



Remarks at the Embassy of the United States, Baghdad, Iraq

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Baghdad, Iraq
April 20, 2008

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Thank you very much. Well, I always look forward to an opportunity to come by and say hello from home and thanks very much for your service. I'd like to also thank Ambassador Crocker, to thank Ryan for his extraordinary service and that of General Petraeus as well. I don't think we've ever had better civil-military cooperation than we have right now.

And for our men and women in uniform, for our Foreign Service Officers, Civil Service, the many other government agencies that are here, our coalition partners, I know you're a long way from home and I know it's been a tough period of time over the last several weeks as Iraqis have fought to take back their country from criminals and from those who would cause harm to innocent civilians. I know that it's sometimes been that the Green Zone itself has been attacked, that you've gone through difficult times. And I just want to thank you and I want you to know that you've been in our thoughts and prayers every day.

I want to say a special word to the Iraqis who work with us, because this is your country and it's emerging. It's emerging from extremely tough times. It's been a long five years, there's no doubt about that. But I was just with the Executive Council, the Prime Minister, President Talabani, Vice Presidents Al-Mahdi and Hashimi and a representative from -- Mr. Barzani from the north. And President Talabani said this is a political spring for Iraq and they said that they are absolutely dedicated to making certain that the sacrifices in Basra and in surrounding areas are going to be followed up by completing the political reconciliation. And it was a very hopeful message.

I know that it is not easy to -- on the ruins of tyranny, to build a new democratic state where people treat each other with respect and where differences are solved politically, not through violence or not through repression. But that's exactly what's starting to happen here in Iraq. And because of that, Iraq is going to be a place that is a very strong signal and symbol for the rest of the region as well. And so I look forward tomorrow to going to Bahrain, where I am going to meet with the Gulf Cooperation Council: Egypt, Jordan and Iraq. And it means that Iraq will be taking its rightful place back alongside its Arab neighbors. And then on to an expanded neighbors conference in Kuwait, where the international community, I hope, will hear the story of the progress that is being made here in Iraq. Fragile though it may be, it is indeed significant progress, indeed remarkable progress.

And so to our Iraqi employees and Iraqi colleagues, I want to say that we know that you serve with us, that sometimes you serve at peril given the security situation. But with all due respect to Ambassador Crocker, I think you are our best ambassadors, because you can go back among the Iraqi people and talk about this great mission that we are on together to help to bring a stable and democratic and pluralistic and tolerant Iraq to the center of the Middle East. Iraq has determined enemies, but slowly but surely, they are being defeated.

And so to all of you: Thank you, thank you, thank you. I am going to go in a few minutes with Ambassador Crocker and we're going to reveal a plaque that will be to the memory of those who have paid the last full measure among us. There will eventually be a fitting memorial for them, but we wanted to do something now that showed how much we miss comrades and friends who have fallen. But because of what is happening in Iraq and because the Iraqi people are really now taking control of their future, we know that their sacrifice will not have been in vain.

And so, please know that the people of America, the President and every American, honors your service, thanks you for it, and that you're in our constant thought and prayers. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

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