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Outside the Green Zone: The Next Realities in the Rebuilding of Iraq

America is confronted with a monumental task—rebuilding Iraq. The United States and other members of the Coalition are encountering obstacles including an unstable security environment, a decaying infrastructure, and an embryonic political process.

Americans are provided different accounts about progress in Iraq. There are daily media reports about coalition force casualties, infrastructure problems, and political and social unrest. Administration officials, on the other hand, portray rebuilding Iraq as a work in progress. Congressional delegations have been allowed to enter Iraq, but only under the supervision of the Coalition Provisional Authority, and a military security umbrella.

Congressmen Wolf and Shays have made a number of trips to Iraq, spending several days and nights traveling and living with humanitarian organizations. Their latest trip to Al-Kut, a town of about 300,000 Southeast of Baghdad, allowed them to visit small villages, attend a wedding feast, observe the construction of schools and roads, and interact with Iraqis. This experience gave them a better understanding of the challenges we face and provided a different perspective on what it will take to bring stability and progress to that long-oppressed nation.

What Was Learned

- **The Iraqi people are proud.** It is difficult for them to see their country controlled by foreign troops. While they want Coalition forces gone, they realize stability must be brought to Iraq before progress can be made.
- **Iraqis are dependent on government assistance.** Decades of tyrannical control have left a generation of Iraqis believing the government will provide for their needs. The transition from state controlled passivity to individual motivation will be a long process.
- **It is difficult for Iraqis to trust the people who have been put in control by the Coalition.** Iraqis believe those now running the government do not understand their needs, and only fellow Iraqis who have endured their plight can solve their problems.
- **Rooting out corruption is a major challenge.** Iraqis fear that those in control will use their positions to help only themselves, not Iraq, because that's the way it has always been.
- **Both the CPA and military leadership are upbeat and optimistic about the future of Iraq, but some lower ranking U.S. military personnel do not share that same level of optimism.** Americans serving in Iraq endure sacrifices and hardship, but they know their cause is just.
- **While the quality of life is steadily improving, the process of rebuilding Iraq is going to be long and arduous.** The American people and Iraqi citizens cannot expect a country that has endured decades of tyrannical rule, harmful economic sanctions, and wars to be turned into a model society in a matter of months or even a few years.

Recommendations

- **The Administration should consider independent assessments of our efforts in Iraq.** Teams of auditors, on a recurring basis, should be sent to the North, the Central and Southern regions of Iraq to evaluate the security situation, political development and economic status in each area. These teams would develop actionable recommendations.
- **The Administration should redouble efforts to internationalize the rebuilding of Iraq.** Administration efforts to bring other countries in to help rebuild Iraq should be rejuvenated. New diplomatic initiatives are needed to garner additional international cooperation and support.
- **The position of Special Advisor to the President for Public Diplomacy should be created.** In Iraq, Ambassador Bremer is focused on increased efforts to communicate Coalition intentions to the Iraqi public. As recommended by the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World (chaired by Ambassador Edward Djerejian), the Administration should expand this initiative by reaching out and communicating our intentions more often and more clearly to other nations in the region.
- **The Secretary of State should appoint a special envoy to focus on the Arab-Israeli issue.** Sustained, high-level attention to the Arab-Israeli issue is essential to the success of U.S. efforts to bring stability to the region and implement the Road Map.
- **The Administration should take the lead in creating an alliance for law enforcement that is modeled after the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).** The United States and other nations are cooperating to train Iraqi police. This cooperation should be built upon to create a permanent, structured alliance of law enforcement agencies. Extensive cooperation and coordination between the United States and the militaries of other nations should be duplicated in a parallel coalition of law enforcement authorities.
- **The face and voice of the Coalition Provisional Authority should be an Iraqi.** The spokesperson conveying information about their new government should be an Iraqi citizen, someone with whom the audience can identify and who intimately understands the idioms and nuances of the culture.

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- **Representation from the Iraqi Governing Council should participate in all CPA briefings.** Americans visiting Iraq, including Members of Congress, need to hear from Iraqis, not just Coalition personnel. To build trust, the Governing Council should know what the CPA is telling outsiders about progress in Iraq.
- **In order to improve security and stem attacks on Coalition forces, a more aggressive effort should be mounted to secure or buy back weapons caches hidden throughout Iraq.** Regional CPA officials need greater authority to purchase the smaller caliber weapons being used to attack Coalition forces – rocket propelled grenades, AK-47s.
- **The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should be invited to help search for Iraq's nuclear weapons program.** The IAEA has extensive experience in searching for the elements of prohibited nuclear weapons programs and could assist the Iraq Survey Group to capture information learned through past inspections.