

Remarks With President of Iraqi Interim Government Ghazi Al-Yawar After Their Meeting

Richard L. Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State

C Street Entrance

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DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Well, good afternoon. It's been a great honor to be able to host the President of the Interim Government of the Republic of Iraq, Sheikh Ghazi Al-Yawar, here this afternoon. We've just completed a luncheon with members of the U.S. Congress, academics, diplomats, social activists. We were all thrilled to hear President Al-Yawar express the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people, and the firm determination to have elections on the 30th of January.



Speaking for Secretary Powell and the men and women of our Department of State, we couldn't be more pleased to have had this honor today.

Mr. President.

PRESIDENT AL-YAWAR: Thank you very much. I have been honored and pleased to visit the State Department today as part of my trip to the United States. It's very important trip, because after all, we are in very close coordination to make sure that the upcoming elections in January will be a complete success, hopefully.

The trip is very positive. The outcome of the trip is very positive, and we have received very warm hospitality and understanding from the Administration of President Bush.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Thank you. We'll take one or two questions, if you'd like.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, today in Saudi Arabia, only five attackers were able to get inside a compound which had been fortified. What does this say about your capability of countering such attacks, and what will you do about it to improve security?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Well, it's quite clear that those terrorists who attacked

our Consulate in Jiddah had observed our procedures for some time. Clearly, we'll do an after-action report and we'll take any remedial activity that is necessary.

QUESTION: I'm sorry, you said that it's clear that they had observed the Consulate for some time. Then was there -- there was actual surveillance; and was there any intelligence suggesting that this specific Consulate was being targeted?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: No, I know of no specific intelligence. There had been a general intelligence threat in Saudi Arabia. What I was referring to was the fact that by the method in which they entered, it's clear that they had observed our procedures for some time. This is just common sense; it wasn't a matter of intelligence.

QUESTION: One question. What do you think for the talks for Turkish accession to the European Union December 17th in Brussels? In connection, however, must Ankara should recognize first the Republic of Cyprus?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Well, the -- although not an EU member, obviously, our view has been steadfast in the ability -- Turkey to have the ability to accede to the European Union, and we certainly hope this will be the case.

How about a question on Iraq?

QUESTION: A question for the President -- a question for the President. Sir, thank you very much for the question. What assurances can you give to the people of the United States and others that the Sunnis will be able to -- that the Sunnis will participate? Have you come away with any sort of guarantees, any additional support from the U.S. in terms of trying to get them on board, in terms of participating?

PRESIDENT AL-YAWAR: Well, first of all, let's make this clear. This Sunnis are not negative nor boycotting or planning to boycott the elections. It's only that there is a security situation. We are still working on it. We are determined to make things better by the time of elections.

There are more and more participation from many people in the Sunni community. Some of them are reluctant because of security situation, but definitely, we are working with many other parties on encouraging everybody to cast their votes. After all, Iraqis has been deprived from this right for 45 years, and all Iraqis, regardless to ethnicity or sect, are really very keen to go and exercise their rights.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: One more.

QUESTION: Mr. President, since asking a question to you about eight months ago at the National Press Club, the situation -- putting in this infrastructure, your reconstruction and all other social needs in your country, has that gone underway correctly? And to what degree are you working with various religious groups -- Sunni, Muslim and Kurds -- to make certain

that the situation for the elections the end of January succeed?

PRESIDENT AL-YAWAR: Well, this is a political issue. It's not something for the clergy. The clergy are there to be the safety valve of the society. I think they are all wise enough to encourage everybody to preserve their rights through positive participation in elections. Everybody in Iraq is trying to work together. We are working on bridging any gap or misunderstanding. We do not have, really, any racial or sectarian problem between different parts of the society. After all, we are all Iraqis and we are all proud of being Iraqis.

Thank you.



DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT AL-YAWAR: Thank you, sir.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Thank you so much.

PRESIDENT AL-YAWAR: Thank you very much.

(The Deputy Secretary escorts the President to his car.)

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, did the New York chapter meetings move the ball forward on North Korea? The New York chapter meetings last week on North Korea, did it move the ball forward? What was their response?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I'm not sure. We'll have to wait until they digest what was said.

QUESTION: And so is this some kind of precursor to bilateral meetings? Why choose this forum to talk to them directly?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: No, no. We've often used that for a number of years now. So there's nothing special.

QUESTION: But about six-party talks?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: It was about six-party talks.

QUESTION: I mean, have you used it before about six-party talks?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Many times.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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