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Speech

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Prepared Statement for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

By Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Washington, DC, Tuesday, May 18, 2004.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee: I thank you for the opportunity to come and brief you today on the Defense Department's role in the upcoming transition to Iraqi sovereignty. I am heartened by the numerous statements from members of this Committee recognizing the importance of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the ongoing reconstruction mission in Iraq to our nation's security. Such statements send a strong message of America's resolve to those who oppose our efforts to help the Iraqi people rehabilitate their nation after 35 years of unimaginable tyranny under Saddam Hussein.

I would also like to thank the members of this Committee for their continued support to the men and women of our Armed Forces. Our prayers are with all our people currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Whether members of Active Duty, Reserve, or National Guard units, these heroes embody the best ideals of our nation – serving so that others may be free – and we thank them all for the sacrifices they make.

I would also like to pay tribute to the hard work and sacrifices of all the civilians and Foreign Service officers in the Coalition Provisional Authority and various NGOs. Their tireless efforts and heroism have been vital to our mission in Iraq, and they have been as fine a group of ambassadors for this nation as we have ever sent abroad.

Finally, we also owe a sincere debt of gratitude as well to the roughly 25,000 men and women from our Coalition partners, who are serving the cause of freedom in Iraq. This coalition is neither “illegitimate” nor “window dressing.” Thirty-four of our closest friends have troops that are bravely fighting alongside us in Iraq, spearheaded by the two multinational divisions led by the British and the Poles. British, Italians, Bulgarians, Thais, Poles, Danes, Estonians, Ukrainians, and Spanish have been killed while trying to advance freedom and democracy in Iraq. Just recently, one of our smallest allies, El Salvador, has been singled out for the valor of its troops in countering the recent violence in Iraq. Most significantly, the largest partner of this Coalition is the Iraqis themselves, tens of thousands of whom are already fighting for a new Iraq. The number of Iraqi Security Forces may exaggerate their capability at this time, but not their determination to rebuild their country, as more than 300 Iraqi Security Forces

have been killed in action, and close to 700 wounded.

The horrible abuses at Abu Ghraib prison have been, as Secretary Rumsfeld characterized it, a body blow for all of us. These actions are a betrayal of what thousands of Americans have risked their lives to achieve in Iraq. But these actions do not represent America, nor do they represent American values. We will uncover the truth. We will punish the guilty. And we will act to prevent such abuses from recurring in the future. The Iraqi people will see that a free democratic system functions and operates transparently. Americans are human and we make mistakes, but when we do, we work to correct them. And it was not a mistake to free the Iraqi people and the world from one of the most abusive dictators in history.

The Coalition's Strategy to Achieve Victory in Iraq: Capacity Building

We need to continue to move forward on all fronts implementing the coalition's strategy to set conditions that will ensure a free Iraq that is stable and at peace with its neighbors. Our strategy involves three interdependent lines of operations to build indigenous Iraqi capacity and transition responsibilities from the Coalition to Iraq rapidly, but not hastily. While the lessons to be learned from the violent events of the past few weeks affect the way we pursue these three lines of operation, these are still the three key elements that will bring success in Iraq.

The first element involves building capable Iraqi security forces to achieve stability. Accordingly, we have redoubled our efforts to recruit, train, equip and, most importantly, mentor Iraqi security forces - Police, Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, Army, Border Police, and the Facilities Protection Service. Over the next few months our aim is to be able to certify the ability of these forces, as they become ready to assume greater responsibilities from coalition forces. Also, through technical assistance and mentoring by U.S. prosecutors, we are helping to build the capacity of the Iraqi criminal justice sector.

The second element involves nurturing Iraq's capacity for representative self-government, with the aim of creating a government that can assume sovereignty on behalf of the Iraqi people. June 30 is not a magical date on which the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) will suddenly transition all of its responsibilities to a new Iraq government. It is actually just one step, albeit a very important one, in a process. Free Iraqis have been gradually assuming responsibility for governmental functions for quite some time. Eleven Iraqi ministries already report to the Governing Council rather than the CPA. Iraq now has a functioning judiciary to provide equal justice for all. At the local and provincial levels, elected assemblies are up and running. When the Interim Government assumes sovereign authority on June 30, its most important task will be to prepare the way for elections to establish the Transitional Government in January of 2005. That government in turn facilitate the drafting of a permanent Iraqi Constitution which will pave the way for the election of a fully constitutional government at the end of 2005.

The third element of the strategy involves the reconstruction of Iraq's infrastructure and the restoration of essential services that are providing better lives for Iraqis and putting people back to work. Iraq has

tremendous potential. Iraq has well-educated and industrious people. It has fertile land and water resources and it has abundant natural resources. Our strategy aims to put Iraq on course to realizing that potential and to setting conditions for Iraqis to prosper in the future.

Iraq's Progress Since Liberation

The recent violence in Iraq is aimed at obstructing the progress that is being made toward building a new Iraq and to create chaos that will permit the return of the old tyranny or the imposition of a new one. Despite this assault, after 35 years of living through the nightmare of Saddam's cruelty and misrule, Iraq is slowly beginning to realize its long-suppressed potential. Given its talented people, fertile land, and natural resources, Iraq should have been a wealthy nation. Yet Iraq's economy was moribund due to state control, rampant corruption, and Saddam's misallocation of resources. Money earmarked for life-saving medicines was used to buy means to end life. Money available to maintain Iraq's infrastructure instead maintained Saddam's palaces. Schools that should have been centers of learning became command centers and ammunition bunkers.

Today, the Iraqi economy is on the path to recovery and prosperity. Unemployment has fallen by nearly one-half over the past year. Inflation is a quarter of what it was before the war. Iraqi marketplaces are filled with consumer goods for the first time in decades. All of this is occurring despite ongoing security concerns, and before the full effect of the \$18.4 billion in reconstruction grants and more than \$15 billion in international aid is felt.

Iraqi essential services have also seen significant improvement in the past year. Electricity generation has surpassed prewar levels and is more evenly distributed. Iraqi schools are no longer propaganda factories for Saddam's cult of personality and Ba'ath party fascism. Health care spending in Iraq is 30 times greater than its pre-war levels.

Iraqis are also experiencing unprecedented political freedoms as well. The Transitional Administrative Law, the document that will govern Iraq's transition period beginning June 30 and which was signed by all members of the Iraqi Governing Council, is the most liberal basic governance document in the Arab world, with assurances that include:

- Freedom of Religion;
- Freedom of Expression;
- Freedom of the Press; and
- Freedom of Assembly;

The TAL calls for equal rights for all citizens of Iraq regardless of ethnicity, denomination, or sex. Over ninety percent of Iraqi towns and provinces have local councils. More than half of the Iraqi population is active in community affairs, and one in five belongs to a non-governmental organization.

Security in Iraq

Although these achievements are far from trivial, they take place against the background of

continuing violence. The past month has been as costly to us as any since the liberation of Iraq a year ago. We are facing a pivotal moment in the battle for Iraq's future, making sober reflection on where we stand and where we are heading in Iraq critical.

This reflection begins with recognizing who the enemy is in Iraq. Among the groups in Fallujah the U. S. Marines have been fighting are the murderers and torturers of the Fedayeen Saddam and Mukhabarat who melted away without engaging our forces a year ago. Reports indicate that Iraqi officers of the so-called "Special Operations and Antiterrorism Branch," -- a truly Orwellian designation -- also known as M-14, are responsible for planning roadway improvised explosive devices and some of the larger car bombs that have killed Iraqis, Americans, and other foreigners. Their campaign of terror and intimidation springs not from frustration with the Coalition's occupation of Iraq, but from their desire to dominate and brutalize their fellow Iraqis. Captured documents reveal that these members of Saddam's secret service were making plans for urban guerilla warfare even before the fall of Baghdad, and took steps such as preparing explosives-laden vests for suicide attacks before the war. In order to destroy the last vestiges of Saddam's tyranny, it was always necessary that we defeat these forces. They are joined by domestic and foreign terrorists, including the notorious Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who moved to Iraq after the fall of Afghanistan and who claims credit for personally beheading Nicholas Berg and is responsible for conducting many of the worst terrorist bombings in Iraq, and he is connected to a number of plots in Europe and possibly elsewhere.

In the Shi'a community, Muqtada al Sadr's power grab has not succeeded. A February poll by Oxford Research International showed that only one percent of Iraqis name al Sadr as the national leader they trust most. This number seems to be declining as the Shi'a clerical establishment influences their community against him. U.S. and Iraqi forces have launched numerous attacks against Sadr's gang of thugs in the past week, further limiting his efforts to intimidate his way into power.

Lessons Learned and Challenges Ahead

It is well known that no pre-war prediction will unfold perfectly, and that there will be setbacks that require adjustments in both objectives and courses of action. In war, plans are at best the basis for future changes. This Coalition has repeatedly demonstrated that it can be flexible when necessary. Examples of this flexibility include:

- Creating a new type of indigenous force (the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps) to fill the gap left by the Iraqi police service, many of whose members turned out not to be as well trained as we had supposed.
- Requesting a large amount of supplemental funds when the requirements for Iraqi reconstruction became clear.
- Responding to Iraqi demands for an earlier resumption of sovereignty by developing the idea of a transitional government that could take power before a permanent constitution is ratified.
- Dropping the "caucus plan" for selecting the transitional government, when it turned out

to be unpopular with Iraqis, and substituting a two-step process involving an interim government that can take power before legislative elections.

- Revising the mechanisms for implementing the de-Ba'athification policy to address complaints that the appeals process was not working as intended, and to respond to the Sunni minority's fears of marginalization.

Similarly, events of the past month have taught us several lessons that have influenced our policy decisions. We are focusing intently on the Iraqi Security Forces, whose performance during the recent spike in combat activity has been mixed. Approximately half of the security forces stood their ground, and in Fallujah some ICDC units fought bravely and well. Iraqi commandos from the Iraqi Counter Terrorist Force were instrumental in expelling Sadr's militia from the Mukhaiyam Mosque in Karbala. However, other units, however, did not face the enemy or avoided contact altogether, and a small proportion cooperated with the enemy.

Our disappointment with the security forces has to be tempered with realism. Overall, they were not capable by themselves of deterring or withstanding the recent attacks, and that fact should not surprise us. We have been fielding Iraqi security forces as fast as we could, but we never expected Iraqi security forces to take over responsibility for Iraq's security on June 30th, much less April 5th. Our plan was – and is – for Iraqi forces to develop strength, capability, and experience under the security umbrella of the Coalition, while the Coalition retained overall security responsibilities. Recent events provide lessons we can apply to increase the impact of what we are doing.

The first lesson is the need for stronger leaders in the security forces. We will build on the leaders whose units fought and we will replace those whose units did not. We will integrate Iraqi officers with Coalition forces and we will embed Coalition officers with the Iraqi security forces. This arrangement provides liaison, which produces mutual confidence, and it also helps us develop Iraqi leadership. Similarly, we need police liaisons and specialized trainers to get down to police stations around the country to provide confidence and set the example.

Second, the Iraqi security forces need more and better equipment. We had not planned for them to be fully equipped at this point, but some police and ICDC units were outgunned in recent action, so we are reexamining the equipment requirements. We have also incurred some delays in equipping the Iraqi security forces. Part of the delay has been caused by challenges in the contracting process, and we hope those problems have been fixed. We need to make up for lost time, but any delay is unacceptable.

Third, it is clear that the members of the security forces, most of whom are Iraqi patriots, need an Iraqi rallying point. They need to understand they operate under an Iraqi chain of command, and that at the top of that chain of command is a lawfully constituted Iraqi government. The chain of command is being put in place now. A defense minister has been named, along with a commander in chief of the armed forces and a chief of staff. A new interior minister has also taken office. We need to fill in the rest of the chain, but Iraqis in the security forces can see today that there are Iraqis at the top.

The greatest factor in the mixed performance of the security forces was an intangible: fear. The enemies of a democratic future for Iraq have so terrorized the cities of central Iraq that many members of the security forces doubt that they or their families can be protected from the retribution that may follow their participation in operations alongside the Coalition. Until Iraqis are convinced that Saddam's regime has been permanently and irreversibly removed, and until a long and ghastly part of their history is put to rest and overcome, that fear will remain. Convincing them of this truth – that Saddam and the Saddamists are finished – will continue to require investments of our time and our resources and our precious men and women in uniform, to continue to build trust among the Iraqi people. That is why it is so important in this time of stress to show that our commitment to their freedom is rock-solid.

Political Progress and the Way Ahead

The timing of the current violence was not entirely unexpected. President Bush warned that we could expect increased violence in the months leading up to the transition to Iraqi sovereignty. We knew that the enemies of democracy in Iraq would do everything they could to disrupt the transition to sovereignty. This expectation was confirmed when we intercepted a letter from Abu Musab Zarqawi to his Al Qaeda colleagues in Afghanistan. In this letter, Zarqawi recognized that the fast-approaching turnover of sovereignty would further weaken his cause, saying:

“With the spread of the [Iraqi] army and the police, our future is becoming frightening. The problem is you end up having an army and police connected by lineage, blood and appearance to the people of the region. How can we kill their cousins and sons and under what pretext, after the Americans start withdrawing? This is the democracy . . . we will have no pretext.”

Zarqawi's letter strongly suggests that we are seeing an upsurge in violence precisely because the terrorists and extremists in Iraq believe we are winning and that their time to derail democracy in Iraq is running out. The same political situation that is driving such attacks also is a source of optimism for the Iraqi people and their Coalition partners

The reason the enemy believes its time is running out is because Iraqis, as reflected in the Transitional Administrative Law, have established a clear way forward for drafting and ratifying a permanent constitution for Iraq and the election of a government in accordance with its terms. This political transition is scheduled to evolve over three phases:

- Phase I (June 30, 2004) – Iraqi Interim Government
- Phase II (January 2005) – Iraqi Transitional Government
- Phase III (January 2006) – Iraqi Government under Permanent Constitution

According to the timeline laid out in the TAL, the Iraqi Interim Government will take power on June 30. This Interim Government is being selected based on intensive consultations among Iraqis, led by Ambassador Brahimi, the UN Secretary General's Special Advisor on Iraq. Under this plan, the UN will appoint an Iraqi executive consisting of:

- A President;
- Two Deputy Presidents;
- A Prime Minister; and

A Ministerial Cabinet.

In accordance with the TAL, the interim Government will assume full sovereignty on June 30th. And in July a national conference will be convened to select a “consultative” council. Ambassador Brahimi currently is in Iraq where he is consulting closely with Iraqis and U.S. officials to produce a list of names by the end of May.

We believe the ideas put forth by Mr. Brahimi are promising and we look forward to more details from the UN. U.S. officials remain in close contact with Mr. Brahimi, members of the Iraqi Governing Council and other Iraqis as these procedures are finalized.

This Administration has made a major effort from the start to involve the United Nations in the reconstruction of Iraq. The Coalition’s ongoing efforts in Iraq have been endorsed by three Security Council Resolutions: UN Security Council Resolution 1483 – passed May 22, 2003 – supports the formation of the CPA and an Iraqi Interim Administration. UNSCR 1500 – passed August 14, 2003 – welcomed the establishment of the Governing Council. UNSCR 1511 – passed October 16, 2003 – authorizes a multinational force under U.S. command. All three of these resolutions were unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council.

The Administration has worked closely with the United Nations Secretary General throughout the past year. Before his tragic murder by terrorists, UN envoy Sergio Viera de Mello was instrumental in establishing the Iraqi Governing Council. Since the tragic bombing of the UN Headquarters in Baghdad last August – which Zarqawi boasts was his doing and which was clearly aimed at driving out the UN – security for the UN has been a major challenge. However, the UN representative for Security Coordination’s Office has been in Baghdad since mid-January. A UN Election Assistance Team headed by Carina Perelli continues to work with the Iraqi people to help them create the legal and institutional structures for direct national elections by the end of January 2005. And as noted, we have welcomed the proposals of the new UN envoy, Lakdar Brahimi, regarding the creation of the Iraqi Interim Government.

The Interim Government will serve until the Transitional National Assembly, or TNA, is elected in either December 2004 or January 2005. The TNA will then elect a three-person Presidency Council consisting of a President and two Deputies, who will appoint by unanimous vote the Prime Minister and, on the Prime Minister’s recommendation, a Council of Ministers. The Prime Minister and Council of Ministers must obtain a vote of confidence from the TNA before taking office. Together, the TNA, the Presidency Council and the Council of Ministers will comprise the Iraqi Transitional Government.

In addition to being the legislature, the TNA will also draft a permanent constitution for Iraq, which will be submitted for popular ratification by October 15, 2005. Elections under this new constitution are to be held by December 15, 2005, and the newly elected government, operating under the permanent constitution, will take office by December 31, 2005.

Now, I cannot sit here today and predict the exact form of the permanent government. Iraqis will decide

the exact provisions of their permanent Iraqi constitution, and who will emerge as the leaders of the new Iraq. After 35 years of totalitarian dictatorship, it is a complicated task to build new political institutions and it cannot happen overnight.

Since the liberation of Iraq a year ago, Iraqis have conducted themselves extraordinarily well for a nation so long exposed to Saddam Hussein's unique level of sadism. In a remarkably short period of time, Iraqi leaders have overcome many differences to demonstrate the arts of political compromise and their commitment to the goal of a new Iraq.

Americans of all people should understand that democracy does not guarantee specific outcomes, it opens ideas up for debate. One need only look back at our own Constitutional Convention to be reminded that with any attempt to establish rule for the people by the people, there is always a great deal of uncertainty and controversy, even after the ink has dried. We should not expect Iraqis to achieve immediately what we and the British, for example, have labored to accomplish over the course of centuries. But even an imperfect Iraqi democracy will be an enormous improvement for a country that has suffered so much over the past 35 years.

An early end to the occupation is essential to our political strategy to defeat the terrorists. A sovereign Iraqi government will be better able to marginalize its extremist opponents politically while Coalition forces defeat them militarily. As the letter from Zarqawi demonstrates, such a transformation is the worst possible scenario for those who oppose the emergence of democracy in Iraq. They fear it, and that's why they are trying so hard to derail it.

Moving ahead is important to inspire Iraqi confidence that the transition is moving forward and that their country will not be occupied indefinitely. The transfer of sovereignty will also help to create the national rallying point for the Iraqi Security Forces I alluded to earlier. But it is important also to make clear that we believe that there will continue to be an urgent need for coalition forces to remain in Iraq after June 30, as there will still be serious threats to security in Iraq. But, on July 1, Iraq will be governed by an Iraqi government. This is in accordance with the expressed wishes of the Iraqi people.

We will have a legal basis for continued MNF operations in Iraq. The TAL provisions relevant to security arrangements provide the appropriate framework for implementing our security strategy in Iraq after this transition. Article 59(B) of the TAL states that Iraqi armed forces will be "a principal partner in the multinational force operating in Iraq under unified command pursuant to" UNSCR 1511. Article 59(C) states that the elected Iraqi Transitional Government "shall have the authority to conclude binding international agreements regarding the activities of the multinational force," and that "nothing in this Law shall affect rights and obligations . . . under UNSCR 1511 . . . which will govern the multinational force's activities pending entry into force of those agreements." And perhaps most importantly, Article 26 (C) ensures that CPA orders and regulations "shall remain in force until rescinded or amended by legislation duly enacted and having the force of law."

While it is important not to view the accomplishments in Iraq through rose-colored glasses, it is also harmful to give way to excessive pessimism. The American people need to know what their forces are

accomplishing in Iraq, how the efforts of our servicemen and women are transforming the lives of 25 million Iraqis for the better, and transforming a region that has for too long accommodated despotism to the detriment of its freedom starved populations. And both our friends and our enemies in Iraq need to know that we have the will and resolve to accomplish our objectives.

They also need to know that the Defense and State Departments share the same objectives in Iraq. Today as we face the challenge of executing the transition from the Coalition Provisional Authority to a sovereign Iraqi government 45 days from now, we must also plan for U.S. representation in Iraq to be conducted by a U.S. Embassy. Fortunately, planning for this transition has been well underway within the Defense and State Departments for some time. LTG (USA, Ret.) Mick Kicklighter and Ambassador Frank Ricciardone lead Transition Teams for the two Departments, and they have worked hand in glove with the CPA and Defense and Army staffs since early January to make the transition a success. They have formed an Interagency Transition Planning Team (ITPT) and provide the State and Defense leadership for drafting an Operations Plan for the transition. Experts from 16 subject matter sectors (such as Security, Human Resources and Personnel, Facilities, Finance, Medical and Health Services, etc.) from State and Defense coordinate closely to draft the highly detailed, time-phased plan. The ITPT as a whole meets almost daily, with sector leads meeting with their teams more often as required. General Kicklighter and Ambassador Ricciardone meet several times each week to ensure that planning and implementation of the plan are on track.

When the President declared the end of major combat operations last year, he noted that “We have difficult work to do in Iraq. . . . The transition from dictatorship to democracy will take time.” This prediction has turned out to be correct, although the specific nature of some of the challenges we have encountered could not have been foreseen a year ago. But it is important to remember how large the stakes are and that fortitude and steadfastness are essential for success.

Iraqis seem to understand this and are less prone to pessimism in the face of setbacks than we are half a world away. Despite all the violence and uncertainty caused by the enemies of a free Iraq, Iraqis sense dramatic improvement in their everyday lives and anticipate much more.

Iraqis recognize the challenges they face and embrace them as a revolutionary opportunity to build a free nation and to better their lives. Recently, Nesreen Berwari, the woman serving as the Iraqi Minister of Municipalities and Public Works said: “On April 9, 2003, Iraqis were offered the opportunity to begin to dream their future. Before April 9, 2003, we were not allowed to dream. We could not imagine life with the kinds of positive challenges we face today.” Minister Berwari’s optimism persists even though she recently survived a second assassination attempt on her life which killed her bodyguard.

There is an old Chinese saying, “May you live in interesting times.” This saying is intended as a curse not a blessing. There are some days when it is tempting to view events in Iraq this way.

But overall, I think we are in fact blessed with the opportunity and the capability to help the Iraqi people to realize their goal of a stable and representative government. And with this Committee’s help, we will

begin to make this a reality with the transition to Iraqi sovereignty next month. Recently in Houston, seven Iraqi businessmen were fitted for artificial hands. Saddam had ordered their hands amputated, to make them scapegoats for Iraq's economic failure. As one of those businessmen said, "The age of tyrants is over, the age of good remains. God willing. Good is coming in Iraq."

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