



COALITION PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY  
BAGHDAD

040225-10

UPB HAS SEEN

INFO MEMO

*Handwritten notes:*  
Dan...  
We need to  
be on this...  
25 February 2004  
2/25

FOR: THE ADMINISTRATOR  
FROM: Don Hamilton *me*  
SUBJECT: Baghdad Focus Group: Don't Celebrate Regime Fall; Make & Keep Promises

Steve Moore of IRI has presented another tight and useful focus group report. Two focus groups (men and women) met yesterday. Key findings:

- Do not celebrate the April 9 fall of the regime. Any observation should be somber. Names like "Day of Sorrow" were preferred. (DRH Comment: This suggests that a somber ceremony commemorating Saddam's victims would be appropriate.)
- This group also said they want to see you "meeting with average Iraqis; listening to their problems and working to solve them. Men and women want to see you on television weekly."
- The physical scars of war matter. (DRH Comment: Destroying and removing war-damaged buildings should probably move up on our priority list. Implode them and hire Iraqis to haul away the rubble.)

ATTACHMENTS: IRI Public Opinion Report: "One Year Anniversary of the Fall of the Regime and Perceptions of Ambassador Bremer"  
DISTRIBUTION: Stratcom: Tappan, Senor, Smith  
Governance: Carpenter, Martinez  
IRI: Moore  
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**INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE  
PUBLIC OPINION REPORT  
ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF THE REGIME  
& PERCEPTIONS OF AMBASSADOR BREMER**

**BACKGROUND**

This report is based on two groups conducted in Baghdad on February 24. The men were fairly diverse group, but the women were all highly educated and disproportionately affluent. Some of their remarks may be more liberal than average.

**OVERVIEW**

While people are happy to see the former regime gone, they feel like the year that followed was full of sorrow. **They see the ability to express their opinion as the best thing to come out of the previous year, and feel like the economy has improved considerably.**

New construction and healing of the physical scars of the war would contribute considerably to a sense of improvement for Baghdadis.

**Women continue to like Ambassador Bremer better than men. Both groups want to see Ambassador Bremer spending time with average people, listening to their problems and taking action on them.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Don't celebrate April 9. Celebrations of the fall of Saddam on April 9 would be viewed negatively by the Iraqi people.** Make it a somber occasion. Additional research may reveal appropriate ways to mark the occasion.
- Dispatch resources to physical reconstruction. Not only will this improve Iraqi perceptions, but likely the physical scars of the war in Baghdad will be the lead of "One Year Later..." stories in the international press. **Both Iraqis and the international media will be expecting physical improvement.**
- **Ambassador Bremer needs to be seen meeting with average Iraqis, listening to their problems and working to solve them.**

## CONCLUSIONS

### *The anniversary of the fall of Saddam*

- Our groups said they will mark April 9 as the anniversary of the fall of the former regime.
- The occasion would be one of sadness. While the fall of the former regime is viewed as an occasion for celebration, it is eclipsed by the year of hardship that followed.
- When asked to propose a name the date, the groups offered names like "Day of Sorrow," "Day of Traitors," and "Day of the End of Days."
- Our groups preferred referring to the day as "**The Fall of the Former Regime**" or "**The Fall of Saddam.**" "**The Fall of Baghdad**" triggered negative responses.

### *What has improved in the last year?*

- When asked what has improved over the last year, both groups agreed almost unanimously that the freedom to express one's opinion was the best improvement.
- **Economic improvement was noted, primarily by the men, and people said that security has improved by 10% since the fall of the regime.**

### *What would improvement look like?*

- **People want to see reconstruction. New buildings and demolition or reconstruction of war damaged buildings would be the primary evidence of improvement.**
- Baghdadis want streets to re-open.

### *Perceptions of Ambassador Bremer*

- Both groups said in different ways that they want to see Ambassador Bremer solving problems.
- Women were unanimous in their favorable opinion of Ambassador Bremer and felt like he is the best person to lead Iraq. However, they feel like he is taking bad counsel from Iraq's elite.
- **They wanted to see him solving problems – going to places of work, asking people about their problems and then solving them. They want to see him making promises and keeping them.**
- Men were the polar opposite of the women, saying that Ambassador Bremer is a liar, and he doesn't keep his promises. **The underlying premise is that they want Ambassador Bremer to make promises and keep them.**
- Both groups wanted to see Ambassador Bremer appear weekly on television.