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National Security, Emerging Threats, and International
Relations

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I thank you for the chance to speak with you again today regarding the current challenges in the relief arena in Iraq. In addition, I will reflect on the lessons we have identified from past humanitarian operations and how they shaped our approach to these issues in Iraq. Finally, I will discuss some of the challenges we now face in Iraq in my area of responsibility.

The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration implements U.S. overseas refugee and related humanitarian policy: fostering physical and legal protection for refugees and conflict victims, facilitating refugee returns when conditions allow, and maximizing the efficiency of the UN, other international organizations and non-governmental organizations working on these issues.

CHALLENGES

We remain in the early stages of Iraq's recovery and there are two major relief and initial reconstruction challenges facing the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the UN system that fall within my area of responsibility: preventing further population displacements and managing refugee returns.

Certain population groups are especially vulnerable, including Palestinians and Iranian minorities. They are increasingly intimidated and often forced to leave land and homes given to them under the former Iraqi regime. About 4,000 Palestinians are currently taking shelter in very difficult conditions in a stadium in Baghdad, where UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are providing food, water and other assistance. In northern

Iraq, the reintegration of 800,000 internally displaced Iraqis from previous conflicts constitutes an additional long-term challenge in northern Iraq. Issues to be faced include property dispute resolution and compensation and assistance to those displaced by the returning indigenous population. Tensions have already flared in some communities between returning Kurds and Arab settlers.

The CPA and UNHCR have said that the conditions do not yet exist for large-scale organized refugee returns, and we strongly agree with them. Until security, legal protection, and infrastructure problems are addressed, the system will not be prepared to handle massive refugee repatriation. Spontaneous returns, however, are already taking place from neighboring countries, particularly Jordan and Iran. There is also pressure for large scale returns from among the 200,000 Iraqi refugees in Iran. Furthermore, many European countries are also seeking to return their significant caseloads of Iraqi asylum-seekers. We are working closely with the CPA and various UN agencies to create the conditions that will ultimately ensure well-managed, sustainable large-scale returns. In the shift from Iraq's centrally managed economy to a market economy, it will also be important to ensure that the most vulnerable, including returning refugees and internally displaced persons, especially women and children, continue to have access to the resources they need.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

The international community was able to avert the humanitarian crisis many had predicted in Iraq. In part, this reflected the lessons identified and applied from previous humanitarian crises and post-conflict operations. Examples include:

1. **Contingency planning.** Afghanistan taught us that humanitarian interagency contingency planning is a painstaking process, but it is absolutely vital to the success of the overall operation. For Iraq, the key agencies within the U.S. Government carried out quiet contingency planning. As a result, by February, our plans were complete and we were able to present publicly our humanitarian preparations to minimize suffering in Iraq in the event of conflict. A part of these preparations were USAID's stockpiles to assist one million in displaced persons.

2. **Engaging the multilateral system.** We engaged early with senior levels of the United Nations and other international organizations, and encouraged them to begin their own contingency planning. We provided funding to these organizations to allow them to set up response mechanisms and deploy programs as soon as security allowed. Our objective was to prepare the UN's operational humanitarian agencies for the key roles they would play in meeting humanitarian needs in post-war Iraq and to establish a UN mission.

3. **Fostering military planning for humanitarian issues and civil-military cooperation.** Failure to conduct such planning caused some confusion and delays in the Balkans. Doing it in advance of the Iraq operation helped forge civil-military consensus about what was needed and who would do what.

4. **Evaluating in advance the humanitarian impact of action taken or not taken.** U.S. military operations have evolved to the point where we build in the requirements to deal with the inevitable humanitarian consequences of conflict. One of the lessons of the Kosovo operation was recognition of the need to minimize internal and external displacement of people. The U.S. Government applied these lessons in Afghanistan, taking steps to feed the Afghan people while the allied coalition destroyed the regime that oppressed them. The result of U.S. policy was that very few people left Afghanistan, and two million were able to return to their homes. In the case of Iraq, the international community anticipated the exodus of over a million refugees and internally displaced. In fact, thanks to the rapid conclusion of hostilities and our humanitarian preparations, very few people were displaced. Successful U.S. measures included information operations broadcasts and tangible evidence of the pre-positioning of relief supplies and services. We accurately predicted a conflict would disrupt the Public Distribution System, which provided food to almost all Iraqis. USAID was particularly successful working with WFP and others to prepare for the rapid resumption of the program, which successfully occurred in June.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Despite the lessons identified from past experiences - and we are getting better at learning from some of these lessons - there remain significant impediments to managing refugee returns and preventing further population displacements - two important planks in Iraqi reconstruction and recovery efforts.

- **Security.** It has become a cliché - but no less true - that security is the fundamental precondition for recovery from conflict. Refugees and IDPs will not return to their homes unless security improves. Humanitarian action, reconstruction, and society-building in general, are heavily dependent on the restoration of law and order and public safety. Clearly, as Chief Administrator Bremer says, "The first job of any government is to provide security and maintain law and order." Clearly, this is the most important challenge now
- **Property rights disputes.** We remain concerned that pent-up ethnic and religious tensions in Iraqi society will encourage human rights abuses and even a humanitarian crisis. Such tensions have already exacerbated land tenure disputes and competing property claims inherent in any return effort. A proper system of adjudication needs to be put in place before large-scale returns can begin. A U.S.-led fact-finding commission has reported with recommendations for a course of action. Actual adjudication will be left to Iraqi courts.
- **Human rights abuses.** We were concerned that the Iraqi regime's legacy of terror and persecution might encourage a popular backlash of retribution and score settling. To date, such retribution has been limited, thanks in part to the DART, civil affairs units, the UN agencies, and NGOs who are identifying potential tensions and working with community leaders to defuse them. However, these tensions are still simmering and need to be carefully monitored and addressed if we are to avoid population displacement.
- **Coordination between the CPA and UN Agencies.**
- President Bush said that the United Nations has a vital role to play in post-conflict Iraq. The UN brings resources and experience to Iraq's recovery efforts. The Administration and CPA are working to clarify the roles

and responsibilities with UN agencies in Iraq. A productive interaction between the UN and the Coalition will be critical to Iraqi and international support for the reconstruction effort.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the U.S. Government's humanitarian priorities will continue to highlight the promotion and implementation of strategies that prevent further population displacements and ensure the sustainable reintegration of returning refugees and internally displaced persons. Our emphasis will be on the protection of these populations to prevent displacements and ensure sustainability of returns. Sustainability of returns is closely tied to the CPA's efforts to transform the Iraqi economy. We will work closely with our international partners that have protection mandates, particularly the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee for the Red Cross, to ensure that they have the resources they need to do their jobs. Finally, we will continue to support the CPA in working with international and non-governmental organizations that have as their focus protection and assistance to the refugees, returnees, and IDPs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to discuss these issues with the Subcommittee. I would be pleased to take your questions at this time.