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Presenter: Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority

Sunday, December 14,
2003

Ambassador Bremer Briefing from Baghdad

Bremer: Ladies and gentlemen. We got him!

[Cheers and Applause]

Saddam Hussein was captured Saturday, December 13th, at about 8:30 p.m. local in a cellar in the town of Abduar which is about 15 kilometers south of Tikrit.

Before Dr. Pachachi, who is the Acting President of the Governing Council and Lieutenant General Sanchez speak, I want to say a few words to the people of Iraq.

This is a great day in Iraq's history. For decades hundreds of thousands of you suffered at the hands of this cruel man. For decades Saddam Hussein divided you citizens against each other. For decades he threatened and attacked your neighbors. Those days are over forever. Now it is time to look to the future -- to your future of hope, to a future of reconciliation.

Iraq's future, your future, has never been more full of hope. The tyrant is a prisoner. The economy is moving forward. You have before you the prospect of a sovereign government in a few months.

With the arrest of Saddam Hussein there is a new opportunity for the members of the former regime -- whether military or civilian -- to end their bitter opposition. Let them now come forward in a spirit of reconciliation and hope, lay down their arms, and join you, their fellow citizens, in the task of building the new Iraq.

Now is the time for all Iraqis -- Arabs and Kurds, Sunis, Shia, Christian and Turkamen -- to build a prosperous, democratic Iraq, at peace with itself and with its neighbors.

Dr. Pachachi.

Pachachi: [Through Interpreter -- could be different depending on interpreter] To all of the Iraqi people, the happy Iraqis, I wanted to [follow] [inaudible] intelligence has been done without no longer coming back. Iraqis are happy and joy as we look forward for the future. The future of internal peace for Iraqis could focus all their effort toward new Iraq, new free Iraq and equality. And I would like to express my feelings in the behalf of the Iraqi Council that we are going forward, exerting our effort to have our authority and to have the self control for Iraq to regain its power and to be in a good position internationally. Thank you.

[Applause]

Sanchez: Good afternoon to all of you here, and good morning to all of our fellow Americans. I'm going to give a short statement and then I will answer a few questions.

Today is a great day for the Iraqi people and for the Coalition. Last night at approximately 8:00 p.m. local, forces from the 4th Infantry Division commanded by Major General Ray Odierno together with Coalition Special Operations Forces conducted Operation Red Dawn to capture the former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. This was done during a cordon and search operation at a remote farmhouse near the city of Tikrit.

There were no injuries, and in fact not a single shot was fired. Saddam Hussein, the captive, has been talkative and is being cooperative.

At this time I would like to provide you with a brief overview of the operation that led to his capture.

For orientation purposes this is a general map of the region showing Western Iraq, the location of the city of Tikrit, and the location of the town of Abduar in the vicinity of which Saddam Hussein was captured.

For the last several months a combination of human intelligence tips, exceptional intelligence, analytical efforts, and detainee interrogations narrowed down the activities of Saddam Hussein. This effort led us to conduct this raid last night on this rural farmhouse where we apprehended Saddam.

At about 1050 hours yesterday we received intelligence on the possible whereabouts of Saddam Hussein. Two likely locations were identified near the town of Abduar and for operational purposes these locations were identified as Wolverine I and Wolverine II.

The 1st Brigade Combat Team from the 4th Infantry Division was assigned the mission to kill or capture Saddam Hussein.

The forces involved, approximately 600 soldiers from the Raider Brigade, the 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 4th led by Colonel Jim Hickey. The 4th included cavalry, engineers, artillery, aviation, and Special Operations Forces.

At about 1800 hours last night under the cover of darkness and with lightening speed the Raider Brigade forces were positioned and began movement toward the objective northwest of Abduar.

At about 20 hundred hours Coalition forces assaulted the two objectives, but initially did not find the target. As a result, the 1st Brigade Combat Team elected to cordon the area and begin an intensive search. Coalition forces subsequently found a suspicious location to the northwest of Wolverine II.

The area is a small walled compound with a metal lean-to structure, a mud hut, and during the search, a spider hole was detected. The spider hole's entrance was camouflaged with brick and dirt. After uncovering the spider hole a search was conducted and Saddam Hussein was found hiding at the bottom of the hole.

The spider hole is about six to eight feet deep, and allows enough space for a person to lie down inside of it. Saddam was captured without resistance.

At about 2115 hours last night Saddam Hussein was moved to a secure area and a further search of the hole and surrounding area was conducted.

Results from the raid include confiscation of two AK-47s, a pistol, 750,000 U.S. dollars in 100-dollar denominations, and a white and orange taxi. Two other Iraqis affiliated with Saddam Hussein were also detained. Saddam Hussein is currently under Coalition custody and at an undisclosed location.

At this time I'd like to show you a short video. Roll the video, please.

[Video shown]

What you see here is a short clip of the hole where Saddam Hussein was found. This is the air

vent and a fan, an exhaust fan, that had been built into the hole to allow him to remain underground.

This is Saddam as he was being given his medical examination today.

[Cheers and Applause]

Saddam's medical examination proved that he had no injuries and he is in good health.

[Shouts from audience - Translated as "Death to Saddam"]

What we will see next is the picture of Saddam Hussein at the time he was captured. On your left and on the right is Saddam Hussein after he was shaved.

Next slide.

Here you see Saddam's historical picture and with him today on my left.

The capture of Saddam Hussein is a defining moment in the new Iraq. I expect that the detention of Saddam Hussein will be regarded as the beginning of reconciliation for the people of Iraq and as a sign of Iraq's rebirth.

Just as importantly, this success brings closure to the Iraqi people who now have final resolution. Saddam Hussein will never return to a position of power from which he can punish, terrorize, intimidate, and exploit the Iraqi people as he did for more than 35 years. The chapter of Iraq's history that was filled with Saddam Hussein's reign of terror is now closed forever.

I will now take your few questions.

Q: Carol Williams of the Los Angeles Times.

It was announced when this War Crimes Tribunal was formed earlier this week that any suspects would be turned over to Iraqi custody. Do you have plans to do that, and under what conditions? Do certain conditions have to be available in Iraqi prisons before you will hand Saddam over to Iraqis?

Sanchez: Ma'am, at this point that has not been determined. We continue to process Saddam at this point in time and those issues will be resolved in the near future.

Yes, sir.

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] Saddam Hussein, how would you treat him and can you make an interview with him and put him on the television? And when we will see one united Iraqi government to take care of all the Iraqi business without any problem or any conflict? Thank you.

Pachachi: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] A government of Iraq will be established without anybody controlling it. We are all working on that, to enact a law bringing one Iraq during the next transitional period before -- In a few months we will have a full, powerful government to take care of all the Iraqi business.

Anyway, this matter will be discussed later and as you know -- It sounds like he's asking about the trial of Saddam. He will face a trial as all the people who have committed unhuman crimes, and I would like to repeat, I will ask the Iraqi Council to declare during this week a holiday, a national holiday. [Cheers] Allah is great. Allah is great.

Reporter: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] I would like to congratulate my people first and the Coalition forces and the brothers here in the name of Allah. [Inaudible] from [all sorts of] newspapers. I'm sorry for the shock which may be on this table. I would like to congratulate my people first and the Iraqi Council and all Iraqis. And also the brother Americans who will put Iraq on the right track. And I would like to congratulate the families of all the martyrs and those who have been tortured by the former government. We would like to ask the Iraqi Council for

Saddam's trial, to be the Iraqis themselves, the people, to be the judge. Because Saddam is the first and the final criminal. And we will ask the Council to do so. We want the people to be the judge in this trial.

Thank you very much.

Pachachi: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] As I said before, it will be a special trial. This trial it will be issued as all those people who did unhuman crimes, crimes against humans. But for sure it will be an Iraqi courthouse.

Q: [Through Interpreter] Rusha [inaudible], Shira Newspaper. After we captured Saddam Hussein do you think that the anti-American operation has been finished? Thank you.

Sanchez: The question is are the operations against the Coalition forces going to be over after the arrest of Saddam Hussein. We've repeatedly stated that this is a critical moment in the history of the country, in the history of our attempt to bring security and stability to Iraq, but we do not expect at this point in time that we will have a complete elimination of those attacks. I believe that those will continue for some time, but with the cooperation of all of the Iraqi people and our Coalition, I believe that we are now much closer to a safe and secure environment here in the country.

Q: Lisa Barron, CBS. Can you tell me exactly what Saddam Hussein said when he was captured, what he's been saying since, the state of his medical condition, and how long he'd been there?

Sanchez: No. At this point I couldn't tell you that.

Q: Jim Crane with the Associated Press.

We were wondering if anyone has come forward to collect any reward money for the capture. And if you could just give us an idea of how he was able to elude capture for so long, and maybe how long he might have spent in this location.

Sanchez: I have no idea how long he had been at this location or how he was able to elude capture. I think this will come out as we conduct our follow-on inquiries in the interrogation.

Q: Reward?

Sanchez: No, I couldn't give you any further information on the reward.

Q: James Titus from the Times.

Can you give us any more information about the other two people who were captured with him?

Sanchez: No. I do not have positive ID on those other two individuals.

Yes, sir?

Q: Rod Northam from Newsweek.

You said he's cooperating. Does that mean that he's likely to give any kind of statement to his followers to desist? Are you asking him to do that or anything along those lines?

Sanchez: No, we've not done that at this point in time, but he was cooperative during the process of being brought in to our detention facilities and in the process of being given his medical examinations last night.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] The happiness is confusing me and I cannot make any question but I would like to thank the brothers, the Coalition forces, and ahead of them the Primer. And thank you. [Inaudible] from Bayenna Newspaper.

Sanchez: Thank you, ma'am.

All the way on the left.

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] [inaudible] Almatonama Newspaper. As you captured Saddam Hussein did you find any communication devices or papers or some letters to some certain elements? Thank you.

Sanchez: The question is whether there was any hardware or written documents that were confiscated at the time we arrested Saddam Hussein. The answer is that the site continues to be exploited at this time, and as the information becomes available we'll communicate that to the people.

All the way in the back, sir.

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] If the health of Saddam Hussein does not allow him to face a soon trial, would you postpone it or you'll just cancel it?

Bremer: As General Sanchez said in answer to an earlier question, the determination about how and when Saddam would face justice, and he will face justice, is a question that still remains before us.

Q: [Inaudible], Italian News Agency.

I want to know if it's possible something about the possibility that Saddam Hussein had to run the guerrillas from that hole in the ground.

Sanchez: I'm sorry, I didn't understand.

Q: If it was really possible that he was leading the guerrillas from this hole underground that we have seen in the video.

Sanchez: At this point we've not been able to determine that. Once again, some of that information hopefully will come out during the interrogation processes.

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] The World International TV.

Did the Iraqi Council as they have formed a new court to prosecute all the anti-human criminals, would you give any handover Saddam Hussein to face his fair trial as he did against the Iraqis?

Sanchez: We've answered that a couple of times now. That's still to be determined as the case progresses. Undetermined at this point. Yes Ma'am.

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] A new Iraq, new democratic Iraq. We would like to forward the best and the finest. Lovely wishes to our brothers in the Coalition forces, to the Ambassador and the brother who became a real, very intimate brother for the Iraqis, Mr. Bremer, and all the efforts that you have done to capture the tyrant, this who is hated and [neglected] from all over the world.

We would like to ask the Iraqi Council what would you offer the Iraqi people after this capture as the Iraq, and Iraqi people need all the help. We are looking forward for a good Iraq, peaceful Iraq, and we are asking you through the Coalition forces as a new government, we want a promise for a new Iraq.

Pachachi: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] We are in the service of the Iraqi people and we will do our best to offer all these services, and the first thing is to prepare for our transitional period to have a complete, self controlled and independent. And we are working to have a general election in the future to elect the people of Iraq. We will enact a constitution and we will show it to the parliament and it will be offered to Iraqis. We will clean it up and we correct it and we will show it again to the Iraqi people.

Q: WP Reporter: Can you please elaborate a little further on the information you received yesterday morning that led to his capture, was this a tipster? Was this a result of an interrogation? And

based the preliminary examination of the site by your soldiers can you come to any preliminary conclusions of how he might have been there? Whether he had been in a house living in the in the house, living in the vicinity? Any further details on that please?

Sanchez: No, we don't have anything further details on the amount of time he had been living in that area. And in terms of how and when and where the intelligence came from, we just received the intelligence, we communicated it to the Division and Brigade commander, and in a matter literally of a couple of hours they responded. The Brigade responded within a matter of about an hour and a half to position their forces and execute the mission.

Q: Was it a tip?

Sanchez: It was intelligence, actionable intelligence that was determined based on the analyst that had been working it for some time. It was great analytical work. Yes Ma'am.

Q: NYT Reporter: General, when are you going to be meeting with the captive if you haven't already, and can you tell us Mr. Bremer the progression of phone calls you made once you were told that Saddam Hussein had been captured?

Sanchez: In terms of a formal meeting with Saddam Hussein, at this point I do not have one planned, but I was with him when he was brought in last night, and through the positive identification process.

Q: [Inaudible]

Sanchez: No, not directly, ma'am. I'm sorry, it was a question for the Ambassador.

Bremer: I think I'll leave for a later date the minute-by-minute activities in the last 14 or 15 hours, but you can be sure it was pretty busy.

Sanchez: Just a little bit of sleep last night. Yes, sir?

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] Some sources have said that the American examination for Saddam has been taken place after his capture. Do you confirm this piece of news and when he will be interviewed on television?

Sanchez: I'm sorry, please clarify the first part? Oh, DNA tests?

Interpreter: Yes.

Sanchez: We are in the process of doing more conclusive tests on the identification, but we are as sure as you all saw that we do have Saddam Hussein. We did get positive identification on him from some of our other detainees.

Yes, sir. In the back.

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] [Inaudible] Newspaper.

The question is, after the capture of Saddam Hussein do you think it has any necessity to stay in Iraq or you can transfer him out of Iraq? And you can repeat showing the movie? Thank you.

Sanchez: At this point in time we will continue to hold him in an undisclosed location.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: Christine Somy with the Chicago Tribune.

I would like to ask Ambassador Bremer, has he seen Mr. Hussein? Were you both together at that time last night when he was brought in?

Bremer: No, I've not seen him yet.

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] Do you think that the capture of Saddam Hussein will enable you to capture others, or are you just looking to capture Saddam and that's it, the job is done?

Sanchez: The question is whether I am going to stop now, of course not. No, of course not. We're going to go ahead. We still have a lot of work to do in terms of identifying some of the former regime elements that are still operating in the country, that are still creating havoc and attacking the Iraqi people, and we will continue to hunt them down just the way that we've been persistent with Saddam Hussein. And as I've told everybody here in my press conferences, that is a mission that has been assigned to us; it's a mission that we pay attention to every single day; and we will not slack off until we in fact have brought security and stability to the country.

Yes, ma'am. In the back.

Q: [Inaudible] with the Wall Street Journal.

General Sanchez, when you saw Saddam Hussein what were your impressions of him? Was he surprised, angry, hungry, shocked?

Sanchez: I think it was a cooperative posture that he was presenting to us. He was a tired man. Also I think a man resigned to his fate.

All the way in the back?

Q: [Inaudible] Romania Radio.

Sir, do you expect any increasing attacks during the following days as some sort of retaliation for Saddam's arrest? And do you think that today's bombing in Kaldia was these kind of attacks?

Sanchez: Yes. I think everyone knows that there was a bomb attack in Kaldia that killed 20 Iraqis and wounded -- correction, wounded 20 and killed 10. This is a continuation of the attack on the people of the country by these former regime elements and terrorists. Do I expect an increase in retaliation? I don't know. I couldn't answer that. But I'll tell you that we are prepared and we will defeat those elements if they choose to attack us at any point in time.

Q: Jack Fowler, Daily Telegraph.

I was just wondering if the President gave a memorable reaction when he was informed on the phone that Saddam had been arrested.

Bremer: I think you should direct those questions to the White House.

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] After the international TVs and the satellites, they said that Saddam's wife who gave this information and intelligence led to his capture. These things are true or not true?

Sanchez: Rumors. Next?

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] How long it will take to interrogate Saddam Hussein? Time-wise, I mean.

Sanchez: When will we investigate Saddam and when will we interrogate him, is that the question, sir?

Interpreter: How long?

Sanchez: As long as it takes for us to get the information we need.

Let me come over here. Ma'am, in the red?

Q: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] Berjin for the Voice of [inaudible].

The questioner would like to address you today, that we know that sentence of death has been appointed for Saddam, whether you would give him a sentence of death or not and his trial. Will this be open or not? For Iraqi people to see it.

Pachachi: [Through Interpreter – could be different depending on interpreter] This issue will be before the court, and I would like to concern for all people, everyone should know that the court, the trial will be fair, open, and for the accused they will have the right to appoint lawyers, attorneys, and to bring witnesses. This trial won't be like the former trials of the former regime which takes instances in now time. In three minutes they can finish the case [inaudible].

Sanchez: The last question?

Q: Mike Georgie from Reuters.

Can you tell us what Saddam Hussein was doing when your troops arrived? And secondly, does this mean you're going to leave the country quicker than expected now that you've captured Saddam?

Sanchez: [Laughter] Am I going to leave quicker?

Q: Yes.

Sanchez: We're going to leave whenever it's time for us to leave after we've accomplished the mission that we've been assigned. That's when we bring security and stability to this country.

In terms of what was Saddam doing, he was hiding. That's what he was doing at the time we found him, trying to evade our capture.

Thank you all very much. I believe that was the last question. God bless America.

[Applause]



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