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## Iraq: A New Way Forward

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
Washington, DC  
January 11, 2007

(10:10 a.m. EST)

As I come before you today, America is facing a crucial moment--indeed, as the Chairman has put it--a pivotal moment concerning our policies in Iraq and concerning our broader policies in the Middle East. I think that we all know that the stakes in Iraq are enormous and that the consequences of failure would also be enormous not just for America and for Iraq, but for the entire region of the Middle East and, indeed, for the world. And so we agreed that the stakes in Iraq are enormous. And as the President said last night, Americans broadly agree and we in the Administration count ourselves among them that the situation in Iraq is unacceptable. On these two points, we are unified, the enormity of the stakes and the unacceptability of the current situation.

The President has therefore forged a new strategy that speaks both to our stakes in Iraq and the need to change the way that we are doing things. The Iraqis have devised a strategy that they believe will work for their most urgent problem, that is, to return security to Baghdad. We are going to support that strategy through the augmentation of American military forces. I think Secretary Gates will say more about that in his committee.

But I want also to emphasize that we see this not just as a military effort, but also as one that must have very strong political and economic elements. In order to better deliver on the governance and economic side, the United States is further decentralizing and diversifying our civilian presence and I will talk a little bit more about that and in greater detail.

We're further integrating our civil and military operations and, as Senator Lugar has noted, it's extremely important to see Iraq in a regional context and I would like to talk a little bit about the regional strategy that we want to pursue that supports reformers and responsible leaders in Iraq and across the broader Middle East. Let me be very clear. We all understand that the responsibility for what kind of Iraq this will be rests with Iraqis. They are the only ones who can decide whether or not Iraq is, in fact, going to be an Iraq for all Iraqis, one that is unified, or whether they are going to

allow sectarian passions to unravel that chance for a unified Iraq.

We know historically that Iraq rests on the region's religious and ethnic fault lines. And in many ways, the recent events in Baghdad over the last -- almost a year, that Baghdad has become the center of that struggle. The Samara mosque bombing provoked sectarianism and it set it aflame at a pace that threatens to overwhelm the fragile and yet promising process of reconciliation, a process that has produced successful elections and a new constitution and substantial agreement, as we sit here today, on a law to share Iraq's oil wealth fairly, as well as a commitment to a more reasonable approach to de-Baathification and to hold provincial elections. Iraqis must take on the essential challenge, therefore, that threatens this process of natural -- of national reconciliation and that is the protection of their population from criminals and violent extremists who kill in the name of sectarian grievance.

The President last night made clear that the augmentation of our forces is to support the Iraqis in that goal of returning control and civility to their capital. He also noted that there are also very important strategic, important economic and political elements that must be followed up if "clear, hold, and build" is to actually work this way. And so I want to assure you that we in the State Department recognize the importance of surging our civilian elements and our civilian efforts as well as the surge that would be there on the military side.

This is a comprehensive policy. Iraq has a federal government. We need to get civilians out of our embassy, out of the green zone, into the field across Iraq. We have had, over the last year-and-a-half, the establishment of provincial reconstruction teams that are operating outside of Baghdad. And the importance of those teams should be understood in the following way. It is extremely important to have an effective and functioning government in Baghdad and we have worked with them on ministries, on budget processes, on the technical assistance that they need to have a functioning government.

But it is equally important to have local and provincial governments that can deliver for their people. And indeed, this gives us multiple points for success; not just the government in Baghdad, but the people with whom we're working in the provinces. I might just note that we believe that this is having an effect in places like Mosul, an effect in places like Tal Afar. But it's having a very good effect even in some of the most difficult places. And one of the other elements of the President's policy last night was to announce that 4,000 American forces would be augmented in Anbar, the epicenter of al-Qaida activity.

That is, in part, because we believe that the efforts that we've been making with local leaders, particularly the sheikhs in Anbar, are beginning to pay fruit. For instance, they have recruited from their own ranks 1,100 young men to send to Jordan for training. And these sons of Anbar, as they call them, will come back to enter the fight against al-Qaida. And so I want to emphasize we're very focused on the need to return control to Baghdad, but we're also very focused on the need to build capacity in the local and provincial governments and to be able to deliver economic and reconstruction assistance there.

Finally, let me just say one point about our regional diplomatic strategy, one word about our regional diplomatic strategy: Obviously, Iraq is central now to America's role in the Middle East, central to our credibility, central to the prospects for stability, central to the role that our allies and friends and Iraq's neighbors will play in the Middle East. But we have to base our regional strategy on the substantially changed realities of the Middle East. This is a different Middle East. This Middle East is a Middle East in which there really is a new alignment of forces.

On one side are reformers and responsible leaders who seek to advance their interests peacefully, politically, and diplomatically. On the other side are extremists of every sect and ethnicity who use violence to spread chaos, to undermine democratic governments, and to impose agendas of hatred and intolerance. On one side of that divide, the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and the other countries of the Gulf, Egypt, Jordan, the young democracies of Lebanon, of the Palestinian territory led by Mahmoud Abbas and in Iraq. But on the other side of that divide are Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah and Hamas. And I think we have to understand that that is a fundamental divide. Iran and Syria have made their choice and their choice is to destabilize, not to stabilize.

And so with all respect to those who talk about engagement with Syria and Iran, I think we need to recognize that if Iran and Syria wish to play a stabilizing role for their own interests, then they will do so. If on the other hand, they intend to offer a stabilizing role because they believe that in our current situation in Iraq we are willing to pay a price, that's not diplomacy, that's extortion. And I would just ask you what that price might be.

I have a hard time believing that Iran will, on one side, talk to us about stabilizing Iraq and [on the other] say, "Oh, by the way, we won't talk about what you're doing in the Security Council to stop our nuclear program. That's not part of the price." Or that Syria will talk about stabilizing Iraq while they continue to destabilize it and say, "Oh, we aren't actually interested in talking about the fact that we are irreconciled -- we have not reconciled to the loss of our position in Lebanon or to the existence of a tribunal to try those who are responsible for the assassination of Rafik Hariri." These two will most certainly come into contact with each other. The destabilizing activities in Iraq and the desires of these states to have us pay a price that we cannot pay.

We do have a regional approach. It is to work with those governments that share our view of where the Middle East should be going. It is also to work with those governments in a way that can bring support to the new Iraqi democracy. It is to support the very normal democracy that Iraq itself may engage in with all of its neighbors and it is to have an international compact which is a bargain between the international community and Iraq for support in response to Iraqi reforms, economic and indeed some that are political. In that Iraqi compact both Syria and Iran have been present and will continue to be.

Let me just conclude by saying that we all understand in the Administration that there are no magic formulas for Iraq, as the Baker-Hamilton commission said. I want you to understand that I personally, too, understand and know the skepticism that is felt about Iraq and, indeed, the pessimism that some feel. I want you to know that I understand and, indeed, feel the heartbreak that Americans feel at the continued sacrifice of American lives--men and women who can never be replaced for their families--and for the concern of our men and women who are still in harm's way, those in uniform and those civilians who are also on the front line, civilian diplomats and civilian personnel who are also operating in places like Anbar and Mosul.

That said, I know, too, how carefully President Bush and the entire national security team considered the options before us, and I'd like you to understand that we really did consider the options before us. The President called on advisors from outside, he called on the advice of the Baker-Hamilton study group, and of course he discussed the policies with his advisors like me who have been there from the beginning and therefore bear responsibility for both the successes and failures of this policy, and new advisors like Secretary of Defense Gates who came with a fresh eye.

After all of that, he came to the conclusion, and I fully agree, that the most urgent task before us now is to help the Iraqi Government--and I want to emphasize help the Iraqi Government--establish confidence among the Iraqi population

that it will and can protect all of its citizens whether they are Sunni, Shia, Kurds, or others, and that they will in an even-handed fashion punish those violent people who are killing innocent Iraqis, whatever their sect, ethnicity, or political affiliation.

We believe that the Iraqi Government, which has not always performed, has every reason to understand the consequences now of nonperformance. They, after all, came to us and said that this problem had to be solved. They came to us and said that, yes, they would make the necessary decisions to prevent political interference in the military operations that need to be taken to deal with the Baghdad problem. They came to us and said that this government will not be able to survive if it cannot reestablish civil order. And they gave to the President, and not just Prime Minister Maliki but many leaders, an assurance that this time they're going to make the difficult choices in order to get it done.

The situation in Iraq is unacceptable, but Iraq is also, at this point in time, of very high stakes to this nation. This is a time for a national desire and a national imperative not to fail in Iraq. We have faced crucible tests as a country before and we've come through them when we have come through them together. I want to pledge to you, as the President did last night, that we want to work with all Americans, here particularly in the Congress--the representatives of the American people--as we move forward on a strategy that will allow us to succeed in Iraq. This is a strategy that the President believes is the best strategy that we can pursue, and I ask your careful consideration of it and your ideas for how to improve it. And of course, understanding that not everyone will agree, I do believe that we're united in our desire to see America succeed. Thank you very much.

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