

Powell gets big U.S. State Department sendoff

WASHINGTON (AFP) — After four years as the top US diplomat, an emotional Colin Powell bade farewell to State Department employees with a speech in which he hailed US successes from Iraq to Afghanistan, in Asia and on AIDS.

Hundreds of State Department employees, from high-ranking diplomats to cafeteria workers, gathered in a conference room at the State Department to send off Powell under a large sign reading: "Secretary Powell, Thank You, From Everyone."

Powell listed what he said were some of the administration's key successes from the fight against terrorism to ousting the Taliban in Afghanistan and toppling Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

"Though the task is difficult, ... we will see to it that these two nations, Afghanistan and Iraq, have the freedom and democracy that their people richly deserve. And that will happen, and you have had a lot to do with that," he said.

And the retired general turned diplomat used mili-



U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell (left) speaks during his farewell address in the main lobby of the US State Department building in Washington D.C. on Wednesday.

tary language to salute the department "troops" on the eve of the arrival of his successor, outgoing national security advisor Condoleezza Rice.

"You were my troops. You were America's troops. You are wonderful individuals, you are wonderful families, you are wonderful patriots who serve your nation as its troops in the far-flung out-

posts of American diplomacy. You are in the first line of offense of America's foreign policy," Powell told the crowd.

"You are the carriers of America's values," said Powell, 67. "You are the ones that go out — not to lecture, not to impose, but to let our works go before us to show what democracy can bring to people in the way of a better

life. You are the ones who demonstrate the importance of individual rights, that everybody should be free."

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the confirmation of Rice, 50, one of President George W. Bush's closest aides, as the next secretary of state on Wednesday.

The full Senate was expected to confirm her in the

post Thursday.

Powell also hailed what he called progress with China "the other major nation that at one time might have been called an adversary."

"We had a problem, you recall, in early April of 2001 with the collision between our airplanes and everybody thought this relationship was going in the deep freeze," he said. "But instead, through patient diplomacy, through listening to the Chinese and their concerns, their listening to us, we solved that problem, and over the last several years have put US-Chinese relations on the soundest footing that they have been in decades."

"If you look at what we did with our Asian alliances and alliance members and partners, it is in excellent condition."

He also hailed the "doubling of our development assistance funding (and) the HIV-AIDS program where we are in the forefront of the world's efforts."

Powell also telephoned French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer

and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to bid farewell before leaving the State Department, his spokesman said.

France, Germany and Russia were among the countries most staunchly opposed to the war in Iraq, and Boucher said Powell would be phoning other top diplomats without saying which.

Widely regarded as more moderate than many in Bush's administration, Powell's time at the helm of the State Department saw some strains with the Pentagon, led by the more hawkish Donald Rumsfeld.

Among the more difficult memories of his service as a diplomat likely is the February 5, 2003 presentation he made at the United Nations to defend the US case that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, and pave the way to war; the arms never have been found.

Powell has been discreet about his plans for the future saying for now only that he would spend more time with his family and continue to be involved in the foreign policy arena.

THE BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS OF SOUTHERN NEVADA

WILL BE HOSTING A TRIBUTE DINNER

IN RECOGNITION OF

State Senator Joe Neal

for 32 years of public service

Friday, January 21, 2005

Nevada Partners Academy Events Center

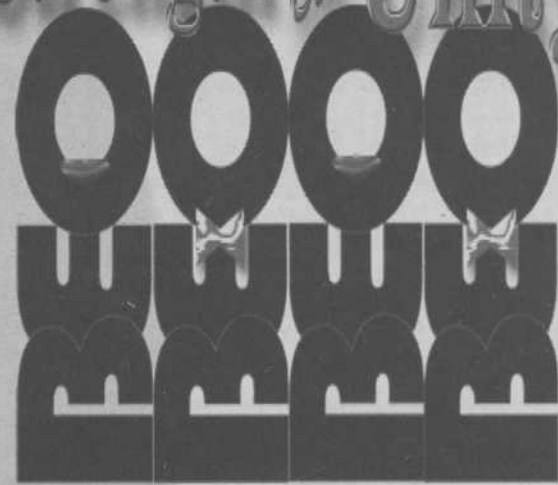
710 West Lake Mead Blvd.

6:00 p.m. - cocktails

7:00 p.m. - dinner

\$25 per person

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Commissioner Lynette Boggs McDonald
Assemblyman William Horne

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Regent Linda Howard
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Councilman William Robinson
Board of Education Trustee Marcia Washington
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Michael Chambliss, Executive Director

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Bob Bailey
Donald Clark
Frank Hawkins

Steven Horsford, Chairperson
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