

# OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

## IRAQ: SPECIAL REPORT

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For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
April 4, 2003

### **Dr. Condoleezza Rice Discusses Iraq Reconstruction**

Press Briefing by National Security Advisor Dr. Condoleezza Rice

2:52 P.M. EST

DR. RICE: Good afternoon. I have a quick opening statement, and then I'm happy to take questions.

There's been a lot of speculation in the press in recent days about the post-Saddam Iraq, not all of it entirely accurate and some of it just plain wrong. (Laughter.) So I'm here to try and clear up a few things. Just as we've planned for a military victory, we have been planning to win the peace.

We cannot say when military victory will come, or predict what difficulties lie in the future. As we know for certain, many difficulties remain and the one thing that we do know is the coalition will prevail. But it is essential to continue planning for what comes after Saddam Hussein's regime.

Our goals are clear: We will help Iraqis build an Iraq that is whole, free and at peace with itself and with its neighbors; an Iraq that is disarmed of all WMD; that no longer supports or harbors terror; that respect the rights of Iraqi people and the rule of law; and that is on the path to democracy.

To achieve these goals, we will dismantle the tyrannical infrastructure of Saddam Hussein's regime. That is, in fact, being done as coalition forces go through the country. We will work with Iraqis, our coalition partners and international organizations to rebuild Iraq. We will leave Iraq completely in the hands of Iraqis as quickly as possible. As the President has said, the United States intends to stay in Iraq as long as needed, but not one day longer.

Many specific means of achieving these goals are being worked out now. Many can only be developed once Saddam's regime is gone. To a large extent, the means to these goals will depend on things outside our current control. We do not know, for instance, what damage Saddam Hussein's regime may inflict on the Iraqi people in the regime's last gasps. We do not know what we'll find on the ground once the regime is gone -- for instance, the condition of Iraqi natural resources or its infrastructure. And we haven't yet heard from millions of Iraqis who are currently not free to voice their concerns. We are, however, committed to working with all Iraqis to implement a vision of a free Iraq.

As to the matter of the Iraqi interim authority, about which there has been a lot of comment, let me describe it for you. The interim authority will be a transitional authority run by Iraqis, until a legitimate permanent government in Iraq is established by the Iraqi people. It will be broad-based, drawing from all of Iraq's religious and ethnic groups, including Iraqis currently inside and outside of Iraq. It will be a means for Iraqis to participate immediately in the economic and political reconstruction of their country.

After the current regime is removed, the interim authority will assume responsibility for administering many government functions and take on further responsibilities as it becomes able. The interim authority will not be a coalition-imposed provisional government.

Iraqis will be developing the interim authority at various stages of the process. In liberated areas within Iraq, we have already seen the emergence of local Iraqi leaders who are helping in the liberation of their own country. Iraqis currently free and Iraqis who will soon be free and Iraqis who have for decades kept alive the hopes of a free Iraq while in exile will all have much to contribute to the interim authority and to Iraq's future.

On the U.N. role: The coalition is committed to working in partnership with international institutions, including, of course, the United Nations. But I would just caution that Iraq is not East Timor, or Kosovo, or Afghanistan. Iraq is unique. There are lessons to be learned from the success of the process that led to the creation of the Afghan Interim Authority. But the important thing now is to liberate Iraq. And as the statement from the Azores summit said, we will welcome the efforts of U.N. specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations in providing immediate assistance to the Iraqi people. The precise role of the U.N. will be determined in consultations between the Iraqi people, coalition members and U.N. officials.

The coalition will naturally have the leading role for a period of time to assure the provision of essential services to the Iraqi people. That action will require unity of effort. But, of course, the United Nations has expertise in many key areas, and the coalition will welcome its participation in postwar Iraq.

Let me just state that the goal of everyone, the coalition and the international community, should be to return sovereignty to the Iraqi people as soon as possible, sovereignty that has been denied them under the reign of Saddam Hussein.

To the matter of the role of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, the immediate focus of ORHA's efforts will be on helping Iraqis restore the delivery of basic services -- such as electricity, if necessary, water, basic medical care, and to make certain that civil servants are paid, for instance. We want the ORHA to work so that the Iraqi people can begin to live normal lives as soon as possible, and then to chart their own future.

After the initial phase, and as more and more functions are turned over to the interim authority, ORHA will shift to an advisory role. The office itself, the ORHA, is a multinational coalition effort. The Department of Defense is the lead U.S. agency in this effort. Coalition governments and Iraqis will also be involved at every step.

The ORHA is led by Jay Garner, a retired U.S. Army general who, in 1991, helped the people of Northern Iraq establish their own administration in that part of the country. The ORHA office reports to General Franks, and is comprised of representatives from a range of government agencies, including the State Department, the Department of Defense, the Justice Department and USAID, as well as advisors from outside the government. There are also coalition representatives in place in the ORHA, and there will be more soon. Iraqis will be fully involved in the operations of the ORHA.

Policy guidance for the ORHA is, of course, provided by the President, through the Secretary of Defense, and that policy guidance is now being developed and coordinated on an interagency basis.

ORHA will coordinate the coalition's humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts with the activities of NGOs, international organizations and other members of the international community, as appropriate. The office already has links with U.N. agencies and NGOs that will play an important role in postwar Iraq counterpart offices in the governments of coalition countries, and with the various free Iraqi groups.

Some of the offices staff is in place, but other positions are in the process of being filled. ORHA is not a provisional government for Iraq, civilian or military. The goal is to transition responsibilities to the Iraqi people as soon as possible. I just want to underscore that Iraqis will be involved in this process at its very earliest stages.

I'm happy to take your questions. Bill.

Q How much power will the interim authority have? There seems to be a great deal of public disagreement about this, listening to the statements of some members of the Iraqi diaspora, and some things that are said on the record -- or not quite on the record -- around here.

DR. RICE: Well, the IIA is not intended to be a provisional government. The IIA is exactly what it says, a transitional authority that gets Iraqis involved as early as possible in the administration and life of the country.

Quite obviously, it needs to be -- even the IIA needs to be broadly based, representatively based. It should have members from the exile community that has kept alive the hope for a free Iraq for all of these years. It should also have membership from within the country, where there are people being liberated every day and where local leaders are beginning to participate with the coalition in the liberation of Iraq. And we are certain that as the liberation of Iraq takes place, more people will emerge who can be a part of that leadership.

The purpose of the IIA in this transitional period is, first of all, to be a repository for sovereignty, but not to act as a provisional government. In time, there needs to be a process by which you move through to elections and some kind of process that allows the voice of the Iraqi people to be heard about the governance structure. But the interim authority is not intended to be in its earliest stages, in any case, a provisional government.

Q How quickly do you expect the interim authority would be up and running? And would it be operating in certain areas of the country while violence is still going on in other parts of the country?

DR. RICE: Well, it's entirely possible that there could be pockets of violence, given the way Saddam Hussein is using these death squads and the like, and that other large parts of the country could have already been liberated. And I think under those circumstances we'll have to see what unfolds on the ground to see if it makes sense to perhaps have an interim authority operating in some parts of the country. But, really, we're going to allow events on the ground to dictate the timing for the creation of an IIA.

But I should say that mechanisms are already -- have already been employed and are being employed every day that should help create a basis for an IIA. For instance, you know that we've had opposition conferences; that helps to create a basis for an IIA. There are also going to be mechanisms that are going to emerge as the liberation of the country takes place, and we're looking for mechanisms by which Iraqi leaders, local leaders can get together and, again, provide a basis for the IIA. So I think a lot of this is going to depend on how things unfold on the ground and what the right timing is.

Q Dr. Rice, how do you explain -- or how do you -- how does the Defense Department maintain control of the reconstruction effort if the money you've asked for to pay for it Congress is not allocating to Defense? In fact -- I know the bill is not done, but both Houses are expected to pass it as is, and basically they're saying anybody but Defense.

DR. RICE: Let me be very clear what the President asked for. The President asked for the appropriations to be made available, in a sense, to the President for distribution. The thing that we need most here is flexibility to use this funding so that the reconstruction effort is effective and efficient. The Defense Department, however, has been designated by the President -- and Secretary Rumsfeld -- by the President as the lead agency. The other agencies are supporting agencies to the Defense Department's effort.

It only makes sense, because we are in a war, that the phase of war termination and immediate aftermath would be a Defense Department effort. Now, this was all structured in a policy directive that the President issued several months ago. And so there's a clear understanding of this, we will make certain that however the funding is allocated, that it gets to the appropriate places, that it gets to General Garner, so that he can make sure that the reconstruction effort is efficient. But I want to be very clear that the President wants this money to be flexibility and available to the agencies that need it.

Q But just to clarify, Congress has said they don't agree with that, they don't want you to have that flexibility. It's their role to allocate the money where they see fit.

DR. RICE: I'm just telling you what the administration has pressed for. And the administration has pressed for this money to, in effect, be allocated to the President for distribution.

Now, whatever comes out, we will make it work so that General Garner has what he needs to do -- Secretary Powell is devoted to that. The other Secretaries who are involved in this are devoted to that. So whatever comes out of the Congress, we'll make it work. But the President asked that that money be available to the agencies as needed.

Q You and other administration officials keep emphasizing that the IIA is not a provisional government, that it's a transitional authority. What does that mean? If it doesn't have the authority of a government, what authority does it have?

Does it help the government of Tommy Franks -- is it an enabler for him?

DR. RICE: It's an enabler, John, for the Iraqi people to be involved in the administration of their own country. And it becomes a first stage or a basis on which you can begin to build to a representative government that can be then affirmed by the Iraqi people.

I want to remind you that we went through a similar phase in Afghanistan. The transitional authority, the earliest stages in Afghanistan, this was a leadership that emerged, emerged in that case out of a conference, was really involved in administration, was then confirmed in a loya jirga, and then began to assume the responsibilities of a government. So there's a process here.

And what the interim authority will do, along with the Office of Reconstruction -- Jay Garner's operation -- with the coalition partners and with international agencies, is to make sure that the Iraqi people are getting back on their feet -- that life is returning to normal; that health care can be delivered; that people can go back to school; that agriculture can get up and running. I mean, there are just things that are going to have to be done for the Iraqi people.

The question of how we get to governance structures that are government structures, I think we'll have to see how that evolves. But there are a lot of people with very good ideas about this.

The one thing I want to say about interim authority is that the one condition for anybody being involved in the interim authority is that they be devoted to certain principles about how Iraq is going to be governed in the future; that it will have territorial integrity, that it has to be a unified Iraq, that it has to be broadly representative, that there is going to be respect for human rights, that there are not going to be weapons of mass destruction in the country. There are some principles that we would expect everybody in the IIA to be involved in.

Q And a last step before elections, would the interim authority have political power at that point?

DR. RICE: John, I think we have to get there. What we're concentrating on right now is that there's going to be a day after the collapse of this regime, and we want to be sure that the Iraqi people are as quickly as possible returned to normal life. And we believe that the best way for them to be returned to normal life is to have the competence of Iraqis involved in that administration, as well.

Q Dr. Rice, there are reports that there are up to 4,000 would-be suicide bombers now in Iraq. How can you bring stability to the country with this kind of pending violence? And wouldn't it be another Northern Ireland?

DR. RICE: We fundamentally believe that when the grip of terror that Saddam Hussein's regime has wreaked on its own people is finally broken and Iraqis have an opportunity to build a better future, that you are going to see people who want to build a better future -- not blow it up.

This is a society that, after all, 20-plus years ago was one of the economic strengths of the Middle East. This is an educated population, a sophisticated population that has lived under a tyrannical regime in a reign of fear. The kinds of things that the paramilitaries are doing now to keep that grip of fear needs to be broken. And slowly, but surely, in the progress of coalition forces, that reign of fear is being broken.

We believe that when Iraqi people are given the chance, they are going to want to have a better future, not one that blows up their children in terrorist attacks.

Q Dr. Rice, a key question. It fascinates me -- when you mentioned the U.N., you said Iraq is not East Timor, it's not Kosovo, it's not Afghanistan. In all of those cases, the U.N. had played a role, say, in the case of Afghanistan, of helping to form an interim government, and all the others in paving the way for elections. Are you saying that the U.N. will not have a role in Iraq's political future?

DR. RICE: I'm saying that the role of the United Nations is yet to be determined. There is too much work still to do on the ground. What we focused on to this point is the importance of getting the U.N. involved in the humanitarian side. The oil-for-food program, by the way, the resolution passed 15-0 so that we could get the oil-for-food program authorized again. We would expect that as soon as parts of the country is safe -- as Umm Qasr has just been declared safe -- that U.N.

and relief agencies will be able to go in.

I think we don't want to try to get into a theology here about the U.N. role. We are going to have practical problems to solve on behalf of the Iraqi people, and with the help of the Iraqi people. And all of us should be looking -- whether it is the international community or the coalition -- should be looking for a broad representative group of Iraqis who can begin to restore life to the Iraqi people. And that has to be the goal, is a broad-based Iraqi interim authority. And I would think if you have a broadly-based interim Iraqi authority, everybody, including the international community, is going to want to be supportive of that.

Q Can I just follow up?

DR. RICE: Yes, you can follow up. Yes.

Q But you do seem to have decided that the U.N. will have a supporting role, rather than a central role, just in the sense that the leading decision-maker is going to be the coalition forces, in partnership with the Iraqi people. And can you just explain how you came to that decision; whether that was indications from the U.N., the situation on the ground, or the aftermath of the second resolution?

DR. RICE: No, the point here is that the U.N.'s role is -- the exact character of the U.N.'s role is really not an issue for discussion right now. We are not in a position, with the liberation of Iraq still going on, to know what is going to be needed. But as Colin Powell said yesterday, it would only be natural to expect that after having participated and having liberated Iraq with coalition forces, and having given life and blood to liberate Iraq, that the coalition intends to have a leading role. I don't think -- "the" leading role. I don't think anybody is surprised by that.

When I said that this isn't East Timor, that was a new state. When I said, not Afghanistan; that was a failed state. When I said, not Kosovo; it's not a state at all. Clearly, that's not Iraq. And Iraq is a country with a pretty sophisticated bureaucracy, for instance. I think we will look to see what technocratic talent there is among civil servants that can help in the rebuilding of Iraq. So that's the question here.

But it shouldn't be surprising to anyone that given what we've gone through and what we're now going through, that the coalition will have the lead role.

I said Karen next.

Q Are you considering at all the establishment of an interim government, before the total fall of Baghdad, before conquering the country, in someplace other than Baghdad that's in secure territory?

DR. RICE: The interim authority. Possible. It is possible, but again, we're watching how events are unfolding on the ground. We're watching the development of potential leaders, local people, for instance, who are coming out and supporting the coalition participating in the liberation of their country. So there are several pacing mechanisms here. The most important is events on the ground, but it's also the emergence of leadership.

Q Can I just follow up? The criticisms or the concerns that have been expressed by some other governments is that an interim authority, selected essentially by the United States, would not have the same credibility in the region, or perhaps not even in Iraq, that -- one that was chosen under some sort of international authority. How do you respond to that?

DR. RICE: I would say that as an interim authority emerges from the broad base that it must be -- and that is, again, people outside the country, people inside the country, people who have for decades fought for a free Iraq and people who are being freed -- it's got to be representative of ethnic and religious groups in the country, and it has to be broadly based.

Now, I would think that something that is clearly broadly based in that way is going to have the support of the international community -- and ought to have the support of the international community. I don't know what other option there is to a broad-based Iraqi interim authority. And so I expect that we would have the support of the international community.

Q Dr. Rice, this is another follow-up on the U.N. role. What you're saying, do I gather that the administration -- this administration doesn't have enough confidence in the abilities of the United Nations to take over matters in Iraq other than overlook the humanitarian function?

DR. RICE: No. First of all, it's not a matter of confidence. It's a matter of what the conditions on the ground are and it's a matter of what will be needed to get Iraq back on its feet as quickly as possible.

The circumstances under which Iraq will have been liberated will be a coalition effort. There will be a lot of security issues still to deal with in Iraq -- WMD destruction, a range of issues. And so we think it's very important that we not try to prejudge every aspect of the post-conflict administration right now.

Nobody in this administration has said that they want the U.N. limited to a humanitarian role. That has not been the case. We want to discuss with the U.N. and we want to discuss with the coalition partners the role that the U.N. may play, where its expertise makes sense. But we want to do what's effective. This is not a matter of confidence, it's a matter of what will be needed on the ground.

Q As you explain this broad-based interim authority, is it fair to say that those in the exile or expat community who have already talked about a provisional government of only exiles initially, and those in the administration who have spoken of getting known entity exiles or expats into the country first, and then finding out who of the indigenous Iraqis can be trusted -- should those people get, from what you're saying, that it's time for them to get a message that you -- and you speaking for the President -- don't view it that way, and they ought to just stop talking about it?

DR. RICE: John, I've been sitting through all of these meetings. And the vision has been, from the earliest time that we started to talk about an Iraqi interim authority, of one that was as broadly based as possible. Now, obviously, the expat community will bring a great deal to the future of Iraq.

These are people, many of them who are talking about just going back for short periods of time and trying to help with their technocratic expertise. They're a group of expats right now who are gathered here outside of Washington to try and arrange themselves to go in and help their country of birth, to take on specific tasks. That's a wonderful resource for a new Iraq. There are exiles who have carried the flame for a free Iraq for decades -- for a decade. And let me tell you, these are not people who have failed to take risks in carrying that out. They have been threatened by Saddam's regime. They have an expectation and we want them to be involved also in the future of Iraq.

But from the first time that we started talking about an interim authority, we talked about the importance of the emergence of people from within, as well. And as liberation is taking place, some of those people are beginning to emerge; even more will emerge. This will be a group that brings all Iraqis and all of their skills in support.

And so, you know, I know a lot of people have been talking, John, and that's why I'm up here. From the very earliest stages that we talked about an interim Iraqi authority, we have talked about the interim Iraqi authority, itself, being as broadly based as possible. We've had opposition conferences to have leadership committees and all kinds of things to try to stimulate efforts on behalf of Iraq. But we've always talked about a broadly-based authority.

Q Has that message not sunk in, perhaps, specifically in the case of the Iraqi National Congress and its leader, when you talked about a provisional government?

DR. RICE: When we talk with members of the Iraqi National Congress and others, they are supportive of the idea that you must have representation from people who are inside the country -- both those who are currently free, some of them free only in the last few days, and people who are still to be freed.

One more question. Jim.

Q If I could, the legal --

Q -- who's going to identify the leaders and what criteria?

DR. RICE: I think we don't give the Iraqi people enough credit for being able to identify people who can lead them. In

some of these communities, these local communities, you're already having leadership emerge. When you get rid of the reign of fear that Saddam Hussein has wreaked on people who hold their communities together, you're going to see leadership emerge.

And so it's not as if somebody is picking these people; these people are emerging from Iraq. Just as in the exile community, these are people who have emerged because they have fought the long fight and they ought to be a part of Iraq's future.

Ultimately, there will have to be a process of elections and all of the things that go with democracy, that will finally affirm what the actual government of Iraq will be. But in this interim stage, there's no reason to believe that the Iraqis cannot help -- cannot identify the people who will be a part of the interim Iraqi --

Q Will the interim authority be a sort of legally constituted authority over Iraq that would be able to make decisions that would otherwise be made by a government, beyond, say, what you seem to be saying, which was sort of the civil authority that would repair and make sure the services were available, and so forth?

DR. RICE: There's going to be -- there will be a process of getting to a group of Iraqis or Iraqis who have gone through different processes and different mechanisms to take on more authority over time. But in the initial phases, we expect the interim authority to be involved in the administrative task; we expect the interim authority to work with the Office of Humanitarian Effort and Reconstruction; and we expect that all of this will have international organizations, the U.N. and others, involved in it, too.

We have coalition partners who are involved, we have international organizations that need to be involved, and we have Iraqis who need to be involved. There's going to be a lot of work for everybody to do. And I think the mistake is to try to jump ahead to governance structures. There will be a time when governance structures will have to emerge in Iraq. They do not have to emerge right away.

Q But it will be that group that would sort of envision how you make that leap?

DR. RICE: I think in time -- certainly it will be one of the repositories of that, but there are also those who have written and thought for years about how an Iraqi constitution might look, about how rights might be assured for the Iraqi people.

Thank you very much. I've got to catch the helicopter.

Q What about the meeting with Blair?

DR. RICE: The Blair meeting -- it's one in a series of what they've been doing. You know, he was just recently at Camp David. We'll go to Northern Ireland. And the President is also very pleased that the Prime Minister has asked him to come at this time, because it is apparently a very important moment for participants in the Good Friday Agreement. There is a belief that some progress can be made, and so the President is going to try to lend his efforts to that, as well.

Thank you very much.

END 3:25 P.M. EST