

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, EMERGING THREATS,
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Christopher Shays, Connecticut
Chairman
Room B-372 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Tel: 202 225-2548
Fax: 202 225-2382
E-mail: hr.groc@mail.house.gov

Statement of Rep. Christopher Shays
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In defense of international peace and human dignity, coalition armed forces have liberated Iraq from the death grip of a brutal, corrupt regime. They did so brilliantly and bravely, executing a battle plan that demanded unparalleled military precision and unprecedented efforts to minimize civilian casualties.

That same concern for the long-oppressed people of Iraq now motivates our efforts to stabilize that nation and bring relief to millions in need. The forces of liberation, military and civilian, are working to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of Saddam's insidious, tyrannical control apparatus. The same urgency that propelled armored columns into Baghdad must now drive efforts to establish civil order, restore basic services and reopen safe passage for people, food, medicines and other necessities.

During my brief stay in Iraq last month as the guest of the Connecticut-based humanitarian organization, *Save the Children*, I saw heart-wrenching poverty and unendurable living conditions. Not the war, but decades of Saddam's sadism and brutal selfishness robbed the Iraqi nation of the means and the capability to thrive. As liberators, the culminating, perhaps more difficult duty of "regime change" is to care for the people of Iraq until they are able to harvest the fruits of human dignity and freedom for themselves.

The task is enormous. Before the war, sixty percent of the population relied solely on the United Nations Oil for Food Program for basic needs. After the war, food warehouses were looted. Lack of clean water and reliable power are crippling an already inadequate health care system. In an oil rich country, shortages of cooking fuels and other refined products inflame hardship and resentments.

We cannot and should not expect to meet the challenge alone. International aid programs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have the most experience assessing humanitarian needs and getting essential supplies through logistical and political barriers. NGO staff are willing to take risks. But they cannot yet operate fully or freely in an unsettled security environment that threatens the physical safety and political neutrality of humanitarian workers.

The transition from combat to police operations has not been as rapid or smooth as planned. Hard lessons learned in Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, Haiti and Afghanistan on the need to quell emergent lawlessness seem to have fallen out of the battle plan during the dash to Baghdad. The military mechanics of basic security and free flowing humanitarian assistance need to be brought forward quickly, before vicious thugs and radical mullahs can occupy the moral high ground so nobly gained in battle.

The President charged the Pentagon's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance with bringing civil order and much needed aid to Iraq. Ambassador Paul Bremer and retired Army General Jay Garner are leading U.S. efforts to meet that challenge. We will hear a taped message from General Garner this morning. We will also hear from federal agencies and NGOs directly involved in rebuilding Iraq. Their testimony will help us understand the difficulties of delivering assistance in post-war Iraq, and the scope of the humanitarian mission facing the world.

With military might and precious lives, we have paved the way for peace and democracy in Iraq. For that struggling nation, that troubled region and a changing world, the road ahead is perilous and the stakes are enormous. We cannot fail to complete the journey.