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COALITION PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY
BAGHDAD

INFO MEMO

Handwritten notes:
Don Hill
let the govt
do it
2/22/04

22 February 2004

FOR: THE ADMINISTRATOR
FROM: Don Hamilton *[Signature]*
SUBJECT: 14 February Focus Group Report: Samarrahans Really Dislike the Coalition

You are receiving this report late because I did not quickly get my inbox straight on my return to post.

This typically well-organized and timely report from Steve Moore highlights the extreme dislike of Samarrahans for the Coalition. Most of the findings confirm what we would have expected intuitively, but a few rate special mention.

- CFs are the principal source of all woes.
- People who report bombs face social repercussions (one wonders if it ends with "social" repercussions).
- The reluctance to blame Iraqis for suicide bombings is clearly present.
- Even though distaste for CFs permeates the report, even the Samarrahans do not want the CFs out of Iraq.
- The advisability of bolstering the governor is obviously a function of how much we like the governor.

ATTACHMENTS: IRI focus group report: "Security Concerns and a New Governor in Samarraha"

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**INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE
PUBLIC OPINION REPORT
SECURITY CONCERNS AND A NEW GOVERNOR IN SAMARRAH**

OVERVIEW

Samarrah benefited from the regime, and feels no benefits of the CF presence. They feel persecuted by CF, many of their relatives are jailed, jobs are scarce and inconsistent enforcement of the curfew causes fright and curtails movement. Additionally, they are worried about car bombs.

The new governor provides hope, but it is too early for participants to make a judgment on his efforts.

Empowering the governor to release prisoners and be seen restoring basic services is important to improving the situation. Also important is providing outlets for expression.

CONCLUSIONS

Security

- **The primary source of fear about security in Samarra is from Coalition Forces – “the Americans” or “the occupiers.”** Car bombs are the next most prominent source of fear.
- More than **half of the participants claimed 3-4 jailed family members.**
- Inconsistent enforcement of the curfew is a major source of agitation. Participants said that the official curfew is 11pm, but say CF frequently arrest people for violating the curfew as early as 8pm, making errands, visiting friends and emergencies frightening and difficult.
- **Samarrahns want the CF to be out of Samarra proper, but still want the protection of the CF in their area – “guarding Samarra’s borders.**
- There is **no good reason for cooperating with CF or CF proxies, including reporting bombs.** Focus group participants give examples of **people who reported bombs who bore social repercussions in their community.**
- **Participants blame the CF for all security deficiencies, down to quarrels between locals when one kills another because they say the CF has exacerbated the differences between the families.**

- Participants also blame Saddam for insecurity in the area. First they blame him for letting in the CF, then they say that Saddam's letters in the media were taken as orders by the area youth, who committed acts of insurgency as a result. They say the local insurgency has slowed down considerably.
- Male participants advocate the reconstruction of security organization – military security and the mukhabarat – to restore security. IRI moderators say that Samarrah is well-known as the home to many security officers, and focus group participants claim family members in these organizations.

Who are the Bombers?

- They see **suicide bombs as being the work of outsiders** – Iraqis don't kill themselves to kill others, they say. Iranians were the most frequently mentioned outside group potentially responsible, but our moderators believe this is more a result of Samarrahn dislike of Iranians than any real Iranian involvement. "Arab forces," specifically Yemenis, were the next most frequently mentioned outside group.
- The group **did not believe bombers were impeding progress in Iraq, as no progress is possible while occupiers are in Iraq.**
- Samarrahns would be more likely to believe an Al-Qaeda connection with the bombings if CPA were to widely broadcast captures of Al-Qaeda suspects.
- The group says that the remaining insurgents would be extremely difficult to bring into the political process. They say they are following their religious duty to get an occupying power out of Muslim lands.
- **Tremendous sympathy exists for the insurgents.** Essentially, if they are attacking the CF, taking out a few Iraqis in the process is acceptable.
- Despite the above, they suggest that the CF call for negotiations with insurgent leaders.

Perceptions of the New Governor

- The group described the new governor as being from a respected family with a great history who was appointed because "he has ideas about how to do things right for the people of Samarrah."
- They are slightly suspicious of him because of his closeness to the CF, but still have faith in him, and feel that perhaps he can work with the CF to their advantage. The men's group became slightly defensive at our moderator's questioning, and protected the governor from our moderator's perceived prying.
- Getting people out of jail without conditions of release is the most frequently cited action people would like the governor to take on their behalf. Paving the streets ranks second.

United Nations

- Unprompted, the group brought up the UN envoy to Iraq. They say that he cannot be trusted, as they perceive that he said one thing to Sistani, one thing to the Sunnis, and something else in a press conference in Baghdad.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a situation where the governor can facilitate the unconditional release of some number of prisoners in Samarra. It is OK to show his closeness to the CF making this possible. *Unconditional* release is important. This will ease tensions and increase the profile of the governor.
- Repaving streets would also show the governor to be effective.
- Publicize arrests of Al-Qaeda suspects and evidence of Al-Qaeda links to terrorist events in Iraq.
- Give Samarrahn more opportunities to express themselves. Not only were the focus groups extremely well received in the end after being very difficult to implement in the beginning, but the groups implied frustration at lack of outlet to express their point of view. They feel that the CF controls the media outlets, and they have no venue to express themselves.

IRI intends to do more focus groups in Samarra, and will distribute reports of these findings in Arabic tailored to the Samarrahn audience in order to show that Samarrahn opinions are being heard.