

# **“Iraq: Winning the Hearts and Minds”**

**Prepared Statement of  
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before the  
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Relations  
of the  
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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am please to have this opportunity to testify before this Committee about our policy and progress in Iraq.

Over the past thirty-five years, the Iraqi people have been through a terrible ordeal. They suffered through a dark and painful era under the tyrannical rule of Saddam Hussein and his Ba’athist regime. The fall of Saddam’s regime and the liberation of the Iraqi people ushered in a new period in Iraqi history. Images of falling statues and streets filled with celebrating Iraqis greeted Coalition forces. There is no doubt in our minds that the overwhelming majority of Iraqi people still welcome the removal of that regime. They have concerns now -- and so do we. But those concerns focus on the future.

The rapid collapse of the old regime left a vacuum, and the essence of our strategy is to fill that vacuum with Iraqi institutions -- to help the Iraqis build their own new institutions: political, economic, and security institutions. Today, just 14 months after liberation, Iraq is undergoing an historic transformation:

- Just over two weeks from now, the Coalition will transfer sovereign authority to a new Interim Government in Iraq. This government will lay the foundation for free and democratic elections in Iraq at the end of 2004, or at the latest by January 2005.
- This unfolding political process is guided by the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), negotiated by Iraqis in March, which with its provisions for civil liberties, human rights (including women's rights), and other checks and balances presents a remarkable example of liberal governance in the Arab world.
- On June 8, United Nations Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 1546 endorsing the formation of the new sovereign Interim Government of Iraq.
- Ninety percent of all cities and towns in Iraq are governed by elected municipal councils.

- Iraq now has a new and stable currency.
- Iraq's inflation peaked at an annualized rate of 47.7 percent in October 2003. In April 2004, it was down to 19.6 percent. Over the last six months, the Consumer Price Index has averaged an annual rate of 7.0 percent.
- Estimated crude oil export revenue is over \$6.9 billion so far in 2004.
- Over 220,000 Iraqis currently serve in uniform protecting facilities, borders, and patrolling streets to provide security.
- Two hundred forty Iraqi hospitals and over 1,200 preventive health clinics are operating.
- Nearly 2500 schools have been rehabilitated to date and an additional 1,200 are expected to be complete by the end of this year.

These are just some examples of the progress that is being made in the political, economic, and security spheres.

This hearing focuses on the important topic of Iraqi public attitudes. We know there are problems on the ground, particularly in the security sphere. And this Committee is correct to note that political, economic, and public diplomacy issues all play a part in determining the security conditions in Iraq today.

Your letter of invitation to me asked me to focus on six questions. Let me respond to them in order.

**Question # 1: What events precipitated the change in Iraqi attitudes from jubilation over the fall of [Saddam] Hussein to a high profile insurgency against Coalition personnel?**

With all due respect, I would like to challenge the premise of the question. I do not believe that a “change in Iraqi attitudes” underlies the present campaign of violence.

First of all, it seems clear, as I suggested earlier, that the Iraqi people overwhelmingly continue to welcome at the removal of a hated tyrant. A new Gallup poll conducted in March/April 2004 puts this figure still at 80 percent.

As political leaders, you understand the phenomenon of “What have you done for me lately?” Today, 14 months later, despite the progress I described, there is still some hardship and uncertainty. To some extent we may be the victims of our own success. After the quick triumph of our military campaign, Iraqis’ expectations may have been excessively high. Lieutenant General David Petraeus calls it the “man on the moon” syndrome: “If America can put a man on the moon, it certainly can get me 24/7 electricity.”

When difficulties persist, it is natural for people to express resentment at those in authority -- especially when the latter are foreign powers exercising authority as an occupier. It is no surprise that there is a desire in Iraq to see an early end to occupation. We share that desire.

That is why President Bush decided to accelerate the process of transferring sovereign authority back to Iraqis -- not waiting (as earlier plans would have done) for the formation of an elected government under a new constitution. As I noted, the handover of sovereign authority is due to occur very soon -- on June 30 -- to a broadly representative Interim Government formed through consultations among Iraqi leaders, the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Advisor, and the Coalition Provisional Authority.

One can ask whether the perpetrators of violence have a broad base in Iraq or are broadly representative of Iraqi society. They include contradictory forces -- die-hard former regime elements, Islamist and nationalist radicals, foreign jihadists -- who differ on long-term goals but share the apparent goal of defeating the Coalition.

These extremists, applying Lenin's doctrine of "the worse, the better," are attempting to wage war against the progress that is being made. Your question refers to a "high profile insurgency against Coalition forces." In fact, what is taking place is even more a war against Iraq's democratic progress. It attacks soft targets such as Iraq's economic infrastructure -- including energy facilities that are a key to Iraq's future prosperity -- as well as moderate political leaders and the growing number of Iraqis bearing arms as police, who are bravely seeking to maintain law and order so the country can get back on its feet.

Thus, the problem is not that the "change in Iraqi attitudes" underlies the insurgency. It is that the minority of extremists are seeking to demoralize the population by their campaign of violence. It is a way, among other things, of disrupting and discrediting the Coalition's determined efforts to improve the lives of the Iraqi people.

The war against the Coalition is also a war to derail the democratic political process on which Iraq has embarked. We know this from the letter of al-Qaida-affiliated terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi which we captured earlier this year. Zarqawi makes patently clear that he considers himself in a “race against time” to block or disrupt the June 30 handover. “We fight them,” Zarqawi says, “and this is difficult because of the gap that will emerge between us and the people of the land. How can we fight their cousins and their sons and under what pretext after the Americans...pull back? ... Democracy is coming, and there will be no excuse [for us] thereafter.” Zarqawi talks of his attempt to drive the Americans out, and to foment sectarian war -- all in order to disrupt what is taking place.

The good news is that he has failed to disrupt what is taking place. That is his main strategic goal, and he is failing to achieve it. Our basic strategy is both political and military: It is to empower moderate Iraqis and marginalize the extremists politically while we hunt them down militarily. That strategy is on track.

**Question #2: What factors caused the security environment to deteriorate?**

Security problems clearly remain. But here, too, one can ask whether this is the result of a “hearts and minds” problem or other factors. The insurgents do seem to have gradually improved their ability to organize and coordinate their actions -- yet their impact is still greatest against soft targets. Most of the incidents, though tragically they can inflict casualties, do not have a strategic significance. The more serious challenges that we faced in April -- the violence in Fallujah, mainly by former regime die-hards, and the challenge represented by Mustaqqa al-Sadr’s attempt to dominate the Shia community – are being dealt with; they have not been entirely overcome but we believe we are regaining the upper hand.

Administration officials have pointed out on a number of occasions that an intensification of violence should be anticipated in the coming period, as the extremists redouble their efforts to disrupt the June 30 handover and undermine the new Iraqi government’s authority.

Our strategy here too is to empower the moderate Iraqis -- to help them build their strong new institutions in the security sphere. While over 220, 000 Iraqis are under arms, we know from the April crisis that many of them need more training and better equipment. They will benefit, however, from being under an Iraqi chain of command after June 30. With strong leadership and clear guidance from Iraqi authorities, these Iraqi security forces are likely to be better motivated than when under the Coalition. They will be defending their own country and its democratic progress against enemies seeking to ruin both.

**Question #3: To what extent did the Coalition succeed in fostering political reforms in Iraq?**

The political evolution of Iraq continues apace, as described above -- the formation of the Governing Council last July; then the political timetable agreed on last November; then the negotiation of the Transitional Administrative Law in March; and now the imminent assumption of sovereign authority by the Iraqi Interim Government.

- In July, a National Conference will convene to select an advisory Interim National Council.

- Democratic elections for a Transitional National Assembly will be held by the end of this year, or no later than January 31, 2005. A Transitional Government will then take power.
- During 2005, the Transitional National Assembly will take charge of the drafting of a permanent constitution. By October 15, 2005, a referendum will be held to approve the constitution.
- Elections for the new government under this new constitution are to be held by December 15, 2005, and the government is to take office by December 31, 2005.

In addition, CPA devoted a considerable effort to supporting the building of civil society in Iraq. This included obtaining grants for women's and political coalition conferences; developing a civic education campaign and distributing materials on the TAL and the political process; other forms of assistance to women's groups; planning resource centers for training and building NGO capacity; and providing training for local government bodies and for the Governing Council's staff.

This democratic political process embodies the hope of Iraq's future. It is supported by all the moderate political forces in Iraq, who constitute the overwhelmingly majority. The legitimacy of this process is the strongest weapon against the extremists: In the name of what do they seek to destroy Iraq's democratic progress?

Secretary of State Powell expressed it eloquently on June 8, before a meeting with Iraq's new Interim President, Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawer:

They [the extremists] are now challenging their own [country's] leaders. They are now fighting against the dreams of their own people. The Coalition is there to help their government, and they are now attacking their own covenant, and they are attacking their own interests and the interests of their people, and they must be defeated. They cannot be allowed to deny the Iraqi people this hopeful future, and they cannot be allowed to drag them into the past, the terrible past that we got rid of last year when we got rid of Saddam Hussein.

Opinion polls in Iraq have shown that large majorities support democratic principles:

- Over 90 percent support the right to free and fair elections.
- Nearly 80 percent believe in free media.
- Over 70 percent believe in equal rights for women.

- Over 85 percent believe in the right to criticize government.  
(CPA Poll August 2003)
- 76 percent of Iraqis acknowledge that they feel freer to express any political view in public now than during the tyranny of Saddam.  
(Gallup, March/April 2004)

**Question #4: What is your judgment of the Coalition's efforts to distribute aid and development funds, rebuild infrastructure, and create a stable economy generating needed jobs for Iraqis?**

At the beginning I cited some of the indicators of progress in the economic field. In addition, it should be noted:

- There have been no health or food crises.
- Projects to improve the supply of water, the disposal of sewage, and other municipal services are underway across the country.
- A 2004 program to clear 20,000 kilometers of Iraq's waterways will employ around 100,000 Iraqis.

- We should see even more jobs starting to be created this summer as contracts begin to be let and the impact of international donations begins to be felt.
- In a CPA-sponsored poll in February 2004, a significant majority in key cities (55 percent) considered the economic situation an improvement over before the war.

Since April, the pace of reconstruction has been slowed somewhat by real and perceived security threats. Nonetheless, reconstruction work proceeds throughout Iraq due to the diligent efforts of Coalition forces, contractors, and the Iraqi people.

**Question #5: Why did Coalition and U.S. Government public diplomacy efforts fail to reach the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people?**

I commend Chairman Shays for his long-standing interest in the important topic of public diplomacy, and for his wise advice.

Again, however, the premise of this particular question can be challenged as overstated. There have been delays in establishing U.S. media that can reach the Iraqi population, but today Al-Iraqiya television and radio and the broader regional coverage of Radio Sawa and Al-Hurra television put us on a better footing.

Public Affairs training programs for Iraqi journalists and broadcasters begun late last year are continuing. The Prime Minister's public affairs office and those of each of the ministries, have Department of State PAOs assisting in this process.

A recent CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll found that 74 percent of Iraqis polled watch Al-Iraqiya, considerably more than watch Al-Jazeera (27 percent). Iraqis report and anchor all news and sports programs. Al Hurra and Radio Sawa - - created by the independent U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors -- are also showing promise. Sawa has a listenership in the 40 percent range in many Arab communities; and Al-Hurra TV broadcasts by satellite 24/7 to over 20 Middle East countries, including Iraq. A special Iraqi programming stream has been developed that is now being broadcast into Iraq via terrestrial means as well.

As part of the ongoing transition, Al-Iraqiya is now run by a nine-member board of Iraqis, similar to a public broadcasting service. A separate media commission, also run by Iraqis, is in place and is well into the process of licensing new television and radio stations.

As President Bush said on May 24, “Iraqis will write their own history and find their own way.” The measure of success will not be how much they like us, but what kind of new Iraq takes its place in the community of nations.

The bottom line in judging the effectiveness of our “message,” therefore, is that we believe the Iraqi people have the same objective we have -- a democratic future. Their preference to see occupation end and self-rule begin is natural -- and we share it. There are those who reject this democratic future, but they are enemies of the Iraqi people, not just enemies of the Coalition.

We also know that all of Iraq’s moderate leaders, in the Interim Government as well as in the Governing Council before it, want the Coalition to remain to complete the task of helping the new Iraq get on its feet. This wish is clearly stated in both the Transitional Administrative Law and in the letter of Prime Minister Dr. Ayad Allawi to the UN Security Council on June 5, blessed by the international community in UN Security Council Resolution 1546 a few days later.

**Question #6: To what extent has the United States government succeeded in building Iraqi confidence in, and cooperation with Coalition efforts to create social cohesion, democratic governance, respect for human rights, and economic well being in Iraq?**

The answer to this question is already embodied in several of the answers provided above. It is also expressed clearly in the categorical statement of Iraq's new leaders -- President al-Yawer, Prime Minister Allawi, and others -- that the Coalition's continued support is needed and wanted.

The June 30 transfer of sovereign authority will be, we are confident, the setback for the extremists that Zarqawi fears. Even more so, the emergence of an elected Iraqi government at the beginning of next year. Legitimacy, as I stated, is our strongest weapon against the extremists.

The Iraqi people know this.

The Transitional Administrative Law, as noted earlier, represents an historic consensus among Iraqis on democratic principles and human rights. The TAL remains the guiding document for the next phase. It is the Iraqis' great achievement.

The United States, in its turn, has accomplished something of historic importance in the liberation of Iraq. We should never forget this. The success of democratic Iraq will have wider ramifications in the Middle East, as President Bush has declared. Thus, this is an enterprise of great moral as well as strategic significance.

It is a vital national commitment that we as a nation need to fulfill. Congress and the President, I am confident, are united in this task. And we will prevail.

Thank you.