Iraq:

U.S. Troops Withdraw from Cities

Remarks by President Obama, April 7, 2009[1]

President Barack Obama delivered these remarks in Baghdad, Iraq

President Obama. Thank you. Thank you, guys. Let me say Multinational Force Iraq, Multinational Corps Iraq, Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq First Corps, America's Corp Band. Thanks to all of you.

Listen, I am so honored.

Audience Member. We love you.

President Obama. I love you back. I am honored—I'm honored and grateful to be with all of you. And I'm not going to talk long because I want to shake as many hands as I can. And I've been talking all week.

But there's a couple of things I want to say. Number one, thank you.

Audience Member. You're welcome.

President Obama. You know, when I was at Camp Lejeune I spoke about what it means for America to see our best and brightest, our finest young men and women serve us. And what I said then is something that I want to repeat to you, which is.: You have performed brilliantly in every mission that has been given to you.

Audience. Ooh-ah.

President Obama. Under enormous strain and under enormous sacrifice, through controversy and difficulty and politics, you've kept your eyes focused on just doing your job. And because of that, every mission that's been assigned—from getting rid of Saddam, to reducing violence, to stabilizing the country, to facilitating elections—you have given Iraq the opportunity to stand on its own as a democratic country. That is an extraordinary achievement, and for that you have the thanks of the American people. That's point number one.

Point number two is, this is going to be a critical period, these next 18 months. I was just discussing this with your commander, but I think it's something that all of you know. It is time for us to transition to the Iraqis. They need to take responsibility for their country and for their sovereignty.

And in order for them to do that, they have got to make political accommodations. They're going to have to decide that they want to resolve their differences through constitutional means and legal means. They are going to have to focus on providing government services that encourage confidence among their citizens.

All those things they have to do. We can't do it for them. But what we can do is make sure that we are a stalwart partner, that we are working alongside them, that we are committed to their success, that in terms of training their security forces, training their civilian forces in order to achieve a more effective government, they know that they have a steady partner with us.

And so just as we thank you for what you've already accomplished, I want to say thank you because you will be critical in terms of us being able to make sure that Iraq is stable, that it is not a safe haven for terrorists, that it is a good neighbor and a good ally, and we can start bringing our folks home.

So now is not the time to lose focus. We have to be even more focused than we've been in order to achieve success.

The last point I want to make is I know how hard it's been on a lot of you. You've been away from your families, many of you for multiple rotations. You've seen buddies of yours injured and you remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Audience. Ooh-ah.

President Obama. There are probably some people here who have seen children born and have been missing watching them grow up. There are many of you who have listened to your spouse and the extraordinary sacrifices that they have to make when you're gone.

And so I want you to know that Michelle and myself are doing everything—are doing everything we can to provide additional support for military families. The federal budget that I have introduced increases support for military families. We are going to do everything required to make sure that the commitment we make to our veterans is met, and that people don't have to fight for what they have earned as a consequence of their service.

The main point I want to make is we have not forgotten what you have already done, we are grateful for what you will do, and as long as I am in the White House, you are going to get the support that you need and the thanks that you deserve from a grateful nation.

So thank you very much everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

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Remarks by President Obama and Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki, April 7, 2009[2]

President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki delivered these remarks in Baghdad, Iraq

President Obama. Well, thank you very much. I'm just going to make a short statement. I've just had very productive discussions with Prime Minister Maliki. I'm glad that I could come back to Iraq. It's important for me to speak directly to the Prime Minister as well as other Iraqi leaders. And it's obviously a great honor to pay tribute to our troops, our diplomats, as well as Iraqis who have fought side-by-side with Americans.

I've arrived in Baghdad a day after—around the bombings that killed many innocent Iraqi civilians. And our hearts go out to the victims of this senseless violence, as well as their families. But I remain convinced that our shared resolve and commitment to progress is greater than the obstacles that stand in our way.

But we should not be distracted, because we have made enormous progress working alongside the Iraqi government over the last few months. Overall, violence continues to be down. There's been movement on important political questions. But we have been reminded that there's more work to do.

I communicated to the Prime Minister that we are strongly committed to an Iraq that is sovereign and stable and self-reliant. And as Prime Minister Maliki was already aware, we have committed ourselves to a strategy that ensures an orderly, responsible transition from U.S. and coalition security forces to Iraqi security forces.

I've made it clear to my commanders that we need to be flexible but focused on training and equipping Iraqi security forces so that they can take the lead in dealing with security threats in their country. And the drawdown that will take place will ultimately result in the removal of all U.S. troops by 2011.

The second point of discussion was to indicate that we strongly support political steps to be taken to resolve differences between various factions within Iraq and to ensure a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Again, we've seen very good progress, but going forward it's absolutely critical that all Iraqis are fully integrated into the government and the security forces.

We also want to work with the Prime Minister to deliver basic services to the Iraqi people, and I know that's something that he cares deeply about.

And finally, we discussed how important it is to work together to deal with some of the regional issues that ultimately will be important to Iraq's security.

I just came from Turkey, for example, which I think has been working much more effectively and cooperatively in dealing with issues in northern Iraq. And we want to continue to foster good relations not just with Turkey, but with all of the countries in the region.

So as we carry out this strategy, we'll be working closely not only with the Prime Minister and his government but also with President Talabani and all of the other key government leaders. We'll do so in a spirit of partnership. The U.S. pursues no claims on Iraqis' territory and resources. We respect Iraqi sovereignty and the sacrifices that you have made for your country. And we seek a full transition to Iraqi responsibility for the security and prosperity of the nation.

The American people, through its troops, through civilians, have made enormous sacrifices here in Iraq. But they do so with the knowledge that they have stood alongside the Iraqi people in creating a more stable and prosperous country. And they are proud of the work that they've done, and I am proud and speak for them when I say that we want to continue to advance progress here in Iraq. And I look forward to the partnership with the Iraqi government and the Iraqi people in making this happen.

Prime Minister Maliki. Thank you, Mr. Obama. I welcome you in Iraq, that you—that was a station after a very good trip for you. We discussed a lot of things regarding fixing a lot of the regional and international problems. The discussion with Mr. Obama included a lot of the bilateral issues that we insisted that he should continue to include all type of areas like scientific, social, et cetera. And we also committed to whatever had been achieved from democracy and the SOFA agreement.

We also talked about that dialogue should be the only way to resolve any issue, whether it was between the Iraqi society components or in the region.

We achieved a lot of things in Iraq now, the democratic process. We commit to our constitution. We want to go forward to benefit the country in this direction.

We assured the President that all the progress that was made in the security area will continue so we will be able to continue our building effort, our progress in Iraq. Iraq that now is based on increased security and increased stability, look forward to international companies and to other countries to participate in investing in the country. The partnerships that were created and the agreements that were signed will be the base for the cooperation to improve our relationship.

I appreciate very much the call for dialogue that President Obama mentioned, especially between East and West, between Islam and Christianity, and also work to solve the Palestinian issue that will help reduce violence in the area drastically. It will help in giving people their rights also produce peace that we've been looking forward for a few years.

We also thank President Obama for his willingness to help in the resolutions that were issued against Iraq in the previous period.

Thank you very much.

Remarks by Secretary of Defense Gates, April 7, 2009[3]

Secretary Robert Gates was interviewed by The News Hour with Jim Lehrer

Q. Secretary Robert Gates, thank you very much for talking with us.

Secretary Gates. My pleasure.

Q. As we sit here at the Pentagon in Washington, President Obama is right now in Iraq talking to the troops, meeting with Iraqi leaders. What is his message to the Iraqis?

Secretary Gates. I think, first of all, his message to our troops is one of apprecia-

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tion and gratitude for their dedication and their service. I think his message to the Iraqis is, almost certainly, keep on doing what you're doing; keep on resolving problems politically; keep on working at reconciliation; get ready for your elections. We are going to keep our side of the bargain in terms of the agreement, in terms of draw-downs of troops and you have to step up to your responsibilities now, too.

Q. You've obviously been in Iraq many times. What would you hope the president would take away from this visit?

Secretary Gates. Well, I hope that he will be successful in encouraging the Iraqi leadership to continue working together. And I hope that he will—in fact, I am confident that he will come home impressed by the caliber of our men and women in uniform out there.

Q. The violence has been escalating recently. In fact, there was a car bomb today, I guess, in a Shiite neighborhood in Baghdad. The U.S.'s pledge to get most of the troops out—19 months, most of them will be out by next year. But if this violence were to step up considerably, is there a contingency plan?

Secretary Gates. I think the president always has the authority to, as commander-in-chief, to change his plans. But I think the view of our commanders is that, while there are some of these spectacular attacks, overall, the level of violence continues to be quite low compared with, particularly, 2007 and the first part of 2008, in fact, at levels not seen since 2003.

I think what we're seeing is al Qaeda trying, sort of as a last gasp, to try and reverse the progress that's been made through these attacks. But these car-bomb attacks generally are the signature kind of thing that al Qaeda in Iraq does.

Q. Are they reversing the progress?

Secretary Gates. I don't think so, no. And, in fact, I think it's been quite impressive how people, how resilient people have been in Baghdad, in Iraq in general.

Q. President Obama has used part of this overseas trip not only to emphasize he's different from his predecessor, but to reach out to the Muslim world, especially with that speech in Turkey. As somebody who's observed U.S. national security up close for three decades, do you think this is something that's going to pay dividends?

Secretary Gates. I think it will. I think that—I gave a speech last year in which I made the comment that, how can it be that the nation that discovered public relations is being out-communicated by a guy in a cave? The reality is, I think we probably have not done as well as we should have in terms of reaching out to Muslims and making clear that what we're concerned about are violent extremists. This isn't the war against Islam. And I think the president is communicating that message.

I think the challenge for the rest of the government is to figure out how we do that on a more comprehensive and continuing basis.

Q. Is that process underway?

Secretary Gates. Yes, it is.

Q. Anything you want to flesh out about it?

Secretary Gates. Well, I mean, it's basically under the auspices of the State Department. We do a fair amount in theater in Iraq and Afghanistan and our commanders have the capability to do some of the strategic communications, but, fundamentally, it's a State Department responsibility.

Q. Let's talk about the Robert Gates defense budget that you unveiled yesterday. Now, the United States is in the middle of two wars and a serious recession. Is this the right time to haul out a major, dramatic overhaul of not only defense spending, but military strategy?

Secretary Gates. Well, the reality is, this is nothing new. I've been talking about this for 18 months; it is the heart of the national defense strategy that was issued last fall in the Bush administration that I issued and it's really more about simply recognizing the enduring requirement for the capabilities to fight these irregular or hybrid conflicts than it is a major strategic shift. It's really, as I put it yesterday, fundamentally, the modernization programs of our traditional strategic and conventional weapons still account for about half of our budget. Dual-purpose capabilities that work in any war scenario count for about 40 percent.

And what I'm trying to put at the table are representatives of those who spend about 10 percent of the budget. Their work has been funded principally through supplementals over the last six or seven years. I want to get that capability into the base budgets so that it will continue and we don't forget, as we did after Vietnam, how to do what we're doing right now so successfully in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

And it's really not as much about cuts; I know that there's a lot of focus on cuts because of four or five major programs. But it's really a rebalancing: How do we sustain the capability not only to fight the wars we are in, but also, how we preserve the hedge to fight any future conflict.

Q. So, practically, when it comes to Afghanistan, how does this change what the U.S. is able to do over the next two to five years in Afghanistan?

Secretary Gates. Well, the wars themselves are still being funded principally in 2009 by a supplemental and in 2010 with an overseas contingency fund. But what we are putting into the budget, for example, $2 billion worth of the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities that are at the heart of our success in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

We're increasing our capacity for helicopters, which are in huge demand in Afghanistan. We are doing a lot to build up the special operations forces, more people, more special operations-oriented lift and mobility. So there are a number of aspects of this that are going into the base budget as long-term capabilities for the United States that obviously will pay dividends in Afghanistan as well.

Q. At the same time, the president clearly made an effort on this trip overseas to talk to our allies in Europe about giving the U.S. more help in Afghanistan. There's a lot of words of support but not much support in terms

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of people and materiel. How can the U.S. achieve the goals that your administration has set out for Afghanistan without that additional help?

Secretary Gates. Well, first of all, I think it's important and probably no one has been more outspoken than I have in terms of asking the Europeans to do more. The truth is the Europeans have fulfilled all the commitments they have made; it's just that the requirement goes beyond the commitments that they've made. And, frankly, I was surprised, pleasantly, by the outcome in France of the NATO summit because I had not anticipated that they would provide additional combat troops, perhaps some small numbers for election security.

But not only did they commit several thousand more troops, but hundreds of police trainers; they committed to a lot of civilian experts. They committed resources to the Afghan trust fund, the NATO trust fund to sustain the Afghan military forces. So I think that they actually came through with a quite a lot compared, I guess, to my expectations based on the defense ministers' meeting in Krakow last month.

Q. Is that enough?

Secretary Gates. Well, it's never enough, but it is a significant contribution, I think.

Q. You are calling, as you said, for more money to fight the terrorists, the irregular warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq and less for so-called conventional warfare preparations, theoretically places like China and Russia. But some experts we're already hearing expressing concern about the conventional military buildup in China, considered the one nation that could eventually seriously challenge the United States. Is this a prudent time to reduce emphasis on conventional warfare?

Secretary Gates. I think what we're trying to do is not reduce emphasis on conventional warfare, but be more selective about the weapon systems that we fund to fight that kind of a fight. I'm not cutting the F-22; I'm not recommending cutting the F-22; I'm simply recommending that the program set in 2005 was to build 183 of these aircrafts. I'm simply saying, let's finish that program and then let's focus on buying large numbers of the Joint Strike Fighter, the F-35, which has 10- to 15-year newer technology, has some capabilities that the F-22 doesn't have.

The F-22 is a great airplane, all you have to do is ask the pilots who fly it, but—and it will remain in the inventory, but there is no military requirement for more than 183 of them, 187 with those that are in the supplemental. So we're doing that, we're building additional ships, we're doing more in the way of theater and tactical ballistic-missile defense. We're converting more ships to have ballistic-missile defense that would help against China. So I think there's kind of a misunderstanding of exactly what it is we're trying to do here. We're trying to be more selective about systems that actually work and that can be delivered in a reasonable period of time than some of these exotic systems.

Q. But by ending production in—down the road, of the F-22 Raptor, I'm already reading that shutting it down is going to mean the loss of tens of thousands of jobs. Was that something that weighed on you as you made that decision?

Secretary Gates. Well, we can't be oblivious to the impact that these decisions have on people, but the information that's available to us shows that the direct employment of the F-22 will go from about 32,000 in—I'm sorry, from about 24,000 this year to about 11,000 in 2011. But Joint Strike Fighter will go from 38,000 people working this year to 82,000 people that work on that plane in direct support in 2011. So there are puts and takes. I think we've done a good job of taking care of the industrial base in the shipyards and the workers there in the decisions on the shipbuilding.

So we're not oblivious to the employment aspects, but to be perfectly honest, there isn't a single defense program anywhere, procurement program, that doesn't have an impact in somebody's hometown or somebody's state. And so if you're going to bring any discipline to the Defense Department budget, if you're going to try and make any selectivity, have any selectivity in terms of what you fund and don't fund, it will have an impact somewhere.

Q. Well, speaking of that, so many defense secretaries before you have tried to cut this or that or change this or that weapon system. Congress has essentially patted them on the head and said, fine, and then gone off and done exactly what they wanted to do. We were already hearing resistance from the Congress; what makes you think it's going to be different this time?

Secretary Gates. Well, for one thing, there's a big push on in Congress for acquisition and procurement reform in the Department of Defense, and so I think we'll keep that up front and say, you know, it's all well and good to talk about acquisition reform, but that means tough decisions have to be made. That when programs are out of control, when they're six years late, when they're twice the cost that they were originally forecast, something has to be done. Something has to give. My hope is that because of the economic circumstances at home, because of the magnitude of the decisions that we're making and recommending, that in fact, the Congress will put aside parochial interest and do what's in the best interest of the country as a whole.

Q. Quick question on missile defense. You are not cutting the entire thing, but there are significant cuts. Already, though, we're hearing senators both sides of the aisle, members of Congress saying this is going to hurt national security, hurt homeland security. What do you say to them?

Secretary Gates. We have two threats: theater and tactical ballistic missiles and ballistic missiles, intercontinental ballistic missiles from rogue states like North Korea. We are significantly increasing the missile defense capabilities to deal with the theater and tactical threat, from Iran or Hezbollah or others like that, in a number of different ways—a lot of money being added to the budget.

We are not cutting the number of interceptors in Alaska, we are going to fund—robustly fund research and development to

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keep enhancing their capabilities, we are keeping alive the airborne-laser program, we are just not buying a second research platform. We're going to make do with one 747 to do this research. The procurement program was completely out of control, with twenty 747s and so on and so forth. So I think we are doing a lot, we do very well with terminal defense, with THAD and the theater missile. We do very well at midcourse with the ground-based interceptors in Alaska and California.

Now, we're continuing to do research work on the boost phase, where they're just coming off the pad, and we have several programs, some of them classified, that are aimed at taking care of that. So I think we have really strongly supported missile defense, and I think that what we have taken out of the budget, frankly, were some experimental capabilities that were really not intended for the rogue-state missile threat but rather, a much larger threat. So I'm trying to conform our program to our policy. Our policy is to have a missile defense and it was—as it was in the Bush administration—our policy is to have a missile defense against rogue states, such as Iran and North Korea. That's what our program does.

Q. So when it comes to Bob Gates versus the Congress on this, how do you stack each one up?

Secretary Gates. Well, first of all, I don't think it's me versus the Congress. I think there's going to be a lot of debate in Congress on these issues, and I think that there are a lot of people up there who are going to look very seriously and analytically at this, and my hope is that—and I will work with them. These things are always have to be worked out jointly, between the administration and the Congress, at the end of the day, and I'll work with them. But I think that we clearly need to move in a new direction. My guess is there's more support for doing that and for the kind of discipline I'm talking about than would appear from some of the press statements.

Q. And finally, we started out talking about President Obama. You are the only holdover in the cabinet from the Bush administration. You've worked—is this now your eighth president?

Secretary Gates. Yes.

Q. You've worked for—I think people are really curious to know, what is working for this president like compared to the—all of his predecessors you've gotten to know?

Secretary Gates. Well, I try to not compare the ones that I'm working for currently with ones I've worked for in the past. Someday I'll—

Q. Well then just, what's it like—

Secretary Gates. Someday maybe I'll do that.

Q. Well then, as a standalone, what's it like working for President Obama?

Secretary Gates. I've been very impressed at how well the national-security team has come together. He's very thoughtful, he's very analytical and I find him willing to listen. And he said he would listen to the commanders, with respect to both Iraq and Afghanistan; he has. So it's a pleasure working for him.

Q. And as a Republican working for a Democratic president?

Secretary Gates. Well, you know, I've tried always to do this job and the jobs that I've had in government, at CIA and elsewhere, in a completely nonpartisan way. I continue to do that and I don't find it awkward.

Q. Secretary Robert Gates, we thank you very much for talking with us.

Secretary Gates. My pleasure.

Remarks by Secretary of State Clinton and Iraqi Foreign Minister Zebari, April 25, 2009[4]

Secretary Hillary Clinton and Minister Hoshyar Zebari delivered these remarks in Baghdad, Iraq

Introductory Remarks Omitted

Foreign Minister Zebari. Today, we have conducted a series of talks and discussions with Secretary Clinton. I can summarize those talks as useful and fruitful. We covered a wide range of issues related to Iraq and regional issues, as well as Iraq's relation with the region and the world. Secretary Clinton also conducted a series of very important meetings with the president of Iraq, as well as with the prime minister of Iraq. After—in a while she will be meeting also with the vice president of Iraq. In addition, to the officials meetings, the Secretary also had meetings with other ordinary Iraqi citizens this morning. The purpose and the objective behind this visit is for the Secretary to listen to various Iraqi leadership and to assess also the political, security, and economic situation, especially after the improvement in the security situation.

The Secretary's message today to all of us was a very assuring message that the United States will continue to support the efforts of the Iraqi Government and the enhancement of Iraqi security and stability and will work with all of us to add additional gains in the area of democracy.

We are going through a very important transitional period, also in relationship to the U.S.-Iraqi relation and the transition of the Iraqi—for the relationship gradually between the United States and Iraq from a security and military relationship into a normal bilateral relationship that will focus on development and prosperity. But there is no doubt that there are serious security and economic challenges that are facing Iraq. Therefore, we will continue to rely on the continuation of U.S. commitment and support to both the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people to enable them to face those challenges.

We also reaffirmed to the Secretary the Iraqi Government's commitment to the SOFA agreement and to the withdrawal

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according to the timetable, and also to activate the strategic framework agreement between the two countries and enhancing cooperation and working together.

Once again, (inaudible), good to have you here, Madame Secretary, in Baghdad. We are delighted to have you here. We are delighted to have you visit here with us and convening this press conference at the headquarters of the Iraqi foreign ministers.

Secretary Clinton. Thank you very much, Minister Zebari, for your hospitality and for a series of excellent meetings today. I'm happy to be back in Baghdad and proud to have introduced my friend and our new Ambassador Chris Hill.

It is encouraging to both see and hear about the progress that is being made in Iraq, and that came through to me not only in my official meetings with the foreign minister, the prime minister, and the president, but also with the special representative of the secretary general of the United Nations. The special representative briefed me about the work that the UN is doing, including the recently concluded report on disputed internal borders.

I especially appreciated the chance to meet with Iraqis, including a group of women who were both war widows and who were helping widows and their children. I also participated in an historic town hall meeting with Iraqi citizens representing a broad cross-section of Iraqi society. At every stop, I have emphasized President Obama's message that our strategy working with you may be in a new phase, but we pledge our full and continuing commitment to Iraq and the Iraqi people.

We are committed to seeing an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant, and fully integrated into the region. We are working toward an orderly transition of responsibility from the American military to the Iraqi security forces, and we continue to help train and equip these forces so they will take the lead in safeguarding their country.

Like President Obama, I condemn these violent recent efforts to disrupt the progress that Iraq is making. My heart and America's sympathy go out to the people who have died and the families who have suffered. This violence has only reinforced the Iraqi people's determination to seek a better future for their country. Their response and the response of Iraqi's leaders has been united and firm.

The end of the United States' combat presence in Iraq by 2011 will mark the beginning of a new phase in our country's relationship. As we draw down militarily, we will deepen our civilian cooperation in accordance with the strategic framework agreement. We will work on development and diplomatic initiatives and a regional agenda that includes border security and refugees.

The Iraqi people have withstood challenges of the most vicious and violent sort from those who would have torn their society apart, and Iraqis from everywhere have made tremendous sacrifices. The United States has also shared in those sacrifices. But we are proud of the progress that the Iraqi people have made. I said today that the Iraqi people are known for intelligence, hard work, and courage. And we will stand with you as you build a future worthy of all of the children in Iraq.

Thank you, minister.

Moderator. We will take a question from the Arab media.

Q. My question goes to the Iraqi foreign minister and the question is about the latest UN Security Council Resolution 1859 and regarding getting Iraq out of Chapter 7.

Foreign Minister Zebari. Yes, we have discussed this issue with Secretary Clinton and the accompanying delegation. Next June, UN Security Council resolution will review all UN Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq and Chapter 7.

We—the foreign minister—we have done an intensive inventory about all those UN Security Council resolutions that were imposed on Iraq, and they go back to 1990. And also the general secretary of the ministry reviewed—of the UN reviewed all the same UN resolutions that were imposed on Iraq under Chapter 7. Of course, there are resolutions that were compelling, and Iraq must carry out. Of course, there are also other UN resolutions that are no longer applicable. Some of those that were related to the various sanctions that were imposed on Iraq, some of them were related to the inspection regime that was imposed on Iraq, some of them related to oil for food. All of those were no longer applicable, but they will go through with the final review process. Of course, this process is going to be a tedious process. We will go through the reviewing process and we will work very hard. A lot of work is ahead of us, but we have to do that in order to free our country from the Chapter 7 obligations.

Moderator. Next, Arshad Mohammed.

Q. Secretary Clinton, Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei today has said—blamed the United States for recent suicide bombings in Iraq in which Iranian citizens died. What is your reaction to that accusation and does it bode well for the kind of engagement that President Obama hopes to bring about with Iran? And are you aware of the reports that North Korea has resumed reprocessing plutonium? And if so, what is your comment on that?

Secretary Clinton. Well, I'm not aware of the Supreme Leader's comments. But I must say that it is disappointing for anyone to make such a claim, since it is clearly traced to the al-Qaida remnants and other violent groups who wish to disrupt the progress of Iran—of Iraq. The United States and Iraq are partners in that progress, and we are going to continue to be partners and do all that we can to support the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people in this important work of standing up a stable, sovereign, and self-reliant Iraq. And we hope that all of Iraq's neighbors will assist Iraq in achieving its goals.

And with respect to North Korea, we continue, along with our partners in the Six-Party Talks, to press North Korea to return to the obligations which it assumed. We were very pleased by the strong statement that came out of the United Nations last week, and we are working to implement that statement and we hope that we'll be able to resume discussions with North Korea that will lead to their assuming responsibility for denuclearizing the Peninsula.

Q. The question is to the foreign minister. What is your comment about the question that was posed by (inaudible) about the statement came out of Ayatol-

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lah Khamenei about the U.S. responsibility behind the latest bombings in Iraq? And also what's your comment about what General Petraeus said about one of the suiciders came—who was Tunisian national came to Iraq through a neighboring country?

Foreign Minister Zebari. I'm not aware of that particular statement, but our experience with various terrorists, as well as suicide bombers, those who are basically—blow up themselves. We are not aware that any Americans participated in anything similar to that in the past. Regarding those terrorists who come to Iraq from the outside, either based on a jihadi ideology or based on certain religious ideology, they come from a variety of countries. Some of them come from Saudi Arabia, some other Gulf States, some of them come from North African countries. So I can see that some of them come from different nationalities, either Tunisians or Morocco. We have enough intelligence information at the hands of the Iraqi Government, that there are (inaudible) of those suiciders who come from North African countries.

Secretary Clinton. I have one more question. I have to take two from my (inaudible).

Moderator. Indira.

Q. Thank you. My question is for both Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Zebari. And first, I'd like to know, based on what you learned from your briefing from General Odierno and Iraqi officials today, based on the recent deadly attacks, will it still be possible to withdraw U.S. troops as planned from cities by the end of June?

And secondly, with the planned release of dozens of photos showing prisoner abuse by the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan, what are your concerns about that fueling anti-American sentiment and violence here in Iraq? Thank you.

Secretary Clinton. I'll take those. General Odierno briefed me and members of my delegation this morning. And his view is my view, that these are tragic and terrible events, but they do not reflect any diversion from the security progress that has been made. They are certainly regrettable and horrible in terms of loss of life. But the reaction from the Iraqi people and the Iraqi leaders was firm and united in rejecting that violence, and refusing to allow it to set Iraqi against Iraqi, which is obviously one of its intended goals.

And with respect to any matters that are going on in the United States, I think we'll wait and see what happens. I don't want to be prejudging or commenting on anything until it does happen. But I think the strong relationship that the United States and Iraq have in our partnership on all levels is in a very positive framework and will become more so as we work together on specific issues and find solutions to the problems that confront Iraq as they make this very courageous transition into security and stability and sovereignty and self-reliance, and that's what we're going to be focused on. Thank you very much.

Foreign Minister Zebari. Just add to what Secretary Clinton has said actually on this issue, on this question. I personally don't believe that these deadly attacks was (inaudible) government determination to pursue its plans to (inaudible) the country. Yes, we have, indeed, certain timeline for withdrawal from the population center and the city centers. But we are doing our utmost, and we are coordinating very closely with the multinational forces to ensure that there is no vacuum when that happens, and that security is viable to certain extent. But this ultimately would be an Iraqi responsibility.

As for the aim of this attacks, actually, if you look back most of them were Iranian (inaudible) innocent, soft targets that have been targeted by these terrorists in Diyala and (inaudible). And our condolences also to go to their families and to the government. And we are doing our utmost really to protect them and to ensure that they carry out their religious duty as it should be.

Thank you very much.

Secretary Clinton. Thank you.

Excerpts of Remarks by Secretary of State Clinton, April 30, 2009[5]

Secretary Hillary Clinton delivered these remarks in Washington, DC

Secretary Clinton. Secretary Gates and I are here together because our departments' missions are aligned and our plans are integrated. The foreign policy of the United States is built on the three Ds: defense, diplomacy, and development. The men and women in our armed forces perform their duties with courage and skill, putting their lives on the line time and time again on behalf of our nation. And in many regions, they serve alongside civilians from the State Department and USAID, as well as other government agencies, like USDA.

We work with the military in two crucial ways. First, civilians complement and build upon our military's efforts in conflict areas like Iraq and Afghanistan. Second, they use diplomatic and development tools to build more stable and peaceful societies, hopefully to avert or end conflict that is far less costly in lives and dollars than military action.

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To achieve this, we have launched a new diplomacy powered by partnership, pragmatism, and principle. We are strengthening historic alliances and reaching out to create new ones. And we're bringing governments, the private sector, and civil society together to find global solutions to global problems. The 2009 supplemental budget request for the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development is a significant sum, yet our investment in diplomacy and development is only about 6 percent of our total national security budget. For Secretary Gates and myself, it is critically important that we give our civilian workers, as well as our military, the resources they need to do their jobs well.

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We have requested $482 million in the supplemental for our civilian efforts to help Iraq move forward—we want to cre-

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ate a future of stability, sovereignty, and self-reliance—and another $108 million to assist Iraqi refugees.

In Afghanistan, as you know, the President has ordered additional troops. Our mission is very clear: to disrupt, dismantle, and destroy al-Qaida. But bringing stability to that region is not only a military mission; it requires more than a military response. So we have requested $980 million in assistance to focus on rebuilding the agricultural sector, having more political progress, helping the local and provincial leadership deliver services for their people.

As President Obama has consistently maintained, success in Afghanistan depends on success in Pakistan. And we have seen how difficult it is for the government there to make progress as the Taliban and their allies continue to make inroads.

Counterinsurgency training is critical. But of equal importance are diplomacy and development, to work with the Pakistani Government, Pakistani civil society, to try to provide more economic stability and diminish the conditions that feed extremism. That is the intent of the comprehensive strategy laid out by Senator Kerry and Senator Lugar, which President Obama and I have endorsed and which the Senate will be considering in the next days.

With this supplemental request, we are seeking funding of $497 million in assistance for our work in Pakistan, which will support the government's efforts to stabilize the economy, strengthen law enforcement, alleviate poverty, and help displaced citizens find safe shelter. It will also enable us to begin to keep the pledge we made to Pakistan at the Tokyo Donors Conference earlier this month.

In addition to our work in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, we are committed to help achieve a comprehensive peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and to address the humanitarian needs in Gaza and the West Bank. At Sharm el-Sheikh last month, on behalf of the President, I announced a pledge of $900 million for humanitarian, economic, and security assistance for the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people. Our supplemental request is included in that pledge; it is not in addition to it. And it will be implemented with stringent requirements to prevent aid from being diverted into the wrong hands.

Meanwhile, the current economic crisis has put millions of people in danger of falling further into poverty. And we have seen again and again that this can destabilize countries, as well as sparking humanitarian crises. So we have requested $448 million to assist developing countries hardest hit by the global financial crisis. These efforts will be complemented by investments in the supplemental budget for emergency food aid, to counter the destructive effects of the global food crises, to try to help people who are undernourished to succeed in school, participate in their societies. And I'm very pleased that the President has asked the State Department and USAID to lead a government-wide effort to address the challenge of food security.

We also must lead by example when it comes to shared responsibility. So we have included in this request $837 million for United Nations peacekeeping operations, which includes funds to cover assessments previously withheld.

As recently in Haiti, where the UN peacekeeping force, led by the Brazilians, has done an extraordinary job in bringing security and stability to Haiti. It is still fragile, but enormous progress has been made. It is a good investment for us to pay 25 percent of that kind of stability operation instead of being asked to assume it for 100 percent of the cost.

We're asking also for small investments targeted to specific concerns: international peacekeeping operations and stabilization in Africa; humanitarian needs in Burma; the dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear programs, assuming that they come back to the Six-Party Talks; assistance for Georgia that the prior administration promised and we believe we should fulfill; support for the Lebanese Government, which is facing serious challenges; and funding for critical air mobility support in Mexico as part of the Merida Initiative.

Finally, if the State Department is to pursue an ambitious foreign policy agenda that safeguards our security and advances our interests and really exemplifies our values, we have to have a more agile, effective State Department and USAID. We have to staff those departments well. We have to provide the resources that are needed. We have to hold ourselves accountable. Our supplemental includes $747 million to support State and USAID mission operations around the world.

Secretary Gates and I are also looking at how our departments can collaborate even more effectively. That includes identifying pieces of our shared mission that are now housed at Defense that should move to State.

With the budget support we've outlined in this supplemental request, we can do the work that this moment demands of us in regions whose future stability will impact our own.

Secretary Gates and I are committed to working closely together, in an almost unprecedented way, to sort out what the individual responsibilities and missions of Defense and State and USAID should be, but committed to the overall goal of promoting stability and long-term progress, which we believe is in the interest of the United States and which we are prepared to address and take on the challenges and seize the opportunities that confront us at this moment in history.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Statement by President Obama, May 20, 2009[6]

To The Congress Of The United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the Federal Register and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the Federal Register for publication. This notice states that the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, as modified in scope and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13315 of August 28, 2003, Executive Order 13350 of July 29, 2004, Executive Order 13364 of November 29, 2004, and Executive Order 13438 of July 17, 2007, is to

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continue in effect beyond May 22, 2009.

Obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Accordingly, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to this threat and maintain in force the measures taken to deal with that national emergency.

Press Release from the U.S. Agency for International Development, May 20, 2009[7]

Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Rafie al-Issawi, Minister of Planning Dr. Ali Baban and U.S. Agency for International Development's Acting Mission Director Thomas R. Delaney opened a two-day conference to discuss the prospects for sustained development of Iraq under the Five-Year National Development Plan (NDP).

The conference, held at the Al Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad, brought together various ministries and elected officials from the provincial councils for the first time to formulate policy options, program priorities and implementation strategies for the NDP, spanning 2010 through 2014. The planning process is important because it is participatory and inclusive involving constituents in key sectors of the economy to identify the problems they face and to suggest solutions.

The USAID-funded National Capacity Development program, or "Tatweer," works with 10 Iraqi ministries and executive offices to improve overall institutional performance and introduce international best practices. The program is assisting the MoPDC to reintroduce medium-term strategic planning by the adoption of a participatory approach. In the past two years, USAID/Tatweer has trained more than 70,000 Iraq government officials in strategic planning, human resources, financial management, and project management.

The planning document represents the views and efforts of 20 line ministry members and MoPDC officials, who worked together in 10 committees assisted by MoPDC. The committee members articulated the main development goals in 15 sectors, including agriculture, housing, and private sector. Overall, the plan aims to promote economic growth that is equitable and sustainable, improving the well-being of Iraqis.

Minister of Planning Dr. Baban said, "Investment and productivity are the cornerstones of the plan. These two words represent our call to build a new Iraq, and we can overcome our economic problems only through patience, sacrifice, and hard decisions."

USAID Iraq Acting Director Thomas R. Delaney said, "The conference offers an excellent opportunity to engage with the different levels of government to jointly shape a plan that will reflect the vision and aspirations of the Iraqis." He said the outcome of the discussions at the conference will help strengthen the ongoing efforts of the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement to build a prosperous, diversified, growing Iraqi economy that is integrated into the global economic system and meets the essential service needs of the Iraqi people.

Press Release from the U.S. Agency for International Development, May 28, 2009[8]

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Iraq's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) today launched the Social Safety Net program nationwide aimed at providing benefits to the most vulnerable citizens of Iraq and facilitating their integration into the country's economic development.

In 2005, the Government of Iraq passed legislation to establish a Social Safety Net to complement the state-subsidized food rationing system, the largest social security spending in the country. The new system is intended to help low-income families, displaced workers, and unemployed people adjust to the ongoing restructuring and reform efforts. The initiative is an essential step in ensuring food availability, supplementing buying power, encouraging students to stay in school, and preserving access to other social services.

The USAID-funded Economic Governance Program in partnership with MoLSA provided technical support in the design of the Social Safety Net program, including upgrading the information technology system, and leveraging grants from the World Bank Trust Fund to expand coverage to 21 sites. A team of USAID advisors and their Iraqi counterparts addressed key capacity building concerns by enhancing the skills of civil service personnel in technical, operational and management techniques essential to the implementation of the program. The World Bank and USAID have invested more than $13 million for the nearly four-year project.

The Social Safety Net system has robust processes to detect and prevent operational irregularities that allow for the delivery of benefits in a standardized manner to all needy recipients. The system uses internal controls that ensure accurate identification, registration, and verification of recipients, and appropriate tracking of beneficiary records and payments. Such mechanisms are aimed at running an effective, transparent and accountable program.

The success of the 2008 pilot in Baghdad paved the way for a Memorandum of Understanding between MoLSA and USAID to expand the program nationwide. Today, nearly 673,000 people, or 2.4 percent of the population of Iraq, are receiving benefits through the Social Safety Net program. The program is expected to cover an estimated one million beneficiaries.

Press Release from the U.S. Agency for International Development, June 2, 2009[9]

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) hosted a workshop on June 2 to help Iraqi entrepreneurs find viable options for financial assistance to build sustainable enterprises and sup-

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port Iraq's private-sector development.

The workshop, titled "Opportunities and Challenges of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises," was one of a series of initiatives implemented through USAID's Community Stabilization Program (CSP) that helps stabilize communities by offering grants and training to entrepreneurs, among other activities. The program works closely with grant recipients by providing in-kind assets for their businesses and training in basic business skills.

Traditionally, Iraqi banks have not practiced lending to low-income clients to avoid credit risks. To fill the gap in business development, USAID under the CSP program has awarded more than $78 million in grants to 10,300 Iraqi businesses. These grants have created or restored jobs for 37,000 Iraqi people, enabling them to contribute to the growing economy.

As Iraq transitions to a more stable environment, the need for in-kind grants such as those offered through the CSP program will end. CSP is conducting workshops offering information about other financial services available in Iraq to help program recipients adjust to the transition and ensure continuity of their businesses.

Held at Al Rasheed Hotel in the International Zone of Baghdad, the workshop introduced recipients of CSP grants to the USAID-funded Tijara Economic Growth Program that supports Iraqi-owned microfinance institutions and Small Business Development Centers. In addition to loan capital, the program offers training, technical assistance and other financial services products.

Complementing the Tijara program, USAID's Inma Agribusiness Program helps build meaningful linkages between farmers, agribusinesses, financial services, and domestic and international markets. The program also offers grants to nongovernmental organizations, which then provide micro-loans to farmers and small businesses.

By demonstrating the viability of micro, small, and medium enterprises, USAID aims to stimulate private sector lending that will advance sustainable and more equitable economic growth in Iraq.

Press Release from the U.S. Agency for International Development, June 6, 2009[10]

The Founding Shareholders meeting of the Iraqi Company for Financing SMEs, Ltd. (ICF-Small and Medium Enterprises) convened on June 6 at the Baghdad headquarters of the Tijara Provincial Economic Growth Program. Managing Directors of ICF-SME's nine Iraqi private commercial shareholder banks attended. They confirmed the appointment of Sherwan Mustafa to be ICF-SME's new Managing Director and reviewed the first-year business plan.

Incorporated last month, ICF-SME is designed to funnel investment capital to Iraqi banks for on-lending to small and medium enterprises to stimulate private sector growth. About 700,000 formal sector SMEs already exist in Iraq. Each employs from three to 29 workers. ICF-SME shareholders anticipate that a guaranteed flow of loan capital will allow existing small-and medium-size enterprises to expand and new ones to be created.

The Tijara program supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will provide a grant of $6,000,000 to ICF-SME for on lending through its shareholder banks that have specialized SME Lending Units. The money will be used for SME loans extended to qualified business borrowers at about 10 percent interest, and will average about 35 percent below prevailing market rates.

"Many worthy business people simply can't pay 16 to 18 percent interest, but they can afford 10 percent interest," says ICF-SME managing director Sherwan Mustafa. "We hope an established funding source will create more competition and allow interest rates to fall even further."

The founding private commercial banks that will receive the initial loan capital allocations are Gulf Bank, Sumer Bank, Ashur Bank, North Bank, Middle East Bank, Baghdad Bank, National Bank, Mosul Bank and Basra Bank.

Excerpts of Remarks by Secretary of Defense Gates, June 30, 2009[11]

Secretary Robert Gates delivered these remarks en route from Germany

Q. So today is an important day—the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraqi cities. We've seen a peak of violence these past weeks and your commanders and yourself said that it was pretty predictable. However, I was wondering if you could give us an assessment of the security in Iraq for the next month? What is the Pentagon's assessment? What might happen?

Secretary Gates. Well, I think it really varies around the country. You have some places like Fallujah and Ramadi and Kirkuk, Basra that are pretty quiet. Mosul—they were in the middle of a fight in Mosul when this deadline came, and we're seeing some of these high profile suicide attacks in Baghdad.

And I think the general view is that part of General Odierno and what he has been anticipating for weeks was that al Qaeda, in particular, as soon as we began—two things. First, as soon as we began to leave the cities, al Qaeda would try and reignite the sectarian violence, and to the degree that he has seemed relatively positive about developments, I think it's because even after these high profile bombings and with a lot of casualties, that sectarian violence has not reignited. And I think his view is most Iraqis are sick and tired of the violence.

The other thing is al Qaeda and others trying to increase the level of violence to try and pretend that they were the ones that forced us out of the cities and also to try and demonstrate deficiencies of the Iraqi security forces.

So this is—I think our commanders have anticipated these strategies on the part of the remaining al Qaeda and a few others, to try and take advantage of our withdrawal to get into the cities. And the failure to spark new sectarian violence is what is, I think, making them as positive as they sound.

Q. So what do you expect for the next month to happen?

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Secretary Gates. Well, I expect that there'll continue to be sporadic attacks as people try and take advantage of our being out of the cities. But we're not—you know, we're not coming home and in many respects, being out of the cities and able to focus on, say, the belts around Baghdad and some of these other areas may, in fact, allow us to help the Iraqi security forces by preventing those who want to foment trouble from getting into the cities.

So I think we can continue the partnership that's been developed with the Iraqi security forces. We'll just be doing it outside the cities.

Q. Mr. Secretary, on Afghanistan, can you sort of conclude at this point that NATO allies contributed about as many troops as they're going to, and that our request—(inaudible)—should be not for troops but for money or training camps or things other than just raw numbers of troops?

Secretary Gates. I actually started that in Poland, in Krakow, earlier this year, focusing on two things. One, seeing if they could get some more troops in, at least temporarily, in the pre-election period; but then, second, longer term, contributing civilian experts; and then, third, contributing to the Afghan trust fund in NATO to help sustain the Afghan security force.

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Q. Just back to Iraq real quick. You said you expect the level of violence, you expect more push back from al Qaeda groups. But do you have any concerns about the effect that will have on U.S. forces if they're under more—removed from positions to have to respond to situations where the Iraqi security forces may not be handle it right away? Does that put U.S. forces in a more dangerous situation

Secretary Gates. Well, first of all, as you all know, we're going to have a certain number of soldiers embedded with Iraqi units, and we will still be providing them a lot of support, ISR and so on. And so I think we'll be in pretty good touch with the situation and won't have to wait until somebody is an extremist before we—if they call for help.

I think—I mean, I've been struck by General Odierno's overall positive view of the way things have developed and in the way forward.

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Q. I kind of understand that the Pentagon plans to keep the level of forces currently in Iraq steady for the next month until the election while the number in Afghanistan is going to go up. So it means pretty much according to provisions that—forecast that there's going to be 180 (thousand) or more, almost 200,000 U.S. soldiers in theater at the end of the year. Is there any concerns that it might, you know, add to the issue of stretching the force?

Secretary Gates. Sure there is. And, you know, we really don't begin to get real relief. They've obviously gotten some relief by going from 20 BCTs to 12, which is where we are now. But until we can begin drawing down from that 12 to the five or six that General Odierno is talking about after August '10, then we're going to—it will be a continual strain. And that's why General Casey and others have said we don't really begin to see real relief in terms of dwell time until probably after the turn of the year and next spring.

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1. White House Press Release, April 7, 2009.
2. White House Press Release, April 7, 2009.
3. Dept. of Defense Press Release, April 7, 2009.
4. Dept. of State Press Release, April 25, 2009.
5. Dept. of State Press Release, April 30, 2009.
6. White House Press Release, May 20, 2009.
7. U.S. Agency for International Development Press Release, May 20, 2009.
8. U.S. Agency for International Development Press Release, May 28, 2009.
9. U.S. Agency for International Development Press Release, June 2, 2009.
10. U.S. Agency for International Development Press Release, June 6, 2009.
11. Dept. of Defense Press Release, June 30, 2009.

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