists, to be here and to help themselves and to help the foreigners who are on vacation. That made the difference.

SCHIEFFER: Barry Petersen, thank you very much. It's a difficult assignment. We wish you good luck.

We're going to go now to Colombo, Sri Lanka, where Carol Bellamy, the executive director of the United Nations Children's Fund, is standing by.

Ms. Bellamy, you've been on the ground now for a time. Tell us what you've learned. What is the situation now there?

Ms. CAROL BELLAMY (Executive Director, UNICEF): Well, I've spent the day visiting camps. I've visited sites. I've seen some of the most extraordinary devastation I've seen in my 10 years at UNICEF. It is clear that we have to mourn those who have died, but we really have to focus on the living. We have to keep them from having disease outbreaks. We have to make sure they have clean water. The children who have lost their parents need to identify family members. There's a great effort, relief effort, going on now. It's extraordinary. It's led by the government here. The world community is responding. So much is going on, but so much more needs to be done.

SCHIEFFER: One of the saddest things that I've heard is that perhaps as many as a third of the victims there may be children?

Ms. BELLAMY: I think that is probably even a low number. If you think about the population of all of the countries affected, at least a third, if not up to 50 percent, of the population is 18 years or less. And if you think about it, the children and the women were the least able to outrun the waves or to climb the trees. So the number of children who've died or who have been injured is really quite extraordinary.

I saw a wrenching scene today where parents were standing at the edge of the ocean, waiting for their children's bodies to come back.

SCHIEFFER: Carol Bellamy who, of course, is the head of UNICEF. We thank her this morning for serving as our correspondent in Sri Lanka.

We now welcome to the broadcast the secretary of State, Colin Powell.

Mr. Secretary, you are headed out to the region today. I should also add that our friend Doyle McManus is here to join in the questioning. You're heading out there. What exactly do you hope to accomplish?

Secretary COLIN POWELL (Department of State): I want to go out and visit with the governments concerned, but also get out to some of the areas where we've seen such devastation. I'll be going to Bangkok, Thailand, initially. Governor Jeb Bush, who has great experience in these kinds of relief efforts, will be going with me. And then from Thailand-- Bangkok, Thailand, we'll be going out to Phuket and then down to Jakarta, Indonesia, hopefully into Aceh. And then there is a major international conference that's going to be held to deal with this, sponsored by the ASEAN nations, on the 6th of January in Jakarta. And then on the way back I hope to be able to stop in Sri Lanka as well.

SCHIEFFER: Have you ever seen anything like this?

Sec. POWELL: No. And in my many years of government experience, I've been involved in a number of disaster relief efforts, whether it's Hurricane Andrew or northern Iraq after the Gulf War in 1991, but nothing like this. And, you know, it's just been one week ago that this happened. The initial reports that came in worried us; they said maybe 10,000 people were killed. And then over the next three or four days, as the numbers escalated, it became clear what the response had to be. And, as you heard from Carol Bellamy, who's a wonderful person, the international community is responding. Some \$2 billion have been pledged officially, and a lot of private contributions are also flooding in, especially in the United States.

SCHIEFFER: Well, what about the relief effort? Is the stuff beginning to get through now?

Sec. POWELL: Yes, the material is arriving. Food is arriving. Water is arriving. Medicines and other resources are arriving. The challenge will be as you heard from your reporters retail distribution. It's one thing to get a lot of food in an airport, but how do you get it from there out? And now that our military forces have arrived, the Abraham Lincoln carrier group and other military forces will be arriving shortly, we can use helicopters to make retail distribution. The question right now is not money. There's a lot of money available.

The question is: How do we use that money not only for immediate relief but for long-term reconstruction? These people have to rebuild their homes, their businesses, rebuild their lives, and so this is going to be a multitier effort and the United States is in for it. And we made it clear at the very beginning of this crisis last Sunday. I called every foreign minister and let them know that we are here to help. Let us know what you need. And then we started putting money into the system. The first request we got was from the International Federation of the Red Cross, Red Crescent. They wanted \$7 million. We gave them \$4 billion. They, of course, have scaled up their needs now. And then \$15 million on Monday, another \$20 million on Tuesday. Then we started to get an assessment with how mammoth this was and the president decided to go to \$350 million at the end of the week.

All the other nations have gone through the same process. The Japanese, for example, started out with a small number, but when they made their assessment, they've now gone to \$1/2 billion and I congratulate them for that.

SCHIEFFER: Doyle.

Mr. DOYLE McMANUS (Los Angeles Times): Mr. Secretary, let me follow on that. This is not the most important question in this terrible tragedy, but in some ways, the United States seems to have been slower at figuring out the size of what was going to be necessary than other countries. How come that happened?

Sec. POWELL: I don't agree with that. People are saying this, but it's simply not the case. All of the nations of the world took a look and they started to make contributions. The United States made contributions beginning on Sunday afternoon and Monday, then Tuesday. And as we made those contributions, we made it clear and I made it clear in my statements, the president made it clear in his statements that as the assessments came in and we had a better understanding of what the need was, we would scale up our contribution. And so by Friday, the assessments were clear and we did scale up our contribution. Are we through? I don't know yet. Three hundred and fifty million dollars plus all of the money that the military is spending plus all the private contributions that are coming in is a significant amount.

The UN is very satisfied at this point with the \$2 billion that have been pledged and it'll take a while for that money to spend out, but it's not all spent as soon as it is pledged, but I think we responded immediately. The president is kept informed throughout. The president made a statement on Wednesday. He formed a core group in order to coordinate efforts out in the region, and that core group is now working closely with the United Nations.

So if you think of where we were from the standing start last Sunday to where we are this Sunday, a heck of a lot has been done and the United States has played a leadership role, creation of the core group, our contribution, private contributions. Our ships are on the scene. Supplies have been diverted to the region. Three thousand tons of wheat were diverted on a ship that was heading somewhere else into Jakarta. So I think we responded rather aggressively and appropriately and the American people should be pleased and proud of the way we've handled it.

Mr. McMANUS: No you're a retired general and you've actually run relief efforts...

Sec. POWELL: Yes, I have.

Mr. McMANUS: ...in the past. What are the bottlenecks likely to be? What are you most concerned about at this point?

Sec. POWELL: The bottlenecks tend to be airport and port facilities when the aid starts to arrive, and you have to have in place a system at the other end that can distribute this aid. And invariable that's a combination of international organizations, non-governmental organizations, but ultimately it has to be the government itself.

In the case of India, a very sophisticated democracy, they can handle their own relief effort. Thailand has the capacity with some additional help to respond to this tragedy in Thailand. Sri Lanka needs more help. Indonesia--in Indonesia up in Aceh, they need the most help. And they suffered the greatest loss. They will need the most help. So what you have to do is distribute your assets and your relief resources in accordance with the need and not just flood every place with the same amount of assistance.

SCHIEFFER: Could we expect more American military to be called in to this?

Sec. POWELL: It may well be the case. I think we have something like 10,000 to 12,000 military that are involved now. You know, you see in your screens this morning American helicopters--as we saw in your promo--American helicopters that are delivering supplies. Helicopters are invaluable, especially helicopters coming in from the sea where they can be refueled and resupplied out on our carriers and are not taking up space at airfields or putting the logistics based at airfields. A lot of these airfields are not like Kennedy or Dulles. They are rather restricted. And so you have to have good air traffic control at the same time. So the real problem is retail distribution out to remote areas, remote areas that we really haven't even been to yet to access what the need is.

SCHIEFFER: Do we have the troops to do more should that become necessary?

Sec. POWELL: Well, the Pacific Command is looking at what assets they have available. I don't know what the need is yet. And we have to also be careful that we don't trample on the sovereignty of these nations. They have their own military forces. And in the case of India, for example, their military forces responded promptly not only to their own problems, but within 48 hours, Indian naval forces were helping the Sri Lankans. And so we have to be sensitive to the sovereignty issues and to make sure that they know we are there to help those governments not to be a substitute for those governments and their military and civil assets.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Let's take a break, Mr. Secretary. When we come back, we'll talk some more about this and perhaps some other things. We'll be right back.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And we're back again with Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Mr. Secretary, I want to ask you, was there some kind of a breakdown in the warning system? Is there such a warning system for something like this?

Sec. POWELL: In that part of the world, there is not the kind of warning system that exists in other parts of the world. This is such an unprecedented event. I think now we have to look with the countries of the region as to whether or not such a warning system should be put in place. When you see a catastrophe like this, you really do have to make a judgment and put the technical expertise to work and see if the money is there and all the resources available to

put in a warning system. And it all has to be a system that this kind of an earthquake or event has occurred and tsunamis are coming and you need to get the word out to people, move away from the shore. A few hundred yards, a kilometer, would have saved many lives.

But this happened so quickly. And the waves came along at 400 to 500 miles an hour, an enormous speed. And, I mean, it happened in Sumatra, off the coast of Sumatra. About a day and a half later or so, it's hitting the east coast of Africa, so Kenya, Somalia, places like that were affected.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me ask the obvious question. Should something like this threaten the United States, would we have a warning?

Sec. POWELL: I think we have a better ability to receive warning of such an event. I'm sure that my colleagues in FEMA and elsewhere--and FEMA will also be going with me on this trip--but my colleagues in FEMA and elsewhere are now taking another look at the warning system, not only to detect if something is happening but are you able to get the word out to cities quickly.

Mr. McMANUS: Mr. Secretary, over the last year the United Nations and organizations, and Kofi Annan, the secretary-general, has taken a lot of criticism, the oil-for-food scandal and other issues. Has the UN risen to the challenge on this one? Has Kofi Annan proven his critics wrong?

Sec. POWELL: I think the UN has risen to the challenge. You see Carol Bellamy already out there on the scene. The World Food Program, the UN Development Program, they're all hard at work. Jan Egeland, who is the humanitarian coordinator for the UN, is hard at work. We formed a core group on Wednesday, four nations, but I called Kofi Annan as we were doing it to let him know we weren't competing with the UN, and I think over the last three days, the UN has really clicked, and now that the secretary-general will be joining this ASEAN summit on the 6th of January in Jakarta, it's an opportunity for the entire international community to come together.

SCHIEFFER: Is there any way to know how long it will take to rebuild?

Sec. POWELL: It's going to be a multiyear effort. I mean, whole villages and towns have been simply obliterated, gone, and these people not only have they lost members of their family, they've lost their homes, they've lost their economic wherewithal, and so all of that has to be rebuilt. It's going to be principally the responsibility of the nations concerned, but they're going to need a great deal of help, a great deal of assistance. And President Bush has made it clear that the United States will be in the forefront of this, as we have been in almost every similar disaster in recent history, or frankly, long-term history.

SCHIEFFER: Mr. Secretary, let me shift, if I may, to Iraq. This story is so enormous that it is all but overlooked that this morning there was yet another bombing in Iraq, perhaps one of the deadliest yet, 26 people killed by a car bomb. Are we going to be able to hold the elections there in January?

Sec. POWELL: We are still driving forward with the Iraqi interim government to hold these elections on the 30th of January. Registration is increasing. People are signing up to vote, even within the Sunni communities. I spoke to Ambassador Negroponte in Baghdad this morning, and he tells me that there is no change in attitude or approach on the part of the Iraqi interim government and coalition for the simple reason that these people want to have a say in how they're going to be governed.

And we're going to see car bombs, we're going to see this terrible kind of attack take place even more as we get closer to the election because the people conducting these attacks don't want to see an election. They don't want democracy. They want to go back to the past, and they cannot be allowed to go back to the past. Iraq deserves, the Iraqi people deserve, the opportunity to decide how they're going to be governed in the future, and their leaders take risk every day when they get up in the morning. We have to stand with them. We have to move forward toward this election. The UN remains committed to supporting this election at the end of January.

SCHIEFFER: Well, does that mean that we're going to have to put more troops in there to at least keep the peace long enough to hold an election?

Sec. POWELL: We have a significant troop presence there now, 15,000. Secretary Rumsfeld and the military leaders made a judgment to stabilize our presence at a higher level than we had expected at this time. The real solution to the problem not only for the month of January but for the months that follow, where the insurgency will still be there, still be going on, is the buildup of Iraqi forces, military forces, national guard, police forces. Iraqis ultimately have to be responsible for their own security.

And even though you saw the tragedy this morning of Iraqi police officers being killed, they're still coming to work. They're still signing up to be members of the police force. They recognize that ultimately, the responsibility for the security will be theirs, and they are serving their nation and they're paying the price for it.

SCHIEFFER: What size is this security force now and is it large enough?

Sec. POWELL: It's not large enough. It's well over 100,000. It's not large enough. It has to get larger. It has to get more competent. It has to get more equipment. It has to be trained. It has to gain experience and it has to be connected to an elected government, which is what we hope we will have on the evening of the 30th of January. So it is not just a military police force that is not connected to legitimate government, but something that is connected to a government that represents the will and the desire of the Iraqi people.

Mr. McMANUS: Now the Pentagon's own timetable say it'll take probably two years, maybe more, to get that force to where it needs to be. Do we have enough troops there for that transition period? I'm asking your opinion as a military man here.

Sec. POWELL: Well, the--it's a function of how quickly the Iraqi forces can be built up, and it's a function of how much staying power the insurgency has. They are taking losses. It is not as if they're getting a free ride. They're losing a lot of people. But they have also demonstrated the ability to regenerate their capability, so I think that the American military presence and the coalition military presence will be at a significant number through 2005 and into 2006. But I cannot tell you what that number will be.

Mr. McMANUS: Is it big enough now?

Sec. POWELL: The military commanders are comfortable with the number that they have now, and I will let them make judgments on the exact numbers they need and let the secretary of Defense make that judgment.

Mr. McMANUS: And you're going to leave your own judgment aside for the time being.

Sec. POWELL: My--I--my judgment is not informed. This is a matter for the people who relieve me as military commanders, and I have confidence in General Myers, General Pace and General Abizaid and General Casey to make their assessment of what they need and make their recommendations for Secretary Rumsfeld.

SCHIEFFER: Mr. Secretary, this may well be the last time we have you on this broadcast as secretary of State. I wanted to ask you, as you leave office, do you have plans to write a book?

Sec. POWELL: I don't have any immediate plans to write a book. I don't have any immediate plans, except to return to private life, take some time off, and then see what opportunities are out there. But I expect to remain in public life in some capacity and private status and speak out on the issues of the day and also earn a living.

SCHIEFFER: What...

Sec. POWELL: But no book plans immediately.

SCHIEFFER: As you leave this office, what are the things that you will remember most about it?

Sec. POWELL: That over a period of four years, I was part of an administration that got rid of two despotic regimes, one in Afghanistan and one in Baghdad; that we have aggressively dealt with the challenge of terrorism. We've brought an international community together to fight terrorism; that we have had good relations, improving relations with nations that used to be our enemies, China and Russia. We expanded the trans-Atlantic alliance. We've done so much more in development assistance to nations in need. We've de-nuclearized and gotten rid of weapons of mass destruction in Libya. We have brought the international community to bear on the problems of nuclear weapons in Iran and in North Korea. Trade is opening up. I hope we can do more with respect to Middle East peace in the coming year and that we can defeat the insurgency in Iraq. But I leave feeling very good about what we've been able to achieve over the last four years.

SCHIEFFER: Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for your courtesies over these past four years.

We'll be back with a final word in a second.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, I cannot remember a week that started so badly and just got worse, when there was a tragedy of such monumental scale that it was all but impossible to comprehend. We are sometimes more deeply touched by tragedy on a smaller scale, not because the tragedy is small, but because we can relate it to things we know about. We can imagine how parents who lose a child must feel because we are parents. It hurts us when we realize how a tragic fire in the neighborhood could have been prevented or a fatal accident avoided.

But we had no answers for what happened last week, nor anything with which to compare it. When more than 100,000 people die across 12 countries, it becomes a story of statistics and records, and a current so beyond our life experiences, it is all but impossible even to imagine. The terrible television images of one day burned into our consciousness, inuring us

to the next day's pictures which may be even worse. We find ourselves becoming used to the tragedy and then we feel guilty because we do. It becomes too much to process; no longer thousands of human stories, but an event, a page for history. Because we have no real answer for why it happened, we lose the sense of what has happened, which may be why the first reaction of some was that it was a lost PR opportunity because we were so slow in the beginning to pledge aid. Surely, we have not become so self-centered as to believe that was the most important thing about it. The scope of what happened may well be beyond human comprehension, but understanding the reason we help others should be easier to understand. Let us hope we have not forgotten that.

That's it for us. We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.