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## The Road Map For A Sovereign Iraq

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After a suicide car bombing killed Iraqi Interim Governing Council President Izzedine Salim and eight others on May 17, one Iraqi put that act of terror into a larger perspective for those who wonder if democracy can work in Iraq. His name is Omar, one of the new Iraqi "bloggers," and he wrote on his Web log: "We cannot . . . protect every single person, including our leaders and the higher officials who make favorite targets for the terrorists -- but we can make their attempts go in vain by making our leadership 'replaceable.'"

Exercising his newfound freedom of speech via the Internet, Omar addressed what he sees as the terrorists' fundamental misunderstanding about where Iraq is going. Terrorists -- whether Saddamists or foreigners -- "think in the same way their dictator-masters do," failing to grasp that the idea of leadership by an indispensable strongman applies to totalitarian regimes -- not democracies.

That understanding of the stability of representative government was confirmed when council member Ghazi Mashal Ajil al-Yawar assumed the Governing Council presidency. This orderly transfer of leadership showed that the rudiments of a democratic process are already at work in Iraq. The hope for a new Iraq, in which freedom is protected by democracy and the rule of law, rests in such processes.

This hopeful vision is what the enemies of a new Iraq fear the most. Fighting on even after the capture of Saddam Hussein last December, the murderers and torturers of his regime and their terrorist allies, with their perverse ideology of evil, have been seeking with death and destruction to prevent the emergence of a new and free Iraq. In a letter that coalition forces intercepted in January, one of the most notorious of these terrorists, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, wrote to his al Qaeda associates in Afghanistan that democracy in Iraq brings the prospect of "suffocation" for the terrorists, the prospect of Iraqis fighting in their own defense. When the army and police are "linked to the inhabitants of this area by kinship, blood and honor," Zarqawi asks, "how can we fight their cousins and their sons and under what pretext after the Americans pull back? . . . Democracy is coming, and there will be no excuse thereafter."

President Bush recently outlined a five-step plan for helping Iraqis move beyond occupation to a fully

constitutional government, a government that rejects weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, preserves Iraq's territorial integrity and lives peacefully with its neighbors. The plan involves five interdependent phases to build Iraqis' capacity to manage their own affairs successfully.

## **Transferring Authority**

The first phase of the president's plan will become effective on June 30, when the Coalition Provisional Authority transfers authority to the Interim Iraqi Government, a body that will consist of a president, two deputy presidents, a prime minister, a deputy prime minister and 31 other cabinet ministers. The members of this new government will have responsibility until elections are held in January 2005 for day-to-day governance and will work as a full partner in providing security to Iraq.

The members of the new government, announced on June 2, were chosen through a process of wide-ranging consultations with the Iraqi people, led by Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, the special adviser on Iraq to the U.N. secretary-general. The new president will be Ghazi al-Yawar, the same man who stepped in to fill the place of the murdered Izzedine Salim. The new prime minister -- with principal responsibility for the management of the government -- is Dr. Iyad Allawi, a physician and a distinguished opponent of Saddam Hussein for many years, who was once the target of an assassination attempt by Saddam's agents.

The new government is not the old Governing Council in a new form -- only four of the old 26-member Governing Council are part of the new government. The new cabinet was described by another Iraqi blogger, this one named Zeyad, as an "impressive" group, including six women ministers, "an unprecedented step in the region." "Iraqis need to be optimistic at such a critical moment," Zeyad added, or else they "will be left behind along with the dark forces that insist on killing more Iraqis and disrupting the new changes."

On the occasion of the announcement of the new government, Dr. Allawi spoke to his "dear brothers and sisters" about building a "true national unity" so that we can "forge ahead toward building a society ruled by law, covered by justice, and equality, freedom and respect for human rights" to build "a civilized advanced Iraq to be enjoyed by all Iraqis."

Dr. Allawi also asked "to record our profound gratitude and appreciation to the U.S.-led coalition, which has made great sacrifices for the liberation of Iraq." Then, breaking from his native Arabic, Dr. Allawi added: "I would like to say this in English. I would like to thank the coalition led by the United States for the sacrifices they have provided in the process of the liberation of Iraq."

After Iraq becomes sovereign on June 30, a new U.S. Embassy in Iraq will open for business on July 1 headed by Ambassador John Negroponte, who will be the representative of the United States to the sovereign government of Iraq. The character of our engagement will change, but our commitment will not. Iraqis will make the decisions about how their country is governed. But we are ready to continue as full partners in helping bring democracy and security to Iraq. During this stage, our focus will rest on supporting Iraq's political transition, equipping and training Iraqi security forces, and helping to set the

stage for national elections at the end of the year.

## Security

Security is the foundation for victory in Iraq -- the foundation on which all other successes are built -- and the key to that security is enabling Iraqis to take the lead in their own defense. Moreover, Iraqis bring unique advantages against the kind of enemy we are fighting in Iraq today. Iraqis -- who have a native knowledge of everything from city neighborhoods and regional accents to religious sensitivities and even local license plates -- have advantages over any foreign force in confronting the security problems of Iraq today and its urban environments in particular. One notable recent success occurred on May 30, when Iraqi forces captured Umar Baziyani, a known terrorist and murder suspect believed to be one of Zarqawi's top lieutenants.

There are currently well over 200,000 Iraqis on duty or in training in the five branches of the Iraqi security forces -- the new army, the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, the Iraqi police, the border guards and the Facilities Protection Service. While the numbers are impressive for forces that didn't exist one year ago, numbers alone can be misleading. Iraqi forces still have significant shortcomings in training, equipment and leadership. No one had any expectation that Iraqi security forces would be ready this past April to stand up to the kind of fighting they encountered in Fallujah and in the Najaf-Karbala region. Not surprisingly, many Iraqi security forces performed poorly in that recent fighting, but many others stood their ground and performed creditably. As one example, when the Government House in Mosul came under a night attack, the governor stayed at his post defended by Iraqi Civil Defense Corps troops, who stood their ground effectively until Iraqi police came back on duty. Throughout the fighting, Iraqis knew that Americans were there to help if needed, but as a result they didn't have to call on them. There were other recent examples of effective performance by Iraqi security forces, including those trained by our British coalition partners in the Basra area and those supported by Polish forces in Hilla.

After the lengthy competitive bidding process for contracts under the Iraq Reconstruction Supplemental appropriated by Congress last fall, substantial quantities of equipment are starting to fill the shortages in Iraqi forces. In addition, over the past two months, the Iraqis added another \$1 billion of Iraqi funds to meet additional security requirements. Training for Iraqi security forces has now been consolidated under a U.S. three-star general. And we are applying lessons learned from the successes and failures of Iraqi forces in the recent fighting: the importance of good Iraqi leadership, reporting to an Iraqi chain of command backed up and embraced by coalition forces.

Over the next few months, our aim is to prepare Iraqi security forces to assume greater responsibilities from coalition forces -- allowing Iraqis to take local control of the cities, even as coalition forces move into a supporting role and provide forces only as needed. We will continue the process of integrating Iraqi officers with coalition forces and embedding coalition officers with Iraqis -- the sort of mentorship that will continue to develop more capable Iraqi security leaders. To foster a real sense of unity and independence, Iraqi security forces also need an Iraqi rallying point: Iraqis want to take orders from Iraqis. One of the first tasks of the new ministers of defense and interior will be to build Iraqi chains of command. As these command structures fill in, Iraqi security forces will know that fellow Iraqis lead

them from the top.

By next January, we expect the Iraqi army to grow from the current six battalions to 27, or approximately 35,000 soldiers. An Iraqi initiative -- a special division called the Iraqi National Task Force -- is taking form and the first battalion of that force should be on the streets of Baghdad by July. Plans call for the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps to reach 45 battalions, or approximately 40,000 personnel, this fall. There are now close to 90,000 serving in the Iraqi police -- and tens of thousands more in other Ministry of Interior forces -- but many have little or no modern police training. The emphasis in coming months will be to provide the training and the leadership development appropriate for law enforcement in a society that respects the rule of law.

More and more Iraqis seem to feel they can place their trust in their new defense forces. Polls indicate considerable public approval for Iraqi forces even as patience with occupation wears thin. One member of a local district council in Baghdad reflected that sentiment when he said, "Now the people are beginning to understand that [Iraqi forces] are serving the country." The Iraqi general who now leads the all-Iraqi Fallujah brigade, Mohammed Abdul-Latif, recently told a gathering of some 40 sheiks, imams and city council members, "[U.S. troops] were brought here by the acts of one coward who was hunted out of a rat hole, Saddam, who disgraced us all. . . . Let us tell our children that [U.S. troops] came here to protect us. . . . We can help them leave by helping them do their job."

Iraqis are doing more than helping. By our own count, which is probably a significant underestimate, nearly 400 Iraqis have died in the past year for the cause of an Iraq free from tyranny and terror. Despite the enemy's attempts to intimidate them, Iraqis continue to step forward in large numbers to defend their country.

However, U.S. and other coalition forces are indispensable to preserve security while Iraqi forces build their strength. To counter the Saddamists and terrorists who are desperately trying to undermine Iraq's transition to democracy, we will keep our troops in place at whatever level is required. Our commanders in Iraq constantly reassess the numbers of troops they need to meet the mission. As we have often said, and as the president reiterated in his recent address to the nation, if our commanders on the ground ask for more troops, they will get more troops.

### **Rebuilding Iraq's Infrastructure**

The third step in the president's plan for victory in Iraq involves rebuilding Iraq's civil infrastructure -- deeply damaged by decades of Saddam's neglect. The majority of the ministries -- to include Health, Education, and Public Works and Municipalities -- have already been handed over to Iraqis, a process that will be complete by July 1.

Already, through a combination of oil revenues and existing assets, nearly \$20 billion of Iraqi funds have gone into the Development Fund for Iraq to finance government operations and reconstruction projects. An additional \$8 billion of oil revenues are projected to go into the fund by the end of this year. These funds are paying the salaries of over 350,000 teachers and professors and 100,000 doctors and

health workers and have paid for \$1.2 billion of improvements to the electricity infrastructure, \$300 million for water, sewage and irrigation projects, and \$660 million to sustain and expand oil production. Health-care spending in Iraq has increased some 30 times over prewar levels, allowing children to receive crucial vaccinations for the first time in years. Using part of the \$800 million in Iraqi assets provided to local governors and local commanders, Coalition forces and local authorities have rehabilitated more than 2,200 schools and 240 hospitals.

Today, the Iraqi economy is also on the path to recovery. The new Iraqi dinar has been introduced and has traded at a stable exchange rate for over four months.

Electricity is one of the most important factors affecting the lives of ordinary Iraqis. At approximately 4,000 megawatts of peak capacity, electricity generation is back to prewar levels, and we are aiming for higher levels this summer. However, with Iraq's increasing prosperity, demand is also growing rapidly, and the electric power system is a principal target of enemy sabotage, so this sector will remain a challenge in coming months.

As the principal source of revenue for the new Iraqi government, oil production is another main target of the enemy. In recent months, production reached the prewar level of about 2.4 million barrels a day. Under Saddam, the revenue from that oil production was used to build palaces and weapons; today it is being used to build schools and vaccinate children.

Iraq could reach production levels of three million barrels of oil a day -- a level last seen before Desert Storm -- and has the potential to go further. Recently, the Iraqi oil minister proposed a reconstitution of Iraq's national oil company, a move that will help facilitate foreign investment and increase Iraqi revenues further.

## **Enlisting International Support**

The entire international community has a stake in Iraq's success. The fourth step in the president's plan involves enlisting additional international support for Iraq's transition to democracy. The U.N. has already played a critical role in forming the Governing Council last summer, with the heroic assistance of Sergio Vieira de Mello, the special representative of the secretary-general, who gave his life in the process. More recently, Ambassador Brahimi has played the key role on behalf of the U.N. secretary-general this spring in the formation of the Interim Government. A U.N. election team has been in Iraq working on facilitating the forthcoming election process. Three unanimous U.N. Security Council Resolutions, in May, August and October of last year, have provided the basis for coalition efforts in Iraq, including the multinational force under U.S. command. Yesterday the Security Council unanimously endorsed the transition timetable adopted by Iraqis and encouraged other U.N. members to add their support.

Thirty-one nations, in addition to the U.S. and Iraq, have troops that are bravely fighting for a free Iraq, and more than 100 of their soldiers have given their lives. Last fall, 70 nations assembled at the Madrid donors conference and pledged billions of dollars to build a new Iraq. The assistance of the international

community will continue to be important for helping Iraq stand on its own feet.

## **Iraqi Self-Government**

The fifth step in the president's plan involves nurturing Iraq's capacity for representative self-government, leading to a constitutional government by the end of 2005.

When day-to-day governing responsibility is transferred on June 30, work will already be under way on the next phase in the process as defined by the Transitional Administrative Law, a kind of interim constitution written by the Iraqis in March. The Interim Government will serve until the end of 2004, when Iraqis will go to the polls to elect representatives for the first freely elected national government in Iraq's history. Ensuring adequate security for elections will be a major challenge and will require the help of coalition forces. By the end of 2005, Iraqis are scheduled to vote on a new constitution that protects the rights of all of its citizens, of all religious and ethnic groups.

The killers and torturers who kept Saddam in power all these years and their terrorist allies -- who also fear a free Iraq -- will do everything they can, through terror and violence, to block that progress. They are experts in sowing death and destruction and they should not be underestimated. But they offer nothing positive for the Iraqi people, and the evil they represent is one that few Iraqis want for themselves or their children. By enabling Iraqis to take the lead in the fight for Iraq's future, we will confront the Saddamists and terrorists with the defeat that Zarqawi fears.

Nothing is more important to world security than defeating the forces of evil by nurturing the seeds of freedom -- especially in Afghanistan and Iraq. Our enemies understand that these are now the central battlegrounds in the war on terrorism. But the burden is not ours alone. In a remarkably short time, Iraqi leaders, for all their diversity, have shown that they are learning the arts of political compromise -- and that they are dedicated to their country's unity. Now is the moment when Iraqis must rise to the challenge. Now is the time for Iraqis to take the future of Iraq into their own hands.

The blogger Omar's final reflection in the wake of Izzedine Salim's death is a further indication that Iraqis are ready. "Are we sad?" he wrote in his Web log. "Yes of course, but we're absolutely not discouraged because we know our enemies and we decided to go in this battle to the end. . . . I've tasted freedom, my friends, and I'd rather die fighting to preserve my freedom before I find myself trapped in another nightmare of blood and oppression."

Like Omar, we remain committed, as do the brave young Americans in Iraq. And we remain hopeful. Our own history attests to the fact that democracy can be a hard-won prize. But we also know that the goal is worth the fight.

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