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INFO MEMO

FOR: UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY

FROM: Peter W. Rodman, Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA)

SUBJECT: Analysis of the Iraq Study Group (ISG) Report (U)

Overview: The ISG report will provide a limited window of bi-partisan unity on Iraq, and could be perceived by the general population as an opportunity.

- Although it is reported as a bold shift, the report largely validates our present course. The ISG acknowledges that the Iraq mission is difficult and that there is no “silver bullet”.
- The report’s main recommendations for action inside Iraq – more embedded advisors, shifting to ISF development as the MNF-I primary mission, pressing the Government of Iraq (GoI) to meet accelerated “milestones” (benchmarks) on reconciliation – align with our current and planned effort. These recommendations are broadly seen as new and realistic because someone other than the Administration is saying them.
- The ISG recommendations for action outside Iraq include regional and international outreach much like that already underway, with two major additions: direct outreach to Syria and Iran, and a renewed push on an Arab-Israeli settlement.
- What is new is the spirit of the report, characterized by a fundamental contradiction: although the ISG assesses Iraq to be “critical to U.S. interests”, the report is meant to guide an exit from Iraq, regardless of whether the mission is accomplished. The report recommends the U.S. continue to withdraw even if the GoI does not meet milestones.
- Finally, the report focuses primarily on the U.S. and Coalition military as the principal agent for change. This is an error which we must continue to challenge. The military deals with violence – symptoms -- while the other agencies deal with causes and conditions which result in violence. While acknowledging a role for agencies and departments such as Department of State (in an expanded diplomatic initiative and in the implied task of applying pressure on the GoI) and Department of Justice (in



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developing the Rule-of-Law sector), there is a fundamental imbalance in the report regarding their significant role and responsibilities going forward.

Specific Points:

International Support Group (recommendation 4): This group would be a logical extension of our outreach, and would include Iran and Syria in a way that puts them on the spot.

Outreach to Iran and Syria (recommendations 9-12): The report presumes a common interest for stability in Iraq between the U.S., Iran, and Syria.

- This shared interest is wishful thinking. Syrian and Iranian actions show their preference for a weak and divided Iraq, or, at least, a vassal state.
- In addition, negotiation with either or both countries would have a greater chance for success if Iran and Syria had suffered some negative consequences from their meddling in Iraq, and if we were in a stronger position. We should not go to these countries as supplicants.

Arab-Israeli conflict (recommendations 13-17): the ISG's recommendations for a renewed push on the Arab-Israeli conflict are not directly germane to Iraq. Also, focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict helps Saudi Arabia avoid its responsibility for spreading Sunni extremism in the region, including in Iraq. However, such an effort might reduce tensions in the region and diminish one of the rationales for terrorism.

Milestones (recommendations 19-25): the report supports using announced milestones (benchmarks) to accelerate the GoI's ability to assume full responsibility and thus hasten our withdrawal from Iraq. But the recommended means of encouragement for the GoI is to threaten them with a reduction in U.S. support if the GoI does not comply, as well as to point out to the GoI that we have the power to proceed on our withdrawal glidepath without GoI concurrence.

- Faced with such a threat, the GoI may find it advantageous to seek help from Iran. Iran's recent \$1 billion loan to Iraq and its level of effort in Iraq over the past three years suggests that Iran would be pleased to supplant us as the principal ally of Iraq's Shi'a-led government.
- A better way to motivate the GoI would be with some penalties, but also with incentives such as reconstruction aid, military assistance, and the assurance of a long-term security relationship with the U.S.

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- The report's suggestion of a first-quarter 2008 milestone for U.S. forces to "withdraw all (U.S.) combat brigades not involved in force protection" is not helpful; Iraqi forces might not be ready by then, or the milestone might provide an excuse to stretch out the mission.

The U.S. should engage all parties in Iraq except Al Qaeda (recommendation 35): Reconciliation is an Iraqi task, not a U.S. task. The refusal of Sunni extremists to talk to the GoI is the core of the problem. The Sunni extremists' preference to talk with us is their way of avoiding the reality of the new Iraq. Further, the Shi'a have an "1866 mentality." They believe that, like the U.S. North then, the Civil War is over and that what remains are irredentist Ba'athists and Jihadists – "a few dead-enders" – who should be treated as such

Make major organizational changes in the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior (MoI) (recommendations 50 and 51): Iraq is sovereign. We could advise the GoI to place the National Police and Border police under the MoD, but such a change imperils Iraq's internal balance on security matters.

Put the Department of Justice in charge of training the MoI and the regular police (recommendations 56 and 60): Given DoJ's problems in putting small numbers of personnel in Iraq, it is unlikely they could staff such an effort without major changes to the USG personnel system to make civilians deployable on directed assignments (another ISG recommendation, and a good one).

The U.S. military should "work with" the ISF and "private security forces" to protect oil infrastructure and contractors. Measures could include paying the tribes on the basis of throughput (part of recommendation 62): This recommendation appears to sign up MNF-I for a mission beyond developing ISF and force protection. Until the GoI decides on the urgency of infrastructure protection, it is a pointless mission.

Avoid Supplementals; put Iraq in the budget (recommendation 72): This recommendation would increase Congressional oversight but could risk delaying activities in Iraq. Also, it is difficult in February to predict the costs of a dynamic war in the following fiscal year.

Create a Foreign Service Reserve Corps (recommendation 76): This is a fundamental lesson from recent wars; the civilians need a surge capability.

Fix intelligence (recommendations 77 and 78): The ISG's critical observations on the failure of U.S. intelligence to support our forces in Iraq are dead on.