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24 JULY 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR: Secretary of Defense and Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT: Estimate of the Situation in Iraq

1. ~~(C)~~ Summary: After completing the first Iraq leg of our AOR assessment, I wanted to provide you with our estimate of the situation there as well as make recommendations concerning key initiatives that we believe we must pursue in the coming weeks and months. We are taking the fight to the enemy during the execution of purposeful and highly effective operations. While those operations have inflicted heavy losses on anti-Coalition forces, the enemy is adaptive and is certain to continue low-level terrorist attacks to keep the movement alive. While it is not clear that the enemy has adopted a formal strategy, their attacks aim to spread fear among the populace, provoke coalition actions that might alienate the population, demonstrate the CPA's and IGC's inability to impose order, and erode the Coalition's will to sustain the effort. Because the political, economic, informational, and military components of security are interdependent, defeating the enemy and establishing stability in Iraq will require a coordinated effort between the CPA, CJTF-7, and the Iraqi people. Our most urgent efforts must include a continuation of our offensive campaign against the Ba'athists and other adversaries, an invigoration of strategic information operations, the restoration of essential services (especially power), the integration of Iraqis into governance as well as security and reconstruction efforts, and an extension of the CPA's reach to the regional level.

2. ~~(C)~~ Recent Military Operations: During the last month, CJTF-7's operations have inflicted heavy losses on the enemy in the Sunni Heartland, fragmented the opposition, preempted numerous attacks, and depleted the enemy's resources. 4th Infantry Division units took the fight to the enemy during three major operations. The success of those operations stemmed from focused intelligence collection against mid-level Ba'athists, the agility to act rapidly on that intelligence, and a determination to pursue the enemy despite challenges of urban terrain and uncertain conditions. The effects on the enemy appear to be cumulative. Such operations generate additional intelligence and because our forces act rapidly on that intelligence, we earn the trust and confidence of many Iraqis. Three times the number of Iraqis

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are offering information on Ba'athists and other anti-coalition leaders than offered information last month. When we are on the offensive, the results of our encounters with the enemy are lopsided in our favor. 4th Infantry Division, for example, suffered four soldiers killed in action while killing over two hundred of the enemy, detaining over fifteen hundred, and confiscating millions of dollars and large stockpiles of weapons and explosives. Soldiers in the 4th Division were proud of their accomplishments and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to the important mission with which they are charged. The extremely high morale of the soldiers I met belies recent media reports that have focused on a few malcontents from the 3rd Infantry Division. My visit to the Sunni Heartland revealed a degree of military achievement that exceeded all my expectations.

3. ~~(S)~~ Nature of Anti-Coalition Activity and Violence: The enemy, however, is certain to adapt to the new conditions we have imposed on him and already appears to be doing so. Anti-Coalition violence stems from two fundamental sources: loyalists of the former regime and radicalized Islamists. Criminal activity complicates the intelligence picture and is connected to other sources of violence. The enemy is limited to using guerilla tactics and terrorism due to a lack of economic power, military strength, and popular support. Attacks against U.S. personnel and, increasingly, on Iraqis aim to create an impression of Coalition impotence and vulnerability, discourage Iraqi cooperation, incite U.S. forces to conduct operations that offend Iraqi sensibilities, and erode U.S. and Coalition political will. In the near-term, former Ba'ath loyalists represent the most significant threat. While there is no concrete body of evidence to suggest regional or national-level command and control of their operations, it is likely that the enemy is executing plans that pre-date the fall of Baghdad. The formation of opposition parties such as the Party of Return suggests the growth of organized political as well as low-level military resistance. Despite our recent military successes, the enemy's inability to coordinate actions at the regional or national level, and the successful operation against Uday and Qusay, we should not underestimate the danger that anti-Coalition forces pose. The fractious nature of enemy resistance complicates our intelligence efforts and limits the decisiveness of our military operations. After suffering severe losses as the result of our recent operations, the enemy is likely to lie dormant for a brief period while he reorganizes and reassesses the situation. Once he reengages, we are likely to see an increase in enemy propaganda, sabotage, and terrorist attacks.

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4. (S) Sources of Enemy Strength: The enemy draws psychological strength from his hope to influence Iraqi and U.S. public opinion. He believes that he has greater “staying power” than Coalition forces and the Iraqis who have joined in rebuilding Iraq. His attacks on our forces, infrastructure, and Iraqi “collaborators” represent “propaganda by deed” and are important not as much for the damage that they inflict, but for the effect that they have on U.S. support for the effort and Iraqi confidence in the Coalition and the incipient post-Saddam regime. Many Iraqis are experiencing residual fear of Saddam and the Ba’ath Party, although the killing of Uday and Qusay will mitigate that fear. A source of physical strength is the enemy’s ability to recruit from a large pool of unemployed and angry youth, especially in the Sunni Heartland. These potential recruits are disaffected mainly because they perceive a lack of progress in economic development and political reform. They are facing loss of livelihood, are frustrated by a lack of security and basic services, have the perception that they are the “losers” due to the termination of Saddam-era patronage and de-Ba’athification, have strong nationalistic feelings, feel humiliated by the rapid Coalition military victory over Iraqi armed forces, and are suspicious of Coalition motivations for liberating Iraq as well as Coalition designs for the future (due, in part, to an extensive pre-war IO campaign by the Husayn regime). Other sources of enemy strength include large stocks of weapons, munitions, and money; access across Iraq’s porous borders to “reinforcement” by Islamist jihadists and the additional funds, munitions and terrorist techniques that they bring with them (e.g. bomb making); and the ability to avoid detection or pursuit in urban environments.

5. (C) Recommendations: The Coalition must develop a comprehensive strategy that integrates political, economic, diplomatic, informational, and military efforts to attack the sources of enemy strength. Security is not a precondition for work to proceed on the other three essential pillars of reconstruction (i.e. justice/rule of law and reconciliation, social and economic well-being, and governance with popular participation); these are interdependent. The momentum that we have achieved in recent military operations will prove transitory unless we advance on all fronts.

A. (C) Organization and Resources: Extend the reach of the CPA to the local and regional levels. The CPA civil structure and military civil affairs operations have generated tremendous progress, but both seem to be at the limits of their capabilities. Execute the Governance Team (GT) concept and extend Governance Support Teams beyond the planned six

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month period. Provide the human, material, and financial resources that the GTs require to implement political and economic reforms. To ensure unity of effort, align these inter-agency teams with emerging Iraqi political and civil institutions as well as coalition military units.

B. ~~(C)~~ Strategic Information Operations: We need to be as skillful and aggressive in the information spectrum as we are in battle. Because the enemy relies on misinformation and misperception, we must implement dramatic improvements in public affairs and information operations. "Good-news stories" such as 4th Infantry Division's achievements are not reaching the American public, the international community, or the Iraqi people. We should take the following actions immediately:

1. Deploy a cadre of the best civilian and military PAO professionals to Iraq.
2. Encourage the media to send their best reporters to the areas in which our units are making progress and defeating the enemy. Many of the reporters currently on assignment in Iraq lack the experience base and the imagination to move beyond casualty reports associated with the latest "ambush."
3. Reach out to the media, educate them, and give them better access to our units and the CPA.
4. Because many "neutral" Iraqis seem to have adopted a "wait-and-see" attitude, it is especially important that they have access to our successes through Iraqi, coalition, and other media. Establish a credible Iraqi media capable of telling our story in a coherent, "culturally literate" manner that resonates with the population. That effort will demand investment in communications infrastructure and close partnering with Iraqis. We have in coming days an opportunity to capitalize on the killing of Qusay and Uday, but the lack of media outlets will impede that effort.
5. Send a clear, consistent message that emphasizes the benefits and promise of stability, freedom, and a market economy in Iraq, the cost of failure, and our determination to succeed. Communicate to the public that it is impossible for the Ba'athists to return. To militate against sectarianism and the belief that political and economic reform is a "zero sum game," tell Iraqis that everyone has a stake in the future of the country. Emphasize that Ba'athism is dead. Publicize the limited scope of the de-Ba'athification policy and the waiver procedures to communicate that all Iraqis except those who were perpetrators of the Ba'ath regime's brutality will benefit from the new order.

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6. Open a dialogue with religious leaders and stress the compatibility of the Constitutional reform process and political reforms in general with religious interests. Urge their support in the mosques for the new order.

C. ~~(C)~~ Economic Development and Restoration of Services:

Because the enemy draws strength from disaffected members of society, it is also vitally important that we restore services. Time is against us. We should structure all projects to avoid creating conditions of dependency and involve as many Iraqis as possible in those initiatives.

1. Make the development of sufficient, reliable electrical power the first priority. Reliable power is a precondition for water supply, gasoline pumps, and other essentials. Restoration of power would inspire confidence in the coalition and post-Saddam government, provide employment for people who worked in factories and other businesses now dormant, and improve security by removing the most important sources of disaffection. Conversely, lack of power supplies assist the adversary in claiming Coalition impotence. We must commit whatever resources are necessary now to make this happen. Iraqis expect Americans to solve these problems quickly. Iraqis expect a level of services from the CPA and new Iraqi leadership far above what they experienced under Saddam.

2. Organize properly for economic development and reconstruction. Create development teams at the regional and local levels and integrate them with military headquarters and GTs.

3. Maintain the emphasis on visible local projects, such as schools. These projects, especially when they improve the lives of children, have the greatest moral effect. Decentralized assessments and initiatives made possible through commander discretionary funds are extremely effective and should be continued.

4. Encourage and expedite foreign investment to energize the economy and attenuate unemployment. Many investors in the Gulf region have already developed plans. Use U.S. and third-country embassies to highlight investment opportunities and the positive contributions such investments could make to the welfare of the Iraqi people.

D. (U) Political and Judicial Systems: It is important that we sustain the momentum associated with the formation of the IGC with a Constitutional Convention. Connect local political initiatives and governments to regional and countrywide political organizations to discourage sectarianism. Move rapidly on establishing code of law and a

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judiciary. Iraqis standing in judgment of criminals affiliated with the Husayn regime will be a powerful symbol.

E. ~~(S)~~ Security: Because the enemy will continue to adapt, we must stay on the offensive to disrupt his operations and demonstrate the futility of continued resistance. We will not achieve lasting security until Iraqis begin to risk their lives for the future of their country.

1. Establish effective Iraqi police. Our early experience suggests that selecting the right leaders is even more important than providing resources such as uniforms, weapons, communications, and vehicles.

2. Establish Civil Defense Forces and border guards quickly. The more soldiers we can replace as guards for fixed sites, the more Coalition soldiers will become available for patrolling and taking the fight to the enemy. We will conduct operations alongside Iraqi forces until they gain experience and we ensure their reliability.

3. Proceed with existing plans to establish the New Iraqi Army as the long-term solution to security at the national level.

4. Maintain the fight against mid-level Ba'athists as the first priority for tactical intelligence collection and military operations. Strengthen our ability to fuse tactical intelligence at the CJTF-7 level. Increase the number of interpreters and continue to focus limited HUMINT assets against this principal threat. Continue to conduct offensive operations based on that intelligence to kill or capture paymasters and cell leaders and strip them of their resources, especially money.

5. Isolate the Ba'athists and religious extremists from international support through improved border surveillance and control, strategic intelligence, cooperation with friends and allies, and military operations to kill or capture the enemy once they enter Iraq, but before they have the opportunity to intermingle with the Iraqi population.

6. Create a highly mobile operational reserve capable of concentrating effort in selected areas to pre-empt or respond to enemy action.

7. Monitor latent threats to security such as 1.4b, 1.4d and remain ready to eliminate them. Defeat any elements that are clearly hostile, but avoid over-reactions or premature actions that might create greater instability and actually undermine our objectives in Iraq.

F. ~~(S)~~ Diplomatic: Encourage foreign embassies to open in Baghdad. Besides the diverse resources they bring to the effort, international partners buy us more time because they debunk the myth that

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U.S. motives in Iraq are neo-colonial or include a desire to exploit the country's resources.

1. Work with other nations, especially Pakistan and Turkey to provide division-level forces. Hold a force generation conference to coordinate long-term commitments for peacekeeping troops and constabulary forces.

2. Ask Sunni Muslim countries to urge Iraqi Sunnis to support the coalition and the new order and reject Ba'ath efforts to survive.

3. Ask select countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait to assist us in interdicting foreign Islamist jihadists. Ensure that Syria and Iran understand that active or passive assistance to radical Islamists or secular terrorist groups will not be tolerated.

6. (C) Conclusion: This memorandum represents a current estimate of the situation and recommended courses of action based on that estimate. We should remember that the future course of events depends not only on our actions, but also on enemy reactions and initiatives that will prove difficult to predict. I am confident, but our ultimate success seems to hang very much in the balance. If we approach this problem as a team, we will give the Iraqi people freedom and prosperity and alter the course of history in the Middle East. While the price of succeeding in this endeavor will be significant, the cost of failure would certainly be much higher.

John P. Abizaid
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