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Iraq and U.S. Policy
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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss our strategy in Iraq.

I have spoken many times about why we are there. Today I want to discuss how to assure victory.

In short, with the Iraqi government, our strategy – the key – is to clear, hold, and build: clear areas from insurgent control, hold them securely, and build durable, national Iraqi institutions.

In 2003, enforcing UN resolutions, we overthrew a brutal dictator and liberated a nation. Our strategy emphasized the military defeat of the regime's forces and 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 establish security. Our soldiers and marines fought major battles against the insurgency in places like Najaf, 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.

Now we are preparing for 2006. First we must help Iraqis as they hold another vital election in December. Well over nine million Iraqis voted on Saturday. 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. Let's work together on how we will win.

Our Objectives

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 U.S. military help.
- 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 world, even under the most difficult conditions.
- Turn the corner financially and economically, so there is a sense of hope and a visible path toward self-reliance.

Assessing the Enemy

To achieve this, we must know who we are fighting. Some of them creatures of a deposed tyrant, others a small number of home-grown and imported Islamist extremists, feed on a portion of the population overwhelmed by feelings of fear, resentment, and despair.

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 two 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, or 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 on their websites and in their writings.

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

Sadly, the enemy strategy has a short-term advantage. 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 weakness. The enemy has no positive vision for the future of Iraq. The enemy offers no alternative that could unite the Iraqi nation. That is why most Iraqis despise the insurgents.

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

Our Strategy

Let me now turn to *our 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 a number 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.

With our Iraqi allies, we are working to:

- Clear the toughest places -- no sanctuaries to the enemy – and disrupt foreign support for the insurgents.
- Hold and steadily enlarge the secure areas, integrating political and economic outreach with our military operations.
- Build truly national institutions working with more capable provincial and local authorities. Embodying 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 can be achieved by military action alone. None are purely civilian. All require an integrated civil-military partnership. I will briefly review each of them.

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, Iraqi and American forces are clearing away the 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 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 the border. We have also begun taking new diplomatic steps to convey the seriousness of our concerns. Syria and Iran must decide whether they wish to side with the cause of war or with the cause of peace.

Hold and enlarge secure areas. In the past our problem was that once an area was clear, 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 – neighborhood by neighborhood. The 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, and 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 the strategy is implemented, the military side recedes and the civilian part – like police stations, civic leaders, economic development -- move into the foreground. Our transition strategy emphasized building of the Iraqi army. Now our police training efforts are receiving new levels of attention.

Build 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 to 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.

The United States will not 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 sustain the security forces. They also must bring the rule of law to Iraq.

The national institutions must 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 developing new ways to add security to this battered but vital system. And the Iraqis must reform their energy policies and pricing to make the system sustainable.

The national institutions must 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 next government will need to make some difficult but necessary decisions.

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

What is Required?

First, Iraqis must continue to come together in order to build their nation. The state 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 a more effective partnership with foreign governments, particularly in building their ministries and governmental capacity.

- On our side of the 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 make tough decisions.

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

The Iraqis have 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.

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

- The governments must be partners in shaping the region's future.
- Across the region, there are needs and multilateral programs in the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Pakistan as well as Iraq. Rather than consider each in a disjointed way, together they form part of a broader regional effort transforming the Arab and Muslim world. We hope these governments, and 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 their region.

Finally, we – 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 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 Democrats and Republicans alike.

I know this is hard. It is hard to imagine decisive victory when violent men continue their attacks on Iraqi civilians and security forces and on American or coalition soldiers and marines. Every individual has life stories, friends, and families – and incalculable sorrow for those left behind.

But 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 we face. Iraq's struggle – the region's struggle – is to show there is a better way, a freer way, to lasting peace.