

“Iraq: Winning the Hearts and Minds”

**Opening Statement of
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before the
Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and
International Relations
of the
House Government Reform Committee
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Mr. Chairman, Congressman Kucinich, Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to address Iraqi confidence and cooperation.

Today, Iraqi security personnel, the United States, and thirty-one Coalition partners are working together to secure, protect, and establish peace and justice for all Iraqi citizens so they may enjoy a future of their own choosing. Establishment of a safe and secure environment is the single most important element for improved Iraqi quality of life because it enables relief efforts, a free political process, economic prosperity, and social opportunity.

Multinational military personnel have made significant progress in recruiting, training and equipping Iraqi security forces. More than 220,000 Iraqi citizens have taken positions in the various components of the Iraqi security forces. This includes 90,000 in the Iraqi Police Service, 18,000 in the Department of Border Enforcement, 35,000 in the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, 6,000 in the Iraqi Armed Forces, and 74,000 in the Facilities Protection

Service. Based on current training and equipping schedules, we anticipate that the Department of Border Enforcement, the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps and the Facilities Protection Service will be fully trained and equipped by September 2004, the Iraqi Armed Forces by December 2004, and the Iraqi Police by June 2005.

By 30 June, the United States and its Coalition partners will transition control of Iraq to a fully sovereign Iraqi Interim Government. Our responsibilities will not end with the 30 June transition. Multinational forces will remain in Iraq at the invitation of the Iraqi people and with the authorization of the United Nations after the Iraqi Interim Government assumes its leadership responsibilities. These forces will continue to conduct offensive operations to defeat remaining anti-coalition forces and neutralize destabilizing influences in Iraq in order to create a secure environment in which the Iraqi people can build their own future. They will also continue current efforts to organize, train, equip, mentor, and certify credible and capable Iraqi security forces in order to continue the transition of responsibility for security from multinational forces to Iraqi forces. Concurrently, multinational forces will continue to conduct stability operations to support the evolving Iraqi government, the restoration of essential services, and economic development. United States military forces will remain under the operational control of the combatant commander throughout their tenure in Iraq. All multinational forces will work in close consultation and coordination with the Iraqi government at all levels.

I am confident that through this partnership, we--the Iraqis, the Coalition, and the U.S. Armed Forces, will succeed in establishing a safe and secure environment in Iraq. I will be happy to take your questions.