



Leadership Mission to Iraq January 11 - 15, 2009



Generously sponsored by the U.S. Embassy to the Republic of Iraq

Our Thanks

The World Affairs Councils of America wishes to thank the Government of Iraq, and the Embassy of the United States in Iraq, especially former Ambassador Ryan Crocker, for their hard work and generosity in organizing our Leadership Mission to Iraq and ensuring the safety of our delegates from January 11 to 15, 2009.

The delegates would also like to thank the following individuals, whose contributions were indispensable to making this Leadership Mission an extraordinarily informative experience:

Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq
Mr. Barham Salih, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq
The members of the Iraqi Council of Representatives
Mr. Bayan Jabr Al-Zubaidi, Iraqi Minister of Finance
Dr. Mosa Aziz Al-Mosawa, Chancellor of the University of Baghdad
Major General Mark R. Zamzow, Multi-National Force – Iraq
Mr. Jay Taylor, Fulbright Manager, U.S. Embassy in Baghdad

This trip has given the delegates an opportunity to examine first hand the efforts undertaken to start anew and build a peaceful, democratic Iraq. The members of the delegation were moved by the perseverance of Iraqis in the face of obstacles that stand in the way of their biggest challenge yet, nation-building.

Our delegation is committed to passing on the knowledge they have gained from the trip, encouraging members of the World Affairs Councils around the nation to emulate their experience and expand their understanding of the situation there, and to continue to focus on Iraq in the future to observe the progress that will be achieved.

The delegation is delighted to put forward this trip report as a statement of thanks to the sponsors of the trip.

Sincerely,



Barbara Propes
President & CEO

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World Affairs Councils of America

ENGAGING GRASSROOTS AMERICA IN WORLD AFFAIRS

Our mission is to:

- Empower citizens to participate in the national debate on world affairs
- Build citizen support for American engagement in the world
- Stimulate communities to interact effectively in the global economy
- Help people relate their local concerns to global issues
- Improve international education locally, nationally, and internationally
- Foster international interests in America's young people
- Build alliances with counterpart organizations locally, nationally, and internationally
- Increase council professionalism by disseminating best practices

The Foreign Policy Association (FPA) and World Affairs Councils were part of the same system from 1918 until the early 1950s. The FPA began informally in the spring of 1918 with a small group surrounding Woodrow Wilson and included journalist Paul Kellogg. The initial group was concerned that with the end of World War I, Americans would choose an isolationist foreign policy over one of engagement. By 1947, this vision evolved into one of a national organization based on a network of independent community councils.

In 1986, the National Council of World Affairs Organizations (NCWAO) national office was established in Washington, DC. This office evolved into the World Affairs Councils of America - a commonwealth of 90 World Affairs Councils serviced by a national office that provides resources, as well as serving as the central agency of correspondence, and information exchange.

Each year the WACA supports the grassroots development of the council network. Our national conference allows policymakers to interact with World Affairs Council members in Washington, DC. Annually, the WACA hosts and works with local World Affairs Councils on the national championship Academic WorldQuest competition. The WACA also serves an important role representing the council network to the world at large, including foreign diplomats and the U.S. State Department.

While its structure may have evolved since 1918, WACA's goal of building a vital and diverse constituency within the American public on international affairs remains intact today.

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Maria Zammit, Former Vice-Chairman
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Delegation Itinerary

Baghdad, Iraq
January 11-15, 2009

Sunday, January 11

1600: Arrive Baghdad International Airport (BIAP)
1700: Program briefing and orientation
1800: Welcome, Residence of Public Affairs Officer Ambassador Adam Ereli
1930: D-FAC (Dining Facility) dinner

Monday, January 12

1000-1045: Briefing by Ambassador Ryan Crocker
1115-1230: Briefing by Dr. Tahseen al-Shakily on reconstruction
1230-1315: D-FAC lunch
1400-1500: Briefing by Dr. Ali Al-Dabbagh on press
1500-1600: Briefing by Dr. Zuhair Humadi on education initiative
1600-1715: Briefing by Ambassador Adam Ereli, Political Counselor Robert Ford, and Coordinator for Economic Transition Ambassador Marc Wall
1830-2030: Dinner at Al Hamra Hotel with Baghdad-based Western press

Tuesday, January 13

1000-1245: Discussions and lunch at Council of Representatives (COR) Presidency Council
1300 -1400: Briefing by Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Barham Salih
1415-1515: Briefing by Mr. Bayan Jabr Al-Zubaidi, Minister of Finance
1815: Reception at Ambassador Crocker's residence

Wednesday, January 14

0745-0840: Roundtable with USAID Director Chris Crowley
0915-1015: Briefing by UN Special Envoy Ambassador DiMistura
1100-1215: Briefing at Baghdad University by Chancellor Mosa Aziz Al-Mosawa
1230-1345: Briefing and lunch at the residence of President Jalal Talabani
1415-1530: Roundtable with Iraqi print journalists
1600-1700: Briefing by Maj. Gen. Zamzow, Chancery office
1730: Dinner and discussion with U.S. troops
2000-2100: Live interview with NPR affiliate WHRV-FM: Maria Zammit, Ambassador Adam Ereli, COR Deputy Maysoon Al-Damluji

Thursday, January 15

0530: Depart Embassy for BIAP; depart BIAP for Amman

Welcome Reception Comments by Ambassador Adam Ereli

By Marilyn McAfee

Looking Forward

The important issue at the moment is the need to keep Americans from “switching channels.” Americans need to understand the reality in Iraq and what the stakes are here. Why should we stay in Iraq? We’ve come a long way, but there’s a long way to go. Maybe we’re at half-time. What takes us to the 4th quarter? It’s developing the reliability and predictability of government processes. This is complicated by tribal and geographic dynamics and the need for rule of law. There is a reality here in Iraq that doesn’t match the U.S. election timeline. Also, the influence of Iran on Iraq should not be overstated. It is a complicating factor, but not a determining factor. The threat is more homegrown.

Reflections

It has taken five years to put the Iraqis in charge. Up until now, we were running the place. Should we have been as involved as we were? We should have been more involved and earlier. General Tommy Franks said his mandate and orders never included a civil-action phase, so there was neither planning for it nor the forces to do it.

If we had done more earlier, it would have taken less later. For example, there were no curfews, no capacity to stop the looting and the violence; Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld thought it wasn’t bad to get some of the “anti-Saddam stuff” out. Looking back, we pushed for elections and sovereignty too fast.

Meeting with Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker

By Mimi C. Gregory

It was quite an honor for us to be the first citizen delegation to visit the U.S. Embassy compound [NEC] in Baghdad. We were welcomed by Ambassador Crocker for a one hour briefing the first morning, while the imminent arrival of [now] Vice-President Joe Biden hung in the highly charged atmosphere of embassy life.

Ambassador Crocker described the significance and important symbolism of the historic moment on January 1st at the Presidential Palace, [previous US Embassy headquarters] “when the clock struck” and the US flag was lowered for the last time and the Iraqi flag was raised at dawn of the New Year.

“World Affairs Councils are one of our greatest institutions.”
-Ambassador Ryan Crocker

Noting this period of transition in Iraq, Ambassador Crocker emphasized the need for “strategic patience”. In his view, “the Iraq story is still in the early stages”. He noted, however, that it took less than 3 years following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, for the Iraqis to write a constitution; while it took America 13 years to complete our constitution.

By far, the most important agreements reached have been “SOFA”, the Status of Forces Agreement and the Strategic Framework Agreement, both signed on November 8th of 2008. The former is a security agreement, allowing our forces to remain in the region until 2011. The latter is a broader agreement that will guide the bilateral relationship going forward and covers areas such as science and technology; education, culture and energy; the rule of law; finance and trade,

etc. Ambassador Crocker noted that the negotiations on these agreements were often brutal, but in the end the Iraqis believed the final package to be both “historic and good”.

Putting Iraq in an historical context, Ambassador Crocker describes the country, since the 1958 revolution, as opposed to the West and the surrounding region. Iraq led the region in the nationalization of oil, developing a poisonous relationship not only with Western Oil Companies, but also with its neighbors, behavior such as the invasion of Kuwait and a war of eight devastating years against Iran being prime examples. Today, Iraq has the opportunity to create a fundamentally different order; one that looks west.

The move to a “westerly direction” is embraced by Prime Minister Al Maliki. While he does not speak English, and spent years in exile in Syria and Lebanon, his interest in having Iraqi students attend Western universities is strong. Acknowledgement of substantial resentment against the US for the chaos in Iraq over the past few years has not dampened Iraqi belief that the future is not through isolation but through student exchanges and economic ties with the West.

Strategic patience has brought about the reduction of expenses; the diminishment of an Al Qaeda presence; and the historic elections held on January 31st to fill 400 provincial seats. There were more than 14,000 candidates running for those seats and this time there were no boycotts against the election by any religious or ethnic sect.

The United Nations is the lead agency working, along with the US Embassy, with the Iraqi Electoral Commission on this strategic vote. The UN is increasing its presence in Iraq, as is the international community in general. In fact, the US has a unique partnership with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, [UNAMI], the latter is participating in 7 of the US’ Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Looking ahead, Ambassador Crocker pointed to the progress that has been accomplished with Iraq’s Arab neighbors as participants in the new Iraq government. Concerns over security and stability, mixed with the fear of a Shi’a government by neighboring Sunni regimes, have slowed the development of the strong regional ties desired, but there are signs of increasing activity.

Jordan, the UAE, Kuwait and the Arab League have officially opened embassies, and more Arab nations, [including Saudi Arabia] sent observers for the elections than did the West. In Ambassador Crocker’s view, the more Arab engagement with Iraq, the more likely it is to avoid Iranian domination.

As far as the future is concerned, there remains the unexpected. For example, although security may be somewhat improved, the US is still there behind the scenes. Iraqis are, “encouraged to know that the US is covering their backs”. If we were to leave too soon, we risk encouraging and emboldening Iraq’s adversaries. Moving forward, we have left the business of infrastructure behind and have begun capacity building. The US must seize opportunities to construct local development projects with Iraqi management: teaching the basic tenets of organization, training and budget execution.

In the supplemental 2009 budget, there are funds for Provincial Reconstruction Teams, [PRT]’s to create opportunities for enhancing local involvement and engagement; governance programs to help in the learning curve of newly elected officials; capacity building efforts; and funding for “operations and maintenance”.

This supplement will also assure that PRTs are able to fund municipal projects that wouldn't have been otherwise accomplished, due to the tug of war between the Central government and the Council of Representatives, and the Provincial government will not fund these projects. Thus it is clear that Iraq needs continued US support.

In response to a question, Ambassador Crocker also emphasized the need to increase and expedite student visas and has even received authority to issue student visas in Baghdad. However, the clearance process back in the US is, "unbelievably cumbersome and slow" and, as such, is an impediment to progress, bilateral exchanges and trade.

Quoting Ambassador Crocker, "let us de-politicize the situation back home, move the discussion away from "why did we ever do that" to what is happening now. Let us leave the past to the historians".

Meanwhile, our most sincere thanks and congratulations to this fine Ambassador for a truly successful execution of a challenging posting.

Briefing by Dr. Tahseen al-Shakily

By Michael Phillip

Dr. Tahseen al-Shakily was a college professor for over 25 years with post graduate degrees in electrical engineering, public finance, and project management. Life was terrible under Saddam. A college professor made the equivalent of about \$5-\$15 a month.

At the outset there was bad feeling regarding U.S. intentions, and the U.S. was seen as an occupier. It took a long time to change perceptions. Iraq has seen major changes since 2003 and a reduction of the chaos. Some have referred to it as "creative chaos."

Everyone had a dream for Iraq. After the first elections and with the new talk of a democratic culture, people didn't see any real difference. There was no trust between the people and the government. Guns ran the neighborhoods. But the "Baghdad Security Plan" (the "surge") has brought increasing security. Displacement has been stopped, and 60% have returned to their homes in Baghdad.

Iraqis now have a dream for a bright future. According to al-Shakily, the "surge" changed people's perceptions. Suddenly, we learned what democracy was. Before, we didn't even know how to be critical of the government. The first election, voter turn out was 40%, the next 63% and the Parliamentary election drew 90%. We learned that in the "new Iraq," we had both rights and responsibilities.

The U.S. Army built clinics and sewage lines. But the clinics aren't staffed. The contract work financed by the U.S. did not have oversight. \$40 billion went to the Finance Ministry, but there is no hospital, no bridges, and no new electrical generating plant. Where did the money go?

It is a big challenge. The infrastructure in Baghdad was built to support a population of 4 million, and 8 million now live in the city. Basic services were not maintained and are inadequate. Electricity is rationed by rolling black outs. Saddam used to give the majority of the available power to Baghdad, but now the government is attempting to spread what is available to more people. 50% of the country's electric power needs are now being met. Sewage lines and clean

water are also critically needed (40% of water is contaminated by sewage). The Americans are no longer providing infrastructure money unless it is matched by Iraq.

A great many middle-class professionals (4 million) have fled the country. Teachers, engineers, and doctors: the people Iraq most needs to rebuild.

Top priorities are maintaining security and rebuilding basic services.

Meeting with Dr. Ali Al-Dabbagh

By Peter McPherson

According to Iraqi press spokesman, Dr. Ali Al-Dabbagh, the US invasion was “a gift from the gods.” He feels that it would not have been possible for the Iraqis to change the regime without the Americans, and that Saddam had been planning to have his grandson rule Iraq. Although the international press suggests the people of Iraq do not appreciate what the Americans have done, Dr. Al-Dabbagh feels that is not true: the Iraqi people do appreciate what has been done and support it.

The surge was successful not only because of the additional troops but other factors were also involved, including the fact that the people of Iraq were sick of the killing. Also, the strategy of forming “Awakening Councils” with the Sunnis has been the only successful formula for weaning the Sunnis away from insurgency, even though it takes money to sustain them.

Iraq is in a dangerous neighborhood; for example, Syria is a serious problem since it allows dangerous people to come into Iraq. And although Saddam created problems for Iraq in the region, now -- without Saddam -- neighboring countries no longer have that excuse.

*“We are walking wallets.”
[regarding the difficulty in
moving around Iraq to talk
to sources]
- Larry Kaplow, Baghdad
Bureau Chief, Newsweek*

It is important that the US military stay in Iraq for the full time outlined in the recent security agreements, and that the US stay deeply engaged with Iraq for years after that. “The soldiers and Iraqis must not die in vain.” Dr. Al-Dabbagh stated that Iraq could become more dangerous than Afghanistan if we’re not careful, and we shouldn’t “down value” that risk.

In answer to a question, Dr. Al-Dabbagh noted that many elites have left Iraq; there are over 3 million expatriates, which is a big loss for the country. Other key concerns are housing, education and the need for investment. Currently, there is a 2 million unit demand for housing, but the government cannot meet that need. The private sector could do it, but lacks the vision on how to do it.

Dr. Al-Dabbagh feels that education is one sector that has been completely destroyed as a result of sanctions and Saddam’s policies. In the 1970s, the University of Baghdad was one of the best in the region; now its graduates aren’t qualified.

Concerning investment, the oil and gas law will be a monumental step for Iraq once it is approved. There are large oil fields bordering Iran, which presents a security problem. Having said that, Dr. Al-Dabbagh believes Iraq has no choice but to be good neighbors with Iran. However, it is questionable whether Iran has done its part; it is not just an Iraq problem, but an US, Israeli, and regional problem as well.

The Iraqi government and people are in agreement with the direction in which President-elect Obama appears to be going. In general, Dr. Ali Al-Dabbagh was very positive about the work of the US in Iraq, and he concluded by emphasizing that Iraq is a very important country in the Middle East and for the US.

Briefing by Dr. Zuhair Humadi on Education Initiative

By Charles (Chuck) Montgomery

In introducing Dr. Humadi, Ambassador Ereli noted that Iraq had been isolated from the West since 1958. Dr. Humadi's assignment involves facilitating a re-engagement with the world and the West. He also stated that Dr. Humadi has been a long time advocate for a free and democratic Iraq.

Calling it the "Marshall Plan for Iraqi Education," Dr. Humadi described a proposal he submitted to Prime Minister al-Maliki in May 2008 for an Iraqi Education Initiative. The Initiative called for 10,000 Iraqi students per year to study in English-speaking countries. After just two days, Prime Minister al-Maliki gave the go-ahead for this Initiative. Dr. Humadi decided to undertake the initiative by creating a new system, outside of the Ministry of Higher Education, observing that most government ministries were not yet operating smoothly. In this regard, he noted that only \$10 million out of a prior \$100 million scholarship fund had been expended on Iraqi students. Dr. Humadi intends to avoid a repeat of this failure. Dr. Humadi also noted that he expects the success of the Education Initiative, as a "second-track model," to become a model for the various government ministries.

Although Dr. Humadi described problems throughout Iraq's educational system, he decided to first tackle the easy part focusing on sending college-level students to English speaking countries. After the Initiative is successfully launched, the government will build on its success by shifting the focus to problems in the primary and secondary education systems.

Dr. Humadi promises widespread publicity of the Initiative within Iraq, with its student selection process that is open and transparent, and that assures each province an appropriate share of the scholarships. He envisions the bulk of scholarships going to the best and brightest of Iraq, but there will also be opportunity for those who don't perform well on the standardized exams (e.g., GRE, GMAT, TOEFL, etc.). Dr. Humadi states that 70% of Initiative funds will go for undergraduate degrees; 30% for masters level degrees; and 10% for doctoral degrees. Seventy percent of the students are slated to study in the United States. The Initiative will be launched on January 19, 2009, with representatives of 25 American universities in attendance.

"2003 will be seen as important as 1948 is to Israel. It will go down in history as the beginning of democracy in Iraq."

- Dr. Zuhair Humadi

Dr. Humadi highlighted the fact that Iraq had a very good higher education system in years past, but 15-20 years ago the system went into decline, and 10-15 years ago many university professors began leaving Iraq. Today, most who earned their master's degrees in the last 10 years or so, did not have a high quality education. For this reason, the government has chosen to devote only 10% of the Initiative's fund to doctoral degrees.

In response to a question about students being required to return to Iraq in exchange for their scholarships, Dr. Humadi indicated that it was Iraq's responsibility to improve security and

create economic opportunity so scholars would want to return home. He also indicated students would be required to sign commitments to return, and that the government was looking into various kinds of visa arrangement that would encourage students to return to Iraq, but he noted that people are free to move around the globe and this is something very difficult to stop. He cited his own study in the United States, in the 1950s, and the fact that he returned to Iraq.

Dr. Humadi noted that spouses will also go with scholars and they too will receive assistance through the Initiative. This helps keep couples from growing apart during the educational process.

Dr. Humadi indicated the importance of education to a country's economic development and stated that the Initiative will focus on all areas of academic endeavor. He expects the first 500 scholars to depart Iraq in July/August 2009. Those students with TOEFL scores of 425 and above will qualify; those with lesser scores will have an opportunity to attend institutes, established with assistance from the British Council, where they will engage in 9 months of course work, including the study of English. Dr. Humadi stated that American community colleges will be among the institutions attended by Initiative scholars.

With respect to the primary/secondary education system, Dr. Humadi stated that the curricula have been damaged by the last 30 years of authoritarian and Baathist rule. The curricula are also outdated.

In response to a question, Dr. Humadi remarked that he has detected no pressure to slant the selection process for Initiative scholarships toward one religious group or another and that it is completely secular. The selection committee for scholars is comprised of 9 individuals, including himself, the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Education and Higher Education.

Finally, Dr. Humadi stated that Initiative scholars will be allowed to attend the university of his/her choice, provided that the university is accredited by the government as part of the Initiative.

(N.B. An update from Jay Taylor, Fulbright Manager at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, following our return to the States, reports that the meeting of the International Educator's Forum, representing 14 U.S. colleges and universities went extremely well, culminating in the announcement of an allocation of \$56.5 million dollars for the Iraq Education Initiative, including \$2.5 million to expand the Fulbright student program.)

Meeting with US Ambassadors Ereli, Ford and Wall

By Michael C. Maibach

Ambassador Robert Ford: Iraqi Politics

Ambassador Ford outlined the Government of Iraq's goals for 2008-09. More than \$200M is budgeted to promote democracy. This includes training of parliamentarians in how to write laws, how to set up a legislative library, how to train political parties, etc.

In addition, media non-governmental organizations are pushing for freedom of the press and training journalists. All these efforts are aimed at fostering political accommodation among unhappy partners and improving the quality and accountability of governance.

Ambassador Ford also made the following points:

- 275 seat Parliament. In the first election, the Sunnis boycotted, and the US encouraged the Shi'a and Kurds to include Sunnis in subsequent elections. There remains substantial distrust between them.
- Progress has been made in getting the different sects to sit down and talk instead of fight. While Sunnis did not speak to Shi'a in 2005, they now do in Baghdad. This is also happening in some provinces, although the record is spottier.
- The city of Mosul and Diyala province are the two of the most troubled areas.
- Since the Kurds are not Arabs, that is a point of disconnect between them.
- Provincial elections coming at the end of January. Turn-out is expected to be very high, with Sunnis returning to the process, rather than boycotting it as they did previously.
- Under Saddam Hussein, there were state subsidies and a strong central government. Every family continues to receive food coupons, a lingering vestige of Saddam's statist approach.
- The US government is turning over responsibility for Iraq to the Iraqis. These are their opportunities and problems now, and it is up to them although we will provide some support.
- For example, in 1988 Egypt had twice the population of Iraq and was in terrible economic shape. Constant engagement from USAID and the Department of State for 20 years has allowed it to improve its financial health. Iraq's security situation detracts from its development. More sectarian war will once again freeze all progress. The real question is whether the country will hold together? Last August, the Kurds were almost fighting with the Iraqi military. So the situation is almost always tenuous.
- Eastern Europe had the examples of good government and economics from the EU next door. Iraq does not have a similar group of neighbors to serve as role models and allies. Also, there is a lack of governance and economic material translated into Arabic from English and vice-versa.
- In 2005, there averaged 300 attacks per day. Today, there are 25-30 attacks per day. (That rate has been flat; not trending down.)

Ambassador Marc Wall: Economics & Business

Ambassador Wall coordinates nine US civilian agencies working in Iraq, focusing on three main areas:

I. Economic Governance

- This supports Iraq in efforts to initiate and manage projects and to provide services

- Capacity building

2. Private Sector Development

This includes micro finance and policy advocacy

- Working on establishing laws governing investment and improving the investment climate
- Agricultural extension services
- Moving towards WTO membership

“The training wheels are off, but we will still need to be here.”

- Ambassador Marc Wall

3. Developing Iraq’s Energy Resources: Oil & Natural Gas

- 95% of government revenues come from oil and gas. Production is currently lagging and stagnating. There is a lack of new investment, prices are falling, and the facilities are dilapidated.
- Iraqis often don’t have the expertise they need in water and energy development and management, in health services, e.g. hospitals.
- Nasiriya Water Treatment Plant as an example. It is hanging by a thread, suffering from terrible maintenance, sporadic electricity supply, untrained and sometime corrupt staff and contractors.
- There is often no price system for basic services, e.g. home and industrial water and electricity, groceries... and there are usually no provincial or local tax systems. The solutions to these problems are all political. Under Saddam, all companies and public utilities were owned by the government. People paid few or no taxes and were given food stamps and utilities. Now there are shortages, in part because there are no price signals, no markets.
- One provincial government ceased to exist for a period of time. And yet the government employees were still getting paid! All land titles were gone, no police existed. This is because under Saddam most jobs were given in the rough form of patronage and all industries were subsidized. So the citizens resembled serfs, and the economy was a command economy circa Soviet style.
- Today, every Iraqi province is assigned a US Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT). The PRTs work with local officials on project planning and management, and help train them to solve local problems without relying on Baghdad to do so. Although resources are a challenge, the bigger challenge is administrative capacity. There is a reluctance to make decisions, a remnant of a centralized mentality. Although the PRTs are helping, few jobs have been created thus far.
- The US government’s Public Financial Action Management Group (PFMAG) – a joint military and civilian effort -- now helps local officials manage their budgets.
- Half of the Sunnis were displaced. Of those, half left the country and half relocated to other parts of Iraq. Some Iraqis are now returning to the country, and some foreign direct investment (FDI) is coming in via the UAE and Saudi Arabia.
- A goal is to attract business to Iraq; a local couple is even trying to start an American Chamber of Commerce in Baghdad.

Ambassador Adam Ereli: Education & Culture

Ambassador Ereli noted three strategic objectives:

1. Transition to a more normal relationship, i.e. less security focused, more holistic.
2. Anchor Iraqi government, society and business in the West. This can be done by:
 - English-language training.

- Making citizen exchanges robust: Fulbright, YES, Young Leader Exchange Program, WACA Leadership Missions, etc. Iraq is matching US Fulbright spending on their students.
- Changing US attitudes toward Iraq. We need to stop looking backwards and bring Americans to Iraq.

3. Promote a stable Iraq that is not a threat to neighbors and is a positive force in the region. In response to questions, Ambassador Ford described differences between Baghdad and the rest of Iraq. While Baghdad is relatively cosmopolitan and worldly, rural areas are more conservative and family based. Baghdad's population has exploded with people from other areas looking for jobs. In the outlying areas, no one speaks English and the concerns are primarily local and tribal.

International Educator's Forum, representing 14 U.S. colleges and universities went extremely well, culminating in the announcement of an allocation of \$56.5 million dollars for the Iraq Education Initiative, including \$2.5 million to expand the Fulbright student program.)

Briefing Session with the Iraqi Council of Representatives (COR)

By Ann Olsen Schodde

On Tuesday, January 13, the WACA delegation met with several members of the Council of Representatives of the Iraqi Parliament. Iraqi press was present and simultaneous translation provided. The Acting Speaker and the second Deputy Speaker chaired the meeting. In addition, 16 members of the Council were present including five women. Twelve made formal statements to the delegation. The group represented several provinces, political parties and religious sects. The atmosphere was welcoming and dissenting views allowed. Not all of the representatives agreed with all of the comments made, but there appeared to be consensus on several issues and concerns. The following is a summary of their comments:

COR Attitude toward the United States:

The representatives expressed general agreement that currently there is excellent cooperation between the U.S and Iraq as demonstrated by the signing of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) on December 31, 2008. They openly encouraged Americans to learn more about Iraq through exchanges, education, and training programs. The host speakers hoped that the WACA delegation would take their experience in Iraq back to the United States, convey the conditions as we have experienced them, and share them with many other Americans. The Acting Speaker said, "Saddam, not the U.S., destroyed Iraq."

There was general agreement that the current battlefield in Iraq is as important as the last. The new battlefield is the need for international cooperation to help Iraq rebuild its cultural, political and educational institutions and achieve respect for human rights, economic stability and national security free from corruption.

However, several representatives expressed criticism toward the U.S. for dividing country among the religious groups, failing to recognize the importance of the tribes and their role and ability to combat crime and terrorism, and ignoring the waste of millions of U.S. dollars spent on reconstruction projects that were either never built, never finished, or poorly constructed with inexperienced personnel.

Challenges to be Addressed by the Iraqi Government

The representatives cited numerous challenges that Iraq must address and expressed a general sense of both optimism and urgency regarding the coming year, following provincial and local elections. Some of the most pressing challenges the country must address are:

- Resolve the debate over the distribution of oil and gas reserves,
- Reach consensus on the balance of power between the provinces and the national government,
- Establish basic services and security to the people at all levels of government throughout the entire country,
- Address the needs of some five million widows, five million orphans, and 25,000 detainees in the prisons,
- Provide opportunities for and encourage 2-3 million expatriates and refugees to return to the country,
- Accelerate the process of repairing damaged infrastructure,
- Revise the court system,
- Establish a commercial code and financial regulations that encourage foreign investment,
- Continue the progress made with training the military, and
- Devote serious attention to developing a police force that is currently corrupt and untrained.

“We are building a new country, and this is a new experience for us. If we fail or succeed, it will have an impact on the entire region, not just Iraq. We do not want a military dictatorship. We want to build new institutions that serve the people and ensure equality for women and minorities. We need help from the entire world.”
- Member, Iraq Council of Representatives

From a national perspective, several representatives expressed the urgent need to provide adequate legislative oversight of their current constitution, amendments, laws and procedures in the midst of corruption at every level of government. They were critical of the ministries that operate with no oversight of expenditures.

An insightful comment was made by one of the last council representatives to speak:

“We are building a new country, and this is a new experience for us. If we fail or succeed, it will have an impact on the entire region, not just Iraq. We do not want a military dictatorship. We want to build new institutions that serve the people and ensure equality for women and minorities. We need help from the entire world.”

Briefing with Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih

By Ann Olsen Schodde

Following a briefing with the Council of Representatives, the delegation met with the Deputy Prime Minister, Barham Salih to listen to his views as a ranking member of the executive branch. The DPM is a Kurd who studied abroad extensively and speaks eloquent English. He appeared thoughtful and hopeful about the prospects of establishing a democratic Iraq, and felt that the SOFA agreement was a significant step toward achieving that objective.

With enthusiasm, Mr. Salih pointed out we were meeting with him on an historic day. That afternoon the first meeting of the Iraq-U.S. coordinating committee, established by SOFA, took place with Secretary of State Rice via conference call. He believes SOFA is a significant document that can be used as leverage and a model for the U. S. in dealing with other Middle East countries.

Salih expressed concern that so little press coverage on Iraq reports the progress being made in the country. Security has dramatically improved. Second, the Iraqis view the elections as a very serious matter. For the first time, the elections involve both Sunni and Shia candidates who are debating the issues and arguing their differences peacefully. Furthermore, these events are being watched very carefully by Iraq's neighbors. The elections will be observed by more representatives from countries in the region than by either Europe or the United States. Salih commented, "Elections are messy and frustrating, and that is ok." No doubt they are. During that same week, two leading provincial candidates were killed. However, there are over 14,000 candidates for 244 seats!

In spite of several reasons to be optimistic, the DPM pointed out there are serious problems that his country must resolve in order to achieve a democratic Iraq very soon. There is much to be done. As a country, Iraq does not yet have a common vision. There is no coordinated leadership and, in view of the current situation, 2009 and 2010 are critical years in the development of a stable and functioning country. He believes U.S. engagement with Iraq will continue to make a difference as an indispensable broker between the factions in his country and in the region as a whole. This role will allow the U.S. and Iraq to "hit hard" at Al Qaeda. The DPM was adamant that civilian authority govern the Iraq military and that federalism was critical to diffusing power.

In the next two years, Iraq will need technical and development assistance with reconstruction, foreign investment, training in government administration and management at all levels, development of a professional police force, and all aspects of business development. In the next five years, the current financial crisis Iraq faces with decreasing oil prices will also force the country to diversify its economy. It will be necessary to develop and encourage foreign and domestic investment in textiles, automobiles, construction, telecommunications, financial services, tourism, and agriculture. They will need educated and talented citizens to accomplish these tasks. Iraqis who fled the country are returning, but very slowly. To date, they number approximately 180,000 compared to approximately 2-3 million who have left since 2003.

As for Iraq's engagement with countries in the region, the DPM explained Iraq is in constant contact with Iran. The U.S needs to understand that while President Ahmadinejad is the leading spokesperson for Iran, there are ways in which his actions and proposals are curtailed from within the country.

The delegation was very impressed with the DPM and believed he demonstrated the kind of intelligent insight and leadership that Iraq needs. We wish him every success in his difficult and important work.

Briefing by Mr. Bayan Jabr Al-Zubaidi, Minister of Finance

By Michael Phillip

The Ministry is located in the Adan Palace, the former home of Saddam's Vice President.

Describing Iraq's resources, Minister Al-Zubaidi noted that oil resources are very accessible—large pools of oil close to the surface and existing pipelines, making it possible to market oil profitably even when prices are low. However, despite an investment of over \$8 million, oil production is down because of the sad state of affairs which was left by Saddam. With new sources coming on line, Mr. Al-Zubaidi expects production to grow to 3.5 bbl per day in 2010.

Tourism also presents a real opportunity for Iraqi development, as many of Shi'a Islam's holiest sites are located within Iraq and religious pilgrimages to Iraq are very desirable. In addition, some of the world's most important archeological sites (Ancient Babylon, Ancient Sumer) are located there as well, another significant attraction for tourists in the future. And, in a testament to Iraq's rich educational heritage, the country has a large number of gifted engineers.

The ministry has paid off its standby commitment from the IMF and has been in full compliance.

Iraq currently has a housing shortage estimated to be about 2 million unites. The Finance Ministry owns and controls all public lands.

The ministry is anticipating the ground breaking of a new 5-star hotel in the Green Zone within the next few weeks.

Meeting with USAID

By Amb. Marilyn McAfee

In a meeting with USAID the importance of continuing assistance work in Iraq was underscored, even if shifting U.S. priorities (Afghanistan) require that it be scaled back.

Capacity building at the national level and at the regional level is a top priority in Iraq's transition to democratic governance. Using interagency Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) emphasis is on developing capabilities for provincial governance and administration. Efforts are also underway at the national level focusing on government ministries and the Iraqi congress.

There are major health projects going on, but these might not be considered for continuance in long term U.S. assistance efforts.

Reconstruction projects in Iraq have suffered from the haste with which they had to be undertaken (lack of oversight capability, shoddy work and corruption by private contractors) and constant security threats. Much that was rebuilt was subsequently destroyed. Security has been an important limiter in how much reconstruction could be achieved.

DOD has traditionally focused on short term humanitarian assistance (as in disaster relief operations) but is engaged in long term development and nation building work in Iraq. Agriculture is also such an area and one in which the Defense Department (as opposed to other agencies) has no comparative advantage.

Many remarked during our visit to Baghdad that there should be a more reasonable division of labor. Much of what the Defense Department has undertaken in its 'gap filling' has been for lack of resources or surge capacity by other agencies. Secretary of State Clinton in her Senate Confirmation Hearings emphasized the need for enhanced money and personnel for the Department of State.

Meeting with Steffan deMistura, UN

By Amb. Marilyn McAfee

Past events influence the size and effectiveness of the UN presence in Iraq. (The 2007 bombing of UN Headquarters killed UN mission personnel, including the highly regarded UN Mission Director Sergio Vieira de Mello). The 'Oil for Peace' corruption stain also has had an impact but power sharing, after the elections, is very dependent on the oil issue. Currently it is a small mission best able to assist behind the scenes. Ambassador Di Mistura is serving in Iraq for the 4th time, and sees that the UN role of "honest broker" and negotiator successfully defused an explosive situation in Kirkuk where a crisis point had been reached over a hasty and hostile referendum. Di Mistura was able to convince the Kurds that nothing would be gained by promulgating the referendum.

Disputes over shared power, shared resources and disputed territory continue between Kurds and Sunnis, particularly in Kirkuk and Erbil. Can the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) provide stability and security in areas where tensions run high?

The goal of al-Qa'eda in Iraq was to create total chaos and invoke a civil war. The brain and economic drain saw 2 million Iraqis flee the country. In Samara they were successful in inciting violent Sunni-Shi'a conflict. The change in U.S. strategy in 2008, "The Surge" successfully thwarted the al-Qa'eda effort. There were four major reasons for its success:

1. timing - there was no clear winner and al-Qa'eda became seen as opportunistic, a foreign intrusion intent on inciting violence by pitting Iraqi against Iraqi.
2. saturation on the ground- achieved in large part by enlisting Sunni tribesmen ("Sons of Iraq") to fight against al-Qa'eda (and not the Shi'a). They protected large, vulnerable tribal territory and drove al-Qa'eda elements back across the borders.
3. Moktada Al Sadr (the radical Shi'ite leader) was put "out of the game". He removed himself to Iran where he is said to be burnishing his religious credential. He was banned from Najaf (the Iraqi Holy City of Shi'a Islam) by Ayatollah Ali Sistani. Other sources said that the U.S. military's threat to target him if he remained in Iraq was very persuasive.
4. Iraqis were tired of the violence.

Greater security has brought back many who fled Iraq. Particularly important has been the return of middle class Iraqis--shopkeepers and school teachers. An estimated 180,000 Iraqis have now returned.

Encouraging Turkish-Kurdish conversations have been held. It is clear that Turkey must be involved in future governance issues with Kirkuk.

Upcoming elections first at the provincial level in Feb. 2009 and at the national level in 2010 will be good indicators that Iraq is moving in the direction of democratic processes. The Sunnis who boycotted the first elections will be participating in these elections which will make these results far more valid, and encourage a return to normalcy.

University of Baghdad

Meeting with University President Dr. Mosa Aziz Al-Mosawa and Faculty

By Maria Zammit

Outfitted in body armor and escorted by our security team, who ensured our safety during our campus visit to the university (a somewhat incongruous mix of armed security guards interspersed among college students milling about the quad), we made our way to the 19th floor of the administration building to meet with the university president and various department heads.

As the tallest building in Baghdad, the administration tower provided commanding views of the gritty city below, with the Tigris River cutting a ribbon between homes, groves of palm trees, and various palaces and monuments dating from the Saddam Hussein era.

Dr. Al-Mosawa gave us a warm greeting, described the university and its various departments, and then opened the floor to personal introductions by each department chair and questions and answers by our delegation.

The University of Baghdad is the oldest and largest higher education institution in Iraq, founded in 1957. There are approximately 70,000 undergraduates attending 150 undergraduate departments, and 10,000 post-graduates in 270 graduate school departments. It has offered a Ph.D. program since the 1970s, and encompasses 24 colleges; 10 research centers; and 5 institutes offering post-graduate degrees. With 8000 faculty and staff members, the University of Iraq accounts for 42% of all university professors in the country and has several other campuses throughout Iraq.

The University has borrowed from several academic models, particularly those of the U.S. and Britain in the past, but also using some techniques from France, Germany, Russia and the Netherlands. Much seems to depend upon where a particular faculty member received training.

The current challenge facing the university is returning to its former high standards. Prior to the sanctions on Iraq beginning in the 1990s, the University enjoyed a reputation as one of the best universities in the region, placing its graduates in the highest positions throughout government and industry. The sanctions on Iraq seriously hampered the University, and it is now trying to restore its academic standards. Following the US invasion in 2003, the University has been signing memorandums of understanding with universities around the world to help restore it to earlier standards.

In response to a question about how President Al-Mosawa envisions the University of Baghdad over the next 5 years, he stated that “freedom of expression” is a major goal. That is, the freedom to communicate with the rest of the world and enjoy academic independence. He believes that independence -- and competition -- among the various universities would lead to progress for all of them.

Dr. Al-Mosawa emphasized that admission to the university is based on grades in secondary school. There are no other qualifying exams nor are there restrictions or quotas based on religion, sect or sex. All students, regardless of religion, live together in campus housing.

What seemed to be one of the more noteworthy observations was a comment by the head of the College of Women (established in the 1960s). Describing the number of students attending day

classes (2830), she also mentioned that 650 students currently attend evening classes, and that this is the first year of night classes. Apparently the security situation for Iraqis in Baghdad has improved enough that students now feel safe in venturing out for evening classes.

Meeting with President Jalal Talabani

By Mimi Gregory

“Faisal was greedy, Saddam a terror.” Those words were pronounced during a briefing and luncheon with President Talabani at his palace. “Iraq is entering a new era,” the President advised us, and the prospect of pleasing a multi-religious, multi-national population is daunting.

Noting that Iraq is a rich country with wonderful natural resources -- oil, natural gas, sulfur and phosphorous -- President Talabani wants to add to those resources the wealth that education can bring to the country. Under the regime of Saddam Hussein, university professors were paid the equivalent of \$15 per month, and many fled the country after 2003. Today, President Talabani is determined to bring them back to Iraq and to nurture the students of this new era. Baghdad boasts many universities, in addition to French, Turkish, and American campuses. The total number of students today, 113,500, is just the beginning of many who will enroll to take advantage of free tuition in Iraq.

President Talabani regrets the images of Iraq, which he feels are the result of poor foreign media representation and which portray life in Iraq with a great deal of hyperbole. Locally, he reports the emergence of a free media, with 43 new stations reporting news in Iraq.

Iraq suffers from a “culture of corruption,” according to the President and, to that end, a task force has been formed to determine anti-corruption laws. Through the UN; the World Bank; and the IMF, schooling for civil service, public policy and the development of a strong auditing board are now in place. He acknowledges that the politics are difficult, and standards need to be raised before some privatization can occur in the country. Iraq is, according to President Talabani, “in the midst of a civil rights movement.”

We spoke about Iraq’s “neighborhood.” In developing relations with surrounding countries, Iran comes into play as the most fragile. Sharing a 1000 kilometer border with Iran, there are immediate problems of weapons’ smuggling and Iran’s desire to develop another Hezbollah in Iraq. There are also many difficulties with water resources between the two countries, and there is no question that the adoption of democracy in Iraq poses a threat to Iran. They were deeply disturbed by the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and pushed for the election of a prime minister other than Al-Maliki. Overall, Iraq’s neighbors are loath to accept/understand freedom of religion or democratic rule.

We felt most fortunate to have this briefing, which culminated in a delightful luncheon gathering over a table groaning with Middle Eastern specialties. President Talabani was the ultimate host, plying us with special fish from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and ensuring that our plates were loaded to abundance. We could not have received a warmer welcome to Iraq.

Briefing by Maj. Gen. Zamzow, Chancery Office

By Michael Phillip

Strategic Effects Directorate

This is a group with representation from all of the branches of the military as well as full-time and reservist. Their areas of responsibility are: economics, Sons of Iraq, education, employment, budget execution, elections and political/military affairs. According to Zamzow, "We are 'gap-fillers' in short term nation building. Security is our primary role, but secondarily we work on the transition to a democratic state. The Embassy deals with long-term, ministerial capacity building."

A Power Point presentation graphically demonstrated the success of the surge in reducing mortalities, violence and sectarian conflict. Key to this was equipping and training an army of 220,000 and at the local, provincial level 380,000 police (NB President Talabani referred to a very inadequate police force of only 70,000). With 75,000 "Sons of Iraq" hired through the sheiks to control tribal lands, foreign fighters in Iraq are substantially down. Responsibility for the Sons of Iraq contracts for 53,000 fighters has been transferred to the Government of Iraq from the Control Commission. In January '09, all 75,000 will be handled under GOI authority (and payroll).

- Civilian deaths down 89% from the peak in November 2006
- ISF and U.S. military deaths down 98% from the peak in October 2006
- High profile attacks down 83% from the peak in February 2007
- Ethno-sectarian violence down 98% from the peak of December 2006
- IED explosions down 92% from the peak in September 2006
- Over 74% or 123 of 165 Iraqi army combat battalions are "in the lead" for operations. The Iraqis have over 600,000 boots on the grounds.

There remain pockets of violence including Diyala and Mosul. Tensions continue high in Kirkuk. While the level of confidence in security is generally up to 60 – 70%, incidents including suicide bombers, car and truck bombs, sticky bombs and missiles continue. Radar balloons have made it possible to immediately pinpoint missile sources, and 50% of the time IED's (improvised explosive devices) are found before they are detonated.

Iraqi reconstruction spending includes \$270 million initial Commander's Emergency Response Funding (CERP), \$158.6 million committed funding, \$47.4 projects in planning, \$64 million available funds, and \$500 million pending in additional funds. Government of Iraq (GOI) allocated reconstruction funds total \$550 million.

While much of what the military is doing in Iraq should fall to the State Department and USAID, neither has the funding, human resources or surge capability to respond to this kind of situation. "Our diplomatic leaders – be they in ambassadors' suites or on the State Department's seventh floor – must have the resources and political support needed to fully exercise their statutory responsibilities in leading American foreign policy" Defense Secretary Robert Gates, July 2008.*

* "A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future, Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness," October 2008, The American Academy of Diplomacy.

Comments by Peter McPherson

- Former USAID Administrator 6 years during Reagan Administration, President Emeritus, Michigan State University, President, Association of Large Land Grant Colleges and Universities,
- Member Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq for 5 months in 2003 leading a team on economic and financial issues.
- Member of World Affairs Councils of America Delegation Visit to Iraq January 2009

What Was the Situation Five Years Ago?

In April 2004, Peter McPherson arrived in Baghdad one day before Paul Bremer arrived to head the CPA. Work was done in teams. McPherson headed a group of 20 from Bank of America, U.S. Department of Treasury and the Bank of England. Admiral Oliver was also in the group.

Lack of infrastructure affected everyone's efforts. Temperatures were 120–130 degrees Fahrenheit with no a/c. Running water was sporadic. There was no internal phone system. There were neither administrative supplies nor staff support (no paper, no one to prepare drafts or create documents). The teams were spread out and communication and interchange was limited amongst the various teams and with the Iraqis. Telephone communications had to be done through the U.S. (and back) via MCI. Oral history will have to record much of what happened.

Big issues included the Iraqi military and whether or not it should have been paid (it was not) and disbanded (it was). That decision was not made by Paul Bremer. De-Baathification was another big issue. However, not many would have been precluded in a review process since there was no capacity to identify.

Given the vacuum after the collapse of one-man, Baathi Party rule, recommendations and decisions to establish a framework of governance had to be made speedily. McPherson's team focused on getting the Central Bank going and rewriting the Central Bank law to create the independence of the CB. They worked on a national budget and on foreign investment laws. The law proposed by the CPA and approved by the Governing Council to allow majority 100% owned foreign investment, other than in oil, has been modified, but the majority foreign ownership is still in place outside of natural resources. (NB a foreign investment oil contract at 51% was recently rejected by the Iraqis).

A flat rate 5% tariff went into effect and continues, but is under review by the Iraqi government. The flat rate concept continues to be thought important. A flat 15% income tax was recommended but never operational. (NB –In this 'top-down' oil based economy, there continues to be no support for an income tax by the Iraqis. Salaries are low, unemployment is high and government provided basic services, sporadic to nonexistent as they are, include a food basket).

The Trade Bank of Iraq has been a great success with about \$36 billion of trade credit. The question is whether the bank can be privatized in the next couple of years; there seems some interest in doing so.

An early move was made to change the currency, which DOD urged and flawlessly executed. The need for a new currency at that time continues to be widely appreciated. In 2003 there was no retail banking in Iraq. The Rafadin Bank and the Rashid Bank were the two major banks at the time. An unregulated, cash based informal economy obtained with major parastatal entities.

One question that persists is how, and how much, to support the state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The Finance Minister was clear that some privatization and/or private contracts to run some of these entities were attractive options. Cement and fertilizer SOEs apparently will be run by outside private contracts.

Some limited progress has apparently been made on electricity production, especially considering the fairer allocation of electricity around the country, not just to Baghdad, and the increased consumer demand because of citizen purchases of appliances. The problem apparently has been security, corruption and some design work. Production for electricity, sewer and water and health care facilities remain big issues.

Moreover, beyond some core industries like electricity, oil production, agriculture and retail, there is limited economic activity.

Photos









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