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[Contracts](#)

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[Photos](#)

[Releases](#)

[Slides](#)

[Speeches](#)

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DoD](#)

[Transcripts](#)

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Forces  
News](#)

[Articles](#)

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[Television](#)

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Reports](#)

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**Presenter:** Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas  
J. Feith

Friday, July 18,  
2003

### CSIS Report Briefing

(Briefing on the Iraq Post-Conflict Reconstruction Assessment Mission Report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Also participating: Frederick Barton, co-director, Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project, CSIS; Johanna Mendelson-Forman, Senior Program Officer, United Nations Foundation; Robert Orr, director of the Washington Office of the Council on Foreign Relations.)

Feith: Good afternoon. This is an opportunity to discuss a report that the Center for Strategic and International Studies has just done. And we have -- you'll have a chance to talk with Rick Barton and Johanna Mendelson [Forman] and Robert Orr, who are three of the authors of the report.

Mr. Barton is an expert on the subject of reconstruction and humanitarian assistance. In the course of a distinguished career, he served as the director of the Office of Transition Initiatives at the U.S. Agency for International Development and as the U.N. deputy high commissioner for refugees.

The genesis of this report was in a trip that Congressman Frank Wolfe took to Iraq in May. When he came back and told us about his trip, he noted that there had been a bipartisan commission on post- conflict reconstruction that had done a study. It was kind of a joint project of the Center for Strategic and International



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Studies (CSIS) and the Association of the U.S. Army, and General Gordon Sullivan -- retired general Gordon Sullivan worked on it with John Hamre, the head of CSIS. And this commission did a study on reconstruction in post-conflict situations. And Congressman Wolfe had suggested that it would be a useful thing for the Defense Department to have some of the people who worked in that commission and were experts on this area go to Iraq and look around and share their thoughts. We were very fortunate that the former deputy secretary of Defense, John Hamre, and his colleagues at CSIS agreed to undertake the assignment.

Those of us who are working on Iraq issues often find ourselves under the pressure of dealing with so many immediate issues, that we're grateful when experts are available to provide a fresh perspective. And it's helpful to have such distinguished public servants as Dr. Hamre and Mr. Barton and their colleagues look at the situation in Iraq.

Their report is a professional and incisive assessment of conditions in Iraq. Now of course, not everyone in the Pentagon or in the U.S. government agrees with every factual analysis or judgment or recommendation in the report. But it is a serious piece of work with lots of good observations and good ideas in it.

The main benefit is that it has a large number of recommendations. And we're studying these carefully. The ideas are worthy of consideration even if we don't, you know, necessarily see the whole situation exactly as laid out in the report. In many cases, the recommendations are helping us choose among ideas that we've already been thinking about, but it certainly helps to get reinforcement from a group of independent minds.

One example of something that we've been working on that is strongly pushed in the report is the suggestion in the report that the Defense Department should create a strong office in Washington to support the needs of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). We are, in fact, in the process of significantly strengthening what we call the reach-back office that originally served the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, which is now the Office of the Coalition Provisional Authority. This reach-back office, which is now going to be named the Office of the Coalition Provisional Authority Representative, is going to assume the backstopping functions for Ambassador Bremer's work. It's going to serve as Ambassador Bremer's representative office here in Washington. Its staff is going to include detailees from all of the U.S. government departments and agencies that are involved in supporting the CPA's efforts in Iraq.

And it's going to serve as an additional and a convenient portal for people who

are interested in being in contact with the CPA. I mean, we have businesses and non-governmental organizations and universities and others who are interested in passing an idea along or volunteering or putting business ideas forward, and this new Office of the CPA Representative will help put people in contact with Ambassador Bremer's operation. And as such, it complements the other mechanisms that already exist for that kind of contact between people around the world and the CPA, in particular the Council for International Cooperation, which is responsible for pulling together the international coalition contributions to our efforts in -- the coalition's efforts in Iraq. And as we look forward to more involvement in Iraq by non-governmental entities such as businesses and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and charitable groups, the existence of a convenient portal is all the more important.

And with that, I am happy to call to the microphone Rick Barton, who will be happy to talk with you about the report.

Barton: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here today. Thank you, Doug, for the introduction.

I want to make sure that -- I know that some of you had a chance to come to the press conference yesterday, so I apologize for some repetition that we will inevitably have today. I want to make sure that we introduce the other colleagues that were on this team. Bob Orr -- and all three of us will be happy to take your questions and try to answer them. Bob Orr is from the Council on Foreign Relations; Johanna Mendelson [Forman] is from the United Nations Foundation; Sheba Crocker, who also worked on this project, from CSIS, is not here today. But those are really the core. Both Johanna and Bob were really the creators of the framework that has been used, along with Scott File and Michelle Flournoy, who some of you might know from her service here in the Pentagon.

We've all been honored to undertake this assignment, and we've been pleased with the independence that we've been given and the openness with which -- that we've asked for and that has been given to us in every case. We've been asked to see people, we've wanted to go -- wherever we wanted to go, we've been able to do that, and it's made a tremendous difference in the work we've done.

I think in terms of -- just a quick review of the report. We really feel that there has been significant progress, obviously, in the last couple of months, and in many ways it's been greater progress than people could have imagined. On the other hand, we were asked to focus on the areas that need attention, and, as you well know, there are huge challenges remaining. And probably our greatest concern is that the enormity of this task be fully appreciated in every way

possible. And most of our recommendations really do speak to the amount of commitment that we're making, the speed with which we're doing things, the flexibility. We're all going to be asked to do things that are new, are not necessarily comfortable, are not necessarily institutionalized. And that's one of the weaknesses within the United States government writ large in terms of dealing with these post-conflict reconstruction challenges, which led to the work that Bob and Johanna started a couple of years ago, and that John Hamre and Gordon Sullivan chaired.

We do think the next 12 months will be decisive. We are very worried about the coming three months. We believe that the seven recommendations that we make all need to be -- move ahead. It's a rather balanced approach.

We recognize that security is the precondition for all progress. That's our first concern and why we emphasize establishing public safety as job number one. Clearly, that's something that all of you have been tremendously involved in. We want to make sure that the force fits the task. There are a number of medium-term solutions that we put forward. And we're very concerned with spoilers, not just the former soldiers of Saddam's regime, but also the armed militias around the rest of the country who clearly could serve as a force for destabilization.

We, secondly, believe that expanding Iraqi ownership has to take place. We're in a very delicate time now where we still don't know as much about the Iraqi public as we'd like. We do believe there is a silent majority there that needs to be galvanized, needs to be -- whose imagination needs to be captured. And a number of our recommendations touch on that. We're impressed by the local councils, but we recognize their fragility and worry that armed forces that are in the neighborhood could undermine their ultimate effectiveness. We believe that one way to make them more credible is to initiate revenue-sharing type programs that will give them some ability to solve problems and not just become listening posts.

We've put a considerable amount of emphasis on our third recommendation, and one that Jerry Bremer was very interested in when we talked with him, the providing economic and social services. Clearly, there's a need for a crash program right now in terms of the iron triangle of oil tied to electricity and water. We're not sure -- we think that there may be other opportunities there. And it's important that we all recognize that for the time being, Iraq is not a wealthy country, and that the citizens are -- have really spent whatever resources they might have had. And so we have a number of suggestions in terms of giving -- empowering them and giving them more economic opportunities.

We then get into some of the management issues. We think that there needs to be a decentralized approach. It's such a big job, it's the only way that this is going to get done in the short time that we believe is available. This is not -- this is a chaos -- management-by-chaos moment, and so, it's really a question of how we steer the opportunity, as opposed to trying to control it. And so, we have a number of suggestions in terms of decentralizing and how that might help with the situation.

We're extremely concerned in this next recommendation about the Iraqi mindset. We don't feel as if, as I said a few minutes ago -- we don't feel as if we really know what the Iraqis want. So the information coming to us is extremely limited. We're not talking about intelligence, we're just talking about contact. And that's the danger of working in the bubbles and the compounds that we presently have as our base of operation.

At the same time, we don't think we're doing anywhere near as much as we could in terms of informing the Iraqi public. We did not find broad recognition of what our message was, what we were trying to achieve. Everything from national unity to what's happening to your electricity today needs to be much more broadly disseminated. At this point, there is a great demand for hard information in a country where trust has -- really has not existed, and where there's never been anything but propaganda. So, we have to be extremely aggressive in this area, and we believe that this really requires a full-scale national marketing campaign. This is not some sort of polite public information effort that is required.

There's a chance here in our next recommendation to really build a new reconstruction coalition. The coalition that fought the war did that job superbly. This will need to be a much broader coalition. We see the United Nations and major allies as being necessary to achieve the work that we think has to take place in the coming 12 months.

Finally, our last recommendation is on increasing the flexibility and the funding. We've had some advantages in terms of flexible funding because of the money that was found in Iraq and the seized assets here. That's unusual for a reconstruction situation. But now, we're at a time where we're going to come back to more familiar -- the United States and other donor government funding, and we have to be sure that it's not encumbered by bureaucratic rules that we use, notwithstanding authority and some of the opportunities that exist within our legislative mandates to make sure that these people on the ground in Iraq are able to do their jobs. There has been a record amount of liquidity in the hands of our forces to do quick-impact projects, and that has made a tremendous difference.

But we're worried about any bureaucratic restraints, and we're also concerned that within the United States government there may still be a debate on what to do with the international debt and the reparations claims that are outstanding against Iraq. And we think that those need to be freed up, because every billion dollars that doesn't get into play in Iraq is going to be -- mean that we're going to have to be more perfect in the work that we undertake.

So I hope that serves as an introduction. I'll invite my colleagues to come up, and maybe the three of us can join you, and they can -- you can hear their voices, with your questions. And please, fire away. Yes?

Q: This three-month period -- I'm curious why you chose three months. Why did you have to be in control in three months? What's happening that you chose that?

Barton: You guys --

Mendelson-Forman: I think we all can answer that. We looked at a 12-month period of time, and we saw the types of problems compared to other cases we've seen. And certainly the primary goal right now, to gain the confidence of the Iraqi people, is that everybody wants to know where Saddam is, so they can move on. We really are in between a reconstruction and the end of conflictive time, and so they need evidence. And that period has to have some closure, and our sense is, three months is probably logical to also implement some of the things that we've talked about. As Undersecretary Feith has said, there are some things moving ahead.

We think, for example, right now three months is important because there is going to be a deadline on the oil-for-food resources. There needs to be a donors' conference, which is going to take place in October. So many of these things which are already starting to happen -- for example, involvement of the U.N. -- have to take place soon if we're going to have that kind of a building-up.

Q: So you're saying that, for instance, if they don't find Saddam Hussein in three months, there's going to be real trouble?

Mendelson-Forman: Well, I mean, I think we always make arbitrary deadlines, as people who analyze things. But I think the sense of people who are in the country, the Iraqis we've talked to -- and we were in nine of the 18 governates -- was the sense that they want some closure, and they want to know that the people who were the perpetrators of much violence against the population are gone.

And that can be done two ways. I mean, obviously, the ideal point would be to

find Saddam; in the absence of that, a clear information campaign that shows the progress that the coalition has made. As Rick said, there has been progress, but people have to see it. They have to be able to believe it. So that is why it's a combination of things that are urgent.

Orr: I would just simply add that we see a real opportunity to win the hearts and minds of the various populations within Iraq. The reason that we targeted the three months on the security side and the 12 months on the whole effort is that there is a whole -- there is a part of the Iraqi population that remains frozen. In part, it's related to their worries about Saddam coming back. But in part, it is they want to sit it out. They've had a terrible history over the last 30 years, and so it's very natural that they want to sit back. We can't allow them to just sit back for the next three, 12 months; they have to get involved now. And the councils at the national level, the political councils and the local councils have been a good success story so far. That has to be built on here right away.

Q: Following that -- if I could follow on that. Do you assess that there was a bit of a miscalculation in how much the Iraqi people were going to join in, once the regime had fallen? I mean, you mentioned frozen; you mentioned that you don't know what they really want. Is there a lot of question marks on the ground?

Barton: I think there was a general feeling, for those of us who have been working on this for the last several months -- we started our project on Iraq last September -- that there was really almost no reliable information. So we've clearly gotten beyond that point in terms of looking at Iraq. We now have quite a bit of on-the-ground information, but it's still not what you need really to be confident that we're interpreting the public will as wisely as we might.

Q: Can we ask Secretary Feith a couple of questions?

Feith: Why don't you take advantage of the people who were just in Iraq. I'll be happy to come up in a minute.

Q: Well, we will. But we also don't want you to escape without having -- (laughter) --

Feith: The opportunity! (Laughs.)

Barton: Go ahead.

Q: You say in the report here there's a general sense of steady deterioration in the security situation in Baghdad, Mosul and elsewhere. Could you expand on that a

little bit? What did you observe? What did you hear from other people over there? And it seems to run counter to what we're hearing from the Pentagon, that things are generally getting better over there.

Orr: We have very different realities in different parts of the country. I think that's an important thing to acknowledge. Certainly, I think in the -- what is called the Sunni triangle and Baghdad, there is an edginess to the feeling these days. One talks with all of the American and coalition forces there, one gets that. We had many meetings with Iraqis. They wanted to leave in the afternoon because they didn't want to be anywhere outside their house as darkness approached. That is one sense of insecurity.

That is not unusual in a post-conflict situation. People are not going to feel safe until, you know, assassinations stop. So I think that was what we were focusing on in that area, in the triangle and in Baghdad.

Q: (Off mike) -- Mosul as well?

Orr: Yes.

Q: Mosul was dicey. But I also want to mention, in Baghdad as opposed to other areas, women did not go out on the street during the day unless accompanied by a relative. This was not the same, however, what we saw in the north, where there was complete freedom of movement. So I guess, as Bob said, it's the perception of which area you're into.

Q: But the sense here is that things are getting worse. You say steady deterioration.

Barton: In fact, I would say in the two weeks we were there, there was a sense initially that the initial security breaches or the problems that we were having with the electrical system, the water system and what not were maybe more directed at looting, but by the time we left, there was a sense that it was more of an organized effort, that there was sabotage, that the sites they were picking were well targeted. And clearly, we saw a tremendous amount of security. You do travel pretty much in a cocoon in many of these areas. And again, this is part of what makes it difficult to connect to the Iraqi people. But there is that feeling, that edgy feeling that was just mentioned, that something could change very dramatically within a very short period of time. So I would say that we're still at a delicate -- very delicate moment.

Q: It's getting worse there, or better, is it about the same, or how can you talk



about it?

Barton: We heard -- and again, these are just the perceptions of the people we talked to. We spoke to maybe 250 people, mostly coalition people, but certainly a significant number of Iraqis. We heard that there had been deterioration, certainly around Baghdad, in the prior -- during the time we were there.

Yes?

Q: A lot of the recommendations you have would seem to involve civil affairs units, particularly anything related to information. What's your sense of the adequacy of the civil affairs capability in Iraq right now?

Orr: I'll take a shot at that, because I think we were, as a team, impressed by the incredible quality of the civil affairs folks on the ground. They are being stretched. The needs are so profound --

Q: (Off mike) -- numbers.

Orr: -- yet they performed extremely well.

In terms of numbers, it is safe to say that there are a lot of soldiers who are not Civil Affairs officers asked to be doing Civil Affairs-like duties. The good news is that we observed a lot of them performing extremely well. The one thing that we wanted to flag, however, is that in a lot of those Civil Affairs capacities, a lot of those soldiers who haven't been trained for it have kind of reached the end of what they can do. And that's one reason we recommend strongly to get more civilians into the field in a decentralized fashion. One soldier we talked to who had set up a town council said, "I've just about reached the end of my experience on this. I'd love to have a civilian come and help run this thing."

Mendelson-Forman: Maybe I can just --

Q: (Off mike) -- numbers of Civil Affairs officers, or percentage of the soldiers who are Civil Affairs?

Orr: Eighty percent are currently deployed. We did not do a numbers analysis of exactly how many Civil Affairs people are needed. It's certainly true -- I think some folks here at the Pentagon could get you the numbers of how many are deployed. It's safe to say that the needs in Iraq are immense and you could use a lot more Civil Affairs officers. I think that goes without saying.

Mendelson-Forman: But I think --

Q: Yesterday, you mentioned the importance of getting other countries involved in what's going on in Iraq, as well. How should the -- what is your recommendation about how the United States might best facilitate that? It's a goal, obviously, they're working on. For instance, should the U.S. seek a U.N. mandate in order to encourage other countries to take part?

Mendelson-Forman: Thank you. I think I'd like to answer that since -- (laughter) -- I visited the U.N. twice in Baghdad, and I also have worked with several people. You know, I can't speak precisely to what our policy -- (inaudible) -- getting a mandate, but I think it's clear, just over the last week, that the U.N. has become even more critical with the legitimacy of this provisional council. One of the first acts that they did after abolishing the revolutionary holiday was to seek a delegation to go to the U.N. and gain some kind of accreditation. So next week, when Sergio de Mello gives his first report to the secretary-general, I would think I'd be looking for some kind of way to figure how to internationalize through the United Nations that process. Because clearly, other donor states are looking to some kind of guideline.

There is a sense, and we've talked to other donor countries -- they're doing a good job within the coalition, but they're just getting going. And many donor states have restrictions against giving money to occupying powers. So, there are opportunities to create some kind of a mechanism which will support the reconstruction, support their authority, but do it through something which is perceived as a legitimate United Nations action.

Q: I just wanted to ask you about the -- if you could -- just about, you know, we keep hearing about the numbers of countries that are involved; the numbers of countries that you're talking to. But we don't hear that much about the numbers of troops, and it's created the perception that we're really -- the United States has only been able to get a small handful of troop contributions from other countries. Can you tell us anything about what the real contribution is and what the prospects are for getting more troops, and whether or not a U.N. mandate or some other thing might help facilitate countries of donating troops?

Feith: I don't know if I have all the numbers in my head. We can get numbers for you. I think that -- I mean what we're -- what we're talking about right now in the way of international contributions to the stabilization force in Iraq is -- are two divisions. And as you know, divisions -- sometimes you have a 10,000- person division, sometimes you can have a 17,000- or 18,000-person division. I don't know precisely the size of the divisions. But there's going to be a U.K.-led

multinational division, and there's going to be a Polish-led multinational division that are going to be coming in coming weeks, I believe, to contribute to the stabilization force.

We're also talking with -- we have, I think, something like 19 or so countries that now have people on the ground contributing to stabilization, reconstruction efforts in Iraq as part of the coalition effort. I believe we have another 18 or 19 or so who are -- who have committed to contributing in one way or another, and then approximately a dozen or so additional countries with whom we're talking and from whom we hope we'll get other contributions.

So, I hope that helps --

Q: But what I'm wondering, of the 160,000, roughly, force level that General Abizaid has said for the foreseeable future that's probably where we're going to be, how much -- realistically, in the coming months, how much of that can you expect might be troops from other countries, international forces?

Feith: As I said, I don't know precisely. It will be tens of thousands, I would think.

Q: Well, Secretary Rumsfeld used the number 30,000, by the fall, in testimony. Do you still hope to get 30,000 by the fall?

Feith: That may be right. I mean, again, if he used that number, I'm sure he pinned it down. As you know, he's very precise. And I don't have the numbers off the top of my head, but that sounds about right.

Q: And on the U.N. question about the need, the possible need to go to the U.N. to generate more forces, you know, countries like India have said that they're not going to put in troops without a U.N. mandate.

Feith: Well, as you know, we went to the U.N., and we got, I think, a very good, constructive resolution -- I think it's 1483 -- that did a lot of important things. It set up -- I mean, it basically recognized the Coalition Provisional Authority. It recognized the -- this development fund for Iraq and created the U.N. secretary-general's special representative position and did a number of other important things. I mean, we're happy to go to the U.N. and work with them in ways that can benefit the effort in Iraq.

I believe that Ambassador Bremer and Mr. de Mello work closely in Iraq and cooperate on a lot of things. And as was just pointed out, one of the very first acts of this new Iraqi Governing Council was to send -- with the complete blessing of

the Coalition Provisional Authority, send a few representatives to New York to go to the U.N. and engage there. And I mean, there's clearly a role for the U.N., and we're happy to work with them on the various types of contributions they can make to the effort.

Q: Is it fair to say that the United States is having difficulty getting other countries to contribute forces to Iraq?

Feith: Well, I mean, we're -- I don't think I would use the term "difficulty." I think we're -- as I said, we've got about 19 there, about 19 committed, and another dozen or so that we're working with. I mean, we'd always be happy if there are more and if everything were easier. But I don't think I'd characterize it as a difficulty. It's a project.

Q: Foreign Secretary Straw said this week that there were nine other nations, besides the United States and Britain, that had troops in Iraq; that Britain had 11,000; General Abizaid said the U.S. has 148,000; and that there are about 160,000 total. So did those nine amount only to a thousand troops -- those additional nine nations?

Feith: I -- my understanding is that the 19 number that I used to describe the number of countries that have people on the ground -- I'm not sure that they are all necessarily troops. In some cases, they may be doctors at military hospitals that were set up. I mean, I think there is a collection of different functions being performed by the different people that have come in. As I said, some of them are medical personnel and some of them are people that we have in the Coalition Provisional Authority headquarters who are doing different kinds of work. They're not necessarily all troops.

Q: I think maybe we're asking about people who carry guns and stop bad people from doing bad things.

Feith: Yeah. And that's, I think, the main function of the stabilization forces that I mentioned, where we already have these two multinational divisions and we're working on generating additional units that can come in, brigade level or division level units that could come in from other countries.

Q: You mentioned in your introduction that the report had some good observations and good ideas but it also had some judgments that the Pentagon and others might not agree with. Can you talk about the report, what you find helpful, what you maybe don't agree with?

Feith: To tell you the truth, I read the report basically just this morning through. It just got produced. And as one reads it, it's just clear -- I mean, it's a very serious piece of work about a very complex subject, so that every once in a while you come to a sentence and you say, "Well, I don't know if I agree with that." I can just imagine that throughout the government there would be people who would say things a little differently or maybe judge things a little differently, analyze something differently.

Q: What -- (inaudible)?

Feith: I don't want to get into that. I can't claim to have mastered it to the point where I want to, you know, go in and do a critique. What I can tell you is that it gave us good ideas to chew on and we are in fact taking the recommendations very seriously. And in a few cases it even occurred to us that we would probably agree with the recommendations perhaps for some reasons other than those that are in the report. So anyway, it's a serious and rich piece of work and we're grateful for it.

(Cross-talk.)

Feith: Thank you.

Q: Mr. Barton, could we just have sort of a final sum-up of what's at stake here in terms of -- you know, your report talks of a window of opportunity that, you know, could be possibly closing. So what happens? Can you just give us a final -- what the stakes are in terms of this?

Barton: We're guests here and I don't want to abuse the -- I'd be happy to talk to you here on the side.

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