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Presenter: Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz

Sunday, October 26, 2003

Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Iraq Trip Summary -- onboard aircraft

Wolfowitz: I did my arithmetic. You can maybe count differently but I counted 43 working hours so we put in a good week I think.

Staff: In two days.

Wolfowitz: Two days, two nights.

And it seems to – thinking about a way to summarize it all is that we have witnessed or heard about hundreds of individual acts of courage by Iraqis and by Americans, and by the other Coalition partners who are working together to build a new and free Iraq.

I was privileged this evening to have a remarkable dinner with Abdul Hakim, the last surviving brother of the Hakim family, whose rest of his family have been murdered by the old regime, or whoever did that final murder in Najaf. And he's in there. He is undeterred, he knows he's in danger, he knows 60 other members of his family have been killed by the Saddam regime. And by the way, he's a wonderful model of tolerance and rationality. It was a pleasure.

We all saw it in Hillah, those remarkable women, including very traditional looking Muslim women, who are nevertheless courageous enough to stand up for women's rights. And you know it takes courage and equally takes courage for those men to be organizing a center for human rights in a country where human rights have been trampled on for 35 years so brutally.

We saw it everywhere with these brave Americans. You just can't say enough about the troops. They are simply wonderful. Although it's not just troops -- its civilians as well who are risking their lives and proud of what they're doing. They know what the mission is about. They know they're helping to build a new country and they know they're helping to make the world and America safer.

And we saw brave Iraqis and heard about many others in the police, and the civil defense corps, and the facilities protection service who are fighting along side us for a new Iraq, putting their lives on the line. And again, very proud of it. That police deputy superintendent we met at the police station -- I don't know if you heard me say, but he was shot in the leg a few days after I saw him in July. He showed me an Arabic newspaper, I guess put out by the Sadr people, that targets him in an ugly and vicious way. And he said, I'm proud of this. It's just a wonderful spirit.

What is different about the enemy is this enemy doesn't stand and fight. They hit and run and they're losing. When it comes to acts of courage, I was truly inspired by the visit to the hospital and by the courage and commitment of the five people I talked to that had just been seriously wounded. There

wasn't a single complaint. They were all proud of being there, proud of what they'd accomplished. The first one, by coincidence, was the non-American, a British civilian from the Finance Ministry who's just helped to get Saddam's face off the currency and get a new currency on the streets. And he is proud of what he's done with every reason to be.

I think the next one was -- I may have the order slightly wrong -- I think the next one was a State Department secretary who had volunteered to come help out. I think all the State Department people here are volunteers. She'd been in Guatemala. She's only been here a very short time with -- in some pain, but no regrets, proud of what she's doing.

A civilian from the US Department of Labor who's helping to put together a new Labor Ministry. And by coincidence I had met three of the Iraqis that he and his colleagues had sent back to the US for training just last week in Washington. All three of them are women. One is a Sunni Arab, one is Shia Arab and one is a Kurd -- a very impressive group. He's proud of his work with every reason to be.

Then there was a civilian from, a DoD civilian from NIMA, the National Imaging and Mapping Agency, bringing some of their incredible technical expertise out to help us find and track the enemy. And this man had a face that was badly lacerated and swollen and I don't think he could see very well at the time, although I think his vision's okay. And he was just proud of what he was doing and amazingly upbeat.

And then the last one was this Army Colonel who's working in the Ministry of Health -- which is, by the way another real success story here -- who was badly enough wounded that he had an oxygen mask on his face. And they sort of pried it up a little so we could talk and I asked him where are you from? He said, do you mean where do I live, or are you asking about my accent. I hadn't really noticed the accent, and I said, well I meant where do you live, but why don't you answer both. So he said, well I live in Arlington, Virginia but I grew up in Beirut, Lebanon. And I said how do you feel about building a new Middle East and he gave me a thumb's up. And then he asked the nurse to take the mask off and prop up the bed so that we could get a photograph together. It's just -- I'm inspired by their reaction, by their courage. I'm sure you folks all saw it in the CPA headquarters where one of their members had just been killed, and it's a Sunday and they're all back at work just working away and committed.

I think we have people, military and civilians, who have volunteered to do a dangerous assignment because they know it's important. And I think everything they're learning when they're out here reinforces that commitment. And I could go on, I mean you've seen many of the stories and I've probably heard more than you've heard -- well I shouldn't say that. You probably heard a lot that I haven't heard. So I guess with that we'll close this section.



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