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Sent: Monday, March 13, 2006 12:44 PM
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Subject: FW: ~~[S]~~ Civil War

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Troops, here's the papers I have been talking about. For your eyes only. Pls don't forward. Let's discuss at o&I Tuesday.

Some thoughts on Civil War in Iraq.

Context: Need to look at this in the context of what we have done over the past 3 years and what we are trying to accomplish here. Bottomline is that we are perilously close to helping the Iraqis take another major step toward establishing a constitutionally-based, democratically elected government that is broadly representative of all Iraqis. We are also less that two years from our goal of establishing security forces that can maintain domestic order and deny Iraq as a safe haven for terror. Civil war here is by no means inevitable because of what we have accomplished and because of the resilience and long-suffering of the Iraqi people. Question is, "Can they be pushed into civil war?" Answer is, "Probably not while we are here in large numbers, the Iraqi security forces remain a national force, and there is still a political process that the Iraqis buy into."

That said, a violent, protracted civil war in Iraq will put the accomplishment of our objectives off for another generation (Lebanon lasted more than a decade). The resulting lawlessness would open Iraq as a terrorist safehaven from which to export terror to the region and beyond. The main groups that will benefit from a civil war are AQIZ, the Saddamists, Iran and Syria. The losers will be our WOT efforts, the region and the Iraqi people.

What would it look like?: I would call it a civil war in Iraq if I saw widespread, intense and sustained fighting between ethnic and sectarian groups accompanied by the failure of central government control. Initially, the sectarian violence would seek to secure and protect key population areas and then to gain political and economic power at the expense of the other groups. It

would likely be seen as a battle between the Sunni insurgents and the Shia militia and be supported by the regional actors.

It would result from the failure of the Iraqi security forces and the political process--a judgment by the country's political leaders that they cannot divide political and economic power satisfactorily in Iraq without violence. It would likely be centered in the "Baghdad Belt"--Baghdad and the mixed population areas surrounding it (North Babil, Diyala, Southern Saladin), and not be a country-wide phenomenon. The Kurds would likely sit it out--if they try to encroach this will inflame the situation further, especially in Kirkuk. The Shia wouldn't fight each other in the South and would likely try to protect their areas, secede and take the oil with them. Baghdad would become Beirut circa '78 with a "Green Line" running down the Tigris, and population movements into sectarian enclaves on the East (Shia) and West (Sunni). Anbar, Ninewa, northern Saladin and Tamim would likely see some attacks on minorities and some forced population movements, but because of the largely Sunni population, violence wouldn't continue for long--as long as the Kurds didn't move on Kirkuk.

The nature of the violence would shift from the retaliatory violence that we just saw to more interest in controlling key areas. Sunni insurgents and Shia militia would be the key protagonists. AQIZ would take advantage of this divide to support the Sunni insurgents, who would likely reciprocate with support and safehaven for them, making their defeat by us much more difficult, if not impossible. After the "sectarian cleansing" and the drawing of battle lines around ethnic and sectarian regions of the country, the violence would subside and settle into a stalemate as neither side would have the capability to both hold terrain and conduct the offensive actions necessary to expand their control. It would take some time to build this capability even with help from external players.

What should we do?: As I've thought about this today, it seems fairly obvious that we want to do everything in our power to prevent civil war in Iraq from happening--to include sticking with the Iraqis as the violence here ebbs and flows, and supporting them if things turn dramatically worse. This will be hard, but not impossible through the government transition period. Three things are clear and we are doing them: 1) the Iraqi political and religious leaders must exercise patience and control as they complete the formation of the government and the formation of the government should be completed as expeditiously as possible; 2) the Coalition forces must continue to play a leading role in shaping security responses and in holding the ISF together; and 3) the Coalition forces and Embassy should encourage and support a concerted ITG effort to prevent additional sectarian attacks and to prepare an emergency action plan to mitigate the consequences of future high-visibility attacks.

With respect to our actions in the event of civil war, the attached paper offers some strategic options and their consequences. I would characterize them as 1) Bug Out; 2) Duck; 3) Intervene; and 4) Pick a Side. Paper does a nice job of laying out the pros and cons of each. I find none of them fulfilling, especially at this point. The last thing we want to do is to cede the field to Al Qaida. Talk of us not intervening seems to me to send the wrong signal—Rumsfeld's comments to that effect had a big impact here. Some even asking, "If they are not going to help us why are they here?" There's a lot we and the Iraqis can do now to prevent civil war and to keep it from getting to the "divided country" that I mentioned above. That said, if we get to the point of the civil war I describe above, we either have to reinforce and reoccupy the country or leave. The first option would acknowledge that the accomplishment of our strategic objectives for Iraq will be significantly delayed, but that we have not given up. The second acknowledges strategic defeat. I favor the former.

So how do we respond to the question of what are you going to do in the event of civil war?

- 1) We have to say that civil war, by my definition above, is not imminent—especially while we are here in numbers. So we are talking about hypotheticals.
- 2) We are currently heavily involved with the ISF and expanding our support to the police. We will continue our efforts to train them, to move them into the lead and to support them in their security missions. This will require continued enabling support and transition teams. As long as they hang together, we will be here for them.
- 3) We will continue to conduct counter-terrorism operations to defeat al Qaida and to deny them the ability to foment sectarian violence and establish a terrorist safehaven in Iraq. We will not let up on AQIZ.
- 4) We will continue to support and protect the government and the people of Iraq.
- 5) We will continue to engage with all Iraqis to assist them in resolving their differences and moving toward a representative government.

That's where I am on this now. Will continue to refine our thinking on this. I have not sent this to anyone else. george

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