

2 June 2003

TO: Secretary Rumsfeld

FROM: Paul Bremer

SUBJECT: Meeting with Iraqi Political Leaders

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I held my second meeting with the Leadership Council Sunday night. I began by stressing the commitment of President Bush and Prime Minister Blair to the economic and political reconstruction of Iraq. The coalition shares with Iraqis a vision of Iraq that is democratic, free, and prosperous. I then laid out our vision for establishing an interim administration (IA) in the next five to six weeks. Stressing my desire to consult broadly with all Iraqis to reach this goal, I reiterated the coalition's commitment to an IA that was representative of all strands of Iraqi society. I then outlined our concept of the IA by specifying it would have two main bodies: the Political Council and the Constitutional Convention. I said we would welcome their advice and views on these plans.

The Political Council

The Political Council (25-30 Iraqis) would be the "public face" of the IA and Iraq's main interlocutor with the coalition and the world at large. Membership on the Political Council would be personal, meaning that an individual, while perhaps affiliated to a party, could not endorse another person to take his seat on the council in his absence. Being a member of the Political Council would be a paid full-time commitment, one that the coalition hoped would be assumed by the most senior representatives of Iraqi political parties and the country's most-respected figures. All members of the Political Council would be permitted to stand for office in Iraq's first election. Consultation between Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the

council would be close. I noted that I would plan to meet with the council often, perhaps weekly.

The Political Council would have two major responsibilities. First, this body would play a role in getting the government ministries back up and running. The council would nominate to the CPA a candidate to be a Chief Advisor to each ministry. (A person could not simultaneously be a Chief Advisor and sit on the council.) This Chief Advisor would have increasing responsibilities within the ministry, working with the CPA Senior Advisor, having full access to all the ministry's staff and files, and being party to all ministry decision-making. The Chief Advisor would be available to brief the Political Council as it wished on the progress of the ministry. When both the Political Council and the CPA determined that a ministry was ready to assume greater responsibility, the CPA would ask the IA to nominate a candidate for the position of Interim Minister.

The Political Council would also be responsible for addressing long-term issues that will ultimately determine the shape of Iraqi society. Education, economics, de-ba'athification, and electoral laws were just some of the topics about which Iraqis will want to develop recommendations and strategies. I suggested that the Political Council might set up committees on these issues to serve as the focal point for a broad dialogue with Iraqi people on such subjects. The CPA would welcome advice on these issues.

The Constitutional Convention

Turning to the second body in the IA, I stated that in my private consultations with Iraqis, including the groups present, I had found unanimous agreement that a new constitution must precede a national election. A Constitutional Convention, therefore, was essential. The selection of this group must be done carefully through a nationwide process to ensure a representative body. Although I stressed that I was open to ideas about how the Constitutional Convention might function and on its size,

I expected that, after convening, the convention would establish a 12-15 person drafting committee. Once the committee completed its work, the constitution would be submitted back to the Convention for approval and then to the Iraqi people for their endorsement in a referendum. I stated that the timeline for completion of the constitution was for the Iraqi people to determine.

I concluded my opening comments by stressing the coalition's desire to move ahead. The next step was broadening the consultative process to ensure that both bodies of the IA would ultimately be more representative. I underscored how the creation of the IA would be "an agreed process" between the CPA and Iraqis. I did, however, note that legally, I would be the one to appoint the body. I reminded each of the leaders that we had asked them to bring to this meeting the names of people to add into the consultative process. We hoped they would give us these suggestions now. We also sought their recommendations on people who could play an important role in the Constitutional Convention and on the Iraqi De-Ba'athification Council announced last week. I stated that we expected to accelerate the pace and breadth of our consultations and would meet again on Friday in an expanded forum that included additional Iraqis.

The British Envoy then made clear that his government agreed entirely with the approach outlined and, like us, stood ready to receive the advice and views of the Iraqis present.

Reaction of the Leadership Council

The Iraqis asked several points of clarification after our presentations. These queries related to: the selection of people for the Constitutional Convention (we noted that we believed the convention should be broadly representative and that we would welcome their views on how best to achieve this), the role of a possible national conference (we said we held open the possibility of convening one sometime later in the process if it seemed useful), and the authorities of the Political Council. In

response to a question about qualifications for membership on that council, I noted that members would have to endorse our broad vision for Iraq as captured in the Nasiriyah declaration of principles. No one present offered explicit criticism of our plans while at the table.

During informal discussions with attendees at a reception after the meeting, it was apparent that the Iraqis differed in their reception to CPA plans. The INC itself gave contradictory signals, saying to some CPA representatives they were pleased with our approach and telling others they were unhappy with the indirect Iraqi role in governing. The INA, by contrast, thought the approach was sound. The PUK and KDP seemed generally on board, but clearly wished to consider further the implications of the proposal for their own situation. SCIRI, which had been antagonistic to the ideas before, seemed to take a pragmatic approach, asking clarifying questions, but avoiding antagonism. The Dawa Party cautioned that the Group of Seven was not representative and the US should not project the impression that it was treating them as any kind of collective leadership. The NDP was focused on the need to start the Constitutional Convention process as soon as possible.

Next Steps

We will move out smartly this week. Our goal is to subsume the G-7 into a broader and more representative "consultative committee." We will quickly identify another six to ten people to invite to our consultative meeting Friday night (which will include the original G-7 as well). We will present our ideas again to them and seek ways to broaden our reach even further. I plan to set a rapid pace over the next month, meeting with our expanding circle of Iraqis in formal sessions at least weekly while our folks actively canvass the country for fresh candidates – for the Political Council, its likely specialized committees, and the Constitutional Convention.