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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2400 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2400

C + D Hold

ACTION MEMO

12-23-02 11:24 AM

I-02/018095 FEN:30

USDP purp for
23 DEC 2002

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FOR: DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, ISA
(Peter W. Rodman, (b)(6)) *flwr* 23 DEC 2002

SUBJECT: Supporting the Iraqi Opposition (U)

~~(S)~~ U.S. policy toward the Iraqi opposition is at a crossroads. It is time to make a strategic choice.

~~(S)~~ At the December conference in London, where oppositionists took important steps toward unity and laid a claim to a future role, the USG was postured publicly as disparaging these steps and resisting this role. By such a posture we risk demoralizing the opposition and eroding the credibility of our commitment to regime change.

~~(S)~~ Skepticism toward the opposition seems to rest on the ideas that:

- we want to keep control over events when our military move in; and
- we doubt the cohesion, utility, and legitimacy of the external opposition.

~~(S)~~ I would argue, on the contrary, that:

- there is significant political value in promoting a role for the external opposition, the sooner the better; and
- failure to do so will not protect our control over events but undermine it.

Issues

~~(S)~~ Opposition disunity is clearly a problem. On the other hand, the U.S. has enormous leverage to remedy it. As liberation approaches, their incentive to unify increases exponentially. We are therefore in a position not only to promote their coalescence, but to guide it in a direction we consider fair, balanced, and

DOC 1
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CLASSIFIED BY ASD/ISA PETER W. RODMAN
Reason(s) 1.5(d)
DECLASSIFY ON 17 December 2012

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12-23-02 11:24 AM

most likely to last. They clearly need a neutral umpire; unity and balance will not come spontaneously. We have to do it, but it's doable.

- The London conference authorized formation of an "advisory committee" of 65 people, representing all the key groups, plus independents. It is not a government-in-exile but it can serve a variety of purposes. (See below.)

~~(S)~~ Legitimacy is another requirement. For the Arab audience especially, Iraqis need to be seen participating in their own liberation.

- Some Iraqi military officers are reportedly leaning toward resisting a U.S. attack, rather than surrendering, because of anger at what they have read about a long U.S. occupation.
- A U.S. occupying army risks becoming a target of radicals and malcontents and a rallying point for Iraqi nationalism.
- The more we have Iraqis with us, the less pressure for a UN mantle that could impede our freedom of action.
- I believe it will be in our interest to turn over power to appropriate Iraqis as soon as possible -- and to announce this intention now.

~~(S)~~ There is debate about the role of external vs. internal opposition. It is said that exiles are never welcomed back to take power. This was true in the ex-Soviet bloc. On the other hand, there are significant exceptions, like de Gaulle -- and Karzai.

- In a totalitarian state like Iraq, internal opponents are either dead or invisible. Undoubtedly some will emerge when the regime begins to collapse. Our strategy should be flexible enough to leave room for such figures once they emerge. We should not be anointing any individuals now as future leaders, or drafting constitutions that should be left to constituent assemblies after liberation.
- But there are many political and military tasks that we need the opposition to be helping us with *before* that time--training, intelligence, vetting of officials now administering Iraq, etc. We can't wait until the war is over before starting the process.
- We have already succeeded in forcing a coalescence of the key groups (the "Group of 7," the London conference). Not by accident, these are

inclusive, broadly representative groupings. They have also agreed on some basic principles (e.g. Iraq's territorial integrity; a federal system). Thus they are representative enough to constitute the first stage of the kind of political grand bargain that these groups will have to strike if they are ever to live together. Why would we want to delay this?

~~(S)~~ Filling the power vacuum after Saddam is the name of the game. In the first instance it will be the U.S. military. But the idea that we can fill the entire political vacuum by ourselves may be an illusion.

~~(S)~~ While analogies with postwar Germany and Japan are bandied about, a more instructive analogy may be postwar France:

- FDR and Churchill planned an Allied Military Government for France, just as for Germany. They did not take de Gaulle seriously; only after millions turned out to greet him after D-Day did they begrudge his claim to represent Free France.
- Had an occupation government been imposed, the Communists – who dominated the Resistance on the ground – would have taken over the countryside while the allies sat in Paris imagining they were running the country. Meanwhile, we would have neutered the Gaullists.
- As it happened, de Gaulle in power (1944–46) built up his own movement as a counterweight to the Communists and neutralized them.

~~(S)~~ In Iraq, there will be many unsavory elements (radical Shia, ex-Baathists, Communists, al-Qaeda, Wahhabis) who will immediately strive to fill the political vacuum around the country. An occupation government may only delay the process of solidifying the moderates.

- The best hope for filling this vacuum is to prepare Iraqis to do it.

Recommendation

~~(S)~~ Therefore I urge a more forthright strategy:

- The U.S. should take charge of helping the Iraqi opposition unify. There is no excuse to be shy. Everyone knows they're our responsibility, and we will pay the price for their failure.

- We should actively encourage the oppositionists to accelerate the working out of their mutual relations and a rough allocation of power among them.
- We should retain control or reach firm understandings with them on key issues that concern us (WMD eradication; oil; Kirkuk; Kurdish autonomy; relations with Turkey, Kuwait, Jordan, Iran; etc.).
- We should use the vehicle of an Iraqi Advisory Council, supporting our military administration, for this purpose, but not block their evolution into a Provisional Government as soon as they are ready.

DEPSEC 's Decision

APPROVE PR DISAPPROVE _____ OTHER _____

24 DEC 2002

What should we (DOD) do?

Prepared by: Peter W. Rodman, (b)(6)