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Post-War Iraq: The Immediate Imperatives

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As the situation in Iraq moves into the post-war phase, what needs to be done right away to stabilize the country, and who needs to do it? On April 16, 2003, the U.S. Institute of Peace hosted a briefing to discuss these questions and others surrounding the immediate [challenges facing the U.S.-led coalition](#) and the international community after the end of full-scale combat in Iraq.

Moderated by [Dan Serwer](#), director of peace operations at the Institute, the panel featured: [Ray Jennings](#), former senior field adviser for the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives and current Institute senior fellow; [Robert Perito](#), special adviser to the Institute's Rule of Law Program; [Jonathan Tucker](#), Institute senior fellow and former UNSCOM biological weapons inspector; and via phone from Kuwait [George Ward](#), coordinator for relief and humanitarian assistance with the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs at the U.S. Department of Defense.

Addressing the Security Gap

Discussing the current security challenges in Iraq and lessons learned from his experience with the Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, Robert Perito underlined the importance of re-establishing law and order. While Perito cautioned that establishing post-war security in Iraq would be "difficult, dangerous, and confusing for all," he also stressed that it was the foundation upon which all post-conflict reconstruction initiatives would rest. But what security concerns should the coalition look to address first?

Noting that riots, fires, and looting had hit hard some of the critical infrastructure that the coalition had intentionally spared during its bombing campaign, Perito outlined three main security concerns the coalition should focus on:

1. Removing war criminals and human rights abusers from Iraqi police forces and judiciary.
2. Implementing a short-term review process to clarify what the current laws are and a long-term review process for reforming the Iraqi legal system.
3. Uprooting remaining elements of Hussein's security and intelligence service networks that, while currently inactive, could serve as spoilers and a source of ongoing instability.

In closing, Perito emphasized that while post-conflict Iraq poses its own unique challenges, lessons learned from U.S. experiences in Bosnia, Panama, and Afghanistan could be applied to addressing the current security problems in Iraq. He also suggested that U.S. policymakers should pursue three immediate

courses of action to help solidify current efforts to re-establish security and the rule of law in Iraq:

1. Speed up efforts to supplement the military police units now on the ground.
2. Ask immediately for assistance from coalition members and allies with trained constabulary forces that could be quickly deployed to the region.
3. Form commissions to begin assisting Iraqi scholars and jurists on reform of the Iraqi justice system and administration of the rule of law.

The Road to Reconstruction: A Progress Report from the Field

Is a humanitarian crisis underway in Iraq? While water and food shortages have received a lot of attention recently in the media, George Ward, coordinator for relief and humanitarian assistance with the U.S. Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs (ORHA), said, "as of now there is not a humanitarian crisis in Iraq." Speaking via phone from Kuwait, Ward stressed that from his field visits and reports received from around Iraq, the coalition was making steady progress in coordinating and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Having already deployed several ORHA disaster assistance response teams (DARTs) to assess needs around the country, Ward indicated that several nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations (such as UNICEF and the UN World Food Program) were already conducting relief operations in the field. He also noted that medical supply contributions from international donors were keeping up with the current need and that initial reports were optimistic about the number of internally displaced persons already heading home.

Nevertheless, Ward cautioned that security concerns had the potential to complicate the ability to deliver food, water, and medical supplies to areas in need. Ward also noted that a fuel shortage could further complicate efforts to restart power, water, and other public works and sanitation facilities and services around the country. To meet these and other humanitarian assistance challenges, Ward pointed out, ORHA would need to continue to actively work hand-in-hand with the international community. "[The] United Nations," Ward emphasized, "is regarded [by ORHA] as the center of gravity for the coordination of humanitarian relief and assistance."

Building a Foundation for Peace in Iraq

Speaking from his recent research and experience working in zones of conflict around the globe, Institute senior fellow and former USAID adviser Ray Jennings noted that the first twelve months would be critical in the building the foundation for a stable and democratic Iraq.

However, Jennings warned that the road to rebuilding Iraq would be difficult and cautioned U.S. policymakers against propagating unrealistically high expectations—both at home and abroad—for the new government in Iraq. He also emphasized that the U.S.-led coalition should appreciate the depth of damage to Iraqi civil-society done by the Hussein regime and resist the temptation to pull out of Iraq too quickly. "There are really no short cuts," Jennings stressed, "for the long and difficult work of changing a political culture and a people's relationship with a governing authority."

After a brief review of peacebuilding challenges that the U.S.-led coalition will face, Jennings outlined four primary recommendations for U.S. policymakers to focus on over the next twelve months:

1. Security must be the first priority. Given the experience of many within Iraq with brutal political repression under the Hussein regime, free and fair elections and political reform will not be possible

in an environment where Iraqis fear reprisal for their political views or activities, Jennings warned.

2. U.S. words must be met with actions. Speaking of the widespread mistrust throughout the region of U.S. intentions in Iraq, Jennings stressed that political rhetoric must be followed with demonstrable actions. He also noted that it was important to maintain as much transparency as possible in U.S. decisions regarding the rebuilding of Iraq to maintain credibility with the people of Iraq.
3. The international community must deliver a peace dividend to the people of Iraq. Noting the difficult road ahead for the people of Iraq, Jennings advocated creating a clear economic incentive for a new Iraqi regime to work towards. By providing some type of peace dividend for the people of Iraq, on both the national and local levels, Jennings noted, the international community can demonstrate to Iraqis and others the value of the hard work that democratizing Iraq will entail.
4. U.S. policymakers must keep the American public focused on long-term objectives. Jennings stressed the importance of U.S. policymakers maintaining domestic support for ongoing activities in Iraq and a long-term commitment to ensuring that Iraq is rebuilt. A long-term commitment in Iraq, he stated, was not only crucial to ensuring regional stability, but to fulfilling U.S. national security and foreign policy goals. Maintaining a public focus on the importance of a U.S. investment, both physical and monetary, in a stable and democratic Iraq will be key, Jennings argued, to the success of any peacebuilding initiatives in post-conflict Iraq.

In sum, Jennings reminded the audience that a combination of both actions and words over the next year will be critical to winning the peace in Iraq. "Nation building," Jennings emphasized, "is both a psychological and physical process."

Great Expectations: WMD and the Challenge of Disarming Iraq

Institute senior fellow and former UN weapons inspector Jonathan Tucker stated that the Bush administration may have set the bar too high for uncovering weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq. Citing the U.S. presentation to the UN Security Council on Hussein's WMD capabilities and other statements made by both the United States and the United Kingdom about the danger of Iraq's WMD capabilities, Tucker noted that "the international legitimacy of the U.S. war in Iraq now depends on finding significant caches of banned weapons." However, Tucker also cautioned the audience that finding the Hussein regime's caches of WMD would not be easy.

Recapping some of the many difficulties weapons inspectors have faced over the years in Iraq, Tucker pointed out that the skill the Hussein regime had acquired in hiding weapons from UN inspectors should not be underestimated. In fact, he stated, it may take coalition teams months, even with the assistance of Iraqi informants, to find any significant WMD stocks or production facilities.

In closing, Tucker made several suggestions for U.S. policymakers to consider in managing the search for, verification of, and destruction of any WMD in Iraq:

- Consider engaging the United Nations in the search for WMD in Iraq. Tucker noted that not only might United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) inspectors be able to help supplement the expertise available to the United States in searching a vast area, but it could also be a useful diplomatic tool to reach out to the members of the Security Council. In addition, Tucker noted that UN verification of the destruction of any WMD would likely be needed before UN sanctions could be lifted on Iraq. Hence, Tucker suggested, employing UN inspectors, even in a limited capacity, might prove to be valuable for U.S. policymakers in later negotiations with the United Nations on rebuilding Iraq.
- Consider working with U.S. allies and other members of the coalition in the verification of any WMD uncovered in Iraq. Building upon his previous points about maintaining U.S. credibility both

in the Arab world and within the international community at large, Tucker suggested that the United States engage other coalition partners or allies to verify any WMD found. This would provide U.S. policymakers with another option to legitimize any WMD finds and showcase the multilateral nature of the U.S.-led coalition.

- Consider spearheading an international effort to keep Iraqi WMD technology and "know how" from proliferating. Perhaps one of the worst outcomes of the conflict in Iraq, Tucker warned, would be a proliferation of Iraqi WMD technology and scientists to rogue nations and terrorist groups eager to gain WMD. Pointing to successful models in Russia, Tucker suggested that the United States spearhead an international effort to create scientific centers and programs to keep Iraqi chemical, nuclear, and bio-weapons experts employed in peaceful civilian industries within Iraq.

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This summary reflects the presentations and comments from "[Post-War Iraq: The Immediate Imperatives](#)"—a Current Issues Briefing held at the U.S. Institute of Peace April 16, 2003. The views summarized above reflect the discussion at the meeting; they do not represent formal positions taken by the Institute, which does not advocate specific policies.

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