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From: MENAD  
Sent: Saturday, September 20, 2003 10:35:46 AM  
To: MENAD - All Staff  
Subject: FW: INFO: OO IRAQR/FCOLN 175: NOSEC: IRAQ: POLITICAL PROCESS  
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For Political Director

Your Telno 71

SUBJECT: NOSEC: IRAQ: POLITICAL PROCESS

SUMMARY

1. Discussion of possible timings for the political process needs to take more careful account of the variables. Things are stirring in the Iraqi political field and we may not be able to exercise complete control. Update on the constitutional process and on the pressure to advance handover. Indications of Bremer's thinking, not always fully consistent. This sets the context for sensible Plan B thinking

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ourselves.

DETAIL

2. Thank you for this constructive reply. I think we are beginning to define more clearly what the political possibilities are.

Timelines

3. We are agreed that the Bremer Steps are the right political route map: Plan A. It's realisation and our preferred time framework, as in your para 3, are being well promoted by the impressive drive of CPA/Coalition activity on security, security sector development (see below), infrastructure, economic groundwork and Iraqi-isation generally. But there are unpredictable variables: the effect of security lapses or terrorism spectaculars; the evolution of public Iraqi reactions; the increasingly complex interplay of Iraqi politics as political aspirants flex their muscles; the securing of large-scale resources from outside.

4. Bremer has told me that he thinks the CPA might run for anything up to two years, even if his preferred target date for elections and subsequent handover remains summer/autumn 2004. This longer time bracket is connected in his thinking to the essential need, as he sees it, to ensure a certain kind of new Iraq. In the short term, he does not wish to take the responsibility for setting dates against his Seven Steps. He is all too conscious of the variables and wants to avoid time commitments which may not hold. Hence his pressure on the Governing Council to come up with dates themselves, an approach which anyway suits his tactic of pushing the Iraqi face to the fore whenever possible and sensible.

5. You know where the GC process has got to. The Constitutional Preparatory Committee(CPC) is due to report with recommendations by the end of September. Earlier indications that the CPC would recommend elections to the Constitutional Conference, in line with Sistani's fatwa, are being tempered. Secular CPC members fear an elected Islamist majority and so are pushing for several options to be proposed, including appointment or partial elections, either of which could be completed relatively quickly. But the pressure to meet Sistani's demands and the logic that a lengthy transitional period will make immediate transfer of sovereignty more pressing, mean that a single recommendation for elections cannot be ruled out. Bremer is waiting to see how this goes, while of course he and I and others are arguing with the relevant Iraqis we meet that elections for a Constitutional Conference are unwise. All this means that we shall be lucky to get a conference convened within the next month.

6. The pressure to transfer executive power soon, whatever happens on the Constitution, has stirred the pot rather more than we were expecting. But I do not yet sense that there is real momentum in this direction within the GC and Cabinet as a whole. Many GC members recognise the downsides of early independence, and want the US around for quite a bit longer. The Chalabi group appears prepared to take the risk of acceleration because they may fare worse in a democratic contest later on. Akila al Hashimi, to me at least, was clear that she recognised the realities,

That said, there is so much movement in the air, with the UNGA business next week, the Dubai/Madrid conferences and the emergence of some real ministerial activity, that we will have to be prepared for developments in any one of several directions.

7. I find Bremer's readiness to push the senior Iraqis to the front very interesting. We Brits think it the right tactic, but I expected more resistance from him. He continues to remind the GC, eg when they produced "decisions" on Foreign Investment, Nationality and de-Ba'athification this week, that only he can sign things into law. But he does not seem fussed to be losing the substantive initiative

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(though he may not see it like that). The bid for an UNGA place was not just something which Bremer had to condone; he actively promoted it. Rumsfeld and he were wondering about the opening of an Iraqi Mission in Washington before State lawyers had their say. Yet so much else points to Bremer's insistence that the CPA must be around until we are sure that democracy and an open market have a good chance of rooting themselves in a new, stable Iraq. He has written to Rumsfeld pointing out all the disadvantages of vesting sovereignty in a provisional or transitional GC-type government. If putting Iraqis centre stage presentationally is the preferred tactic because it fits the CPA cover, fine. But how can he be sure that presentation will not turn into reality as the bandwagon grows? Bremer's outcome remains dependent on Bremer being in more than nominal control.

8. So I think we are right to be doing some Plan B thinking at the London end. Bremer will not allow me even to discuss it here, which is not a good sign of recognition of the (possible) realities. A more sensible strategy is to be serious about the Seven Steps, but to watch carefully, and try to affect the outcome of, the variables listed above. If they go against us, a Plan B should be available. I rather think that events will give us, in due course, a peg on which to hang our broaching this with the Americans.

9. I mentioned security sector development (para 3). I am hoping to do some co-ordination work here, though softly, softly if the US system is not to take alarm. Any expert thinking, or useful models, available in London would be good to have. Walt Slocombe is not back until 25 September, and so I cannot start straightaway. But the police area seems to be moving nicely.

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