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Sunday, Feb. 23, 2003

Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Town Hall Meeting with Iraqi-American Community

(Town Hall Meeting with Iraqi-American Community)

Wolfowitz: Thank you very much. Thank you Emad, thank you Maha. Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to greet you as I learned to greet people when I was the American Ambassador to Indonesia some 15 years ago, [in Arabic]. (Applause.)

I'd like to thank you all for joining us here today. I know it's a snowy and difficult day here in the Detroit area. We experienced something like it in Washington not long ago.

When I was Ambassador to Indonesia someone told me a little story about the problems of cross-cultural communication between Americans and Asians. It was a story about an American consultant who was once invited to give a speech in Japan. Naturally he consulted a consultant about his speech and the consultant gave him this advice. He said you have to understand that the Japanese like you to put on a great show of humility. So begin your speech by saying that you're really not qualified to be speaking here, you're going to make mistakes, and you want to apologize in advance for any mistakes you make.

The speaker duly followed this advice and began his speech as he was advised, but to his shock and dismay, the audience erupted into uproarious laughter. He couldn't understand what had happened but he struggled through the end of his speech and finally got off the stage.

The head of the Japanese company that invited him hurried up and said. We are so sorry, sir. You have to understand. We were briefing our employees before your speech and we told them, Americans always start their speeches with a joke. So whatever he says, you have to laugh. (Laughter.)

Well it is standard for Americans to open remarks with a joke and I guess I've just done so but what brings us here together today is no joking matter. We're here to talk about deadly serious business. I brought some very serious people with me who will be available afterwards to help explain further

what we can do together to face the tasks ahead and let me just introduce them.

There's Lieutenant General Michael DeLong. (Applause.) He is the Deputy to General Franks. He's the Deputy Combatant Commander of the U.S. Central Command responsible for operations around the Arabian Peninsula and in a vast part of the world.

Dr. David Chu. (Applause.) David is the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the chief personnel officer of the Department of Defense.

And Dr. William Luti. (Applause.) Bill is the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Near East and South Asia which makes him the principal official in the Office of the Secretary of Defense responsible for the Persian Gulf and the surrounding area.

Critical decisions about the future of Iraq lie ahead of us. I've come here today not just to speak to you but just as important, to hear from you. You Americans with roots in Iraq and some more recent immigrants who are not yet citizens. You have a stake in Iraq's future. And because you know firsthand the truth of Saddam Hussein's regime it is important that we and the rest of the world hear from you. I'm very pleased that so many of our national media are here in fact to give you an opportunity to speak to your fellow Americans.

President Bush is clearly in the final stages of determining whether there can be a peaceful solution to the threat posed by Saddam Hussein or whether the use of force will be necessary. The President confronts some difficult decisions in the coming days and weeks and I know you all join me in praying for him and for his continued courage in confronting the serious threat posed by a dictator who possesses weapons of mass terror and who supports terrorists. (Applause.)

But while there are decisions now that only President Bush can decide it is not too early for the rest of us to be thinking about how to build a just and peaceful and democratic Iraq after Saddam Hussein is gone. In fact we in the Administration have already begun doing so and if you have not had the chance yet I encourage you to read the speech that Steven Hadley, the President's Deputy National Security Advisor, delivered last week in New York City.

As I said, I've come here to listen to you, not just to speak to you, but let me start our discussion by focusing briefly on five subjects.

First, what are the principles that should shape the future of a post-Saddam Iraq? Principles that can be broadly agreed upon by the Iraqi people themselves, by the United States, and by the broader international coalition?

Second, what are some of the key issues that the Iraqi people will face in the aftermath of Saddam Hussein's regime? And how can the international community assist Iraqis to answer those questions which Iraqis must answer for themselves?

Third, what kinds of assistance should the international community be prepared to provide to meet the immediate needs of the Iraqi people?

Fourth, perhaps most important, can democracy take root in Iraq and how will it do so?

And fifth, and the reason why I brought such a distinguished and important group with me today, we

want to talk with you in this open forum and then we'll be available afterwards to talk in more detail, about how Iraqi-American citizens and Iraqis who have recently immigrated to the United States can assist the U.S. government and the coalition in the aftermath of a forcible removal of the Saddam Hussein regime should it come to that.

Let me first briefly talk about those principles. In the speech I spoke of earlier, Steve Hadley as I said, the President's Deputy National Security Advisor said, and I'm quoting now, "The goal which we are confident we share with Iraq's people is an Iraq that is whole, free, and at peace with itself and its neighbors; an Iraq that is moving toward democracy in which all religions and ethnic communities have a voice and in which individual rights are protected regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity; and," he concluded, "an Iraq that adheres to the rule of law at home and lives up to its international obligations."

Let me summarize briefly the principles that the U.S. government is applying in thinking about a post-Saddam Iraq and you can read them in more detail in Mr. Hadley's speech.

They are first, and this is really the overarching principle, the United States seeks to liberate Iraq, not to occupy Iraq. (Applause.)

Second, Iraq must be disarmed of all weapons of mass terror, weapons production capabilities and the means to deliver such weapons. This is a complex and dangerous task for which detailed planning is already underway.

Third, we must eliminate Iraq's terrorist infrastructure. (Applause.)

Fourth, Iraq must be preserved as a unified state with its territorial integrity intact. (Applause.)

And fifth, with our coalition partners we must help the Iraqi people begin the process of economic and political reconstruction.

Those are principles that define American policy, that define the principles on which the coalition will operate, and if I can judge from the reaction of this audience it seems to me they are principles that we here agree on.

But there are other issues that really have to be answered by Iraqis, that cannot be answered by others. In moving toward that goal Iraqis themselves must answer such questions, and this is just a partial list. About democratic institutions. And keep in mind that democratic institutions are not just about free elections but about securing individual freedom and equal justice under law. But Iraqis need to answer the question what institutions are best suited to secure freedom and democracy in the unique circumstances of Iraq?

A second important set of issues, recognizing that democratic institutions cannot come into being overnight, is to figure out how quickly the transition to democratic government should take place and in what stages.

A third important question, how can Iraqis ensure the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq while providing the appropriate level of self-government? For those of you who know American history, you know that this was a challenge our country faced more than 200 years ago. The answers we framed have worked well for us but Iraqis need answers that are suited for Iraqi conditions.

Fourth, and quite importantly I think, how do you strike a balance between the need to account for past injustices and the need to avoid creating new animosities and new sources of conflict?

The answers to these questions are not for America nor for the international community to dictate. Iraqis need to answer them for themselves.

A Muslim friend of mine pointed me to Sura 13, verse 11 of the Koran where it says, "Surely God has not changed the condition of a people until they change their own condition." (Applause.)

Today I hope you will share your thoughts with us and with the American people who are listening to us today about these important subjects.

Third, what the international community must be prepared to do. While Iraqis must confront many issues and challenges, they will not be alone. The international community must be prepared to do its share to help Iraq in the process of liberating the Iraqi people and setting them immediately on the road to recovery.

Should military force become necessary to liberate Iraq from Saddam Hussein, the United States and its coalition partners will make every effort to avoid hurting non-combatants and to spare infrastructure that free Iraqis will need to rebuild their nation. Our concern for the safety of Iraq's people will not begin on the day hostilities end, but on day one.

The United States and the international community will work to ensure the rapid flow of humanitarian relief and the rapid start of economic reconstruction efforts. Indeed, we've already begun discussing with UN agencies, with non-governmental organizations, and with other governments and there are plans and even initial deployments of relief supplies underway. (Applause.)

When Saddam Hussein and his regime are nothing more than a horrible memory, the United States will remain committed to helping the Iraqi people establish a free, prosperous and peaceful Iraq that can serve as a beacon for the entire region. (Applause.)

We know that to arrive at these goals there is no greater engine than the industrious and well-educated people of Iraq themselves. Along with our coalition partners we would help the Iraqis begin the process of economic and political reconstruction. We would assist the people of Iraq in putting their country on a path towards prosperity and freedom.

If the President decides it is necessary to use force let me assure you once again that the United States will be committed to liberating the people of Iraq, not becoming an occupation force. (Applause.)

And as Secretary Rumsfeld elaborated further, and I'm now quoting from my boss, "If the United States were to lead an international coalition in Iraq, and let there be no doubt it would be a very large one, it would be guided by two commitments," the Secretary said. "These two commitments are that we would stay as long as necessary and leave as soon as possible." (Applause.)

Fourth, let me raise the issue of democracy and whether democracy is possible in Iraq. There are some who ask that question, is democracy possible in Iraq and the answer is no. They doubt that democracy could ever take root anywhere in the Arab world. I think they're wrong and let me give you my response, but when you get a chance I hope you'll give us yours.

First, look to the people of Northern Iraq. Beyond the reach of Saddam Hussein and his regime for more than a decade they have shown a remarkable ability to manage longstanding differences and to develop relatively free and prospering societies, even though they labor under the same economic sanctions that is supposed to cause so much misery in the rest of the country and even though they live in constant threat from Saddam Hussein. (Applause.)

If you're not convinced by that then look to the Iraqi-Americans here today and throughout this country, and other Arab-Americans, and see how quickly they have adapted to a democratic system.

But finally I say to these doubters, look at the Iraqi people's long yearning for representative government and look at their long suffering under one of the most oppressive dictatorships the world has known. Perhaps more than any other people, they have been inoculated against tyranny.

As you know, the values of freedom and democracy are not just Western values or European values, they are Muslim and Asian values as well. Indeed, they are universal values. They are the bridge that span civilizations.

That's my answer to the critics, but in the end you can answer the question much better than I can -- Is Iraq capable of democracy. (Applause.)

Well, I think we have your simple answer and we can hear more soon.

Finally, I'd like to talk briefly about how you can help -- a major reason why we've come here today and why I brought General Long and Secretary Chu and Dr. Luti.

As Iraqi-Americans or as recent immigrants you have a great stake in the outcome in Iraq. Many of you here today know the cruelties of the current Baathist regime firsthand or through your families. It is important that other Americans and indeed the entire world also understand the horror of this regime.

As I've said many times, Saddam Hussein's regime is one that not only supports the use of terror against its neighbors and against the United States, but against its own people as well. Your personal experiences underscore why liberation is needed and why it is a just and noble and moral cause.

We know that you want to be part of this cause and there is an urgent need for your talents.

For those of you who would like to work with the U.S. government and with our coalition partners in the reconstruction of a post-Saddam Iraq and in assisting Iraqis in the building of free institutions there are a number of ways you can help. Let me briefly outline how, and the people with me later will be able to describe them in more detail.

First, you can help the U.S. military as civilians. We are establishing a program through which Iraqi-Americans could be hired as temporary civilian employees or in some cases independent contractors of the U.S. government.

We're also making arrangements for Iraqi-Americans and others to be employed by contractors to serve in areas such as translation and other specialized functions. I might add that I know from my own experience not only is it invaluable to have people who are truly bilingual, but even more valuable to have people who are truly bi-cultural and to understand Americans and American culture is more than just understanding English. You can bring that to an important task.

Second, you can join the United States military and put on that proud uniform. We're launching a separate initiative to encourage Iraqi-Americans to join the U.S. military as part of the Individual Ready Reserve. That's something that Dr. Chu can tell you more about after our discussion. In this program you can serve as an integrated part of the U.S. military. This would take advantage of your professional skills in a wide variety of areas while also capitalizing on your understanding of local languages and culture as well as American culture and language.

Third, you can join the Free Iraqi Force. Working closely with Iraqi opposition groups we have launched a program to train free Iraqis to support military operations should they become necessary inside Iraq. If war becomes necessary, the Free Iraqi Force will be integrated with U.S. forces to serve as guides, translators, and experts on civil affairs. After a conflict the skills and local knowledge of these forces will help to rebuild Iraq.

Training has already begun at a military base in Hungary. The U.S. military members working with those recruits have praised their courage and their dedication. This force is open to Iraqis around the world, not just those in the United States. (Applause.)

Fourth, you can help to improve public understanding by telling your story in Iraq, in America, and around the world. You can help the American people understand what the stakes are here and you can start this afternoon.

Let me conclude if I might by quoting from a speech that I quoted from not long ago in New York by a man probably known to many of you, Barham Salih, a very brave and distinguished Iraqi Kurdish leader who spoke recently about the dream of the Iraqi people. He said, and I quote, "In my office in Sulimaniyah I meet almost every day some traveler who has come from Baghdad or other parts of Iraq. Without exception they tell me of the continuing suffering inflicted by the Iraqi regime and the fearful hope secretly nurtured by so many enslaved Iraqis for a free life, for a country where they can think without fear, and speak without retribution." (Applause.)

Since the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 the policy of the United States government is that Saddam Hussein and his regime must go. (Applause.)

I think we know how you feel!

Today in President Bush we have a President who is serious about that policy, serious about seeing the current regime out of Baghdad and out of the lives of the Iraqi people who have been made to suffer so much for so long.

The President understands Iraq's present enslavement by fear and he has spoken many times about the suffering inflicted on a population by a man he calls a student of Stalin. The President understands the hope of the Iraqi people and your hope.

You, Iraqi-Americans, can help the rest of America and the world understand the suffering of the Iraqi people and most of all help us understand the unrelenting fervor of a people's hope for a future of freedom and justice.

We may some day look back on this moment in history as the time when the world defined itself for the 21st Century. Not in terms of geography or race or religion or culture or language, but in terms of

values -- the universal values of freedom and democracy. We will remember proudly the part that you played in defining this moment.

Thank you very much. [In Arabic]

(Applause.)

Moderator: Okay ladies and gentlemen, I would like us to begin the next component of our stay today.

I want to especially thank Secretary Wolfowitz for a wonderful, comforting, reassuring remarks and comments. I think it touched on a lot of our fears and concerns.

I want to first begin by laying the ground rules and I'm going to speak in Arabic right now.

[In Arabic]

There won't be any questions taken or accepted from the media because of the short time. And while you are getting ready --

[In Arabic]

I'm going to begin and ask the first question as the moderator, taking the prerogative of that.

Secretary Wolfowitz, what you said was absolutely reassuring to us. Iraqis have been bitten previously and have trusted and things have not been delivered to them.

Considering the history of the United States government and its policy in the area of supporting dictatorships, considering the support of the United States government to Saddam Hussein in the '80s, considering the turning of the United States' backs to the Iraqi people in their uprising and the resultant slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, considering the United States turned its face when the Kurds were sprayed with chemical weapons, considering the unevenhandedness and the dealing of the United States with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, why should we here, with all due respect, why should the people outside in Iraq trust or believe what you just said or what the United States government says? (Applause.)

Wolfowitz: Give me a minute to think. (Laughter.)

Maha warned me that she was going to give me the hardest question first, but she didn't say it would be quite that hard.

Let me answer it this way. We could debate a lot about history and I could disagree with some of the things you say; I might agree with some of them. I would say you didn't point out some very important things that we have done which I think bear on the current situation.

Remember, it was the United States and United States blood and courage that liberated the people of Kuwait. It was the United States military that saved the people of Somalia from starvation. It was the United States military that ended ethnic conflict in Bosnia. It was the United States military and a coalition that ended ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. It is the United States military that led to the liberation of Northern Iraq and has protected it since. And it was the United States military and other countries

and our President and a lot of other people, but above all the courage of American soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines that liberated Afghanistan. And that's by my count, six times that we've come to the aid of Muslim populations. The Iraqis will be the seventh. (Applause.)

But let me say one other thing because I know there's a lot of history and some of it is personal and bitter. This is a time not to look to the past but to look to the future. This is a time not to talk about our differences but to pull together.

We have a President of enormous courage who says what he means and means what he says and his word you can count on. We have one of the most powerful military forces ever assembled ready if the President decides they're needed to do what has to be done. And if we commit those forces we're not going to commit them for anything less than a free and democratic Iraq. (Applause.)

Q: My name is [inaudible]. I used to be a [inaudible] back in Iraq, but now I am working [inaudible] to help refugees now. You come up to [inaudible].

The point that you mentioned that some people think it's hard to have a democratic society in Iraq and the area. I am going to give you a short brief about my personal experience here.

I came here in 1992 from [inaudible] refugee after I participated in the uprising in 1991 [inaudible] with my other people, most of them here, [inaudible]. The majority of them here are American citizens.

I came here in 1992 and I was in the first occupation, the present job. I also went as a personal observer in the elections. I was with some group for some of the candidates --

Moderator: Can you please make it brief?

Q: I want to assure you and all other people around the world that we suffered so much and we are willing to work towards democracy as we are -- Most of us want to work in two phases. The liberation phase and the rebuilding phase. So please, please take it seriously, and we want it fast. Fast, as fast as you can. Thank you. Liberate Iraqi people please. (Applause.)

Wolfowitz: Let me just ask you, did you learn English before you came here or did you learn it here?

Q: I used to be an interpreter.

Wolfowitz: So you have an unfair disadvantage, but you obviously learned a great deal about our country and about our democratic system and that I believe is something that is very important that Iraqi-Americans and Iraqi immigrants who have seen a real democracy in action can help teach other Iraqis how to make democracy work. It's not a simple system, as you know. It may look simple on the surface, but real democracy is about something more than just holding elections. We've been at it more than 200 years and we're a long way from perfect, but we've learned a lot. Obviously you've learned a lot being here and you can take some of those lessons back.

Q: Mr. Deputy Secretary I would like to thank you for taking time in coming to meet with our community. My name is Imam Fasuni. I am one of the religious leaders in this community. I was born in Iraq originally and I have been living in exile for over 30-some years. And almost half of my family, my extended family has been massacred by Saddam Hussein. Over 15 members of my family including my grandfather who we are not sure what happened to him. He was 80 years when he was arrested by

Saddam Hussein some 23 years ago.

It is not only about my family. It is about all the people that you see here. They have victims, people who were killed, massacred by Saddam Hussein.

I was probably one of the first people who met President Bush even before he became a President when he was campaigning in the presidential campaign. I brought to his attention the necessity for him to remove Saddam Hussein once he gets power. I said to him that when your father liberated Kuwait he didn't finish the job. He should have went further and removed Saddam from power. He smiled and he indicated that he would finish the job. (Applause.)

I hope today that he will be able to finish that job.

The last time I met with him it was in November, last November in the White House. I indicated that he should not bow to any pressure by the international society for any reason to leave Saddam alone. Saddam is cancer and he has to be removed. (Applause.)

And if we don't do it today we may do it in five years or ten years from now. We will deal with him again.

So I think that we are all here relieved to hear your assurance that our troops and our government is about to remove Saddam from power and there will be democracy in Iraq.

My question to you is, Mr. Deputy Secretary, there have been reports in Washington Times and New York Times about America will be installing another general, American general, to rule Iraq. And there have been other reports that there would be Iraqi military commander who might be ruling Iraq.

My question to you, what is your comment to those reports? You just assured us that there would be democracy. And what are your comments about those reports who spoke about another dictator ruling Iraq?

I would like to assure you that all these people here, they won't be willing to see another Saddam replacing this Saddam or another dictator replacing a dictator. (Applause.)

Wolfowitz: My first response would be don't believe everything you read in the newspapers. (Laughter.) But it is not a joking matter, I understand.

It is absolutely clear, particularly I think to the President but to all of us, that if we invest the kind of resources and risk of American lives to liberate Iraq it's not going to be handed over to some junior Saddam Hussein. It has to be for the goal of a democracy. The President's been clear about that. All of the people who work for him are clear about that.

The only issue is how do you work through stages of those things that are going to have to be done initially and early and quickly and probably have to be done by the U.S. military. Such things as putting out fires if Saddam burns the oilfields, or repairing critical civilian infrastructure, although as I said in my remarks we're trying very hard to make sure that nothing is damaged that doesn't have to be damaged. But there's no question, as Secretary Rumsfeld said, we don't want to stay there any longer than we have to. And the key to getting us out quickly is for Iraqis to come together quickly in a spirit of unity and harmony and understanding the importance of having a democratic country. That's what

we're going to wait for. We'll be there as long as it takes but we don't want to be there a minute longer than that.

Q: [Through Interpreter] His name is [inaudible]. You're an Iraqi poet and a journalist. I'm not different than lots of people that are here. I have been oppressed and hurt by Saddam and I have a brother who has been executed. We want to thank you for your support of the Iraqi cause.

Saddam Hussein is a coward and when the time comes he may actually leave when things are really hot. So the point here is if Saddam leaves peacefully, so to speak, willingly, what would be the position of the United States and will the United States actually enter into Iraq?

Wolfowitz: A very good question. When we say that the President hasn't yet decided on the use of force there is a small chance that this might be resolved peacefully. My own feeling is it's a very very small chance that Saddam would actually comply with the resolutions of the United Nations. There's a slightly greater chance that he might do what this gentleman suggested.

If that happens, it will be a good thing because it will avoid a war with all the terrible consequences of a war. But what it has to lead to then is the construction of a legitimate, free, democratic government that the Iraqi people deserve. (Applause.)

Q: [Through Interpreter] Thank you for coming here. He is talking, and the name of his movement, the Liberal Iraqis.

There are doubts among Iraqis inside and outside Iraq. [Inaudible] the states will let one of the second-line members of the Baath party who governed Iraq after [inaudible].

Wolfowitz: I'll repeat what I said. We're not interested in replacing one dictator with another dictator. (Applause.)

Q: [Through Interpreter] This is a gentleman who's family was killed all by Saddam and he has the pictures of his family here. What he's saying, he's lost his family but all his family are the people who are here and the people in Iraq. (Applause.)

He is saying that we don't want the 1991 to be repeated. What we want is to make sure that President Bush and yourself to help the Iraqi people liberate themselves into a future that is prosperous and democratic. (Applause.)

Wolfowitz: If I could just say something, you mentioned you lost 15 of your family, you lost six of your family, I hear people say oh, we know Saddam Hussein is a bad guy, but... And then comes we shouldn't really do anything about it. We can't take care of every dictator in the world, we can't this, we can't that. People who say that really don't understand that Saddam Hussein is more than just a bad guy, he's one of the most evil leaders that has ruled in the last 100 years. (Applause.)

You may want to say a little bit to the American people because, in fact you probably don't because they're so terrible. But I've had the experience of showing people videos or telling them what happened and people who said they thought they knew, they couldn't believe those stories. They're just so terrible.

Q: My name is Victor [inaudible].

Do you have any plans to protect the civilians in Iraq from Saddam Hussein? That's the first question.

Wolfowitz: I think you mean if it comes to a conflict.

Q: Right. Protecting them in general and from Saddam.

Wolfowitz: We will do what we can but I think the most important thing is for everybody who works under him to understand that if they carry out any more of his illegal orders, if they use weapons of mass destruction, if they destroy the Iraqi oilfields, if they kill more civilians, they've sealed their own personal fate.

I doubt that there are too many people left in Iraq who want to be the last person to die for Saddam Hussein. If we have to use force, Saddam Hussein will go and the people who carry out his terrible orders in the last minute will suffer for doing so.

Q: [Through Interpreter] He is a former [inaudible], he used to be a parliament member for two terms. After the Intafada he left with his tribe to Saudi Arabia and then they came here. He participated in his tribe in the Intafada and he was kicked out of the family for standing against Saddam and they live here with 30 other families. His tribe, just like other tribes, was massacred in Southern Iraq.

He wants us all for not only to tell you about the tragedy and the crimes that Saddam committed against Iraqi people but also he wanted to tell all the media about what's happened, and especially the Arabic media who are supporting Saddam and they don't show the real picture of the suffering of the Iraqi people.

As examples, the condition of the Article 200 of the Iraqi law saying that any deserter of [inaudible] faces execution.

He says the regime forced Iraqi people to join [inaudible] by law, and also he has a plan, a plan called Baathification of every Iraqi.

Also there is very inhuman law that punish every army deserter [by] cutting off his ear and tattoo his nose.

There is another law that every wife should divorce her husband if he is against the government or he desert the army.

He says the Iraqi people in the two wars we have lost 1.5 million in the Iranian war and then about half million in the Kuwait war. And half a million disabled.

There are mass graves in many areas of Iraq and there are people here, they know where are these mass graves.

Q: My name is Abdul [inaudible]. I am engineer working with one company in Detroit, Michigan.

My question is in the recent days we see that there is a lot of negotiations going out with Turkey regarding the way that Turkey will accept the U.S. troops here to start flowing the north of Iraq in event of an invasion. I don't know since we have the Kurd area there accessible to the U.S. troops, why would they not use it instead of using Turkey? And the U.S. already has an agreement with Turkey to use the

Incirlik air base, so you don't need any other, I think, any other agreement with Turkey for that.

Wolfowitz: I think I'd just say it's a complicated question. What we're hoping to get from Turkey and I think we may be close to getting it is the ability to present Saddam Hussein with a very strong military threat from all directions.

We believe that if we can literally surround him that if it comes to a use of force it will be quicker, it will be less harmful for the Iraqi people and for everyone in the region. It will also be good for Turkey.

We can't use anything in Turkey, including the Incirlik base, without the agreement of the Turkish government. It's an independent country and we don't occupy it, we don't own it. We work with Turkey which has been a very good ally for a long period of time.

Obviously Turkey has very big interests in what takes place in Iraq and they're nervous, but we are telling Turkey a democratic Iraq which will be unified and preserves its territorial integrity will be good for a democratic Turkey. And you as Iraqis I think also need to understand that you have a stake and we have a stake, a big stake, in the success of a democratic Turkey which is one of the most successful Muslim countries so far and whose success is important for all of us.

Q: [Through Turkey] I welcome you here. You are here in Dearborn and next month we welcome you in Baghdad and Iraq.

I want to share one thing with you. Many of the people who say leave Saddam and maybe there is something in the future. In every heart here, in every person here, there is a scar on our hearts. But we can't show the people in the world our scars on our hearts, but we can show the scars on the face of this young guy. He was in that time in 1991 just one year. He was a child, and this is the father and his uncle, they participated in the uprising. They went to Saudi Arabia, and when the intelligence and the Iraqi army came to the house they beat everybody. They ask about [Abbas], my friend, he worked with me in the same company and about his brother. They couldn't find them. They beat the father, his father, his mother and his wife. While they are beating the family they hear the cry of the child and they say who is the child? The wife said this is my child. They start beating him with their boots until the blood was all over and he had brain damage, partly brain damage. He, with all his forces, he wants just to bring him here and he managed just to bring him a year and a half.

His shape was, what he told me, the most terrifying things in his life happened when he came from Saudi Arabia to America. The first thing he did, he took the phone and talked to his wife and he said I want to talk to my son and she started to cry and she told him he is not talking, he is not talking. What happened? She told him, something happen in 1991. I can't tell you. After that he find out what happened to his son.

Just I want to show the brutality of our regime. Thank you.

Wolfowitz: How long has he been here?

Q: [Through Interpreter] He came to the United States in 2001, June 15. [Inaudible]

Wolfowitz: Is his health coming back?

Q: [Inaudible]

Q: [Through Interpreter] He is a tribal leader from Nassiriyah. After the entrance of Iraqi army to Kuwait, after two months, I saw a team of large trucks, military trucks, going in the direction of desert. Two days later a gentleman came and talked to me and he told me these 18 trucks were being taken to a [valley] very close to us. He said each truck had 35 to 40 people of the 18 trucks and they brought those people down in that valley, and then two helicopters came. They landed and soldiers came out of the helicopter and start machine gunning those people. There were shovels and they just bury them.

He said that guy, he was looking for some of his camels or whatever when he saw that, what happened. He said he found one survivor from those people, he was moving, and he brought him back and they took care of him. That survivor was a [Turkman] and he went back to Northern Iraq later.

He said we took care of him and we give him medicine and care and then he went back to the North. (Applause.)

Q: My name is [Arani Jiahawi]. I called my family last night. One of my children got captured by Saddam. They were visiting from [inaudible] and with a thousand people.

My question is, should we wait and give Saddam more time to kill more people? Or should we act and get rid of Saddam? That's my question. (Applause.)

Wolfowitz: I think it's very clear from what the President has said and everyone in his Administration has said that time is running out very fast and I think you've given the reason why it's not a good idea to wait very much longer.

There are many questions that I think I'd like to hear from you and I think the American people would like to hear from you. One I'd like to ask if you can answer today, a gentleman here just mentioned that he helped to rescue somebody who was a Kurd or a Turkman, and I assume that you, sir, are an Arab. We hear about Shia and Suni and Turkmen and Kurds and Caldians and so many different groups in Iraq and then many so-called experts say well, there will be just incredible ethnic conflict if Saddam Hussein goes.

Voice: Never. [Voices in Arabic]

Wolfowitz: Say something about that because I believe the gentleman who said never is right and certainly the idea that we're going to prevent ethnic conflict by leaving Saddam Hussein in power is nonsense. But it would be helpful to hear about that.

Q: My name is [inaudible] and I heard a question, if there was an uprising when America comes in attack, what would the Americans do? Would they support the uprising? The one against the government? Saddam's regime? What would happen?

Wolfowitz: I think if I understood the question obviously we will, if it becomes necessary to use force to remove Saddam we will obviously be supporting anybody who is in that cause.

I think it's also important to remember that we're now talking about the enormous and possibly dangerous military operation and I think we all need to think about the responsibility that sits now with our President. I know many people here have asked what are you going to do for us, and I understand the question. It's also important to be thinking about what can you do, what will you do, to help our

President, to help our men and women in uniform if they have to use force. We need to work together. We're on the same team. We have the same goal. (Applause.)

Q: [Through Interpreter] Somebody who wants to remain anonymous. His question is, we have no doubt if Saddam Hussein came forward to use biological and chemical weapons that he might use against the Iraqi population under the threat and out of desperation. What is the United States government strategy to protect or prevent this?

Wolfowitz: That's a very good question, it's an important question and I think it brings out the fact that if it becomes necessary to use force it will be a moment of maximum danger. The question points out the danger to the Iraqi people. There is also a danger to the American men and women in our armed forces whose lives will be at risk, including from chemical and biological weapons. It will be a risk and a danger even to the people of the United States because we don't know what use Saddam may have made of terrorists.

That's why our President is still trying to see, not in months but in weeks, maybe less, if there is a peaceful way to resolve this conflict. A peaceful way to get Saddam and his regime out of power and to avoid a war.

But if it comes to a war, if it comes to a use of force, there are two things that can help to prevent the kind of tragedy that the question refers to, or other tragedies.

One is to have the largest possible coalition and to surround Saddam with the strongest possible force. That's why, for example, we're working so hard to cooperate with Turkey.

The second thing is to make it clear to anybody who carries out Saddam's last terrible orders that they will suffer very serious consequences for doing so. We can't prevent everything from happening. We can do what we can to minimize the risk.

Q: We are not against just Saddam. Against all his enemies [inaudible]. (Applause.)

Moderator: Thank you.

What I'm going to do is this. I'm going to let the Secretary choose the two people he wishes to speak with.

[Multiple voices]

Wolfowitz: Wait, wait, wait.

I really wish we could go on for four hours because there's a lot to say. Be patient and let's think through, everybody is watching us now. We want to show the American people that we can be patient, that we can work together, okay?

I would like one person each to think about these two questions.

[Multiple voices]

Wolfowitz: Just a minute. I'd like you to address the question how will Iraqis work together after

Saddam Hussein is gone and how will you create democratic institutions in a country that hasn't had them before?

Q: [Through Interpreter] What he is saying is that Iraq had some democracy. Saddam came in and destroyed it.

Q: The people of Iraq are composed of all kinds of minorities as you stated very eloquently. They have lived together in peace for thousands of years. It's not new for the Iraqi people to work together. What we need right now is actually the help of the U.S. Administration in facilitating a smooth transition toward true democracy.

The Iraqi organized political opposition is attempting to work together. The problem is the demand that is being placed on it which is to create a coalition, to work together to form a transition government. It is a demand that is a bit too hard.

If I may recommend that the period of the transition be depoliticized, to be formed by a group of Iraqis, not people coming from outside Iraq to teach Iraqis how to form a democracy, but by Iraqis who are dedicated during the transition period not to run for office after they facilitate the transition but just to facilitate the transition during a period as short as possible, and not to participate in getting political position afterwards for themselves.

Moderator: So what you're suggesting is basically, so I can understand what you're saying, that this process cannot be done by politicians, but rather technocrats who would put in the foundation for a democratic transition and then have the elections and the transition afterwards. (Applause.)

Q: Exactly.

The various political factions as well as the various ethnicities and the religious factions inside Iraq work together, they are intermarried to each other. My brother, I am a Shia and my brother is married to a Suni. My cousin is married to a Christian. My grandfather was married to a Christian. (Applause.)

So what is needed is a framework to allow us to have true representation. That cannot be done by the politicians because the politicians are going to work for their own political interests. What we need is really to learn from the United States, from the European countries, from the other democratic countries in the world how to create a democracy that suits Iraq where representation is a true representation rather than fake representation of the composition of the Iraqi society. This is something that we as Iraqis need to put together, not an American general. (Applause.)

Wolfowitz: I appreciate that. It sounds like very good advice.

I'm going to have to be the villain here and say we have to stop the questions because we want to make some time so that I can leave and the press will leave and then you can hear from General DeLong and Dr. Chu and Dr. Luti and talk about things that you can actually do to help our government help the coalition.

I look forward to meeting with you again here or maybe in a free Iraq.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)



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