

Powell defends comment on condom use

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WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Colin Powell, defending his comments on condom use, said yesterday he had nothing to apologize for despite criticism from some on the political right.

During a taping Thursday for an MTV special, a teen-age girl asked him for his thoughts on the Catholic Church's stand on condom use.

He said in his judgment, "condoms are a way to prevent infection,

and therefore, I not only support their use, I encourage their use among people who are sexually active."

Powell stood his ground yesterday: "I have no apology for the way in which I answered the question," he said on CNN's "Late Edition."

He said on NBC's "Meet the Press" that it is the time "for us to speak out clearly and responsibly to help millions" of youngsters around the world, such as the audience he was talking to — ages 17 to 25.

"If they are going to be sexually active, we've got to educate them how to protect themselves. And one way to do that is with condoms. And for me to have said anything else would have been irresponsible," Powell said. Still, he made it clear that for years he has advocated abstinence for young people.

Powell came under fire from some groups, including the Family Research Council, whose president said Powell's remarks were "reckless and irresponsible."