

## Remarks at the Swearing-In of John D. Negroponte, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq

**Secretary Colin L. Powell and Ambassador to Iraq John D. Negroponte**

Benjamin Franklin Room

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(12:00 p.m. EDT)

**MR. ENSEMAT:** Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, my name is Donald Ensenat. I am the Chief of Protocol and it's my pleasure to welcome you to the beautiful Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room where we have gathered for the swearing-in of John D. Negroponte to be the United States Ambassador to Iraq.

We are privileged to have the Honorable Colin Powell, the Secretary of State, with us this afternoon who will officiate at the ceremony and will administer the Oath of Office. I am also pleased to introduce the members of John's family: his wife, Diana, who is on the stage with us; his children, Marina, Alejandra, John, George and Sophia.

We are also privileged to have a number of other distinguished guests joining us this afternoon. Among them I would like to welcome, if I could, the Honorable Rend Al-Rahim, the Iraqi Ambassador -- Iraqi representative, excuse me; Mrs. Alma Powell is with the family; the Ambassador of China, the Ambassador of Romania, the Ambassador of Bulgaria, the Ambassador of Greece, the Ambassador of France, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom and Lady Manning; Congressman Amo Houghton of New York, Congressman Peter Goss of Florida, Congressman Donald Payne of New Jersey, the Honorable Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor, and the Honorable Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

Please join me in extending a warm welcome to all of our guests.

(Applause.)

Our ceremony will begin with remarks by the Secretary of State; thereafter, there will be the administration of the Oath of Office to Ambassador Negroponte, after which and the Ambassador will make some remarks and will conclude with the signing of his appointment papers, and following that we will have a receiving line in the front where you can congratulate the Ambassador.

So it's my pleasure at this point to introduce the Secretary of State.

(Applause.)



**SECRETARY POWELL:** Good morning everyone and welcome to the Benjamin Franklin Room. It is a special privilege for me to have the opportunity to preside at the ceremony and to share in this moment with my dear friend, John Negroponte, and Diana and their family. And we do it here in this beautiful room because it is the most prestigious place we have in this building. We do all of our major events

here. It is a room of many emotions. It's a room where much pride and gratitude over the years have been unleashed, recognizing the achievements of so many worthy people. And that's because, among its many functions, we use this room to swear-in the President's envoys to nations around the world, as we are getting ready to do with John Negroponte.

Today, however, in this room there is another emotion that comes upon us, and that is the feeling of hope. By sending one of our most accomplished, skilled and effective diplomats to Iraq, we are telling the world that there is nothing we hope for more than an Iraq that is at peace, an Iraq that is prosperous and an Iraq that can reclaim its seat of honor among the nations of the world.

We are confident that our hopes will become realities because Iraq's new beginning goes forth from the foundation of an illustrious past. In Iraq the alphabet was created and the first code of law was written. In Iraq a human civilization, organized in the rhythms of cooperation, first used the gift of a river to water a fruitful land. In the Baghdad of Haroun al-Rashid there arose perhaps the most enlightened and tolerant civic culture the world had ever seen before relatively recent times.

And if I might now just take a moment to talk directly to the Iraqis who are here and those who may be watching via television, you have other decisive assets that are there for you as you embark on your new future. You are a literate, hardworking and diversely skilled people. You have superb educators, scientists, scholars, artists, farmers and builders. You draw strength from your religious beliefs. We also hope that you'll find strength in the diversity of your beliefs and in the kaleidoscope of your talents.

You, the Iraqi people, have suffered under the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein. Your shared experience has taught you the importance of securing for yourself responsible and legitimate government that will now serve the people and not the rulers.

You face many challenges, but we're confident that you will meet them all in the days and months ahead. No one will stop you because Iraq's future is now, once again, in the hands of Iraqis, with all of your talents and with all of your abilities.

America made a promise and America is keeping its promise: We're returning full sovereignty over Iraq to the Iraqi people.

Ambassador Jerry Bremer will soon turn over his responsibilities to the Iraqi interim government and will return home for a well-deserved rest after doing a brilliant job. We thank him for helping to build a solid foundation for the free Iraqi government that is to come and we thank all those who worked with Ambassador Bremer under very, very difficult circumstances.

John Negroponte is going to Baghdad as the President's ambassador, as the American people's ambassador. He's going to lead a national conversation between the American people and the Iraqi people. He will listen as well as speak. As President Ghazi al-Yawar, Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and the other high officials and ministers of the Iraqi interim government take charge, they will have a friend and a partner in John Negroponte.

We're impressed, very impressed, by these new leaders. We are impressed by the strength of character they have shown so far. We are impressed by their devotion to duty, their courage and their steady leadership during this transition period. And we're going to help them and their colleagues in every way that we can, and especially help them from our embassy in Baghdad.

We will be there with our coalition forces to provide necessary security and to provide technical assistance of so many different sorts, and we'll do that until Iraqis can assume all of those responsibilities for themselves. The United States won't be alone in the months ahead any more than we've been alone in the past months. Dozens of nations have contributed to and sacrificed for the sake of a new and free Iraq. And those contributions will continue.

I know that the Iraqi people will now welcome new partners, just as they know they can continue to count on the partners of the last year.

And, of course, we all welcome an enhanced role of the United Nations. It's clear that the international community has now gathered its strength to help the Iraqi nation. We see that commitment in the recent 15-0 vote in the United Nations Security Council on Resolution 1546. We see it, too, in the G-8's endorsement of the transition framework at Sea Island, Georgia, earlier this month.

President Bush's five-step strategy therefore proceeds full ahead with the backing of the international community as a whole. Step one is about to happen, and that is the transfer of authority from the CPA to the Iraqi government, the unequivocal end of the occupation, and that's just one week away.

The next step is the establishment of security and partnership between the coalition and the Iraqi government, the role of a multinational force working with Iraqi security forces,

which are being built up rapidly. Iraqi authorities have made clear that they want coalition forces to help ensure the basic security that Iraqis need until they can do the job themselves, and we will be there for that.

Coalition forces will be there consistent with the exercise of full authority by the Iraqi government and with the consent of the Iraqi government. We're making steady progress in this handover of security responsibilities. We are building up Iraqi forces. And we thank, above all, the extraordinary courage and dedication of coalition military forces, both Iraqis and the soldiers of 32 other countries. We will always have in our mind and in our hearts the supreme sacrifices made by those who have lost their lives in the cause of freedom.

The third step is the continued building of the new infrastructure of Iraq for economic prosperity. We have pledged \$21 billion for Iraqi reconstruction over the next few years, and other nations have come forward and pledged an additional \$13.5 billion. As the security environment improves, the impact of this worldwide generosity, through the hard work of the Iraqi people, will be seen and will be multiplied many times over.

Step four is to widen still further international support for Iraq's transition, from despotism to democracy. Resolution 1546 and the G-8 endorsement are major steps on that path, but many talented and generous nations can still do more and we will be encouraging them to do more.

And then the final step, step five of the President's vision, is to bring Iraq's progress together to support a political process that leads to fully democratic national elections under a new constitution by the end of next year. The President's plan is on track.

So our mission in Iraq doesn't end next week. There's much left to do. But Iraqis themselves will now take over direct responsibility for their own future. It's up to the Iraqis to decide on their constitution and their election law. It's now up to Iraqis to do business with the rest of the world and to conduct relations with other states. It's up to Iraqis to determine the use of their natural resources. It's up to Iraqis to deal with the criminals of the previous regime. And it's up to Iraqis to decide what support they want from us.

I'm confident that we'll be remaining in the closest of partnerships with Iraqi authorities in the months ahead. We may not agree on everything; they are now sovereign. But that's normal. We have never sought an Iraq that was our client or dependency; quite the contrary. Ambassador Negroponte will guide our cooperation and will smooth out any differences that may arise, as all of the President's envoys do wherever they serve around the world.

But John Negroponte isn't just any Presidential envoy. Most ambassadors that we swear-in here are sworn in, perhaps, for the first time. On some rare occasions, it's a second time or a third time. This is John's fifth time to be sworn in as a Chief of Mission.

John has served every President since Dwight Eisenhower and he's been successful at every job he's ever held. It was my great privilege, 17 years ago when I was National Security Advisor, suddenly elevated to that position from being the Deputy, and in desperate need of a Deputy for myself, that I reached out throughout the Foreign Service looking for somebody who I knew would be absolutely splendid in the job but somebody who I would form a relationship with that would allow us to do the job for President Reagan and who I hoped would become a lifelong friend, somebody whose loyalty was unquestioned and somebody whose character was unquestioned, but more than that, somebody who was a selfless servant in the cause of democracy and the cause of the American people. I found all of that in John Negroponte.

John was indispensable to me during the almost two years that we worked together in the latter period of the Reagan Administration, helping President Reagan to bring into being strategies that changed the world. We heard so much about it during the funeral of President Reagan just a little while ago. John was a key player in those days, and I will never forget what he did for me during those days.

He's done this in every post that he served in over a long and distinguished career: in Hong Kong, in Vietnam, in Ecuador, as Ambassador to Honduras, Mexico, the Philippines, and most recently, as our Permanent Representative to the United Nations where he has done an absolutely outstanding and splendid job leading a great team.

John, we save the most challenging jobs for you. (Laughter.) And it's safe to say that Baghdad is no exception to that rule. The President has chosen you for one of the toughest and most critical positions in all of government. You are headed to an American embassy that is new, our mission having been closed for the past 13 years; and, yet, that embassy is bound to be one of the largest, most complex and most important in the world. But I am absolutely sure of your ability to handle it. You are a pillar of competence and courage. The President has every confidence, as do we all, that you will meet every challenge that comes your way. And very soon, too, the Iraqi people will get to know you as we know you and they will learn what a great friend and what a great partner they have in you. You will have excellent support in your new posting. As you know, we have gotten about seven volunteers for every opening in the new embassy in Baghdad.

Your Deputy Chief of Mission will be Jim Jeffrey who is already there setting things up, who was our Ambassador to Albania and one of our many ambassadors who was willing to give up what they were doing and come help us, just as Ambassador Ricciardone who has been here for the last six or seven months from the Philippines has done. We are very pleased to have Ambassador Jeffrey's wife and son with us here today. This whole building, this whole government stands behind you, John.

And above all, you will have the most important asset of all: your family, the loving support of your wife Diana and your five wonderful children, all of whom are here with us today. Some of them were only like this when I first met them so many years ago: Marina, Alejandra, John, George and Sophia. They are all State Department veterans. They have all served with their mom and dad around the world and we're so proud to

have them.

A special word to Diana, though. When this came along, and the President decided on John, after calling John, I knew there was one other call I had to make. (Laughter.) It turned out to be an easy call because John and Diana had already been thinking about it before they were called. They saw the need that was emerging. They knew that the President would be reaching out to someone and they had already talked about it. And in the spirit of the Foreign Service, in the spirit of selfless service to nation, they had already decided that if the call came to them, they'd be ready. And so when I called, Diana, she and the family was ready. And for that, you will all have forever our undying gratitude.

So John, Diana, members of the family, friends all who are here, we thank you, once again, John and Diana, for your willingness to serve your nation in this way. And you go to Baghdad with the blessings of all of us here and grateful thanks of the President, me, all of your colleagues, but above all, with the thanks of the American people. And I know and we will see very soon that you are arriving with the thanks of the Iraqi people as well.

And now, my dear friend, if you are ready, I'm ready to swear you in.

(Applause.)

(Ambassador Negroponte is sworn in by Secretary Powell.)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Congratulations.

(Applause.)



**AMBASSADOR NEGROPONTE:** Thank you. Mr. Secretary, Ms. Rice, Minister Rend al-Rahim, other colleagues in the Diplomatic Corps who have already been recognized by Secretary Powell, distinguished guests and friends, I guess I would like, first of all, just to acknowledge the presence of one other person who is here today and with whom I look forward to working extremely closely in the months ahead, and that is General George Casey who has just relinquished his or is about to relinquish his duties as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army to come out to be the Commander in Iraq. So I just wanted everybody to know that George is here as well.

(Applause.)

Distinguished guests and friends, this ceremony is a special occasion for me and for my family. So before I say another word, I want to thank my wife, Diana, and our five

children. I could not have accepted this assignment without their love, their encouragement and their support. In any Foreign Service family, as so many of you know, you are in it together through thick and thin. That is always how it has been for us and how it remains. I will go to Baghdad by myself, but I will not go alone.

Mr. Secretary, I also want to thank you for your unstinting support over the years. I was proud to serve as your Deputy on the National Security Council under President Reagan and I am proud to serve you here at the Department of State under President Bush. And I am honored by the confidence that the President and you have shown in my abilities by selecting me to serve as the first United States Ambassador to a free Iraq. The institution you lead has been my professional home since 1960 when I began my career as a Vice Consul in Hong Kong. Along the way I have had the privilege of working with the finest professionals imaginable, not only in the Department but throughout the Executive Branch, on Capitol Hill and in the private sector.

So many of you here today are old friends and colleagues who have been essential in helping me complete the tasks assigned to me. I know I will continue to benefit from your guidance and assistance in Iraq as well. I will need plenty of both, I am sure. As I leave my current post at the United Nations after almost three years, I do so with a sense of gratitude and, yes, a touch of satisfaction. My time at the United Nations has been, without question, one of the high points of my career. The United States needs partners to advance our values and interests in the world, and at the United Nations we are able to forge many partnerships that represent a good return on our substantial investment of time and treasure.

I am thinking, for instance, of the 55,000 peacekeepers stationed around the world under United Nations auspices, of the critical role the United Nations plays as the first responder in times of humanitarian crisis, and, of course, of the ways in which the United Nations maximizes the efforts we and others make in combating the scourge of HIV-AIDS, particularly in Africa and the Caribbean. Time and again, the United Nations offers us leverage, operational flexibility and a means by which we can draw others towards fulfilling the aspirations of the United Nations Charter, a document in perfect harmony with the United States vision of a peaceful, democratic and prosperous world.

Since 1990, Iraq has been a major concern for the United Nations, occupying an enormous amount of the Security Council's attention. We all know the milestones along this difficult journey. Clearly, none has been more important than Security Council Resolution 1546 passed unanimously just last week. 1546 paves the way for the restoration of Iraq's sovereignty and advances us closer to the day when it will be governed by elected representatives who will build the democratic, economic and social institutions the Iraqi people deserve.

As I prepare to go to Iraq as United States Ambassador, I do so with a clear mission: to offer support and assistance to the Iraqi people and government as Iraq reasserts its full sovereignty. Three mutually reinforcing objectives underpin this goal: establishing security by helping the Iraqis defeat terrorists and criminal elements who oppose a free

Iraq; promoting economic development; and supporting Iraq's democratization through elections, promotion of human rights and the rule of law.

To succeed, we must rapidly build a well-resourced multi-agency United States mission in Baghdad that works in the closest coordination with the multi-national force, international organizations, the embassies of coalition countries, the private sector and NGO community and, above all, the sovereign, democratic people of Iraq. Everyone from the least to the greatest must do his or her part. This is a project that will take many months and many years, but time will be our friend as we stay the course.

In closing, I would like to salute all those who have sacrificed their lives or put themselves at enormous risk to advance the cause of liberty in Iraq. For his valor and leadership in confronting an incredibly arduous challenge, Ambassador Bremer has my admiration and gratitude.

I would also like to honor our fallen colleagues from the United Nations, notably Sergio Vieira de Mello and to thank United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan and his Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi for guiding the political process that has led to the interim Iraqi administration. I look forward to continued collaboration with UN colleagues in the months ahead.

When all is said and done, the freedom, security and prosperity of the Iraqi people matter to us, all of us in the community of nations, and we all must give that country our full support. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

**MR. ENSEMAT:** This concludes our ceremony. We will now form a receiving line where you can congratulate the new Ambassador and his family. I invite the Iraqi representative to be the first among us to do so.

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