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Council on Foreign Relations

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, New York, NY, Tuesday, May 27, 2003.

Thank you Pete [Peterson] and Les [Gelb]. Ladies and Gentlemen.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the challenges in a transition from tyranny to a free and civil society.

The problems are real, to be sure:

- looting, crime and mobs storming government buildings;
- the breakdown of government structures and institutions that maintained civil order;
- rampant inflation caused by the lack of a stable currency;
- supporters of the former regime roaming the streets and countryside whose fate has to be determined;



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- regional tensions between north and south;
- delays, bickering and false starts in the effort to establish a new government.

If these problems sound familiar, they should: they are historians' descriptions of the conditions here in America in 1783—in the period after our nation's war for independence.

Those early years of our young republic were characterized by chaos and confusion. There was crime and looting and a lack of an organized police force. The issue of competing paper currencies by the various states led to uncontrolled inflation and popular discontent.

There were uprisings such as Shays Rebellion, with mobs attacking courthouses and government buildings. There were regional tensions between mercantile New England and the agrarian south. There were Crown loyalists to deal with, many of whom had fought against the Continental Army. Our first effort at a governing charter—the Articles of Confederation—failed miserably, and it took eight years of contentious debate before we finally adopted our Constitution and inaugurated our first President.

And, unlike the people of Iraq, we did not face the added challenge of recovering from the trauma of decades of denial and brutal rule by a dictator like Saddam Hussein.

The point is this: no nation in memory that has made the transition from tyranny to a free society has been immune to the difficulties and challenges of taking that path—not even our own. As Thomas Jefferson put it at the time: "we are not to expect to be translated from despotism to liberty in a featherbed."

It is now just 7 weeks since the liberation of Iraq—and the challenges are there. Just as it took time and patience, trial and error, and years of hard work before our Founders got it right—so too will it take time and patience, trial and error, and hard work for the Iraqi people to overcome the challenges they face today.

This much is clear: we have a stake in their success. For if Iraq—with its size,

capabilities, resources and its history—is able to move to the path of representative democracy, however bumpy the road, then the impact in the region and the world could be dramatic. Iraq could conceivably become a model—proof that a moderate Muslim state can succeed in the battle against extremism taking place in the Muslim world today.

The Iraqi people have a foundation on which to build the peace.

Very likely at least in part because of the speed and skill in the execution of the war plan:

- The vast majority of Iraq's oil fields were not destroyed, preserving the country's oil wealth for the Iraqi people. And, an environmental disaster was prevented;
- Key bridges, roads and rail lines were not destroyed;
- Dams were not broken and villages were not flooded;
- The infrastructure of the country is largely intact;
- There were no large masses of refugees fleeing across borders into neighboring countries;
- The former regime did not attack Iraq's neighbors with SCUD missiles;
- And the coalition took great care to protect the lives of innocent civilians, as well as the important holy sites.

So unlike Europe after WW II, for the most part the people of Iraq do not have to rebuild from this recent war, as they work to rebuild their country and society after decades of a dictatorship.

We are committed to helping the Iraqi people get on the path to a free society. We do not have an American “template” we want to impose—Iraqis will figure out how to build a free nation in a manner that reflects their unique culture and traditions.

What the President *has* outlined are some broad principles that are critical if Iraq’s transition from tyranny is to succeed:

- that Iraq be a single country, which does not support terrorists, threaten its neighbors or the world with weapons of mass terror, or threaten its diverse population with repression;
- that it have a government that respects and protects minorities, provides opportunities for its people through a market economy, and justice through an independent judiciary and rule of law.

These are not solely American principles, nor are they exclusively Western principles. They are principles common to all the world’s free societies. The coalition will seek out Iraqis who support these principles, and who desire to have a role in their country’s future. And those who oppose these principles—whose agenda is to replace Saddam Hussein’s tyranny with some other form of dictatorship—will be opposed.

As we move forward to help Iraqis build a free nation, there are some of the guidelines that the coalition is following:

- “ First, while our goal is to put functional and political authority in the hands of Iraqis as soon as possible, the Coalition Provisional Authority has the responsibility to fill the vacuum of power in a country that has been under a dictatorship for decades, by asserting temporary authority over the country. The Coalition will do so. It will not tolerate self-appointed “leaders.”
- “ Second, the coalition will provide security. Among the immediate objectives are restoration of law and order for the Iraqi people and provision of essential services. The coalition is hiring and training Iraqi police, and will be prepared to use force to impose order as required—because without order, little else will be possible.

“ Third, the coalition will maintain as many security forces in Iraq as necessary, for as long as necessary, to accomplish the stated goals—and no longer. Already 39 nations have offered stabilization forces or other needed assistance, and that number is growing. Together, coalition countries will seek to provide a secure environment, so that Iraqis will be able to take charge of their country as soon as possible.

“ Next, the coalition will work to improve the circumstances of the Iraqi people. Already, electric services in the north and south are better than they have been in 12 years and the power situation in Baghdad is improving, albeit slowly. The coalition is working to achieve rapid improvements in other vital public services. The coalition will work to engage the Iraqi people as rapidly as possible, and give Iraqis leadership roles in the reconstruction effort—for it is their responsibility to build the future of their country.

“ Fifth, in staffing ministries and positioning Iraqis in ways that will increase their influence, the Coalition will work to have Iraqis involved as early as possible—so that Iraqis can develop and explain the goals and direction to the Iraqi people. Only as Iraqis are engaged in, responsible for, and explaining and leading their fellow citizens will the broader public support develop that is essential for security.

“ Sixth, the Coalition will work with forward-looking Iraqis and actively oppose the old regime’s enforcers—the Ba’ath Party leaders, Fedayeen Saddam, and other instruments of repression—and make clear that it will eliminate the remnants of Saddam’s regime. Those who committed war crimes or crimes against humanity will be tracked down and brought to justice. De-Ba’athification may cause some inefficiencies, but it is critical to removing pervasive fear from Iraqi society.

“ Next, Iraq will need to find ways to heal the wounds the Ba’athists inflicted on the society. The experiences of Eastern Europe and other countries can inform this process.

“ Eighth, market systems will be favored—not Stalinist command systems—and the Coalition will favor activities that will begin to diversify the Iraqi economy beyond oil. The Coalition will encourage moves to privatize state-owned enterprises. And, it will work to provide enterprise driven economic

development opportunities for the Iraqi people.

“ Ninth, the Coalition Provisional Authority is developing a plan for the Iraqi oil industry based on transparency. Iraq’s oil wealth will be used for the benefit of the Iraqi people.

“ Tenth, whenever possible, contracts for work in Iraq will go to those who will use Iraqi workers, to countries that assisted the Iraqi people’s liberation, that provide assistance to Iraq’s recovery and also to neighboring countries so as to contribute to greater regional economic activity and accelerate Iraq’s economic recovery.

“ Eleventh, countries and international organizations, including the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, are being welcomed to assist in Iraq. They can and are playing an important role. The Coalition Provisional Authority will work closely with them to maintain a focus of effort.

“ Twelfth, assistance from Iraq’s neighbors will be welcomed. Conversely, interference in Iraq by its neighbors or their proxies will not be permitted. Indeed, Iran should be on notice that efforts to try to remake Iraq in their image will be aggressively put down.

“ Finally, in assisting the Iraqi people, the U.S. will play its role but should not be considered the first and only donor of funds.

The American people have already made a significant investment to liberate Iraq, and stand ready to contribute to the rebuilding efforts. But when funds are needed, the coalition will turn first to Iraqi regime funds in Iraq; Iraqi funds in the Oil-for-Food program; seized frozen Iraqi regime assets in the U.S. and other countries; and international donors, many of whom are already assisting.

The transition to democracy will take time, and it will not always be a smooth road. In Central and Eastern Europe, the process has taken time, but it is succeeding. Trial and error and experimentation will be part of the process. The efforts will not be perfect. Course corrections will be needed and should be expected. This effort will require patience by all involved if it is to succeed. It has been seven weeks—in a nation that suffered a dictatorship for decades, that saw tens of thousands of criminals released from their prisons, and where many

of the regime's enforcers are still at large.

The eventual political outcome will be decided by the Iraqi people, within the broad principles of the rule of law, minority rights, individual liberty, and representative democracy. One ought not expect the Iraqi outcome to replicate ours or any other system.

Let me conclude by saying: the Iraqi people have an historic opportunity to build a free and civil society. Doing so will be difficult—just as it was in the early years of our young republic.

But the benefits of success—for Iraq, for the region, and the world—will be enormous. If Iraqis can take hold of their country, develop the institutions of self-government, and claim their place as responsible members of the international community, then the world could have a new model for a successful transition from tyranny to self-reliance—and a new ally in the global war on terror and the struggle for freedom and moderation in the Muslim world.

The world has a stake in their success—and that is why so many of the world's free nations are stepping forward to help.

With that hopeful thought, I thank you for listening—and I'd be happy to respond to questions.



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