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## Press Statement

**Richard Boucher, Spokesman**

Washington, DC

December 18, 2003

## Redirection of Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Experts

The State Department, with the cooperation of the Coalition Provisional Authority, is launching a 2-year program to support the peaceful, civilian employment of Iraqi scientists, technicians and engineers formerly working on weapons of mass destruction programs. This program has two mutually reinforcing goals: to keep Iraqi scientists from providing their expertise to countries of concern; and to enable them to serve in the economic and technological rebuilding of Iraq.

The first step in a multi-stage process will be to establish a new, United States-funded office in Baghdad – the Iraqi International Center for Science and Industry (IICSI). The Center will identify needs and provide funding for specific scientific projects that use the expertise of personnel formerly involved in Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs. Initial projects will focus on establishing priorities for future scientific work, training, and long-term cooperation between the United States and Iraqi scientific communities. These projects will begin within six months of the opening of the Center, and are expected to cost around \$2 million, to be funded by the United States Nonproliferation Disarmament Fund (NDF).

Over the next two years, the Iraqi International Center for Science and Industry will work closely with the Iraqi government to identify, develop, and fund activities in support of Iraqi reconstruction. Of fundamental importance will be the need to provide Iraqis with weapons of mass destruction-related experience meaningful civilian employment in a democratic Iraq.

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