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Menu

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[DoD News](#)
[Advisories](#)
[Contracts](#)
[Live Briefings](#)
[Photos](#)
[Releases](#)
[Slides](#)
[Speeches](#)
[Today in DoD](#)
[Transcripts](#)

[American Forces](#)
[News](#)
[Articles](#)
[Radio](#)
[Television](#)
[Special Reports](#)

[DoD Search](#)

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[News Archive](#)
[News by E-mail](#)

[Other News Sources](#)

Presenter: Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz

Sunday, October 26, 2003

Broadcast Statement to Iraqi People (Iraqi Media Network).

DEPSECDEF: We've just spent a very fruitful three days in Iraq. If you put in 16 hours a day and you have the kind of support that our military gives us, you can get an awful lot done in a short time. We've seen an enormous amount of people and places in this country.

I was here only in July and I'm struck by how many things have moved forward during that time. The Iraqi people are clearly taking charge of their future. It's an exciting thing to watch. It doesn't mean this country doesn't have problems. What it has is a lot of people looking for solutions.

Once again, I want to thank our forces and the other international forces in our coalition and all those civilians who are here too to help the Iraqi people build a new and free Iraq. We visited Baghdad, Tikrit, and Kirkuk. In all those places we saw signs of local councils taking charge of their affairs. I was told about the first time, probably in history, that there was a secret election in Saddam Hussein's own city of Tikrit -- which elected a new and free local council in that city. In Tikrit and elsewhere we saw Iraqis training to be members of the new ICRD and we heard wonderful stories there and in Baghdad and Kirkuk about how the CDC and FPS and Iraqi police are out there every day on line with our troops frequently losing their lives as well, but fighting for their country, fighting for a new and free Iraq.

I want to thank the Iraqi people for their courage, having lived through 35 years of one of the most brutal dictators in modern times. It's now time to build a new country and we're here to do it with you.

I had very good meetings with members of the governing council, including a wonderful dinner hosted tonight by Abdul Aziz Hakim. I applaud the efforts of the governing council to forge a new kind of unity among Iraq's diverse populations and I think it's important for the American people to understand what Iraqis tell me every day which is there aren't differences between Shia and Sunni, and between Kurds - or Kurds and Christians; at least not the kinds of differences that people kill each other and fight over. The killing here was done by this terrible sadistic regime and the remnants of that regime continue to try to target success with hit and run attacks. But they will not succeed. They are losers. The Iraqi people are winners and our international partners and we are here to make sure that they win. And it's a pleasure to once again thank all those people who are here to help. It's difficult work. It's frequently dangerous work. But it's wonderful work and the whole world will be grateful for it in the future. Thank you.

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