Iraq and U.S. Policy

Secretary Condoleezza Rice
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Thank you. I would like to deliver this in full. It's my first opportunity to talk to you specifically about Iraq. I've spoken many times about why we are there, but I would like to talk about how we assure victory.

In short, with the Iraqi Government, our political-military strategy has to be to clear, hold, and build: to clear areas from insurgent control, to hold them securely, and to build durable, national Iraqi institutions.

In 2003, enforcing UN resolutions, we overthrew a brutal dictator and liberated a nation. Our strategy then emphasized the military defeat of the regime's forces and the creation of a temporary government with the Coalition Provisional Authority and an Iraqi Governing Council.

In 2004, President Bush outlined a five-step plan to end the occupation: transferring sovereignty to an Iraqi interim government, rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure, getting more international support, preparing for Iraq's first national election this past January, and helping to establish security. Our soldiers and marines fought major battles, major battles, against the insurgency in places like Najaf and Sadr City and Fallujah.

In 2005, we emphasized transition: a security transition to greater reliance on Iraqi forces and a political transition to a permanent, constitutional democracy. The just-concluded referendum was a landmark in that process.

And now we are preparing for 2006. First we must help Iraqis as they hold another vital election in December. Well over 9 million Iraqis voted on Sunday. Whether Iraqis voted yes or no, they were voting for an Iraqi nation, and for Iraqi democracy.

And all their voices, pro and con, will be heard again in December. If the referendum passes, those who voted no this time will realize that their chosen representatives can then participate in the review of the constitution that was agreed upon last week.

This process will ultimately lead to Iraqis selecting a lasting government, for a four year

term. We must then have a decisive strategy to help that government set a path toward democracy, stability, and prosperity.

Our nation – our servicemen and women – are fighting in Iraq at a pivotal time in world history. We must succeed. And I look forward to working together with you on winning.

We know our objectives. We and the Iraqi Government will succeed if together we can:

- Break the back of the insurgency so that Iraqis can finish it off without large-scale military help from the United States.
- Keep Iraq from becoming a safe haven from which Islamic extremists can terrorize the region or the world.
- Demonstrate positive potential for democratic change and free expression in the Arab and Muslim worlds, even under the most difficult conditions.
- And turn the corner financially and economically, so there is a sense of hope and a visible path toward self-reliance.

Now, of course, to achieve this, we must know who we are fighting. Some of these people are creatures of a deposed tyrant, others a small number of home-grown and imported Islamist extremists. They feed on a portion of the population that is overwhelmed by feelings of fear, resentment, and despair.

As I have said, our strategy is to clear, hold, and build. The enemy's strategy is to infect, terrorize, and pull down.

They want to spread more fear, resentment, and despair -- inciting sectarian violence as they did 2 weeks ago in Hillah, when they blew up devout worshippers in a mosque, and committed this atrocity during the holy month of Ramadan. They attack infrastructure, like electricity and water, so that average Iraqis will lose hope.

They target foreigners. The enemy forces have never won even a platoon-size battle against our soldiers and marines. But their ultimate target is the coalition's center of gravity: the will of America, of Britain, and of other coalition members. Let us say it plainly: The terrorists want us to get discouraged and quit. They believe we do not have the will to see this through. They talk openly about this in their writings on their websites.

And they attack the Iraqi Government, targeting the most dedicated public servants of the new Iraq. Mayors and physicians and teachers and policemen, soldiers – none are exempt. Millions of Iraqis are putting their lives on the line every single day to build a new nation and the insurgents want most to strike at them.

Sadly, this strategy has some short-term advantages because it is easier to pull down than to build up. It is easier to sow fear than to grow hope.

But the enemy strategy has a fatal flaw. The enemy has no positive vision for the future of Iraq. They offer no alternative that could unite Iraqi as a nation. And that is why most Iraqis despise the insurgents.

The enemy leaders know their movement is unpopular. Zawahiri's July letter to Zarqawi reveals that he is "extremely concerned" that, deprived of popular support, the insurgents will "be crushed in the shadows." "We don't want to repeat the mistakes of the Taliban," he warned, whose regime "collapsed in days, because the people were passive or hostile."

Knowing how unpopular they are, the enemy leaders also hate the idea of democracy. They will never let themselves or their ideas face the test of democratic choice.

Let me now turn to our political-military strategy. We are moving from a stage of transition toward the strategy to prepare a permanent Iraqi government for a decisive victory.

The strategy that is being carried out has profited from the insights of strategic thinkers, civilian and military, inside and outside of government, who have reflected on our experience and on insurgencies in other periods of history.

We know what we must do. With our Iraqi allies, we are working to:

- Clear the toughest places – no sanctuaries to the enemy – and to disrupt foreign support for the insurgents.
- We are working to hold and steadily enlarge the secure areas, integrating political and economic outreach with our military operations.
- We are working to build truly national institutions by working with more capable provincial and local authorities. We are challenging them to embody a national compact – not tools of a particular sect or ethnic group. These Iraqi institutions must sustain security forces, bring rule of law, visibly deliver essential services, and offer the Iraqi people hope for a better economic future.

None of these elements, as you have said, Mr. Chairman, can be achieved by military action alone. None are purely civilian either. This requires an integrated civil-military partnership. And let me briefly review that partnership.

Clear the toughest places -- no sanctuaries. As we enlarge security in major urban areas and as insurgents retreat, they should find no large area where they can reorganize and operate freely. Recently our forces have gone on the offensive. In Tall Afar, near the Syrian border, and in the west along the Euphrates valley in places like Al Qaim, Haditha, and Hit, American and Iraqi forces are clearing away insurgents.

As one terrorist wrote to another: "[I]f the government extends its control over the country, we will have to pack our bags and break camp."

Syria and Iran allow fighters and military assistance to reach insurgents in Iraq. In the case of Syria, we are concerned about cross-border infiltration, about unconstrained travel networks, and about the suspicious young men who are being waved through Damascus International Airport.

As a part of our strategy, we have taken military steps, as with our offensive in Tal Afar, to cut off the flow of people or supplies near that border. And we are also taking new diplomatic steps to convey the seriousness of our concerns. Syria and indeed Iran must decide whether they wish to side with the cause of war or with the cause of peace.

Secondly, to hold and enlarge secure areas. In the past our problem was that once an area was clear militarily, the Iraqi security forces were unable to hold it. Now, Iraqi units are more capable.

- In August 2004, five Iraqi regular army battalions were in combat. Today, 91 Iraqi regular army battalions are in combat.
- A year ago, no American advisors were embedded with these battalions. Now all of these battalions have American advisors.

With more capable Iraqi forces, we can implement this element of the strategy, holding secure areas – neighborhood by neighborhood. And this process has already begun.

- Compare the situation a year ago in places like Haifa Street in Baghdad, or Baghdad's Sadr City, or downtown Mosul, or Najaf, or Fallujah, with the situation today.
- Security along the once notorious airport road in Baghdad has measurably improved. Najaf, where American forces fought a major battle last year, is now entirely under independent Iraqi military control.

As this strategy is being implemented, the military side recedes and the civilian part – like police stations and civic leaders and economic development -- move into the foreground. Our transition strategy emphasized the building of the Iraqi army. Now our police training efforts are receiving new levels of attention.

Third, we must build truly national institutions. The institutions of Saddam Hussein's government were violent and corrupt, tearing apart the ties that ordinarily bind communities together. The last two years have seen three temporary governments govern Iraq, making it extremely difficult to build national institutions even under the best of circumstances. The new government that will come can finally set down real roots.

To be effective, that government must bridge sects and ethnic groups. And its institutions must not become the tools of a particular sect or group.

Let me assure you, the United States will not try to pick winners. We will support parties

and politicians in every community who are dedicated to peaceful participation in the future of a democratic Iraq.

The national institutions must also sustain the security forces and bring rule of law to Iraq.

The national institutions must also visibly deliver essential services. Thanks to you and other members of Congress, the United States has already invested billions of dollars to keep electricity and fuel flowing across Iraq. In the transition phase, we concentrated on capital investment, adding capacity to a system that had deteriorated to the point of collapse. But, with freedom, the demand for electricity has gone up by 50% and the capability we have added is not being fully utilized because of constant insurgent attacks. We are with the Iraqis developing new ways to add security to this battered but vital system. And the Iraqis must reform their energy policies and pricing in order to make the system sustainable.

The national institutions must also offer the Iraqi people hope for a better economic future.

Millions of farmers, small businessmen, and investors need a government that encourages growth rather than fostering dependence on handouts from the ruler. The government, the next government, will need to make some difficult but necessary decisions about economic reform.

In sum, we and the Iraqis must seize the vital opportunity provided by the establishment of a permanent government.

Well, what is required?

First, Iraqis must continue to come together in order to build their nation. The state of Iraq was constructed across the fault lines of ancient civilizations, among Arabs and Kurds, Sunni and Shi'a, Muslims and Christians. No one can solve this problem for them. For years these differences were dealt with through violence and repression. Now Iraqis are using compromise and politics.

Second, the Iraqi Government must forge more effective partnerships with foreign governments, particularly in building their ministries and governmental capacity.

- On our side of this partnership, the United States should sustain a maximum effort to help the Iraqi government succeed, tying it more clearly to our immediate political-military objectives.
- On Iraq's side, the government must show us and other assisting countries that critical funds are being well spent – whatever their source. They must show commitment to the professionalization of their government and bureaucracy. And they must demonstrate the willingness to take tough decisions.

Third, Iraq must forge stronger partnerships with the international community beyond the United States.

The Iraqis have made it clear that they want the multinational military coalition to remain. Among many contributors, the soldiers and civilians of the United Kingdom deserve special gratitude for their resolve, their skill, and their sacrifices.

Now the military support from the coalition must be matched by diplomatic, economic, and political support from the entire international community. Earlier this year, in Brussels and Amman, scores of nations gathered to offer more support. NATO has opened a training mission near Baghdad. And now, as Iraq chooses a permanent, constitutional government, it is time for Iraq's neighbors to do more to help.

- The major oil producing states of the Gulf have gained tens of billions of dollars of additional revenue from rising oil prices. They are considering how to invest these gains for the future.
- These governments must be partners in shaping the region's future.
- We understand that across the region, there are needs and multilateral programs in the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Pakistan as well as Iraq. Rather than consider them in a disjointed way, they together form part of a broad regional effort in transforming the Arab and Muslim world. We hope the governments of the region, as well as others in Europe and Asia, will examine these needs and then invest decisively, on an unprecedented scale, to become continuing stakeholders in the future of Iraq and of the region.

Finally, the U.S. Government must deepen and strengthen the integration of our civilian and military activities.

- At the top in Iraq, we have established an effective partnership between the Embassy and Ambassador Khalilzad on the one hand, and the Multinational Forces command and General Casey on the other.
- To be sure, civilian agencies have already made an enormous effort. Hundreds of civilian employees and contractors have lost their lives in Iraq. But more can be done to mobilize the civilian agencies of our government, especially to get more people in the field, outside of Baghdad's International Zone, to follow up when the fighting stops.
- We will embed our diplomats, police trainers, and aid workers more fully on military bases, traveling with our soldiers and marines.
- To execute our strategy we will restructure a portion of the U.S. mission in Iraq. Learning from successful precedents used in Afghanistan, we will deploy Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in key parts of the country. These will be civil-military teams, working in concert with each of the major subordinate commands, training police, setting up courts, and helping local governments with essential services like sewage treatment or irrigation. The first of these new PRTs

will take the field next month.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, to succeed, we need most your help and your support, and that of the American people. We seek support across the aisle, from both Democrats and Republicans.

And I know that we all, as Americans, know the importance of success in this mission. It is hard. It is hard to imagine decisive victory when violent men continue their attacks on Iraqi civilians and security forces and on American and coalition soldiers and marines. And we honor the sacrifice because every individual has life stories and friends and families – and incalculable sorrow that has been left behind.

But of course, there is a great deal at stake. A free Iraq will be at the heart of a different kind of Middle East. We must defeat the ideology of hatred, the ideology that forms the roots of the extremist threat that we face. Iraq's struggle – the region's struggle – is to show that there is a better way, a freer way, to lasting peace.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

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