

REMARKS BY STEPHEN HADLEY, WHITE HOUSE SECURITY ADVISER SUBJECT: VICTORY IN IRAQ
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MR. HADLEY: Thank you, John, for that kind introduction.

It's an honor for me to have an opportunity to address the Center for
Strategic and International Studies. CSIS has a reputation for bipartisanship,
and so it is a fitting place to discuss what I believe is the emerging common
ground on the way ahead in Iraq.

As I listen to the debate here in Washington, there is a growing
recognition that failure is not an option in Iraq. Defeat in Iraq would create
a safe haven for terrorists similar to what Afghanistan was before 9/11, only
this time on some of the world's most strategic real estate with vast natural
resources available to fund future terrorist attacks. Defeat in Iraq would
embolden the terrorists to pursue us, our friends and allies throughout the
region and to our own shores. There's also growing recognition of the enormous
benefits of success in Iraq. It will make America safer by strengthening a new
ally in the war on terror.

It will deliver a decisive blow to the ideology that fuels international
terrorism.

A democratic Iraq will serve as a beacon of liberty, inspiring
democratic reformers throughout the Middle East. As freedom and democracy
spread, it will ultimately lead to a Middle East that is more peaceful, more
stable, and more inhospitable to terrorists and their supporters.

The strategic realities of our present situation in Iraq are recognized
by both the president and many of his critics. The president's view on these
points are well known.

But here is what one Democratic senator said. Quote, "If Iraq
disintegrates and becomes a playground for Iraq's neighbors and a training
ground for terrorists, it would embolden our enemies, encourage terrorism,
undermine moderates in the region, and badly damage credibility that we're going
to need to lead other countries against this new threat." Unquote.

A Republican senator who at times has been highly critical of the
administration's efforts in Iraq stated, and I quote, "We must get Iraq right
because America's stake in that conflict is enormous. All Americans, whether or
not they supported American action to topple Saddam Hussein, must understand the
profound implications of our presence there. Success or failure in Iraq is the

transcendent issue for our foreign policy and our national security for now and years to come." Unquote.

Given the stakes in Iraq, it is fortunate that common ground on the way forward is emerging across party lines and across the divides of the past. If you look carefully at the strategies and proposals offered by various critics and compare them to the strategy described by the president in his speeches over the last couple weeks, you will find that they broadly share the same critical elements.

There is, I believe, an emerging consensus that success in Iraq has five elements: training the Iraqi security forces and shifting increasing security responsibility to them; bringing Iraq's Sunni Arab population into the political process; supporting Iraqis as they review and possibly amend their constitution so that it becomes more of a national compact among Iraq's diverse groups; expanding the support of the international community for Iraq and increasing international participation in the reconstruction effort; and finally, refocusing our support for Iraqi reconstruction and economic efforts so that they provide visible benefit and employment to Iraqi citizens. Let me discuss each of these elements in turn.

First, many critics suggest we need to emphasize the training of Iraqi troops. One recently said we must, quote, "build Iraqi security forces that can provide law and order in neighborhoods, defeat insurgents, and isolate and eliminate foreign jihadists." Unquote. But such critics are advocating what has long been fundamental to the president's strategy in Iraq.

Here is what the president said on this subject at the U.S. Naval Academy last month. Quote, "To defeat the terrorists and marginalize the Saddamists and rejectionists, Iraqis need strong military and police forces. Iraqi troops bring knowledge and capabilities to fight that the coalition forces cannot. Iraqis know their people. They know their language. They know their culture. And they know who the terrorists are." Unquote.

The security track of the president's strategy emphasizes supporting Iraqis in clearing areas of enemy control, holding those areas with Iraqi forces, and building the capacity of local Iraqi institutions to deliver services and advance the rule of law.

Iraqi security forces are the linchpin of this approach. They are increasing in strength and effectiveness. And as Iraqi security forces take the fight to the enemy, they are gaining the trust and confidence of the Iraqi people.

Second, the administration and its critics all recognize the importance of drawing Iraq's Sunni Arabs into the political process. One Democratic senator recently said -- and I quote -- "Our strategy must achieve a political solution that deprives the Sunni-dominated insurgency of support by giving the Sunnis a stake in the future of their country," unquote.

The president has said much the same thing. Last week in Philadelphia he emphasized the importance of, quote, "our efforts to help the Iraqis build inclusive democratic institutions that will protect the interests of all the Iraqi people. By helping Iraqis to build a democracy, we will win over those who doubted they had a place in a new Iraq and undermine the terrorists and Saddamists," unquote.

The political track of the president's strategy calls for isolating hardened terrorists and Saddamist elements; engaging those outside the political process, to bring them in; and building stable, inclusive national institutions that can represent all Iraqis.

Last week marked an enormously important milestone in this effort. More than 10 million Iraqis bravely went to the polls to select a permanent legislative assembly. Unlike last January's election, Sunni political coalitions competed for votes for this time. Most importantly, Sunni Arabs voted in large numbers.

Third, although the recently ratified Iraqi constitution is already the most liberal document of basic governments in the Arab world, the Iraqis plan to review the constitution early this coming year. Our own Constitution has been amended 27 times, and the president supports amending the Iraqi constitution if it helps build stable pluralistic national institutions that can represent all Iraqis.

So do the president's critics. As one Democratic senator said, quote, "We need to build a political census, starting with the constitution, that gives Kurds, Shi'a and Sunnis a stake in keeping Iraq together," unquote.

Fourth, many critics called upon us to encourage international engagement on Iraq and international participation in its reconstruction. One Democratic senator said, quote, "We have to launch a major diplomatic effort to get the international community, especially key neighboring and Arab states, more involved in Iraq," unquote.

Again, the critics are advocating what has been a key element of the president's strategy in Iraq from the outset. As he declared in his address Sunday night, quote, "We'll continue to encourage greater support from the Arab world and the broader international community," unquote. And Iraq is steadily gaining more international support. More than 30 nations besides the United States have deployed forces to Iraq, and NATO is currently training Iraqi security forces. Over 80 countries (and/in ?) international organizations came together in Brussels last June to pledge support for Iraq's political and economic reconstruction. The ongoing effort in Iraq has repeatedly received the unanimous endorsement of the United Nations Security Council, and the Arab League is now engaged.

Finally, critics argue that a refocused reconstruction effort must be a key component of our strategy for defeating the terrorists.

One Democratic senator recently said, quote, "We need to jump start our own lagging reconstruction efforts by expanding job creation programs and strengthening the capacity of government ministries," unquote. Again, we find ourselves on common ground.

The economic track of the president's strategy in Iraq emphasizes restoring neglected or nonexistent infrastructure, reforming Iraq's stifling command economy and building government capacity and human capacity to allow Iraq to reach its full economic potential. The president agrees that the international community must better support Iraqis in improving basic services such as electricity, clean water and sanitation -- services that were totally neglected under Saddam Hussein. But progress is nonetheless being made. According to a recent poll, 77 percent of Iraqi businesses anticipate growth in

the national economy over the next two years. And 69 percent of respondents describe themselves as optimistic about Iraq's economic future.

Reconstructing a nation ravaged by three decades of war and tyranny is difficult work, but the progress is real and measurable. In the end, I would submit many of the disagreements on Iraq are more tactical than strategic. Though presented as radical breaks with the current course, in reality, many of the proposals made by our critics largely follow the strategic course established by President Bush.

We've listened to our critics and are already pursuing many of their proposals, but not every proposal makes sense. Several critics have suggested that a timeline for withdrawal be the centerpiece of any strategy for the way forward in Iraq. Others have called for the United States immediately to stand down and redeploy its forces from Iraq. And here there's no common ground. Where they're calling for coalition forces to stand down to barracks or return to the United States, the advocates of these policies share a core belief that the war in Iraq is unwinnable and that America and the world will be better off by abandoning Iraq.

The president respectfully disagrees. He believes that setting a timetable for withdrawal would send the wrong message to the Iraqi people, to the terrorists, and to our allies in the region. Most importantly, it would send the wrong message to our men and women in uniform and in civilian service in Iraq. As the president said Sunday night, quote, "Not only can we win the war in Iraq, we are winning the war in Iraq. To retreat before victory would be an act of recklessness and dishonor, and I will not allow it." Unquote.

Advocates of a withdraw-now strategy are welcome in our national discourse. This is exactly the freedom of expression we and Iraqis are fighting for in Iraq. But this strategy has been rejected by the bulk of opinion in both American political parties, and for good reason.

First, no one has explained how this policy would improve the situation in Iraq. Proponents assert that our withdrawal will create incentives for Iraqis to provide for their own security. Yet under the president's plan, Iraqi forces are already providing for Iraqi security as quickly as they can be brought online.

Second, advocates of withdrawal fail to explain how abandoning Iraq to the terrorists and Ba'athists would make Americans more secure. We contend it would only encourage further attacks on America.

Third, the case for withdrawal reflects a belief that the Iraqi people do not support our presence in Iraq. This is not the case. A recent poll conducted by ABC News found that the majority of those polled want us to stay either until security is established or until Iraqi security forces can secure their country on their own. Most Iraqis, in other words, share our strategy. They expect any coalition force reductions to be conditions-based, not driven by arbitrary timelines.

It is our belief that most Iraqis share the president's definition of victory in Iraq. Last week he said, and I quote, "We are pursuing a comprehensive strategy in Iraq."

Our goal is victory, and victory will be achieved when the terrorists and Saddamists can no longer threaten Iraq's democracy, when the Iraqi security

forces can provide for the safety of their own citizens and when Iraq is not a safe haven for terrorists to plot new attacks against our nation," unquote.

On Sunday night, the president acknowledged that the war in Iraq has been controversial. It has inflicted suffering and sometimes unbearable loss on some American families. While assuring the country that in every decision he weighed the potential consequences for those who would be sent into harm's way, the president underscored how vital this mission is for our country.

Most Americans want the United States to succeed in Iraq and for our troops to come home as soon as possible. The president could not agree more. But a desire to have our troops come home is not inconsistent with recognizing that we can settle for nothing short of victory. The path home is the path of success.

As I've tried to lay out today, there is already much common ground on the strategy that is needed to achieve this success. The time has come for those who understand the importance of success in Iraq to make common cause together. The Iraqi people and the security of our nation deserve no less.

For last week's Iraqi election represents not only a historic moment for Iraqis but an important victory in the global war on terror. The images of Iraqis celebrating as entire families cast their votes can serve as a beacon of hope in the Middle East. The success of democracy in Iraq will encourage the spread of democracy in the region, and the spread of democracy in this vital region will undermine the sources of violence and instability that give rise to terrorism, and will lay the foundation of future peace.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, we have about 20, maybe 25 minutes for questions, and I am going to be the ruthless judge that gets to pick people. So I invite you to indicate if you would like to ask questions. We'll bring the microphone right down here.

MR. HADLEY: John, do you want to come up here?

MODERATOR: No, no, no.

Q Thanks, Mr. Hadley. As we make many of these phrases, that we are winning and we have to get it right, more and more the "we" obviously includes the Iraqis because they have to determine many of the constitution -- (off mike). Can you give us any sense on sort of the results? We've seen the large number of turnout, but we all know that if the government that comes out of these elections, frankly, looks like the government that is now in place, which is very narrowly focused, that that will be a very, very difficult process. So can you give us any sense of those results, A? And B, if the government should come out like the current one, where the Sunnis are not included, what would be some of our alternative policies?

MR. HADLEY: There are some preliminary returns in. I've seen them. I must say I think you have to be very slow to draw conclusions based on them. Last time, we got a lot of preliminary results of the vote, the referendum and the January election, that didn't prove out.

The big news is turnout seems to be well over 65 percent. You know, it's interesting, three elections in one year, and the turnout has gone up each

election. That's a pretty unusual and remarkable accomplishment for the Iraqi people.

The second big news, of course, is Sunnis voted in big numbers and participated in the electoral process.

Three, I think everybody understands, and the president this morning talked to Prime Minister Ja'afari and President Talabani, and everybody understands the Sunnis need to be part of this process going forward and need to be part of this government. How that will sort out and get done is obviously for the Iraqis to decide.

Look, I think a lot of people are going to come back and say, well, there was a lot of sectarian voting; Shi'a voted for Shi'a, Sunnis voted for Sunnis. This should be no surprise to us, given where this country is in its political evolution. And that's why the Iraqis, I think, were very smart in how they structured their constitution. For a government to be formed, you need to start with a three-person presidency that requires a two-thirds approval of the assembly. And everybody believes that that process of getting the Sunni presidency, which -- sorry, the Iraqi presidency, which will then pick a prime minister, will be part of a big political deal, if you will, that will ensure participation of all communities.

But I think people recognize that the Sunnis have entered the political process, have to have a role in this government, have to have a role in what's going forward, and I think the Iraqis understand that.

MODERATOR: David?

Q Mr. Hadley, yesterday, the president made a very impassioned argument, as did the attorney general and others, about why you had to move forward with the extension of the domestic spying program against al Qaeda members and other suspected terrorists. One question that was left somewhat unresolved at that time, and one that's been raised by a number of your critics on Capitol Hill is that the administration had a procedure within FISA to go ahead and do this kind of work without a court order and then to report it later -- I think within 72 hours -- to a FISA court; understanding the need to, obviously, move very quickly against terrorist threats, and that you've spoken that out frequently.

Could you tell us why you decided to reject that approach?

MR. HADLEY: Well, I'm about to give a very unpopular answer. The president was out on this subject yesterday at a press conference. Mr. Sanger had an opportunity to ask the president a question at the press conference. Al Gonzales was out on the record in the press conference yesterday. There's been a lot of backgrounding on it. I'd really like to talk about Iraq. It's so important that we try and come together on the way forward in Iraq. There's so much at stake.

So, David, you know, we'll do that on the side, but I'd love, John, if we could really focus on Iraq today.

MODERATOR: Okay. Please identify yourself. And right back here in the gray sweater. Please stand up and identify yourself, so that Steve might know.

Q Hi. (Name inaudible) -- from The Wall Street Journal. You spoke a little bit earlier about not wanting to see Iraq become a haven for terrorism. There's already a concern, as you know, among the intelligence services of countries surrounding Iraq that it has effectively already become a haven. The Jordanian Intelligence Service in the aftermath of the Amman bombings said that it feared both that there's a generation of terrorists being trained in Iraq on how to fight modern armies, but also that Iraq is effectively a place for attacks to be planned and then to filter out to neighboring countries. I wonder if you think those concerns are justified presently, and also how you combat that, given that what you fear may already be happening.

MR. HADLEY: Of course, you have to worry about that. Look, the -- Zarqawi and a lot of others have chosen to use the presence in Iraq as an opportunity to attack us.

And our concern is that they will use it as a place to attack us in Iraq, but also plan terrorist operations outside of Iraq.

Why are we concerned? Because this is exactly the plan that they have articulated. And as -- some of you have seen the letter that -- (background noise) -- sorry about that -- that Zawahiri sent to Zarqawi, Zawahiri being the number two in the Iraqi command structure and Zarqawi being an Iraqi -- the head, really, of operations in Iraq. In that letter they say very clearly their strategy is to seize control of Iraq, establish the beginnings of the caliphate they talk about, to use Iraq as a base of operations to attack the neighbors, to extend their reach, and ultimately have a base for operations against us, our friends and allies. That's -- they said very clearly that's what they're trying to do in Iraq. And of course, destabilizing Iraq and thwarting efforts to establish Iraqi democracy are essential elements of that strategy.

So we see it, and that why -- is why it is so important that the terrorists be defeated in Iraq, and that Iraq be a showcase, in some sense, of a competition between the ideology of the terrorists and the ideology of freedom and democracy. And on that dimension, it seems, we're doing very well indeed, given the results in these elections and the level of participation.

I think we're winning that ideological struggle. Now what we need to do, working with the Iraqis, is destroy the network of the terrorists there in Iraq so that they cannot use it as a base of operations to destabilize the region or attack here at home.

MODERATOR: Jon Alterman.

Q Hi. I'm Jon Alterman. I run the Middle East Program here at CSIS.

MR. HADLEY: Hi, Jon.

Q Thanks very much for your talk.

You talked a lot about Iraqis. And as you suggested, in the electoral returns, we've seen a lot of Iraqis really identifying themselves on a sectarian basis. A friend of mine who worked in the CPA said we didn't sow the seeds of sectarian division in Iraq, but in many cases we watered them very carefully. One country in the Middle East which does have government on a sectarian basis is Lebanon. It's never really been able to transcend them. What have we learned from our long experience and involvement in Lebanon that we want to

prevent as we move forward on helping the Iraqis stand up a democratic government into the future?

MR. HADLEY: I think it's a very good question. I think that probably some people in this room can answer it better than I.

I think it's difficult to translate experience from a place like Lebanon to Iraq. Lebanon is a complicated society. It has a long history. And one of the questions is, have the Lebanese learned from their own history, so that this time, when they -- having a chance really to establish a -- their own governmental structure, will they have learned the lessons of their own past?

I think in Iraq, you know, it is not surprising that the Shi'a, excluded from power and oppressed for such a long time, and not having the opportunity that the Kurds had to essentially begin to build a functioning society in northern Iraq, which they were able to do from 1991 on -- it is not surprising that they would feel an enormous pride at being able to step forward, vote in the political process, participate in government and exercise authority and control. I think that is not a surprise.

One of the things the president always does when he talks to people -- he says, "What are you?" And people sometimes say Kurds or Shi'a or Sunni. Most of the time, they will say something like "I am a Kurdish Iraqi." And as frequently they will say, "I'm an Iraqi, but I'm also a Shi'a." "I'm an Iraqi. I'm also a Sunni."

And I think the judgment we've made -- and I think it is proving out -- that this country will decide that it is Iraqi first.

It's one of the things we're relying on in terms of the competition with Iran. Iran clearly has some influence in Iraq. There's a lot of concern that through the Shi'a, they are going to have an inordinate influence in this government. The people we talk to say very clearly to us Iraqi Shi'a, having an opportunity to participate in their government, really for the first time, are not about to become subcontractors to the Iranians.

So I think this is a process. It's not surprising there's a strong sectarian base. I think, though, it is important for -- in everything we do and everything the Iraqis do, to emphasize that it is Iraq first and that what the goal of all three communities is -- a single Iraqi state, democratic, which is inclusive, in which all communities can find a place.

That's what Iraqis continue to say, and it's very important that we encourage and support them in that process.

MODERATOR: Right down here in the second row. Will?

Q Thank you. Mike Miyaza (ph). Among the five points of emerging consensus, you talked about the importance of international engagement and participation. You talked about key neighboring states, and you talked Arab states. My question is, what are you going to do with a key non-Arab neighbor, Iran, in the context of this war?

MR. HADLEY: We have a lot of issues with Iran, not least of it which is evidenced that equipment of Iranian origin is finding its way into the hands of groups in Iraq that have attacked Iraqis and in some cases attacked coalition countries. Iran is a big supporter of terror. It's probably the number-one

supporter of terror in the world today, through Hezbollah and other devices. Obviously, the effort to get a nuclear weapon is an issue that is a problem for the United States, but also for the international community as a whole.

And obviously, Iran's treatment of its own people -- you know, it's been interesting, because Afghans in Iran were able to vote in a free and fair election in Afghanistan, and Iraqis living in Iran were able to vote in a free and fair election in Iraq.

Iranians have an election, but they have an election after the government picks the seven or eight candidates out of a thousand applicants who are able to run, and after that, it looks like a free and fair election. One of the questions we keep asking is when are the Iranian people are going to begin to ask themselves, if Iraqis in Iran can participate in a free election in Iraq and the same for Afghanistan, why not us?

So we have a broad agenda with Iran. Obviously, in terms of the context of Iraq, the Iraqis are trying to find their own way with respect to Iran in terms of establishing a business-like relationship with their neighbor. We encourage that. But we think it is important for the Iraqi government and for other neighbors in the region to make it clear that the Iranians must not meddle in Iraq. They must not try and manipulate the outcome, and they must not be supporting the terrorists and other elements that are trying to thwart the progress toward democracy. We think that's a message we have to send. We think it's a message the Iraqis are sending and other countries in the region have to send.

And one of the things that's been interesting in this dialogue with other countries in the region is the increasing concern that states in the region have about Iranian behavior, and that, I think, provides a basis for us to try and get more effective action against Iran.

But we have a lot of issues with Iran, and we are -- we need to be over time addressing all of them.

MODERATOR: Ma'am back here, and then, I'll come back in here. The microphone's right here. Please identify yourself.

Q (Name inaudible) -- Iraq Foundation. I've just come back from Iraq, and I want to absolutely endorse what you said about troop levels. The majority of Iraqis and certainly all thinking Iraqis understand perfectly that while Iraqis do not want any foreign troops on their soil any longer then is absolutely necessary, we should not link it to an arbitrary timetable and arbitrary dates; that it should actually be linked to the achievement of certain benchmarks.

My question, however, is of a different kind. When the president speaks about Iraq and when others in the administration speak about Iraq, they define victory almost exclusively through the lens of security, that victory is when Iraq is no longer a haven for terrorism, victory is when we have licked Zarqawi and the Saddamists, and so on.

Isn't there some vision of victory in the U.S. that is linked to Iraq's political future? What kind of Iraq do we want to see? Having gone to war against Saddam Hussein, having lost so many American lives, surely there must be some political vision that the U.S. can articulate. Could you please help us articulate that, and could it be heard loud and clear? Thank you.

MR. HADLEY: Sure. I want to just restate what I said. I put it in here with -- because I thought it was important to emphasize. The president talked last week of victory in three terms. The first that he said was victory will be achieved when terrorists and Saddamists can no longer threaten Iraq's democracy. And then he talked about training security forces, and then he talked about Iraq that is not a safe haven for terrorists able to attack the United States.

There's a reason that one is first, because in his judgment, helping the Iraqis to establish their own democracy is the enabler for all the rest. And the president has been very clear, and I think we were very clear before the military action in Iraq, that the goal was to liberate Iraq and help Iraqis to establish a democratic state, a unified Iraq in which all communities would participate.

One of the reasons in those early statements we talked about federalism was not as a vehicle for dismembering Iraq, as some people think, but because -- our judgment that those communities, in order to live together comfortably given that history, would have to have benefit of some degree of autonomy so they could take care of the interests of their own communities.

But it was an articulated strategy before we ever went in that this was liberation, not occupation. The goal was to free the Iraqi people and to support them so that they could build a(n) inclusive, single democratic Iraqi state. And that's why the first item on his definition of victory is to prevent the terrorists from interfering with Iraq's democratic government and democratic evolution because that is the thing that makes the whole enterprise not only a victory for the Iraqi people, but also can have the impact that the president believes a free, democratic Iraq can have as showing the way to the Middle East generally of a movement towards greater freedom and democracy. That will not only be good for the people of those countries, but also, in the president's view, that is the evolution that, at the end of the day, will lead to stability and security, and make the Middle East inhospitable to terror.

MODERATOR: Peter.

Q Peter (Sharpton ?).

MR. HADLEY: Hello, Peter.

Q This is a tactical question, I suppose. But as Iraqi security forces play a larger role in securing urban areas of Iraq, do you see prospects for some redeployment that would better secure the borders?

MR. HADLEY: It's interesting because already some of that is going on. If you look at what the coalition and the Iraqi forces have been doing in the western part of the country, it has been precisely to move into those areas and disrupt the infrastructure that has facilitated the movement of people and equipment from Syria into Iraq. And that was -- there were clearly two well-recognized infiltration paths, and the presence of coalition forces and Iraqi forces up there has helped stabilize the security situation and disrupt the flow of infiltration across that border.

It's interesting, General Casey has said that it has -- for example, he attributes those activities to the reduction in the frequency of IEDs --

implemented -- improvised explosive devices -- and attacks in Baghdad. So precisely that is an effort.

What General Casey has done over the last 18 months, in some sense, has talked about focusing initially on the cities. Seeing the political path that was going forward, he knew the cities needed to be secure so people could vote and feel comfortable voting. As that has gradually been accomplished, he has then somewhat expanded the objectives, and one of the things you've seen is his effort to go up to the Syrian border, to interdict the passage of materials and suicide bombers and others into the country. That's something he's doing now. And he believes he's having some success.

MODERATOR: Over on the far wall. And then I will come back to -- (off mike).

Q (Name off mike) -- Pepperdine University -- (off mike) -- Association of Arab Americans. Mr. Hadley, in your presentation, you talked about -- in response to the criticism leveled at the administration with regards to the internationalization of your approach to Iraq, you mentioned the new role by the Arab League. Having lobbied for 25 years for a better relationship between Washington and the Arab League, and met a brick wall in this town, what is this -- what's the rationale for the sudden conversion -- (off mike) -- the Arab League is finally a player in the -- (off mike)?

The second point: in your -- (off mike) -- of the definition of "victory" by the president and by the administration, you mentioned again a point that your critics keep hammering, which is the issue of Iraq-based terrorists attacking the U.S., that this has to stop, and it's part of your definition of "victory." Why the insistence on dwelling on this rather debunked debate point that -- many people in this country and overseas keep saying, you know, nobody from Iraq has attacked Americans shores. And if we are wrong --

MR. HADLEY: Yeah.

Q -- then can you enlighten us with a couple of cases where Iraq-based terrorists, before or after the departure of Saddam, have actually attacked U.S. shores? Thank you.

MR. HADLEY: First, what we're responding to is the fact that the Arab League itself took the initiative and went into Iraq. That's a very good thing. We encourage it.

The EU, I noticed, recently -- this past week announced that they are now going to have a EU presence in Iraq. All of this is a good thing for the Iraqi people, to have the international recognition and the international support that that brings. And we encourage it.

On your second question, people forget that before we went into Iraq in early 2003, Zarqawi was in Iraq. He had a network in Baghdad. He also had ties to a group in the northeastern part of the country. That was behind a poison plot that was uncovered and frustrated in a number of European countries. This was before we ever went in. So the notion that Zarqawi is of concern about terror plots outside the country has a base in the experience before we ever went into Iraq.

Second, there is a fair amount of information that he has been given that charge by al Qaeda, to have a role outside of Iraq in terms of terrorist planning.

We worry about that. We track it. And obviously, we will do everything we can to disrupt it. But the easiest way to disrupt it, of course, is to deny Zarqawi a safe haven in Iraq, a place from which he can plan, and obviously, disrupt his networks and bring him to justice.

MODERATOR: I apologize, I'm going to disappoint people. I have time for just one more. Mark, you get the last question. I do apologize to -- (off mike).

Q Thank you. Mark Schneider (sp), International Crisis Group. Two of your five points involve bringing the Sunnis into the political process, directly and through the constitutional amendments, to ensure that they have a greater role in the future government. Looking back, would you say, then, that it was a mistake to insist on the August date for closing the constitution and not use the six-month extension that was available? And looking forward, something along the first question; what are the implications, do you think, for Iraq if there are no constitutional amendments that essentially bring the Sunnis more fully into the process? And what are the implications, then, for the U.S. support for that future Iraqi government?

MR. HADLEY: Yeah. That's a good question. I'll try and give you a short version of a long answer. One of the things we learned in January, when there was a lot of suggestions that we should delay and urge the Iraqis to delay the election in January to give more time for the Sunnis to come into the process, we looked -- thought hard about it, and in the end of the day, the president's judgment was that's the election needed to go forward. Part of that was informed by the fact that the Shi'a, for example, were desperate to have elections. And part of it is because of who we are. How could we be the United States not favoring early elections?

I think everyone has concluded that insisting on that deadline was a very good thing for moving the political process forward. And everyone, I think, has also concluded that in the three-plus months it took to form a government after those elections, precisely because there was not a deadline, was very destructive for the political momentum that had otherwise come out of that January election.

So one of the things we learned from that is deadlines are important for moving the political process forward. And that informed the president's decision about the August 15th deadline of the constitution.

That said, this was a deadline that was not a deadline. It was something we could push against to say August 15th, but in fact it slipped. You may remember that the document actually was not closed, and a formal version was not promulgated until the third week in September, which was the last possible date before you could get it printed and distributed for the August -- October 15th referendum. And during that whole time, there was an effort to get from the Sunnis additional changes that would bring them into the political process with the understanding they could either be put into the document before it was published or, as in fact happened, they could be promulgated as an annex, if you will, or an amendment to that document before the October 15th vote.

During that period, it was very frustrating. Ambassador Khalilzad was talking to a variety of Sunni groups. We could not get a single list of demands. There was one list that had seven demands, another list that had 11 demands. They did not overlap. And finally, four days before the October 14th -- 15th referendum, we did get a set of agreed amendments which allowed some Sunnis to join the process. Of course, one of those amendments was to have an early convention to look at further amendments to the constitution so that this process would continue to go forward even after the election in the first six months of the new year.

So this was a classic case of using a deadline as a forcing action, but also having it as a very flexible deadline that allowed the political process to go forward. And that political process is continuing, with the Sunnis participating in the election, participating in the government and participating in that constitutional process.

Last point. Sorry to go on; it's a very important point, I think very misunderstood.

I think everybody believes there needs to be some amendments to the constitution in order to allow it to become what we all think it needs to be, which is a national compact among all the communities. The trick is going to get amendments that address underlying concerns but not create expectations because the last thing you want is amendments or changes that do not meet Sunni expectations, and the Sunnis then come out and leave the political process. And this is going to require some depth -- political work by this new government, and it's going to have to require some real statesmanship among the three communities -- Sunni, Shi'a and Kurd.

But the one thing I would say -- and this was the point I would leave you with -- we spend a lot of time talking about U.S. policy because this is an American audience, but the real story out of Iraq is what the Iraqi people have done. They have met every benchmark or milestone in the Transitional Administrative Law that they gave themselves to bring themselves in just two-and-a-half years to this point and to this last election.

There are enormous challenges ahead, but I think they've shown remarkable maturity and restraint in dealing with this situation, and I would not bet against them being able to find their way through this. They've done a remarkable job. They're a remarkable people.

I want to thank you all for your time. I appreciate it very much. Thanks. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: Could I -- thank you again ladies and gentlemen. I apologize for the electronic interference, Steve, that was terrible. I apologize for that.

Could I ask you all to please stay seated? For security reasons, we'd like to be able to get the national security adviser out. Could you guys come in and -- you're going to take him out the back way. Okay. We'll take him through the trash just like we did in bringing him in. (Laughter.)

Thanks everybody. Thank you for coming. (Applause.)

END.