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INFO MEMO

April 15, 2004

FOR: THE ADMINISTRATOR
FROM: Don Hamilton *Don Hamilton*
SUBJECT: Last IRI Focus Group for this Month

This will be the last focus group report from IRI for April. They have effectively shut down their operation for two weeks due to security concerns.

Also for security reasons, this focus group was confined to family and friends of IRI staff. This all but certainly skews the opinions of the group pro-U.S. and pro-Coalition.

Highlights:

- Problems with Sadr end when his supporters get jobs.
- Fallujah ends when they run out of ammunition in two or three months.
- CF should not be very visible on June 30.
- Group has little confidence in ability of Iraqi security forces to maintain order.
- TAL is a decent document; the fact that it is temporary further lowers concerns.
- They had seen the TAL ads but did not know they were about the TAL.
- They like the idea that a broadly based, representative council of about 300 selects the Interim Government.
- Interim government should have power over the ministers, since there is corruption in the ministries.
- Iraqiya is the most trusted for news, but they use Jazeera and Arabiya for timeliness and up-to-date content.
- They think highly of al-Sharqiya, which seems to be a new station specializing in Iraqi opinions.
- Jazeera and Arabiya seem to believe that U.S. hostility to them increases their importance.

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**INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE
PUBLIC OPINION REPORT
April 15, 2004
OPTIONS ON GOVERNANCE, IRAQIYA AND
DETENTION OF AL-SADR'S AIDE**

BACKGROUND

Due to the unstable security environment, IRI staff was reluctant to conduct a focus group with complete strangers. Therefore, the recruiting mechanism devised for this group involved bringing in friends and relatives of numerous IRI employees from various parts of Baghdad. This group was also recruited to be people not personally impacted by the recent violence.

The group differs substantially from every other focus group that IRI has conducted in that almost all members had a favorable view of the Governing Council. Based on previous research, IRI believes that the odds against putting nine people in the same room that favor the Governing Council are substantial.

As one might expect, friends and relatives of IRI employees skew pro-American, pro-democracy and pro-Coalition. The group was mixed – both men and women in the same group. With all members possessing a bachelors degree or better, this group also skews educated.

Men:

Brigadier general – ret. 1976
Unemployed former high level Baathist
Ex-military pilot – ret. in the eighties
35 year old male shopkeeper

Women:

3 housewives
1 schoolteacher
2 administrators of secondary schools
1 florist

DETAILED FINDINGS

How long will the current unrest last?

- The situation in Fallujah will last one or two months, and resistance will taper off as the insurgents run out of ammunition. They are believed to be not very well supplied.
- Al-Sadr's support will taper off in a few weeks, or as soon as his supporters get jobs. The group seemed confident that the Coalition will find jobs for al-Sadr's supporters.

Detention of al-Sadr's aide

- All the participants had heard about it, and were well-versed in the details of the incident.
- The group said this will be used by al-Sadr to increase his credibility because this happened during a press conference while the aide was practicing free speech.
- Similarly, this is viewed as another example of hypocrisy and broken promises by the Coalition. They talk about free speech in the TAL but do not let anyone actually practice it.
- The group said that he committed no crime, so the purpose of the arrest was to send a message to al-Sadr that he is next.

How will recent unrest impact the June 30th handover?

- Al-Sadr and Fallujah will detract from the ability to have a smooth handover of power.
- However, the group felt sure that these events are part of a CPA plan and a handover would actually happen.
- If these events last too much longer, then they will still be fresh in people's minds during the transfer of power, and trouble could flare up as a result.
- That being said, this group is optimistic about the transfer of power. They see it as a step in the right direction and part of the eventual creation of an Iraqi democracy.
- The group felt that if the CF were not on the streets during the June 30 handover, the event would proceed more smoothly. CF should, however, be available on short notice to quell any violence.
- The group had little confidence in Iraqi security forces to maintain order.

TAL

- The group was aware of the temporary nature of the law, and said that gave them more confidence in it. They said that an elected Iraqi government could change the law.
- Most of them said they got their information on the TAL from their friends. Two said they read about it in the newspaper.

TAL Commercials

- Nobody had seen the TAL ads until the moderator described the ads to the group. At that point they recognized the ads but did not make the connection that the

commercials were about the TAL. They said they thought they were general patriotic commercials.

- The reason they did not recognize the commercials was because the final frame, with the TAL logo, appeared too quickly.
- When the connection between the TAL and the commercials was made, the group on the whole liked the ads. However, they felt like the ads should be more informative about the nature of the TAL. The group was interested in more specific information.

Is this an appropriate time to run the TAL ads?

- Possibly accounting for the misperception about the ads, the group said that they did not have the time or energy to pay attention to the ads. They said that perhaps this was something that could be used in another country where violence was not happening in the street.

To whom should the Coalition hand over power?

- One group member gave a detailed account of how he believed a government would be formed: *There will be a pyramid running from the local councils which will choose people from each district, then the governorate councils will choose from that group. Then these people will form a council to run the country for this transitional period.*
- The rest of the group liked this account.
- Some group members said that if the IGC takes power, then at least they are well-educated and have a year's experience running Iraq.
- The consensus among the group was that anyone that could solve the security problems facing Iraq would be a good leader.
- The group had little problem with the concept of a temporary caretaker government.
- The following scenario was given to the group: *Let's say that we have a council of notable people from each governorate come to Baghdad and they vote on who should be members of the transitional government – the government that will be in charge of Iraq after June 30th and until elections can be held in January of next year. For instance, let's say 300 people from all over Iraq, representing Iraq's different regions, come to Baghdad and vote to elect a Prime Minister. The Prime Minister would then appoint a government – ministers and other important positions.*
- "Representative" was the word the group used to describe this arrangement.
- The group would also like the council to vote on the ministers, noting that corruption and nepotism is currently common in the ministries.
- The group thought it important to have proportional representation by population from each governorate.
- UN supervision was important to the group. The UN was described as fair and having experience in other countries.
- The group felt that a "safety valve" of not allowing members of the caretaker government to stand for election was unnecessary.

Will the transition make a difference in the number of attacks?

- The group was divided. One group said that the return of sovereignty would restore dignity to the Iraqi people, thus reducing the number of attacks. Others said that as long as the CF were in the streets, they would provoke attacks.


Iraqiya

- The group named Iraqiya as the most trusted source for news.
- They say they watch Jazeera and Arabiya because there are no other sources for up to the minute or in-depth news.
- While Iraqiya is more fair and balanced, Al-Jazeera shows half an hour about Iraq. Iraqiya only shows a very short news summary (three minutes the group said) and the news is repeated all the time. Iraqiya's newscasts are too short and insufficiently detailed.
- Some people in the group don't trust Iraqiya because many of the news readers are from the former regime.
- Al-Sharkiya is coming on strong. Al-Sharkiya is apparently a new station. They started programming by collecting the opinions of Iraqis, which the group felt was important.

Jazeera and Arabiya falsehoods

- The group said that Jazeera showed a still picture of an F-15 and spent five minutes commenting on its aerial maneuvers and attacks over Fallujah. The group felt sure the attacks were exaggerated.
- The group says that Jazeera frequently makes itself look more important by saying the Americans are trying to get them out of Iraq.
- Both channels try to make themselves look like they are close to the terrorists groups.
- The group cites an example of Jazeera announcing that for Easter, the resistance would kill an Iraqi Christian for every Muslim killed by the CF. Then the resistance came out and said that it was not true.

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