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BAGHDAD

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INFO MEMO

24 March 2004

FOR: THE ADMINISTRATOR
FROM: Meghan O'Sullivan
SUBJECT: Readout on March 24 Iraq Stabilization Group SVTS

Summary

The conversation at tonight's SVTS focused exclusively on the interim government; we did not have sufficient time to discuss the elections issues. Blackwill, who chaired the group, noted Brahimi's preferences for a simple executive and overall government structure, as well as very limited powers for the interim government. There seemed to be consensus around keeping a fairly small expanded-GC as a standing body. However, most participants disagreed that this body should be more symbolic than substantive; instead, several argued that the expanded body should "be real" and exercise some meaningful powers.

Readout

Blackwill began the meeting by giving a short synopsis of recent developments regarding the GC and the UN. He also distributed a short paper laying out the conditions under which the TAL and CPA orders can be amended (suggesting that the interim government, under one interpretation of the TAL, could not amend or change either - though in OGC's view, this may not be the stronger legal view).

We began a discussion of the principles for the selection of the IIG. Blackwill referenced on several occasions the PC decision to have no legislature. I asked for clarification and was told that it was the unanimous decision of the principals that the IIG would have nothing that looked or functioned like a legislative body. It was not made explicit whether the constraint was on having any standing body, or just one that exercised legislative powers, although over the course of the conversation, the latter seemed to be the case.

Blackwill said there was broad agreement that the IIG should involve an expanded GC, but as that the expansion should involve as few additions as possible to make it representative. The preference, he said was for a body between 25-50 people, although

others stated that the body should look significantly different than the current arrangement. I discussed that we would need to add more than one or two Sunnis to make the new body representative, and these additions would fuel the numbers (unless we removed some of the current Sunnis).

We then discussed the powers that this expanded GC would have; interestingly, no one mentioned the possibility of dissolving it after its first convention. Blackwill insisted that it would have no legislative powers (per the decision of the principals) and reminded us that in Brahimi's experience and that of the UN, there was rarely a legislative body. Blackwill also questioned the utility of the three person presidency, saying Brahimi wanted as simple an executive as possible and citing Sistani's opposition to it. I underscored the importance of the presidency council for protecting minority rights.

The bulk of the participants argued, not for wide-ranging powers for the standing body, but for some real powers for it to exercise. Suggestions included having the power to overturn the actions of the executive and oversight over ministries. I stressed that we would not be successful in addressing public disaffection if we were to create a more representative body, but not empower it.

Blackwill queried whether CPA had views on whether the GC should be refreshed or simply expanded. I replied that, given the shortness of time and the intensity of discussions surrounding the interim government, we leaned away from antagonizing the GC by removing some of its members. Blackwill and others agreed, although Blackwill noted that Brahimi objects to many of the exiles on the Council and may seek to remove them.

Blackwill concluded the meeting by talking about how the process of formulating the interim government would "look to the real world." Brahimi and the UN had to be seen to be at the lead; USG and CPA would be behind the scenes. This is also true for the election process. The meeting concluded with some discussion of the benchmarks that had to be reached on the way to securing a UNSCR before June 30. Kim Holmes said that there must be interagency agreement on the elements of the resolution by the end of April; drafting of the resolution by the end of May, input from other actors (UK, Iraqis) shortly thereafter, and negotiating the resolution at the end of May or beginning of June.

Taskers

Over the course of the meeting, we were asked to provide:

- A short paper on what the nature of the expanded GC would be if we were to allow each provincial council to elect one person to the national body (25 + 18);
- Input into what the ethnic and sectarian mathematics of the expanded GC would be if it included 32 members, or 40, 45, or 50.