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Authority: EO 13526  
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS  
Date: JAN 13 2016

C/10

XI 037010-19

DRAFT: CPA/GOV:RMartinez  
APPROVE: CDA - Amb. Bremer  
CLEAR: CPA/GOV - Amb. Crocker

FROM: HQ COALITION PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY BAGHDAD

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Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS  
Date: 13 Jan 2016 Authority: EO 13526  
Declassify: \_\_\_\_\_ Deny in Full: \_\_\_\_\_  
Declassify in Part: x  
Reason: 1.4(D), 1.5(C), 1.5(D), 1.5(E), 1.5(F), 1.5(G)  
MDR: 11-M-2232

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ CPA 0012

E.O. 12356: GDS

SUBJECT: Ambassador Bremer's June 6 Meeting with Iraqi Political Leaders

~~CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR L. PAUL BREMER III, SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY~~

1. SUMMARY. On June 6, Ambassador L. Paul Bremer met with 17 Iraqis to discuss the political process in Iraq. Almost all participants participated actively, including the three women in attendance. After the CPA vision of the political way forward was described, the Iraqis had detailed questions on the plan centering on (1) how Political Council members and delegates to the Constitutional Convention would be chosen, and the timeframe for forming those bodies; (2) the authorities that the Political Council would have; (3) the precise composition of the Political Council, and (4) the urgent need for some Iraqi bodies to be formed. They also commented repeatedly on the need for security, and some participants suggested that there was no need to draft a new Constitution - rather, either the 1925 Constitution, or the 1970 Constitution could be amended and utilised. The participants made several useful suggestions, including the need for CPA to reach out to the newly-elected leaders of professional unions, and the need to explain publicly to the Iraqi media why we are legally required to use the terminology "occupying power". There was evident tension between the formerly external opposition parties and some of the "internal" Iraqi participants. END SUMMARY.

2. On June 6, Ambassador Bremer met with 17 Iraqis, including Masud Barzani (KDP), Mohammed Tawfik (PUK), Nabil Moussawi (INC), Nuri Badran (INA), Hamid Bayati (SCIRI), Naseer Chadirchi (NDP), Ibrahim Jaafari (Da'wa), Adnan Pachachi (Iraqi Independent Democrats), Yonadam Kanna (Assyrian Democratic Movement), [redacted] (female Ministry of Planning official), [redacted] Farqad al Qizwini (dean of religious university in Najaf), Salahudeen Baha al Din (Kurdistan Islamic Union), Lina Aboud (female doctor from Baghdad), and Safia Souhail (female human rights and womens rights activist). In addition to Bremer, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was represented by UK Ambassador John Sawers, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, Scott Carpenter, and other staff. UN Special Representative Sergio De Mello attended the reception prior to the meeting, and his chief of staff attended the meeting as an observer.

OSD 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6)

3. Bremer began the meeting by reiterating his vision for an Iraqi Interim Administration (IA), which he said he hoped to establish as soon as possible. He enumerated the responsibilities and authorities of the IA's Political Council and Constitutional Conference, largely following the outline he and Coalition officials had previously presented to many individual members of the group. He did note one

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important change in approach – the authority of the Political Council to nominate “Interim Ministers” from its first day of operation. Sawers gave opening remarks supporting Bremer’s statement, and reiterating the Coalition’s commitment to building a free and democratic Iraq.

4. Iraqi responses to the proposal were generally positive, particularly among individuals and organizations which had previously been skeptical of CPA plans. ██████ asked a number of questions pertaining to the timing of the Political Council’s establishment, the IA’s role in international affairs, the reporting relationship between Interim Ministers and the Political Council, the types of tasks that would be given to the Political Council, and the method of selecting delegates to the Constitutional Conference. Bremer made clear that the IA would be established as soon as possible (within 4-5 weeks), and observed that the goal was to have international delegations co-led by Coalition and IA representatives.

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5. ██████ noted his appreciation for the “clarification” provided by the Coalition of its vision, suggesting it would be helpful in moving the process forward. He asked questions pertaining to the decision-making process to be followed by the Political Council and the role to be played by new members of the Coalition. He also suggested that the Coalition might do a better job of explaining publicly the rationale behind the term “occupation” in the UNSCR 1483. Later, he offered a suggestion that former soldiers aged 50 years and over be paid their pensions, and that younger military personnel be given 4-6 months salary in severance pay.

6. ██████ agreed that the role and authorities of the Political Council were now much clearer than they had previously been. He asked, however, about the relationship of those Iraqi-Americans [with the IRDC] who were currently working in the ministries alongside Coalition advisers. ██████ observed that the manner by which the Political Council was selected would affect its legitimacy and the overall success of the project. He suggested that the Council be composed of no more than 20 individuals, to make it more manageable for decision-making purposes.

OSD 5 U.S.C § 552 (b)(6)

7. ██████ asked directly whether Iraqi women would have a role on the Political Council. When Bremer responded in the affirmative, she went on to raise broader concerns about security and the need to arrest criminals who were not among the Top 55, but still quite dangerous. ██████ welcomed Bremer’s proposal concerning the Political Council, stressing the need to begin political consultations as soon as possible, given the current political vacuum. He expressed fear that this vacuum – in Baghdad, Nasiriyah, and elsewhere – might otherwise be filled by political parties hostile to the Coalition. He also urged that economic experts be represented on the Political Council, and that Iraq observe a strict separation of church and state.

8. ██████ emphasized that the Coalition had not yet met the vast majority of Iraqis living inside the country, and that it would be important to do so before selecting the members of the Interim Administration. She suggested the Coalition meet with local Iraqi intellectuals and improve its means of communicating with the Iraqi people. ██████ spoke at length, stressing the horrors of the prior regime and the need to give special consideration in the political process to those who had suffered throughout the duration of Saddam’s rule, vice those who were now returning to Iraq from exile. He suggested the British Constitution of 1925 might be of use in the short term, perhaps with some amendments, and that therefore a Constitutional Conference should not be an urgent priority. As for the Political Council, he raised questions about the means by which it would be selected, and about whether former Iraqi exiles would be entitled to participate. Speaking on security matters, he urged the Coalition to implement a zero-tolerance policy for all firearms. He was also critical of the Coalition,

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complaining that "no decisions have been taken" and that while "we expected to live in paradise after Saddam was removed," the "hell now is worse than Saddam's hell."

9. [redacted] suggested that Iraq might adopt a provisional constitution that would then be ratified by an elected parliament. He also warned against rushing the constitutional process, and noted that the credibility of the Political Council would rest on the powers it was perceived to have by the Arab and international communities. [redacted] responded directly to [redacted] criticism of returned Iraqi exiles, declaring that "we are all Iraqis." He criticized the CPA's policy of disbanding the military, primarily on the grounds that it unfairly disadvantaged the families of officers and enlisted soldiers.

9. [redacted] was clearly most concerned about the method by which the IA's members would be selected. He repeatedly emphasized the need for an "Iraqi mechanism" – otherwise, he argued, the Political Council would be difficult to defend to the world. He asserted that the language of the UNSCR mandated Iraqi self-government and an IA chosen by the Iraqis. He also delivered what he claimed was a message passed to Ayatollah Mohammad Bakr al Hakim from Ayatollah Sistani – that the constitution should be drafted by a council elected by the Iraqi people, emphasizing the importance of such a message from Iraq's senior Shi'a cleric. He again brought up his proposal for a national conference, and suggested an alternative might be for the political representatives of the parties to select IA membership. (Comment: The [redacted] told us after the meeting that he had been present at the Sistani – Hakim meeting in Najaf, and that Sistani's comments on the political process had been nothing more than platitudes. End Comment).

10. [redacted] urged the Coalition to live up to the spirit of a liberation, and not occupation. He argued that the question of religion's role in the future of Iraq be left up to the Iraqi people. He said that most religious leaders in Iraq had not called for a religious government, and that religion should be used to unite people, and not to divide them. [redacted] observed that the Iraqi people had prior, positive, experience with the British in the 1920s. He applauded the British establishment of a National Assembly, and suggested it might be emulated in the present. He also stressed that holding elections in the short term would not be a good idea.

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11. [redacted] suggested that the Coalition's priorities had shifted since victory in the war, now that the Coalition is focused on building a nation. He emphasized the importance of the participation of the Iraqi people, and said that for him the key question would be the method by which individuals would be selected to the Constitutional Conference. The meeting ended with [redacted] emphasizing the importance of the rule of law, and the need for the Coalition to protect human rights – and especially the rights of women.

12. Comment: The combination of ten additional Iraqis, mostly individuals who had remained in Iraq through Saddam's rule, and the "Group of Seven" representatives, produced some interesting dynamics. With the exception of Pachachi, insiders and outsiders did not know each other. For example, Barzani and [redacted] representatives of two major communities, had never met. Everyone was polite in this first U.S. brokered encounter, but there were clear undercurrents. Representatives of the former exile groups had some snide asides along the lines of, "where did you find these country bumpkins", while insiders commented to us on their disdain for those who had lived the good life in exile while they had stuck it out under Saddam. End Comment.

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