Iraq:

U.S., Iraq Finalize Strategic Framework Agreement and Security Agreement on Withdrawal

Remarks by President Bush, October 15, 2008[1]

President George W. Bush delivered these remarks in Washington, DC

President Bush. I've just finished a meeting with our Ambassador, and General Odierno, members of our—some of the PRTs, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, in Iraq, for folks who have been spending time in Iraq. We are having success in Iraq. And one of the main reasons why is we're implementing an innovative strategy that combines our military with civilian expertise to help people at the grassroots level build a society that will lay the foundation for peace.

And so it's been a fascinating discussion. And I come away with a couple of thoughts. One, America is fortunate to have courageous souls volunteer to help develop an ally in the war against extremists, to develop a democracy in a part of the world where a lot of people said democracy could never flourish; and secondly, that we are implementing a strategy in the provinces which is effective.

The good thing about our military and our civilians in the PRTs, they're constantly looking at ways to make sure that we remain effective. And I have asked the press corps to come in here so I could, on TV, thank you all for what you're doing, and thank you for your service. We are fortunate to have citizens such as yourself. Thank you.

Remarks by President Bush and Kurdish President Barzani, October 29, 2008[2]

President George W. Bush and President Massoud Barzani delivered these remarks in Washington, DC

President Bush. President Barzani, welcome back to the Oval Office. It's been a while since we have seen each other, but we have talked on the phone quite frequently—and the reason why is because you've played a very instrumental part in the development of a free Iraq. And I thank you for your leadership and I thank you for your personal friendship.

We had a discussion today on several major topics. We talked about the progress on the election law and on the hydrocarbon law, but we also talked about the status of forces agreement, called the SOFA. President Barzani has been a very strong advocate of the Iraqi government passing the SOFA, and I appreciate that.

I informed the President we received amendments today from the government. We're analyzing those amendments. We obviously want to be helpful and constructive without undermining basic principles. And I remain very hopeful and confident that the SOFA will get passed. And Mr. President, you get a lot of credit for your leadership on that issue.

So I'm proud to welcome you back here. Again, I thank you very much for your courage and your leadership.

President Barzani. Thank you very much, Mr. President. It's good that there has been another opportunity for us to visit with you again. I am here to convey the gratitude of the Iraqi people in general and the people of Kurdistan, in particular, for the brave decision that you've made to rid us of this dictatorship.

We are very grateful for all the brave souls, women and men in uniform, who gave their dear lives in the process. And we are very grateful to the American people and to you, Mr. President, for this sacrifice.

And despite the fact that there remain some major problems, we have also to look at all the big achievements that have been made thus far. Let's look at the elections and the constitution that has been ratified. So these are major achievements that we are proud of. And we are determined to solve all the problems that still exist, according to the constitution.

And in terms of SOFA, we do believe that it is in the interest of the Iraqi government, it's in the interest of this country, and we have been and we will continue to support it and support its ratification.

Remarks by Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Kimmitt, November 3, 2008[3]

Deputy Secretary Kimmitt delivered these remarks in Baghdad, Iraq

Deputy Secretary Kimmitt. It is a pleasure to join in welcoming you to the Dialogue on Business and Investment Climate. On behalf of the American delegation, including Ambassador Crocker and

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my colleagues from Washington—John Sullivan and Mike Delaney—I would like to express appreciation to our Iraqi hosts, and particular appreciation to my friend, Vice President Adil Abdul Mahdi, for hosting this event.

We meet in the midst of historic transformation in the global economy. In just the past few weeks, the United States and other countries have taken steps to: provide much needed liquidity to the financial system; strengthen financial institutions; protect investors; and enhance market stability. These actions are a powerful step toward restoring the health of the global financial system, and creating the conditions for continued increases in cross-border trade and investment.

Even as we seek to stabilize the major economies' financial markets, we continue to focus attention on supporting emerging markets, including Iraq, at this time of global stress. Without economic progress and sound financial practices, political and security gains will remain temporary. This is why the U.S. Government is committed to working alongside the Iraqi leadership to help create a stable macroeconomic environment, strengthen the financial system, and build a solid foundation for private sector economic growth.

Private sector development is the engine of a flourishing economy and the only sustainable catalyst for job creation. Expanding the private sector helps diversify the economy, making the country more resilient to external economic and financial shocks. It also brings in new management techniques and the latest technology, which create efficiencies that enable businesses to compete in the regional and global marketplaces.

Iraq has many resources from which to draw, and its immense natural resources are only the most well known. Companies around the world are beginning to recognize the long-term investment opportunities that now exist in the agricultural, infrastructure, telecommunications, financial services, and tourism sectors. However, there are many obstacles that limit business opportunities for Iraqis and their international counterparts.

That is precisely why we are here today. This morning, we will hear from Iraqi leaders discussing the progress they are making in reforming investment laws and regulations, including through the National Investment Commission. Later today, we will hear from the private sector and the World Bank, who will discuss ways that the Iraqi government and its international partners can best promote investment and leverage public and private sector initiatives. Importantly, key officials from the Council of Representatives as well as provincial governors will also participate in the dialogue to help shape the vision for Iraq's economic future.

It is important to emphasize at the outset that today's dialogue is not the first effort to promote Iraq's private sector. I would like to note some of the work that Iraq, and we in the international community, are already doing to help improve the Iraqi economy, as a basis for discussing how to do even more together:

* First, Iraq has made significant progress implementing a sound macroeconomic framework. Their accomplishments include establishing a strong and respected currency, lowering inflation, improving fiscal policies, attaining consistent growth, and reducing subsidies. Iraq has also passed an important investment law that will help lay the legal basis for foreign investment in the country. And it has maintained a trade regime built on a simple, low tariff schedule.

* Externally, Iraq has substantially decreased the sovereign debt burden incurred under the former regime by actively engaging with the international community. By concluding agreements with remaining official creditors, particularly in the Gulf, Iraq would send a positive signal to investors that it can resolve disputes amicably. Investors are also closely watching political negotiations in Iraq, including on security arrangements. We hope that negotiations on a security agreement can be concluded as quickly as possible.

* Second, agencies from across the U.S. Government, many of whom are represented here today, are implementing initiatives to support Iraq's private sector development. For instance:

* The Treasury Department is providing technical assistance and guidance to help Iraq modernize its public banking sector.

* The Department of Defense's Task Force to Improve Business and Stability Operations in Iraq focuses on encouraging industrial revitalization, attracting foreign investment and market access, and modernizing the private banking sector.

* The United States Agency for International Development helps expand private sector access to financing, supports regulatory reform, and distributes assistance for development support to Iraqi businesses.

* The Overseas Private Investment Corporation, through programs like the Iraq Middle Market Development Foundation, has created loan programs to support small and middle market businesses initiatives.

* Third, and finally, the international community as a whole has also helped Iraq rebuild its economy. At the Madrid Donors' Conference in 2003, 45 countries and international institutions pledged $34 billion for reconstruction and development. In the International Compact with Iraq, agreed to in Sharm el Sheikh in 2007, an even larger group of donors provided additional support in return for Iraqi's commitment to multiple benchmarks to create an enabling environment for private investment and job creation. And, the United Nations and World Bank both manage the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, into which donors have contributed almost $80 million focused on private sector development in Iraq.

While much has been done by Iraq, by the U.S. Government, and by the international community significant challenges remain. The World Bank's Doing Business Indicators ranked Iraq 152 of 181 countries. We already know some of the most important areas for improvement: the complexity of Iraq's existing laws, regulations, and administrative procedures; the need for competition and consumer protection laws; and importantly, the publication of implementing regulations for the new investment law. Iraq's ministerial and provincial budget execution also is still too slow, and the average time and cost to start a business are some of the highest in the region.

The Iraqi government, with the support of international donors, is creating a strat-

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egy to overcome these hurdles, including efforts with the World Bank to improve the ease of doing business. But the Iraqi government and its international partners also have much to learn from our private sector colleagues, including those in this audience. You have the resources and experience to help Iraq develop a robust private sector, by helping identify and resolve some of the major impediments that investors face.

By building a vibrant economy led by the private sector, we will help improve the lives of the Iraqi people, enhance stability, and bolster prospects for lasting peace. But there are also sound business reasons for exploring investment opportunities at this time. By leveraging the ingenuity and entrepreneurship of those from all communities involved, we will achieve much more together than we ever could acting alone.

Remarks by Secretary of State Rice, November 10, 2008[4]

Secretary Condoleezza Rice was interviewed by C-SPAN in Washington, DC

Q. Secretary of State Rice, how does the world view America?

Secretary Rice. Well, the world views America still, I think, as a place where you can be anybody and do anything, where it doesn't matter where you came from; it matters where you're going. I think that's why there was such great interest in our recent election, because it talked about overcoming old wounds. And I think most of the world really understands that America is a place that it doesn't matter what your racial background, your national background, your ethnic background, your religious background—that's why so many people seek to come here.

Of course, America is always viewed also as very powerful—economically, military. And sometimes, because America has to do difficult things that no one else will do, our policies are not very popular. But the American ideal is overwhelmingly popular in the world.

Q. Let me ask about Iran. President Ahmadinejad has sent a letter of congratulations to Barack Obama.

Secretary Rice. Yes.

Q. What advice do you give him and how do we deal with Iran?

Secretary Rice. Well, I thought that the President-elect said it himself the other day when he said it's unacceptable to have an Iranian nuclear weapon. The—we have set up a strategy, an international strategy through the European Union 3—that's Britain, Germany and France, plus the United States, Russia and China, so the P-5 of the UN, plus Germany—that has the international voice now for getting Iran to stop enriching and reprocessing. Because once you enrich and reprocess and learn that at a certain level, you can enrich and reprocess at 5 percent—that's for civil-nuclear use—or at 97 percent—that's for a bomb. And nobody trusts the Iranians with the fuel cycle. And so the question has been: How do you get them to come to the negotiating table?

We in 2006, this President and I, made an offer to the Iranians. We will reverse the more than 28 years of American policy and sit down and talk about any and everything; just stop enriching and reprocessing and let's have negotiations. They've not been able to do it. And so the international community has passed four Security Council resolutions demanding that they do so. We have also used unilateral national measures, as have other countries, like Australia and Great Britain and others, to sanction Iranian entities that are engaged in proliferation or terrorism—banks and financial institutions. And it's no coincidence then that major financial institutions and really all of the major, now, energy companies—Total of France was the last to leave—are no longer engaged in Iran.

So I think the stage is set that Iran, with an economy that is really in very deep trouble and will be in greater trouble with lower oil prices, might be amenable, I would hope soon, to a strategy that is a negotiated strategy to allow Iran civil nuclear power but not the fuel cycle that leads to a nuclear weapon.

Q. You talk about Haiti, which, as you know, has been hit hard by four hurricanes.

Secretary Rice. Yes, yes.

Q. The poverty of Africa. How do we deal with these third-world nations? What is our responsibility?

Secretary Rice. Well, the President, through his really historic Marshall Plan-like assistance programs to these parts of the world, I think is really leading the world to say developed countries that have so much ought to increase their assistance. And indeed, we have led. We have increased assistance dramatically. But there has to be a partner on the other side that is not going to waste the money, it's not going to build palaces, it's not going to be corrupt and take the money of the people, that is going to invest that money in education and in healthcare, that's going to fight corruption.

And the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which is a compact between the country and the United States, has even made a difference in how assistance is delivered. Now, nongovernmental organizations plus the governments of those countries get together and they plan together for the improvement of roads so that subsistence farmers can get their crop to market in an efficient way, for land titling so that larger plots of agricultural land can be developed.

This model, the Millennium Challenge, has countries coming to me with a little brochure that says here's why we would be a good Millennium Challenge country. And they know that that means changes in their laws, changes in their practices, engaging their populations, fighting corruption. And there's even something called the MCC University, where countries that have succeeded engage countries that are trying to get an MCC compact. And the amounts of money are large, over $800 million for Tanzania, over $450 or

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$460 million for Ghana. I mean they're large amounts of money. But they come with a demand for policy changes, and that's changing the way that development assistance is done. And—

Q. But that has been a perennial problem of the corruption on the other end, so how do you ensure it or correct it?

Secretary Rice. Well, because it is being corrected by countries that want those large investments. And by the way, in a lot of the world, now democratic governments that really are accountable to their people are coming into power. You're having changes of leadership by democratic means across the continent of Africa. Of course, in Latin America you're having changes in leadership by democratic means. And so this is the time to reinforce that assistance is not just a handout; it is an investment in governments that are willing to make the tough changes and the tough choices in the way that they govern.

Q. How have you approached this job as Secretary of State?

Secretary Rice. Well, I've tried to do a couple of things. First of all, as I've mentioned, I try always to keep at core what America stands for and its values, and that we are not neutral in defending democracy and freedom abroad. I've tried to make sure that our alliances are strong. And when I find, as I found in 2005, that, for instance, on the situation in Iran, somehow we were viewed as the problem, I've tried to take a hard look at our policies and see how we make sure that we're on the same page with our allies, because I think our allies want to be on the same page with us.

I believe that you can't do this job sitting in Washington. I felt that we did have to strengthen alliances that, frankly, had been frayed by 2003 and 2004, and so I traveled to them. When I was trying to build the P-5+1 to confront Iran, I went and we had meetings face-to-face. I don't think you can do it by telephone and by videoconference.

And I have tried to make sure that the Department of State is a place that values its people. We have a terrific Foreign Service, a career organization and career officers in the Foreign Service and in the Civil Service that just want to make a difference. You know, they don't do it because they are well compensated. These are people who could be doing anything in their lives. They do it because they want to make a difference. They want the world to change.

And I've tried to incorporate those people into my team and into my daily life because I respect them for their talents. And I've tried to make sure that my organization is pretty flat; that if assistant secretaries want to come see and see me, they know they can do it almost immediately.

And so I believe that as a Secretary of State who does those things and who maintains a close working relationship and always remembers that the President of the United States is the President of the United States, and that it is my responsibility to make sure that we are on the same page, that that's a good basis on which to do this.

I think it's very important that we not lose focus on the fact that September 11th happened for a reason...

Q. So what is the art of diplomacy? How do you serve as a diplomat? What do you bring to the job?

Secretary Rice. Well, I think the art of diplomacy is to recognize that it's not just talking. Sometimes it's talking. Talking is a good thing. But you have to have something you're trying to achieve. And when you're dealing with friends, closest allies, it's usually appealing to our common values and our common interests. When you're dealing with adversaries, you'd better have leverage. You have to have established that there are consequences for not coming to agreement.

It's often the case that when you're dealing with adversaries, it's best not to be doing it alone. So one of the things I think we've done well is to structure with the North Korean nuclear problem a circumstance in which North Korea—we may talk to North Korea bilaterally, we may even negotiate with them bilaterally, but they always know that we're doing it on behalf of and with China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea. Because it's easy for North Korea to make it a problem between the United States and North Korea. It's harder to face down or to cheat on China or South Korea that have different kinds of leverage than we do.

So I'm a big fan of multilateralism done the right way, which means that it's about having something that you're trying to achieve and finding common purpose with others.

Q. What worries you the most?

Secretary Rice. Well, I think it's very important that we not lose focus on the fact that September 11th happened for a reason, and it happened because there were people out there who believe that they can take down our way of life, and they plot and they plan every day. It's not over. Are we safer today than we were? Yes, absolutely. But are we safe? No.

And anyone who was in a position of authority on September 11th, for us, every day since then has been September 12th. And every day, you recognize that it could happen again. And so I hope America doesn't lose its vigilance. I hope that we recognize that there is a lot of work to do to continue to take down these terrorist networks, that it's hard and sometimes not very appealing work to do so, and that you have to mobilize all manner of American power to do it.

Q. Is there a moment during the last four or eight years that you remember the most?

Secretary Rice. Well, I think the moment—if I could have two, because one is still unfinished business. But the moment I remember most was flying over Baghdad for the first time. I had gone out there and things were pretty tough when I was first Secretary. Things were pretty tough. But I looked at this great city and I saw the two rivers coming together, the Tigris and Euphrates. I saw the great agri-

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cultural land. I saw the great monuments going all the way back to Mesopotamia and to their great heritage. And I called the President from the plane and I said, "Mr. President, this is going to be a great country again, and it'll be a great country and it'll be America's friend."

Because Iraq is a powerful country in the center of the Middle East, and the Middle East's future is still evolving and unfolding. It is still a part of the world that has to come to grips with the demands for popular legitimacy that are there and that are growing. It is still a part of the world that has not reached its great scientific and economic potential, I think, in part because of the freedom gap. And the Iraqi example had always been one of a powerful state, a bulwark against Iran, a center of the Arab world. There was only one problem: It was run by Saddam Hussein, who attacked his neighbors, tyrannized his own people, and loathed the United States. And it was very, very hard to get there, very hard to get there, and the lives lost will never be forgotten and they can never be brought back. But it will be, I am quite certain now, a powerful, democratic state in the center of the Middle East, and it will be a friend of the United States. And that will matter.

The other is that I was in China and I went out to the earthquake zone to meet some of the people there. And a little 12-year-old boy came up to me and he said, "Oh, I know who you are." He said, "I see you on television." He said, "You're that lady from America." And I thought, yeah, that's right. That's how I'd like to be remembered, not as the Secretary of State or Condi Rice, just that lady from America who could go anywhere and anyplace and the 12-year-old, that's what he thought.

Q. So, finally, two personal questions. What's next for you?

Secretary Rice. Yeah. Well, I'll go back to California. You know, I am, after all, an academic at heart. I will go back to Stanford. I've been on leave. I have to say here, I've been on leave eight years, but George Shultz was on leave almost 12, so I don't have the record.

I want to write a book about American foreign policy. I want to write a book about my folks, my parents. I want to write—I want to think about what I can do to engage what they call tweeners now, or 12-year-olds and 13-year-olds and 14-year-olds, and maybe open up the world to them. Because I get so many letters from kids that age—so many conservative even clerics in the Middle East will say, "Oh, my granddaughter really loves you. Would you send her a note?" And somehow, that age group—American kids who need to engage the world and want to learn languages and know that there's a big world out there, not to be afraid of but to want to be a part of, as well as kids abroad who need to know America. I'd like to see if there's some way that I can use the platform that I have, the fact that a lot of those kids know my name or know at least that I'm the lady from America, I'd like to see if I could do something to spark their interest in the world.

White House Statement, November 27, 2008[5]

Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq

Preamble

The United States of America and the Republic of Iraq:

1. Affirming the genuine desire of the two countries to establish a long- term relationship of cooperation and friendship, based on the principle of equality in sovereignty and the rights and principles that are enshrined in the United Nations Charter and their common interests;

2. Recognizing the major and positive developments in Iraq that have taken place subsequent to April 9, 2003; the courage of the Iraqi people in establishing a democratically elected government under a new constitution; and welcoming no later than December 31, 2008, the termination of the Chapter VII authorization for and mandate of the multinational forces in UNSCR 1790; noting that the situation in Iraq is fundamentally different than that which existed when the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 661 in 1990, and in particular that the threat to international peace and security posed by the Government of Iraq no longer exists; and affirming in that regard that Iraq should return by December 31, 2008 to the legal and international standing that it enjoyed prior to the issuance of UNSCR 661;

3. Consistent with the Declaration of Principles for a Long-Term Relationship of Cooperation and Friendship Between the Republic of Iraq and the United States of America, which was signed on November 26, 2007;

4. Recognizing both countries' desire to establish a long-term relationship, the need to support the success of the political process, reinforce national reconciliation within the framework of a unified and federal Iraq, and to build a diversified and advanced economy that ensures the integration of Iraq into the international community; and

5. Reaffirming that such a long-term relationship in economic, diplomatic, cultural and security fields will contribute to the strengthening and development of democracy in Iraq, as well as ensuring that Iraq will assume full responsibility for its security, the safety of its people, and maintaining peace within Iraq and among the countries of the region.

Have agreed to the following:

Section I: Principles of Cooperation

This Agreement is based on a number of general principles to establish the course of the future relationship between the two countries as follows:

1. A relationship of friendship and cooperation is based on mutual respect; recognized principles and norms of international law and fulfillment of international obligations; the principle of non-interference in internal affairs; and rejection of the use of violence to settle disputes.

2. A strong Iraq capable of self-defense is essential for achieving stability in the region.

3. The temporary presence of U.S. forces in Iraq is at the request and invitation of the sovereign Government of Iraq and with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq.

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4. The United States shall not use Iraqi land, sea, and air as a launching or transit point for attacks against other countries; nor seek or request permanent bases or a permanent military presence in Iraq.

Section II: Political and Diplomatic Cooperation

The Parties share a common understanding that their mutual efforts and cooperation on political and diplomatic issues shall improve and strengthen security and stability in Iraq and the region. In this regard, the United States shall ensure maximum efforts to work with and through the democratically elected Government of Iraq to:

1 Support and strengthen Iraq's democracy and its democratic institutions as defined and established in the Iraqi Constitution, and in so doing, enhance Iraq's capability to protect these institutions against all internal and external threats.

2.Support and enhance Iraq's status in regional and international organizations and institutions so that it may play a positive and constructive role in the international community.

3.Support the Government of Iraq in establishing positive relations with the states of the region, including on issues consequent to the actions of the former regime that continue to harm Iraq, based on mutual respect and the principles of non-interference and positive dialogue among states, and the peaceful resolution of disputes, without the use of force or violence, in a manner that enhances the security and stability of the region and the prosperity of its peoples.

Section III: Defense and Security Cooperation

In order to strengthen security and stability in Iraq, and thereby contribute to international peace and stability, and to enhance the ability of the Republic of Iraq to deter all threats against its sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity, the Parties shall continue to foster close cooperation concerning defense and security arrangements without prejudice to Iraqi sovereignty over its land, sea, and air territory. Such security and defense cooperation shall be undertaken pursuant to the Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq.

Section IV: Cultural Cooperation

The Parties share the conviction that connections between their citizens, forged through cultural exchanges, educational links and the exploration of their common archeological heritage will forge strong, long lasting bonds of friendship and mutual respect. To that end, the Parties agree to cooperate to:

1. Promote cultural and social exchanges and facilitate cultural activities, such as Citizens Exchanges, the Youth Exchange and Study Program, the Global Connections and Exchange (GCE) program, and the English Language Teaching and Learning program.

2. Promote and facilitate cooperation and coordination in the field of higher education and scientific research, as well as encouraging investment in education, including through the establishment of universities and affiliations between Iraqi and American social and academic institutions such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) agricultural extension program.

3. Strengthen the development of Iraq's future leaders, through exchanges, training programs, and fellowships, such as the Fulbright program and the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), in fields including science, engineering, medicine, information technology, telecommunications, public administration, and strategic planning.

4. Strengthen and facilitate the application process for U.S visas consistent with U.S. laws and procedures, to enhance the participation of qualified Iraqi individuals in scientific, educational, and cultural activities.

5. Promote Iraq's efforts in the field of social welfare and human rights.

6. Promote Iraqi efforts and contributions to international efforts to preserve Iraqi cultural heritage and protect archeological antiquities, rehabilitate Iraqi museums, and assist Iraq in recovering and restoring its smuggled artifacts through projects such as the Future of Babylon Project, and measures taken pursuant to the U.S. Emergency Protection for Iraqi Cultural Antiquities Act of 2004.

Section V: Economic and Energy Cooperation

Building a prosperous, diversified, growing economy in Iraq, integrated in the global economic system, capable of meeting the essential service needs of the Iraqi people, as well as welcoming home Iraqi citizens currently dwelling outside of the country, will require unprecedented capital investment in reconstruction, the development of Iraq's extraordinary natural and human resources, and the integration of Iraq into the international economy and its institutions. To that end the Parties agree to cooperate to:

1. Support Iraq's efforts to invest its resources towards economic development, sustainable development and investment in projects that improve the basic services for the Iraqi people.

2. Maintain active bilateral dialogue on measures to increase Iraq's development, including through the Dialogue on Economic Cooperation (DEC) and, upon entry into force, the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement.

3. Promote expansion of bilateral trade through the U.S.-Iraq Business Dialogue, as well as bilateral exchanges, such as trade promotion activities and access to Export-Import Bank programs. 4. Support Iraq's further integration into regional and international financial and economic communities and institutions, including membership in the World Trade Organization and through continued Normal Trade Relations with the United States.

5. Reinforce international efforts to develop the Iraqi economy and Iraqi efforts to reconstruct, rehabilitate, and maintain its economic infrastructure, including continuing cooperation with the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

6. Urge all parties to abide by commitments made under the International Compact with Iraq with the goal of rehabilitating Iraq's economic institutions and increasing economic growth through the implementation of reforms that lay the foundation for private sector development and job creation.

7. Facilitate the flow of direct invest-

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ment into Iraq to contribute to the reconstruction and development of its economy.

8. Promote Iraq's development of the Iraqi electricity, oil, and gas sector, including the rehabilitation of vital facilities and institutions and strengthening and rehabilitating Iraqi capabilities.

9. Work with the international community to help locate and reclaim illegally exported funds and properties of Saddam Hussein's family and key members of his regime, as well as its smuggled archeological artifacts and cultural heritage before and after April 9, 2003.

10. Encourage the creation of a positive investment environment to modernize Iraq's private industrial sector to enhance growth and expand industrial production including through encouraging networking with U.S. industrial institutions.

11. Encourage development in the fields of air, land, and sea transportation as well as rehabilitation of Iraqi ports and enhancement of maritime trade between the Parties, including by facilitating cooperation with the U.S. Federal Highway Administration.

12. Maintain an active dialogue on agricultural issues to help Iraq develop its domestic agricultural production and trade policies.

13. Promote access to programs that increase farm, firm, and marketing productivity to generate higher incomes and expanded employment, building on successful programs by the USDA and the USAID programs in agribusiness, agriculture extension, and policy engagement.

14. Encourage increased Iraqi agricultural exports, including through policy engagement and encouraging education of Iraqi exporters on U.S. health and safety regulations.

Section VI: Health and Environmental Cooperation

In order to improve the health of the citizens of Iraq, as well as protect and improve the extraordinary natural environment of the historic Lands of the Two Rivers, the Parties agree to cooperate to:

1. Support and strengthen Iraq's efforts to build its health infrastructure and to strengthen health systems and networks.

2. Support Iraq's efforts to train health and medical cadres and staff.

3. Maintain dialogue on health policy issues to support Iraq's long-term development. Topics may include controlling the spread of infectious diseases, preventative and mental health, tertiary care, and increasing the efficiency of Iraq's medicine procurement system.

4. Encourage Iraqi and international investment in the health field, and facilitate specialized professional exchanges in order to promote the transfer of expertise and to help foster relationships between medical and health institutions building on existing programs with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, including its Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

5. Encourage Iraqi efforts to strengthen mechanisms for protecting, preserving, improving, and developing the Iraqi environment and encouraging regional and international environmental cooperation.

Section VII: Information Technology and Communications Cooperation

Communications are the lifeblood of economic growth in the twenty-first century, as well as the foundation for the enhancement of democracy and civil society. In order to improve access to information and promote the development of a modern and state of the art communications industry in Iraq, the Parties agree to cooperate to:

1. Support the exchange of information and best practices in the fields of regulating telecommunications services and the development of information technology policies.

2. Exchange views and practices relating to liberalizing information technologies and telecommunications services markets, and the strengthening of an independent regulator.

3. Promote active Iraqi participation in the meetings and initiatives of the Internet Governance Forum, including its next global meetings.

Section VIII: Law Enforcement and Judicial Cooperation

The Parties agree to cooperate to:

1. Support the further integration and security of the Iraqi criminal justice system, including police, courts, and prisons.

2. Exchange views and best practices related to judicial capacity building and training, including on continuing professional development for judges, judicial investigators, judicial security personnel, and court administrative staff.

3. Enhance law enforcement and judicial relationships to address corruption, and common transnational criminal threats, such as terrorism, trafficking in persons, organized crime, drugs, money laundering, smuggling of archeological artifacts, and cyber crime.

Section IX: Joint Committees

1. The Parties shall establish a Higher Coordinating Committee (HCC) to monitor the overall implementation of the Agreement and develop the agreed upon objectives. The committee shall meet periodically and may include representatives from relevant departments and ministries.

2. The Parties shall seek to establish additional Joint Coordination Committees (JCCs), as necessary, responsible for executing and overseeing this Agreement. The JCCs will report to the HCC and are to:

a. Monitor implementation and consult regularly to promote the most effective implementation of this Agreement and to assist in dispute resolution as necessary;

b. Propose new cooperation projects and carry out discussions and negotiations as necessary to reach an agreement about details of such cooperation; and

c. Include other governmental departments and ministries for broader coordination from time to time, with meetings in Iraq and the United States, as appropriate.

3. Disputes that may arise under this Agreement, if not resolved within the relevant JCC, and not amenable to resolution within the HCC, are to be settled through diplomatic channels.

Section X: Implementing Agreements and Arrangements

The Parties may enter into further agreements or arrangements as necessary and appropriate to implement this Agreement.

Section XI: Final Provisions

1. This Agreement shall enter into force on January 1, 2009, following an exchange of diplomatic notes confirming that the actions by the Parties necessary to

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bring the Agreement into force in accordance with the respective constitutional procedures in effect in both countries have been completed.

2. This Agreement shall remain in force unless either Party provides written notice to the other of its intent to terminate this Agreement. The termination shall be effective one year after the date of such notification.

3. This Agreement may be amended with the mutual written agreement of the Parties and in accordance with the constitutional procedures in effect in both countries.

4. All cooperation under this Agreement shall be subject to the laws and regulations of both countries.

Signed in duplicate in Baghdad on this 17th day of November, 2008, in the English and Arabic language, each text being equally authentic.

White House Statement, November 27, 2008[6]

Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq On the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq

Preamble

The United States of America and the Republic of Iraq, referred to hereafter as "the Parties":

Recognizing the importance of: strengthening their joint security, contributing to world peace and stability, combating terrorism in Iraq, and cooperating in the security and defense spheres, thereby deterring aggression and threats against the sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity of Iraq and against its democratic, federal, and constitutional system;

Affirming that such cooperation is based on full respect for the sovereignty of each of them in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter;

Out of a desire to reach a common understanding that strengthens cooperation between them;

Without prejudice to Iraqi sovereignty over its territory, waters, and airspace; and

Pursuant to joint undertakings as two sovereign, independent, and coequal countries;

Have agreed to the following:

Article 1

Scope and Purpose

This Agreement shall determine the principal provisions and requirements that regulate the temporary presence, activities, and withdrawal of the United States Forces from Iraq.

Article 2

Definition of Terms

1. "Agreed facilities and areas" are those Iraqi facilities and areas owned by the Government of Iraq that are in use by the United States Forces during the period in which this Agreement is in force.

2. "United States Forces" means the entity comprising the members of the United States Armed Forces, their associated civilian component, and all property, equipment, and materiel of the United States Armed Forces present in the territory of Iraq.

3. "Member of the United States Forces" means any individual who is a member of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard.

4. "Member of the civilian component" means any civilian employed by the United States Department of Defense. This term does not include individuals normally resident in Iraq.

5. "United States contractors" and "United States contractor employees" mean non-Iraqi persons or legal entities, and their employees, who are citizens of the United States or a third country and who are in Iraq to supply goods, services, and security in Iraq to or on behalf of the United States Forces under a contract or subcontract with or for the United States Forces. However, the terms do not include persons or legal entities normally resident in the territory of Iraq.

6. "Official vehicles" means commercial vehicles that may be modified for security purposes and are basically designed for movement on various roads and designated for transportation of personnel.

7. "Military vehicles" means all types of vehicles used by the United States Forces, which were originally designated for use in combat operations and display special distinguishing numbers and symbols according to applicable United States Forces instructions and regulations.

8. "Defense equipment" means systems, weapons, supplies, equipment, munitions, and materials exclusively used in conventional warfare that are required by the United States Forces in connection with agreed activities under this Agreement and are not related, either directly or indirectly, to systems of weapons of mass destruction (chemical weapons, nuclear weapons, radiological weapons, biological weapons, and related waste of such weapons).

9. "Storage" means the keeping of defense equipment required by the United States Forces in connection with agreed activities under this Agreement.

10. "Taxes and duties" means all taxes, duties (including customs duties), fees, of whatever kind, imposed by the Government of Iraq, or its agencies, or governorates under Iraqi laws and regulations. However, the term does not include charges by the Government of Iraq, its agencies, or governorates for services requested and received by the United States Forces.

Article 3

Laws

1. While conducting military operations pursuant to this Agreement, it is the duty of members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component to respect Iraqi laws, customs, traditions, and conventions and to refrain from any activities that are inconsistent with the letter and spirit of this Agreement. It is the duty of the United States to take all necessary measures for this purpose.

2.With the exception of members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component, the United States Forces may not transfer any person into or out of Iraq on vehicles, vessels, or aircraft covered by this Agreement, unless in accordance with applicable Iraqi laws and regulations, including implementing arrangements as may be agreed to by the Government of

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Iraq.

Article 4
Missions

1. The Government of Iraq requests the temporary assistance of the United States Forces for the purposes of supporting Iraq in its efforts to maintain security and stability in Iraq, including cooperation in the conduct of operations against al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups, outlaw groups, and remnants of the former regime.

2. All such military operations that are carried out pursuant to this Agreement shall be conducted with the agreement of the Government of Iraq. Such operations shall be fully coordinated with Iraqi authorities. The coordination of all such military operations shall be overseen by a Joint Military Operations Coordination Committee (JMOCC) to be established pursuant to this Agreement. Issues regarding proposed military operations that cannot be resolved by the JMOCC shall be forwarded to the Joint Ministerial Committee.

3. All such operations shall be conducted with full respect for the Iraqi Constitution and the laws of Iraq. Execution of such operations shall not infringe upon the sovereignty of Iraq and its national interests, as defined by the Government of Iraq. It is the duty of the United States Forces to respect the laws, customs, and traditions of Iraq and applicable international law.

4. The Parties shall continue their efforts to cooperate to strengthen Iraq's security capabilities including, as may be mutually agreed, on training, equipping, supporting, supplying, and establishing and upgrading logistical systems, including transportation, housing, and supplies for Iraqi Security Forces.

5. The Parties retain the right to legitimate self defense within Iraq, as defined in applicable international law.

Article 5
Property Ownership

1. Iraq owns all buildings, non-relocatable structures, and assemblies connected to the soil that exist on agreed facilities and areas, including those that are used, constructed, altered, or improved by the United States Forces.

2. Upon their withdrawal, the United States Forces shall return to the Government of Iraq all the facilities and areas provided for the use of the combat forces of the United States, based on two lists. The first list of agreed facilities and areas shall take effect upon the entry into force of the Agreement. The second list shall take effect no later than June 30, 2009, the date for the withdrawal of combat forces from the cities, villages, and localities. The Government of Iraq may agree to allow the United States Forces the use of some necessary facilities for the purposes of this Agreement on withdrawal.

3. The United States shall bear all costs for construction, alterations, or improvements in the agreed facilities and areas provided for its exclusive use. The United States Forces shall consult with the Government of Iraq regarding such construction, alterations, and improvements, and must seek approval of the Government of Iraq for major construction and alteration projects. In the event that the use of agreed facilities and areas is shared, the two Parties shall bear the costs of construction, alterations, or improvements proportionately.

4. The United States shall be responsible for paying the costs for services requested and received in the agreed facilities and areas exclusively used by it, and both Parties shall be proportionally responsible for paying the costs for services requested and received in joint agreed facilities and areas.

5. Upon the discovery of any historical or cultural site or finding any strategic resource in agreed facilities and areas, all works of construction, upgrading, or modification shall cease immediately and the Iraqi representatives at the Joint Committee shall be notified to determine appropriate steps in that regard.

6. The United States shall return agreed facilities and areas and any non-relocatable structures and assemblies on them that it had built, installed, or established during the term of this Agreement, according to mechanisms and priorities set forth by the Joint Committee. Such facilities and areas shall be handed over to the Government of Iraq free of any debts and financial burdens.

7. The United States Forces shall return to the Government of Iraq the agreed facilities and areas that have heritage, moral, and political significance and any non-relocatable structures and assemblies on them that it had built, installed, or established, according to mechanisms, priorities, and a time period as mutually agreed by the Joint Committee, free of any debts or financial burdens.

8. The United States Forces shall return the agreed facilities and areas to the Government of Iraq upon the expiration or termination of this Agreement, or earlier as mutually agreed by the Parties, or when such facilities are no longer required as determined by the JMOCC, free of any debts or financial burdens.

9. The United States Forces and United States contractors shall retain title to all equipment, materials, supplies, relocatable structures, and other movable property that was legitimately imported into or legitimately acquired within the territory of Iraq in connection with this Agreement.

Article 6
Use of Agreed Facilities and Areas

1. With full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq, and as part of exchanging views between the Parties pursuant to this Agreement, Iraq grants access and use of agreed facilities and areas to the United States Forces, United States contractors, United States contractor employees, and other individuals or entities as agreed upon by the Parties.

2. In accordance with this Agreement, Iraq authorizes the United States Forces to exercise within the agreed facilities and areas all rights and powers that may be necessary to establish, use, maintain, and secure such agreed facilities and areas. The Parties shall coordinate and cooperate regarding exercising these rights and powers in the agreed facilities and areas of joint use.

3. The United States Forces shall assume control of entry to agreed facilities and areas that have been provided for its exclusive use. The Parties shall coordinate the control of entry into agreed facilities and areas for joint use and in accordance with mechanisms set forth by the JMOCC. The Parties shall coordinate guard duties in areas adjacent to agreed facilities and areas through the JMOCC.

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Article 7
Positioning and Storage of Defense Equipment

The United States Forces may place within agreed facilities and areas and in other temporary locations agreed upon by the Parties defense equipment, supplies, and materials that are required by the United States Forces in connection with agreed activities under this Agreement. The use and storage of such equipment shall be proportionate to the temporary missions of the United States Forces in Iraq pursuant to Article 4 of this Agreement and shall not be related, either directly or indirectly, to systems of weapons of mass destruction (chemical weapons, nuclear weapons, radiological weapons, biological weapons, and related waste of such weapons). The United States Forces shall control the use and relocation of defense equipment that they own and are stored in Iraq. The United States Forces shall ensure that no storage depots for explosives or munitions are near residential areas, and they shall remove such materials stored therein. The United States shall provide the Government of Iraq with essential information on the numbers and types of such stocks.

Article 8

Both Parties shall implement this Agreement in a manner consistent with protecting the natural environment and human health and safety. The United States reaffirms its commitment to respecting applicable Iraqi environmental laws, regulations, and standards in the course of executing its policies for the purposes of implementing this Agreement.

Article 9

Movement of Vehicles, Vessels, and Aircraft

1. With full respect for the relevant rules of land and maritime safety and movement, vessels and vehicles operated by or at the time exclusively for the United States Forces may enter, exit, and move within the territory of Iraq for the purposes of implementing this Agreement. The JMOCC shall develop appropriate procedures and rules to facilitate and regulate the movement of vehicles.

2. With full respect for relevant rules of safety in aviation and air navigation, United States Government aircraft and civil aircraft that are at the time operating exclusively under a contract with the United States Department of Defense are authorized to over-fly, conduct airborne refueling exclusively for the purposes of implementing this Agreement over, and land and take off within, the territory of Iraq for the purposes of implementing this Agreement. The Iraqi authorities shall grant the aforementioned aircraft permission every year to land in and take off from Iraqi territory exclusively for the purposes of implementing this Agreement. United States Government aircraft and civil aircraft that are at the time operating exclusively under a contract with the United States Department of Defense, vessels, and vehicles shall not have any party boarding them without the consent of the authorities of the United States Forces. The Joint Sub-Committee concerned with this matter shall take appropriate action to facilitate the regulation of such traffic.

3. Surveillance and control over Iraqi airspace shall transfer to Iraqi authority immediately upon entry into force of this Agreement.

4. Iraq may request from the United States Forces temporary support for the Iraqi authorities in the mission of surveillance and control of Iraqi air space.

5. United States Government aircraft and civil aircraft that are at the time operating exclusively under contract to the United States Department of Defense shall not be subject to payment of any taxes, duties, fees, or similar charges, including overflight or navigation fees, landing, and parking fees at government airfields. Vehicles and vessels owned or operated by or at the time exclusively for the United States Forces shall not be subject to payment of any taxes, duties, fees, or similar charges, including for vessels at government ports. Such vehicles, vessels, and aircraft shall be free from registration requirements within Iraq.

6. The United States Forces shall pay fees for services requested and received.

7. Each Party shall provide the other with maps and other available information on the location of mine fields and other obstacles that can hamper or jeopardize movement within the territory and waters of Iraq.

Article 10
Contracting Procedures

The United States Forces may select contractors and enter into contracts in accordance with United States law for the purchase of materials and services in Iraq, including services of construction and building. The United States Forces shall contract with Iraqi suppliers of materials and services to the extent feasible when their bids are competitive and constitute best value. The United States Forces shall respect Iraqi law when contracting with Iraqi suppliers and contractors and shall provide Iraqi authorities with the names of Iraqi suppliers and contractors, and the amounts of relevant contracts.

Article 11
Services and Communications

1. The United States Forces may produce and provide water, electricity, and other services to agreed facilities and areas in coordination with the Iraqi authorities through the Joint Sub-Committee concerned with this matter.

2. The Government of Iraq owns all frequencies. Pertinent Iraqi authorities shall allocate to the United States Forces such frequencies as coordinated by both Parties through the JMOCC. The United States Forces shall return frequencies allocated to them at the end of their use not later than the termination of this Agreement.

3. The United States Forces shall operate their own telecommunications systems in a manner that fully respects the Constitution and laws of Iraq and in accordance with the definition of the term “telecommunications “ contained in the Constitution of the International Union of Telecommunications of 1992, including the right to use necessary means and services of their own systems to ensure the full capability to operate systems of telecommunications.

4. For the purposes of this Agreement, the United States Forces are exempt from the payment of fees to use transmission airwaves and existing and future frequencies, including any administrative fees or any other related charges.

5. The United States Forces must obtain

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the consent of the Government of Iraq regarding any projects of infrastructure for communications that are made outside agreed facilities and areas exclusively for the purposes of this Agreement in accordance with Article 4, except in the case of actual combat operations conducted pursuant to Article 4.

6. The United States Forces shall use telecommunications systems exclusively for the purposes of this Agreement.

Article 12
Jurisdiction

Recognizing Iraq's sovereign right to determine and enforce the rules of criminal and civil law in its territory, in light of Iraq's request for temporary assistance from the United States Forces set forth in Article 4, and consistent with the duty of the members of the United States Forces and the civilian component to respect Iraqi laws, customs, traditions, and conventions, the Parties have agreed as follows:

1. Iraq shall have the primary right to exercise jurisdiction over members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component for the grave premeditated felonies enumerated pursuant to paragraph 8, when such crimes are committed outside agreed facilities and areas and outside duty status.

2. Iraq shall have the primary right to exercise jurisdiction over United States contractors and United States contractor employees.

3. The United States shall have the primary right to exercise jurisdiction over members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component for matters arising inside agreed facilities and areas; during duty status outside agreed facilities and areas; and in circumstances not covered by paragraph 1.

4. At the request of either Party, the Parties shall assist each other in the investigation of incidents and the collection and exchange of evidence to ensure the due course of justice.

5. Members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component arrested or detained by Iraqi authorities shall be notified immediately to United States Forces authorities and handed over to them within 24 hours from the time of detention or arrest. Where Iraq exercises jurisdiction pursuant to paragraph 1 of this Article, custody of an accused member of the United States Forces or of the civilian component shall reside with United States Forces authorities. United States Forces authorities shall make such accused persons available to the Iraqi authorities for purposes of investigation and trial.

6. The authorities of either Party may request the authorities of the other Party to waive its primary right to jurisdiction in a particular case. The Government of Iraq agrees to exercise jurisdiction under paragraph 1 above, only after it has determined and notifies the United States in writing within 21 days of the discovery of an alleged offense, that it is of particular importance that such jurisdiction be exercised.

7. Where the United States exercises jurisdiction pursuant to paragraph 3 of this Article, members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component shall be entitled to due process standards and protections pursuant to the Constitution and laws of the United States. Where the offense arising under paragraph 3 of this Article may involve a victim who is not a member of the United States Forces or of the civilian component, the Parties shall establish procedures through the Joint Committee to keep such persons informed as appropriate of. the status of the investigation of the crime; the bringing of charges against a suspected offender; the scheduling of court proceedings and the results of plea negotiations; opportunity to be heard at public sentencing proceedings, and to confer with the attorney for the prosecution in the case; and, assistance with filing a claim under Article 21 of this Agreement. As mutually agreed by the Parties, United States Forces authorities shall seek to hold the trials of such cases inside Iraq. If the trial of such cases is to be conducted in the United States, efforts will be undertaken to facilitate the personal attendance of the victim at the trial.

8. Where Iraq exercises jurisdiction pursuant to paragraph 1 of this Article, members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component shall be entitled to due process standards and protections consistent with those available under United States and Iraqi law. The Joint Committee shall establish procedures and mechanisms for implementing this Article, including an enumeration of the grave premeditated felonies that are subject to paragraph 1 and procedures that meet such due process standards and protections. Any exercise of jurisdiction pursuant to paragraph 1 of this Article may proceed only in accordance with these procedures and mechanisms.

9. Pursuant to paragraphs I and 3 of this Article, United States Forces authorities shall certify whether an alleged offense arose during duty status. In those cases where Iraqi authorities believe the circumstances require a review of this determination, the Parties shall consult immediately through the Joint Committee, and United States Forces authorities shall take full account of the facts and circumstances and any information Iraqi authorities may present bearing on the determination by United States Forces authorities.

10. The Parties shall review the provisions of this Article every 6 months including by considering any proposed amendments to this Article taking into account the security situation in Iraq, the extent to which the United States Forces in Iraq are engaged in military operations, the growth and development of the Iraqi judicial system, and changes in United States and Iraqi law.

Article 13
Carrying Weapons and Apparel

Members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component may possess and carry weapons that are owned by the United States while in Iraq according to the authority granted to them under orders and according to their requirements and duties. Members of the United States Forces may also wear uniforms during duty in Iraq.

Article 14
Entry and Exit

1. For purposes of this Agreement, members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component may enter and leave Iraq through official places of embarkation and debarkation requiring only identification cards and travel orders issued for them by the United States. The Joint Committee shall assume the task of

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setting up a mechanism and a process of verification to be carried out by pertinent Iraqi authorities.

2. Iraqi authorities shall have the right to inspect and verify the lists of names of members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component entering and leaving Iraq directly through the agreed facilities and areas. Said lists shall be submitted to Iraqi authorities by the United States Forces. For purposes of this Agreement, members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component may enter and leave Iraq through agreed facilities and areas requiring only identification cards issued for them by the United States. The Joint Committee shall assume the task of setting up a mechanism and a process for inspecting and verifying the validity of these documents.

Article 15
Import and Export

1. For the exclusive purposes of implementing this Agreement, the United States Forces and United States contractors may import, export (items bought in Iraq), re-export, transport, and use in Iraq any equipment, supplies, materials, and technology, provided that the materials imported or brought in by them are not banned in Iraq as of the date this Agreement enters into force. The importation, re-exportation, transportation, and use of such items shall not be subject to any inspections, licenses, or other restrictions, taxes, customs duties, or any other charges imposed in Iraq, as defined in Article 2, paragraph 10. United States Forces authorities shall provide to relevant Iraqi authorities an appropriate certification that such items are being imported by the United States Forces or United States contractors for use by the United States Forces exclusively for the purposes of this Agreement. Based on security information that becomes available, Iraqi authorities have the right to request the United States Forces to open in their presence any container in which such items are being imported in order to verify its contents. In making such a request, Iraqi authorities shall honor the security requirements of the United States Forces and, if requested to do so by the United States Forces, shall make such verifications in facilities used by the United States Forces. The exportation of Iraqi goods by the United States Forces and United States contractors shall not be subject to inspections or any restrictions other than licensing requirements. The Joint Committee shall work with the Iraqi Ministry of Trade to expedite license requirements consistent with Iraqi law for the export of goods purchased in Iraq by the United States Forces for the purposes of this Agreement. Iraq has the right to demand review of any issues arising out of this paragraph. The Parties shall consult immediately in such cases through the Joint Committee or, if necessary, the Joint Ministerial Committee.

2. Members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component may import into Iraq, re-export, and use personal effect materials and equipment for consumption or personal use. The import into, re-export from, transfer from, and use of such imported items in Iraq shall not be subjected to licenses, other restrictions, taxes, custom duties, or any other charges imposed in Iraq, as defined in Article 2, paragraph 10. The imported quantities shall be reasonable and proportionate to personal use. United States Forces authorities will take measures to ensure that no items or material of cultural or historic significance to Iraq are being exported.

3. Any inspections of materials pursuant to paragraph 2 by Iraqi authorities must be done urgently in an agreed upon place and according to procedures established by the Joint Committee.

4. Any material imported free of customs and fees in accordance with this Agreement shall be subjected to taxes and customs and fees as defined in Article 2, paragraph 10, or any other fees valued at the time of sale in Iraq, upon sale to individuals and entities not covered by tax exemption or special import privileges. Such taxes and fees (including custom duties) shall be paid by the transferee for the items sold.

5. Materials referred to in the paragraphs of this Article must not be imported or used for commercial purposes.

Article 16
Taxes

1. Any taxes, duties, or fees as defined in Article 2, paragraph 10, with their value determined and imposed in the territory of Iraq, shall not be imposed on goods and services purchased by or on behalf of the United States Forces in Iraq for official use or on goods and services that have been purchased in Iraq on behalf of the United States Forces.

2. Members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component shall not be responsible for payment of any tax, duty, or fee that has its value determined and imposed in the territory of Iraq, unless in return for services requested and received.

Article 17
Licenses or Permits

1. Valid driver's licenses issued by United States authorities to members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component, and to United States contractor employees, shall be deemed acceptable to Iraqi authorities. Such license holders shall not be subject to a test or fee for operating the vehicles, vessels, and aircraft belonging to the United States Forces in Iraq.

2. Valid driver's licenses issued by United States authorities to members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component, and to United States contractor employees, to operate personal cars within the territory of Iraq shall be deemed acceptable to Iraqi authorities. License holders shall not be subject to a test or fee.

3. All professional licenses issued by United States authorities to members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component, and to United States contractor employees shall be deemed valid by Iraqi authorities, provided such licenses are related to the services they provide within the framework of performing their official duties for or contracts in support of the United States Forces, members of the civilian component, United States contractors, and United States contractor employees, according to terms agreed upon by the Parties.

Article 18
Official and Military Vehicles

1. Official vehicles shall display official Iraqi license plates to be agreed upon between the Parties. Iraqi authorities shall,

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at the request of the authorities of the United States Forces, issue registration plates for official vehicles of the United States Forces without fees, according to procedures used for the Iraqi Armed Forces. The authorities of the United States Forces shall pay to Iraqi authorities the cost of such plates.

2. Valid registration and licenses issued by United States authorities for official vehicles of the United States Forces shall be deemed acceptable by Iraqi authorities.

3. Military vehicles exclusively used by the United States Forces will be exempted from the requirements of registration and licenses, and they shall be clearly marked with numbers on such vehicles.

Article 19

Support Activities Services

1. The United States Forces, or others acting on behalf of the United States Forces, may assume the duties of establishing and administering activities and entities inside agreed facilities and areas, through which they can provide services for members of the United States Forces, the civilian component, United States contractors, and United States contractor employees. These entities and activities include military post offices; financial services; shops selling food items, medicine, and other commodities and services; and various areas to provide entertainment and telecommunications services, including radio broadcasts. The establishment of such services does not require permits.

2. Broadcasting, media, and entertainment services that reach beyond the scope of the agreed facilities and areas shall be subject to Iraqi laws.

3. Access to the Support Activities Services shall be limited to members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component, United States contractors, United States contractor employees, and other persons and entities that are agreed upon. The authorities of the United States Forces shall take appropriate actions to prevent misuse of the services provided by the mentioned activities, and prevent the sale or resale of aforementioned goods and services to persons not authorized access to these entities or to benefit from their services. The United States Forces will determine broadcasting and television programs to authorized recipients.

4. The service support entities and activities referred to in this Article shall be granted the same financial and customs exemptions granted to the United States Forces, including exemptions guaranteed in Articles 15 and 16 of this Agreement. These entities and activities that offer services shall be operated and managed in accordance with United States regulations; these entities and activities shall not be obligated to collect nor pay taxes or other fees related to the activities in connection with their operations.

5. The mail sent through the military post service shall be certified by United States Forces authorities and shall be exempt from inspection, search, and seizure by Iraqi authorities, except for non-official mail that may be subject to electronic observation. Questions arising in the course of implementation of this paragraph shall be addressed by the concerned Joint Sub-Committee and resolved by mutual agreement. The concerned Joint Sub-Committee shall periodically inspect the mechanisms by which the United States Forces authorities certify military mail.

Article 20

Currency and foreign exchange

1. The United States Forces shall have the right to use any amount of cash in United States currency or financial instruments with a designated value in United States currency exclusively for the purposes of this Agreement. Use of Iraqi currency and special banks by the United States Forces shall be in accordance with Iraqi laws.

2. The United States Forces may not export Iraqi currency from Iraq, and shall take measures to ensure that members of the United States Forces, of the civilian component, and United States contractors and United States contractor employees do not export Iraqi currency from Iraq.

Article 21

Claims

1. With the exception of claims arising from contracts, each Party shall waive the right to claim compensation against the other Party for any damage, loss, or destruction of property, or compensation for injuries or deaths that could happen to members of the force or civilian component of either Party arising out of the performance of their official duties in Iraq.

2. United States Forces authorities shall pay just and reasonable compensation in settlement of meritorious third party claims arising out of acts, omissions, or negligence of members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component done in the performance of their official duties and incident to the non-combat activities of the United States Forces. United States Forces authorities may also settle meritorious claims not arising from the performance of official duties. All claims in this paragraph shall be settled expeditiously in accordance with the laws and regulations of the United States. In settling claims, United States Forces authorities shall take into account any report of investigation or opinion regarding liability or amount of damages issued by Iraqi authorities. 3. Upon the request of either Party, the Parties shall consult immediately through the Joint Committee or, if necessary, the Joint Ministerial Committee, where issues referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 above require review.

Article 22

Detention

1. No detention or arrest may be carried out by the United States Forces (except with respect to detention or arrest of members of the United States Forces and of the civilian component) except through an Iraqi decision issued in accordance with Iraqi law and pursuant to Article 4.

2. In the event the United States Forces detain or arrest persons as authorized by this Agreement or Iraqi law, such persons must be handed over to competent Iraqi authorities within 24 hours from the time of their detention or arrest.

3. The Iraqi authorities may request assistance from the United States Forces in detaining or arresting wanted individuals.

4. Upon entry into force of this Agreement, the United States Forces shall provide to the Government of Iraq available information on all detainees who are being held by them. Competent Iraqi authorities shall issue arrest warrants for persons who are wanted by them. The

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United States Forces shall act in full and effective coordination with the Government of Iraq to turn over custody of such wanted detainees to Iraqi authorities pursuant to a valid Iraqi arrest warrant and shall release all the remaining detainees in a safe and orderly manner, unless otherwise requested by the Government of Iraq and in accordance with Article 4 of this Agreement.

5. The United States Forces may not search houses or other real estate properties except by order of an Iraqi judicial warrant and in full coordination with the Government of Iraq, except in the case of actual combat operations conducted pursuant to Article 4.

Article 23

Implementation

Implementation of this Agreement and the settlement of disputes arising from the interpretation and application thereof shall be vested in the following bodies:

1. A Joint Ministerial Committee shall be established with participation at the Ministerial level determined by both Parties. The Joint Ministerial Committee shall deal with issues that are fundamental to the interpretation and implementation of this Agreement.

2. The Joint Ministerial Committee shall establish a JMOCC consisting of representatives from both Parties. The JMOCC shall be co-chaired by representatives of each Party.

3. The Joint Ministerial Committee shall also establish a Joint Committee consisting of representatives to be determined by both Parties. The Joint Committee shall be co-chaired by representatives of each Party, and shall deal with all issues related to this Agreement outside the exclusive competence of the JMOCC.

4. In accordance with paragraph 3 of this Article, the Joint Committee shall establish Joint Sub-Committees in different areas to consider the issues arising under this Agreement according to their competencies.

Article 24

Withdrawal of the United States Forces from Iraq

Recognizing the performance and increasing capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces, the assumption of full security responsibility by those Forces, and based upon the strong relationship between the Parties, an agreement on the following has been reached:

1. All the United States Forces shall withdraw from all Iraqi territory no later than December 31, 2011.

2. All United States combat forces shall withdraw from Iraqi cities, villages, and localities no later than the time at which Iraqi Security Forces assume full responsibility for security in an Iraqi province, provided that such withdrawal is completed no later than June 30, 2009.

3. United States combat forces withdrawn pursuant to paragraph 2 above shall be stationed in the agreed facilities and areas outside cities, villages, and localities to be designated by the JMOCC before the date established in paragraph 2 above.

4. The United States recognizes the sovereign right of the Government of Iraq to request the departure of the United States Forces from Iraq at any time. The Government of Iraq recognizes the sovereign right of the United States to withdraw the United States Forces from Iraq at any time.

5. The Parties agree to establish mechanisms and arrangements to reduce the number of the United States Forces during the periods of time that have been determined, and they shall agree on the locations where the United States Forces will be present.

Article 25

Measures to Terminate the Application of Chapter VII to Iraq

Acknowledging the right of the Government of Iraq not to request renewal of the Chapter VII authorization for and mandate of the multinational forces contained in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1790 (2007) that ends on December 31, 2008;

Taking note of the letters to the UN Security Council from the Prime Minister of Iraq and the Secretary of State of the United States dated December 7 and December 10, 2007, respectively, which are annexed to Resolution 1790;

Taking note of section 3 of the Declaration of Principles for a Long-Term Relationship of Cooperation and Friendship, signed by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Iraq on November 26, 2007, which memorialized Iraq's call for extension of the above-mentioned mandate for a final period, to end not later than December 31, 2008:

Recognizing also the dramatic and positive developments in Iraq, and noting that the situation in Iraq is fundamentally different than that which existed when the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 661 in 1990, and in particular that the threat to international peace and security posed by the Government of Iraq no longer exists, the Parties affirm in this regard that with the termination on December 31, 2008 of the Chapter VII mandate and authorization for the multinational force contained in Resolution 1790, Iraq should return to the legal and international standing that it enjoyed prior to the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 661 (1990), and that the United States shall use its best efforts to help Iraq take the steps necessary to achieve this by December 31, 2008.

Article 26

Iraqi Assets

1. To enable Iraq to continue to develop its national economy through the rehabilitation of its economic infrastructure, as well as providing necessary essential services to the Iraqi people, and to continue to safeguard Iraq's revenues from oil and gas and other Iraqi resources and its financial and economic assets located abroad, including the Development Fund for Iraq, the United States shall ensure maximum efforts to:

a. Support Iraq to obtain forgiveness of international debt resulting from the policies of the former regime.

b. Support Iraq to achieve a comprehensive and final resolution of outstanding reparation claims inherited from the previous regime, including compensation requirements imposed by the UN Security Council on Iraq.

2. Recognizing and understanding Iraq's concern with claims based on actions perpetrated by the former regime, the President of the United States has exercised his authority to protect from United States judicial process the Development Fund for Iraq and certain other property in which

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Iraq has an interest. The United States shall remain fully and actively engaged with the Government of Iraq with respect to continuation of such protections and with respect to such claims. 3. Consistent with a letter from the President of the United States to be sent to the Prime Minister of Iraq, the United States remains committed to assist Iraq in connection with its request that the UN Security Council extend the protections and other arrangements established in Resolution 1483 (2003) and Resolution 1546 (2003) for petroleum, petroleum products, and natural gas originating in Iraq, proceeds and obligations from sale thereof, and the Development Fund for Iraq.

Article 27
Deterrence of Security Threats
In order to strengthen security and stability in Iraq and to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and stability, the Parties shall work actively to strengthen the political and military capabilities of the Republic of Iraq to deter threats against its sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity, and its constitutional federal democratic system. To that end, the Parties agree as follows:

1. In the event of any external or internal threat or aggression against Iraq that would violate its sovereignty, political independence, or territorial integrity, waters, airspace, its democratic system or its elected institutions, and upon request by the Government of Iraq, the Parties shall immediately initiate strategic deliberations and, as may be mutually agreed, the United States shall take appropriate measures, including diplomatic, economic, or military measures, or any other measure, to deter such a threat.

2. The Parties agree to continue close cooperation in strengthening and maintaining military and security institutions and democratic political institutions in Iraq, including, as may be mutually agreed, cooperation in training, equipping, and arming the Iraqi Security Forces, in order to combat domestic and international terrorism and outlaw groups, upon request by the Government of Iraq.

3. Iraqi land, sea, and air shall not be used as a launching or transit point for attacks against other countries.

Article 28
The Green Zone
Upon entry into force of this Agreement the Government of Iraq shall have full responsibility for the Green Zone. The Government of Iraq may request from the United States Forces limited and temporary support for the Iraqi authorities in the mission of security for the Green Zone. Upon such request, relevant Iraqi authorities shall work jointly with the United States Forces authorities on security for the Green Zone during the period determined by the Government of Iraq.

Article 29
Implementing Mechanisms
Whenever the need arises, the Parties shall establish appropriate mechanisms for implementation of Articles of this Agreement, including those that do not contain specific implementation mechanisms.

Article 30
The Period for which the Agreement is Effective

1. This Agreement shall be effective for a period of three years, unless terminated sooner by either Party pursuant to paragraph 3 of this Article.

2. This Agreement shall be amended only with the official agreement of the Parties in writing and in accordance with the constitutional procedures in effect in both countries.

3. This Agreement shall terminate one year after a Party provides written notification to the other Party to that effect.

4. This Agreement shall enter into force on January 1, 2009, following an exchange of diplomatic notes confirming that the actions by the Parties necessary to bring the Agreement into force in accordance with each Party's respective constitutional procedures have been completed.

Signed in duplicate in Baghdad on this 17th day of November, 2008, in the English and Arabic languages, each text being equally authentic.

White House Statement, November 27, 2008[7]

On Agreements with Iraq

Earlier today, in another sign of progress, Iraq's Council of Representatives approved two agreements with the United States, a Strategic Framework Agreement and a Security Agreement, often called a Status of Forces Agreement or SOFA. The Strategic Framework Agreement sets the foundation for a long-term bilateral relationship between our two countries, and the Security Agreement addresses our presence, activities, and withdrawal from Iraq. Today's vote affirms the growth of Iraq's democracy and increasing ability to secure itself. We look forward to a swift approval by Iraq's Presidency Council.

Two years ago, this day seemed unlikely—but the success of the surge and the courage of the Iraqi people set the conditions for these two agreements to be negotiated and approved by the Iraqi parliament. The improved conditions on the ground and the parliamentary approval of these two agreements serve as a testament to the Iraqi, Coalition, and American men and women, both military and civilian, who paved the way for this day.

As the two agreements move to Iraq's Presidency Council for final approval, we congratulate the members of the Council of Representatives for coming together to approve these historic agreements that will serve the shared and enduring interests of both our countries and the region.

Remarks by Secretary of Defense Gates, December 2, 2008[8]

Secretary Robert Gates was interviewed in a roundtable in Arlington, VA

Secretary Gates. Good afternoon. I'd like to start with four points and then take your questions.

First, I want to thank President Bush for giving me the opportunity to serve as Secretary of Defense. As I said yesterday in

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Chicago, serving in this position has been the most gratifying experience of my life and he made it possible. I also thank him for his support in the difficult decisions that I've had to make. It has been an honor and a pleasure to work for and with him. And I'll have more to say about this at an appropriate time.

Second, this is quite literally a unique situation. Since the creation of the position of Secretary of Defense some 60 years ago, no secretary has been asked to continue in office under a newly elected president, even when the new president has come from the same party. So I thank President-elect Obama for his confidence in me and look forward to working for and with him.

Third, every new president traditionally fills civilian positions at the Department of Defense. It will be no different now. Virtually every political appointee in the Department of Defense before yesterday assumed he or she would be replaced on January 20th or soon thereafter. That assumption remains as valid today as it was before. Some incumbents will likely be asked to serve until a successor is confirmed, and I am hopeful that we can reach those decisions soon.

I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every civilian appointee for their service to this department and to our country.

Fourth and finally, I suppose it should go without saying, but I have no intention of being a caretaker secretary. Our challenges, from the budget to acquisition and procurement reform, war strategy, care of wounded warriors, meeting the needs of warfighters, decisions on important modernization and capitalization projects and more, all demand the personal attention of the Secretary of Defense and they will get it, not to mention the multitude of challenges around the world where this department will continue to play a significant role in supporting U.S. policy.

I'm told by my staff that although there have been numerous opportunities for press questions while I've been on the road or appearing with foreign visitors, I've not had one of these press availabilities in some time. And so I'll stop here and leave ample time for questions.

Q. Mr. Secretary, I was wondering if you could clear up a couple small things and then sort of a broader question. But, are you a registered Republican, Democrat or what? If I could toss that out first.

Secretary Gates. I felt, when I was at CIA, that as a professional intelligence officer, like a military officer, I should be apolitical, and so I didn't register with a party. I consider myself a Republican. Until yesterday, all of my senior appointments have been under Republican presidents.

Q. How long do you—we've all—those of us who have traveled with you a lot have seen your countdown clock, and I'm wondering if you are resetting it. Is your time here going to be open-ended? Or do you expect, even generally, to have, like, sort of a time frame for your stay?

And then secondarily, what changed your mind? We've all quoted you numerous times on your thinking that it might be inconceivable that you would stay on. What are the types of things that you thought about when you knew this was coming?

Secretary Gates. Well, first of all, I've thrown away the clock—because it was absolutely useless—at the end of the day. The president-elect and I agreed that this would be open-ended, and so there is no time frame.

With respect to my comments over the last six months, I guess I would say that I was engaged in my own form of strategic deterrence. It was my hope that if I made enough noise about how much I did not want to stay here and how much I wanted to go back to the Northwest, that I wouldn't have to worry about the question ever being asked, because I also knew myself well enough to know that if the question was asked, what the answer would be.

And it was the same as with President Bush two years ago. With the country fighting two wars and our men and women in uniform at risk, if a president asks me to help, there's no way I can say no. So I spent a long time hoping the question would never be popped. I then hoped he'd change his mind. And yesterday it became a reality.

Q. Mr. Secretary, yesterday you said that when President-elect Obama asked you to stay on as secretary of Defense, you considered it your duty to say yes. But there must—there must have been more involved in that calculation than that.

Just how comfortable are you with President-elect Obama's positions on withdrawal of troops from Iraq, on Afghanistan, on Iran, on Guantanamo Bay, for example?

Secretary Gates. Well, I think the president-elect has made it pretty clear that he wanted a team of people around him who would tell him what they thought and give him their best advice. I think he has assembled that team. There will no doubt be differences among the team, and it will be up to the president to make the decisions.

We did meet, but I would tell you that there were no negotiations or anything like that. The discussion really was focused on how will the—how will it work; how do we make this kind of an appointment that, as I indicated, really has no precedent, work in practice. So it more focused on that and relationships than it was on substantive issues.

Q. Well, specifically, then, do you consider yourself at odds with President-elect Obama on a possible timetable for withdrawal of troops from Iraq?

Secretary Gates. I think that I would subscribe to what the president-elect said yesterday in Chicago. He repeated his desire to try and get our combat forces out within 16 months. But he also said that he wanted to have a responsible drawdown, and he also said that he was prepared to listen to his commanders. So I think that that's exactly the position a president-elect should be in.

Q. But he also said it's right time frame, 16 months. Do you think that's the right time frame—

Secretary Gates. Well, I think—

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Q.—sixteen months to remove combat troops?

Secretary Gates.—I would take you back to what I just said in terms of what—all he said. And it's within that framework that I think that's an agreeable approach.

Q. Just the 16 months again—what might be your concerns at this point about a 16-month timetable?

Secretary Gates. Well, first of all, the situation has changed, I think, in some significant ways since the campaign, and most of all in terms of the signing of the SOFA. We are going to be out of all populated areas of Iraq by the end of June 2009. By the end of June 2009, we are obligated, under the SOFA—or we will see that provincial Iraqi control has extended to the entire country, to all 18 provinces.

So we will confront or have a different kind of situation, in Iraq, at the end of June 2009 than we would have thought perhaps in June of 2008. And I think that the commanders are already looking at what the implications of that are, in terms of the potential for accelerating the drawdown and in terms of how we meet our obligations to the Iraqis.

So again I go back to the president-elect's comments yesterday. He did talk about the 16 months in terms of combat forces. But he also talked about a responsible drawdown and that he was willing to listen to the commanders.

Q. So you're less concerned about that timetable than you were before the election.

Secretary Gates. I'm less concerned about that timetable.

First of all, we have a definite timetable now in the SOFA. It's a longer one but it's a definite timetable. So that bridge has been crossed. And so the question is, how do we do this in a responsible way? And nobody wants to put at risk the gains that have been achieved, with so much sacrifice, on the part of our soldiers and the Iraqis, at this point. And so I think that the president-elect framed it just right yesterday.

Q. Mr. Secretary, President-elect Obama also said that, he thinks, the main threat to the American people comes from terrorist safe havens in South Asia, he said, presumably referring to Pakistan.

Is there more that the department can do, under this administration or the next, to address that problem?

Secretary Gates. Well, I think that we all believe now that we basically have our foot on the neck of al Qaeda in Iraq, that the safe havens in the FATA and that area are a great concern and do pose probably the greatest threat to the homeland, from al Qaeda and other extremist organizations.

My view is that the solution there is involved in partnering with the Pakistanis and our and the Afghans' efforts to work it, from the Afghan side of the border, and the Pakistanis working it from their side of the border. They confront violent extremists there as well. And they have over the last several months been moving fairly aggressively in taking on some of those, some of those groups in Bajaur and SWAT and elsewhere.

And so I think that we just need to continue looking at ways in which we can strengthen our partnership with Pakistan and do what we can to enable them to deal with the problem on their side of the border.

Q. Is this more of a long-term project, or is it something that could be addressed relatively quickly with a policy change or a tactics change?

Secretary Gates. Well, I think that we are prepared to move as quickly as the Pakistanis are. I know they're uneasy about the American footprint in Pakistan, and I think we have to be sensitive to their political concerns. At the same time, I mean, we cannot do this on our own.

Q. Mr. Secretary, can you confirm that Admiral Mullen is on his way to India? Can you outline the purpose of his mission? And more broadly, can you talk about the Mumbai attacks and who you believe was responsible?

Secretary Gates. Well, I think—you know, I don't want to get into the intelligence that we have.

I would like to commend the Indians for their restraint at this point.

Admiral Mullen is in the area, as is Secretary Rice, as you know. And frankly, because the situation's fairly delicate, I don't want to say too much about it. It clearly was the action of an extremist group that apparently was targeting Americans and Britons, and—but the truth is, most of the people who were killed were Indians.

And so it's important that we find out who did it and try and prevent it from ever happening again.

Q. Could you tell us, under an Obama administration—obviously you've talked about some of the changes in personnel that we may see here at the Pentagon. But otherwise, physically, on the ground, in Afghanistan, in Iraq and in here operationally, within the walls of the Pentagon, what will be different under an Obama administration?

I know that besides, perhaps, this difference on the time frame in Iraq in pulling out U.S. troops, they've also had some concerns about the U.S. tactics in Afghanistan as far as the reliance on attacking from the air, the number of civilians who are killed that way. They've taken issue with that. What immediate changes will we see?

Secretary Gates. Well, I think that, clearly, one of the first priorities of the administration will be to look at our strategy and approach in Afghanistan. My own view, as I've said before, is it's very important for us to do everything we can to make sure that the Afghans understand this is their fight and they have to be out front in this fight. That's why I'm such a strong supporter of accelerating the expansion of the Afghan army.

And so, you know, I'm—I can't foretell the outcome of the review that will take place in the new administration, but as the president-elect has made clear, it's a very

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high priority.

You will have a significant number of new civilian leaders in this building. There clearly is going to be very close scrutiny of the budget, I think as I indicated yesterday at Minot. We need to take a—I think for me, at least, a high priority, given our experience of the past year or so—actually, some would say a lot longer—we need to take a very hard look at the way we go about acquisition and procurement.

Q. Mr. Secretary, as far as terror attack in India, there's a clear evidence, according to the U.S. intelligence officials and also Indian officials, that there is a connection from Pakistan-based terrorists. It may not be the hand from the government, but the safe haven, like you said, in Pakistan. What do you think now—since you have been in the area so many times and you have a vast experience and you have been doing a great job now as Secretary of Defense under this administration—what will you advise to the President-elect Obama?

And also, under your new position in his administration, you think you will change your views or policies or what you are going to advise him, as far as this problem? Because there is a tension between the two countries now, just like the parliament attack and all of Kargil. There may be another war between the two countries, so—

Secretary Gates. Well, first of all, I learned a long time ago not to respond to anonymous intelligence officials, either here or abroad. So I'm not going to—not going to go down that road.

As I say, I think it's important for there to be restraint on both sides and—but it's also important to find out who was responsible. And I think what we would like to see is both countries work together to make sure that something like this doesn't happen again.

Q. Are you concerned that the recent tensions in India and Pakistan might divert Pakistan's attention to its eastern border and therefore that they might, you know, soften their effort on the western border with Afghanistan?

Secretary Gates. Well, that's kind of hypothetical. I would just say that we haven't seen any sign of that at this point.

Q. Secretary, when you came in, you spoke about closing Guantanamo Bay and your desire to do so. And the president even has said that he would like to close Guantanamo Bay, but no steps have really been taken to do so.

Did you conclude in the last year and a half or so that it is not possible to do that? Is it still possible to close Guantanamo Bay? Is it something you would recommend to President-elect Obama?

Secretary Gates. I think it is possible to close it. I think it does require a joint effort with the Congress. I think some legislation probably is needed as a part of it. And I think that it will—I think trying to move forward on that, at least from my standpoint, should be a—should be a high priority.

Q. A couple budget questions. You said you don't want to be a caretaker secretary. The budget will get scrutiny and there are major recap issues. What success have you had convincing the Bush White House and President-elect Obama to go along with your plus-up of the '010-'015 plan?

Secretary Gates. Well, first of all, because the president will not submit a budget—I mean, we've told OMB, reviewed with them what we're doing. And we've just started the process of discussing the '10 budget with the transition team. And so we've provided them with briefings, but so far there hasn't really been any reaction.

Q. One follow-up. On the major recapitalization programs—i.e., weapons programs—one of the big issues you're going to deal with is whether to buy more F-22 fighter planes. You've been continually against going beyond 183. Under an Obama administration, are you going to change your mind on that?

Secretary Gates. Well, I think that the key here is to—is to do the analysis, examine the Air Force's requirements, talk to the senior leadership of the Air Force, talk to the new appointees who will come into the department, and then make a decision how to go forward. But I'm not going to commit today where I'm going on that subject. There's a lot of work to be done.

Q. How much say will you have over the team that is around you here at the Pentagon? I mean, did you discuss that with the president-elect? And can you be an effective secretary of Defense if the key positions around you are appointed by the White House?

Secretary Gates. Well, the truth of the matter is, when I came here two years ago every single position was filled by somebody who had been appointed by somebody else. And I think it's worked out okay.

But to the specifics of your question, I expect that the transition will provide names and candidates to me for positions, particularly for the most senior positions, I will interview them, and then I'll make a recommendation to the president, and the president-elect or president will make the final decisions.

Q. Mr. Secretary, both you and President-elect Obama have spoken a lot recently about the need to increase spending on soft power. As we're in the middle of this economic crisis, how much of that increased spending should come from the Pentagon budget, and how much of it should be new spending?

Secretary Gates. Well, as I made pretty clear at the Landon Lecture at Kansas State a year ago November, I wasn't exactly calling for a transfer out of the Defense Department budget to support soft power.

But look, the reality is, the dollars required significantly to enhance our capabilities in that area are, relatively speaking, small compared to a new weapons system, and the personnel required to significantly plus-up the capabilities of the civilian side of the national

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security arena in the State Department and AID and so on are relatively small.

So you know, I think we'll—this is one of the decisions that will confront the new administration, and that is, first of all, how do we organize to make these capabilities more effectively and then how do we recommend to the Congress or propose to the Congress making the necessary increases in those capabilities, and where does the money come from? That's all still out in front of us.

Q. Mr. Secretary, you've talked often about the need for the Pakistanis to improve some of their training, some of the ways that they do counterinsurgency. The Mumbai attacks and the Indian response seem to suggest that India has a lot to do as far as the way it equips its counter-terror forces, what their tactics and procedures are. Have there been any specific requests from India for either U.S. training help or U.S. equipment help? And if not, have there been any offers from the U.S. to India of equipping help or training help?

Secretary Gates. The answer is both is no, not as far as I know.

Q. Thank you, sir. I'd like to return for a moment to Iraq. If I understood you correctly, you seemed to be suggesting that the old debate between withdrawal and a timetable of withdrawal, totally conditions-based, is essentially moot now; that it's been overtaken by events—the SOFA, the improvement in security conditions and so forth. Is that in fact your view, that that debate is over and moot?

Secretary Gates. I still think the pacing needs to be seen in the context of what's going on both in terms of the deadlines we've agreed to and in terms of the situation on the ground. The new factor is that we have agreed to some deadlines that change the nature of the mission in considerably—in considerable ways. And so I think that and the deadline, of the end of 2011 are both new components in addition to the conditions on the ground.

And so this is something that, I think, we just have to work with the commanders and make our best recommendation to the president.

Q. You had mentioned that extra troops for Afghanistan would not be available until spring or summer. Has the president-elect indicated that he might want to accelerate that timetable?

Secretary Gates. There has been no discussion of that.

Q. You have said you want to throw away the clock, which would suggest that you're really kind of settling in to this job for potentially the long term. You're also known for making personnel changes.

Do you see now, if you are kind of settling in for the long term, you making a review of some of the senior officers, across the globe, who work with you, and making changes to comport with your views?

Secretary Gates. I don't at this point.

I mean, this is a continual process of renewal, in terms of the combatant commanders, in terms of two-and-three-year terms. These things are reviewed on a regular basis by the chairman and the chiefs, who make recommendations to me. But apart from the regular rotation of senior assignments, I don't have any changes in mind.

Q. Mr. Secretary, given the withdrawal guidelines now in place, in Iraq, and your plans to increase troop strength in Afghanistan, how quickly can the Army get to an end to its stop-loss policy? And how quickly can you get to a dwell time that gives active troops twice as much time at home as they have on deployment?

Secretary Gates. Well, I think that General Casey is probably in a better position to give you the specifics on that. But I think that in terms of, we will probably increase the dwell time, be in a position where we have to increase the dwell time gradually, rather than all of a sudden go from one-to-one to one-to-two.

We may go from 12 months deployed to 15 months at home or 18 months at home and so on. And I think that process could begin perhaps as early as this fall, I'm sorry, as early as this spring. But General Casey would be in a better position to give you that information.

Q. Well, you have Marines, also, who are—

Secretary Gates. And the Marines, the same way, the one-to-one as opposed to—I think that—for the Marines as well it will probably increase more gradually than just go automatically one-to-two.

Q. Do you see dwell time ending this year—I'm sorry—2009?

Secretary Gates. Dwell time or stop-loss?

Q. Stop-loss, pardon me.

Secretary Gates. No. No, I don't. As I've indicated before, I mean, I've pressed on stop-loss ever since I got this job, because I don't like it. But a significant percentage of those who are stop-lossed are NCOs. And the concern of the Army is that if you don't use stop-loss you end up gutting a unit of its experienced leadership, senior enlisted leadership.

I push on them, I think they will tell you, every month—they may say more frequently—because I would like to see us at least start heading in the right direction. And I think we have leveled off and it has begun to decline very slowly. I won't pretend that it's any significant increase. But I hope that fairly soon and especially with the drawdowns in Iraq that we will begin to see a further decrease in stop-loss.

Q. So no end to the policy in 2009?

Secretary Gates. I don't think so.

Q. Thank you.

Q. On the budget, you said there was going to be scrutiny. But at the same time, the Joint Chiefs have prepared an estimate that's 57 billion (dollars) more than the current estimate for next year.

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So I'm wondering if you—how do you justify that, given the economic situation our country is in?

And also, is it true that there's an $80 billion war supplemental for the remainder of fiscal 2009 estimate that this building has prepared? And when would that be released? Would that be at the same time that the regular budget is released?

Secretary Gates. All along, everyone has known there would be a second component to the FY '09 supplemental. We were given a $66 billion bridge. Everyone has known there is another piece to that. It's still being worked by OMB and us. So it has not gone to the Hill. My hope would be that we could do that in the next couple of weeks for the '09 supplemental.

One of the things that we are trying to look at and see if it's feasible—and I don't want to get into the specific numbers—but we've gotten a lot of expressions of concern, I guess is the way I would put it, from the Hill about the reliance on supplementals. And so one of the things that we are looking at in the '10 budget is are there expenditures that we can anticipate recurring year in and year out in terms of a deployed force that could be moved from the supplemental into the base budget, because we know that we're going to have at least that amount of capability that from the—is going to be operational year after year.

This—as I said, the—President Bush does not submit a budget.

So this is a discussion that's really a philosophical and a strategic question: Do you begin that migration from supplementals into the base budget, which gives you a bigger top line number but also—I mean, it's a bill that's going to have to be paid one way or the other. And so the question is, do you put it in a supplemental or you put it in the '10 budget? And that's a discussion that has just begun with the transition team.

Q. Mr. Secretary, you've talked about the Afghan review, which is wrapping up. First of all, do you have any sense when that will be completed?

And also, I'm hearing from some people that there's a questioning now of whether to send three or four more combat brigades to Afghanistan. Some are saying they might be better off sending combat enablers, Predators, strike aircraft, and maybe send combat engineers, civil affairs advisers, even special forces troops, as opposed to brigades. Can you just talk about that?

Secretary Gates. Well, we—I think there is a desire on the part of the chiefs and myself to be responsible—to be responsive to the requirements that the Commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan/Commander ISAF has requested. That includes—and I usually get these characterizations wrong—but I think it's three additional combat—brigade combat teams and an aviation support unit.

Clearly, we focus on the enablers. And one of the things that I've noticed about some of the press articles about Iraq is they're beginning to focus on the reality that there's a lot of people in Iraq in addition to the 14 brigade combat teams or the 15 brigade combat teams, and most of those are enablers of one kind or another. And so one of the things that we need to make sure is, as we send in the brigade combat teams or additional combat forces to Afghanistan, that we give them the enablers that they need to be successful.

Q. Mr. Secretary, could you talk a bit more about your conversations with President-elect Obama? I understand you spoke to him the same day he was in Washington meeting with President Bush. Just your sense of his sense of the military and stepping into his role as Commander in Chief.

Secretary Gates. Sure. First of all, we did meet the day he came to Washington to meet with the president. We met when he went back to the airport. We actually met in the fire station at National Airport.

And they pulled the trucks out so that our cars could go in.

I have been very impressed by several things—first of all, the things he said to me and the things he has said on the campaign trail about the military and his respect for the institution. I was impressed by his reaching out to Admiral Mullen to come sit down and talk with him. And he has made clear that he wants to have a regular dialogue with the chairman and the chiefs and the commanders.

I also have been very impressed by Michelle Obama's desire to work on behalf of military families. And I think all of these things send very positive signals to our men and women in uniform about the way the new Commander in Chief looks upon his responsibilities, as Commander in Chief but also as the person for whom all of these men and women in uniform work.

Q. Mr. Secretary?

Staff. There's time for maybe one or two more.

Q. I wanted to go back to Guantanamo. You said that in order for the United States to close Guantanamo Bay there needs to be legislation. What needs to be in that legislation so that Guantanamo Bay can be shut down, in your view?

Secretary Gates. Well, I—the list of that legislation depends on who you talk to. And I'm not a lawyer. But to give you an example, it seems to me that we would require legislation so that if somebody is released from Guantanamo they cannot seek asylum in the United States. That's one example. But as I say, there are a number of areas where—where legislation may be required.

Last question. Yeah.

Q. Can you talk about the need to shore-up the acquisitions that's going to do this more smartly? Do you expect to have something like the ISR task force to handle this problem, or can you do it with the existing structure in OSD and in the services?

Secretary Gates. I think we have to make the existing structure in the services and in OSD work better. You can't do these big programs outside the system. I think that—I think that, you know, when it comes to MRAPs or ISR, that's a very finite kind of program, and there is a need for great urgency. We can do the—we can

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do some of these procurements in that—in that fashion.

But I think, when it comes to some of the big modernization and capitalization programs, that it would be a mistake to try and bypass the system. The key is to figure out a way to make the system work better. And I think that will be a high priority.

Q. Is it reasonable to expect that that can happen though, in the time frame that the services at least say it's needed, for things like CSAR-X and tanker? Without—you know, you're going to be going through a transition, assigning new secretaries and whatnot. You'll have the same bureaucracy in place.

So is it reasonable to expect that can happen, within the time that you have before you?

Secretary Gates. I certainly hope and intend for it to be so.

Q. On a personal note, as a Republican, just how strange did it feel yesterday to be standing on that dais in Chicago?

Secretary Gates. It really didn't. You know, the president-elect will be the eighth president I've worked for. And all I can say is, I look forward to it.

Statement by National Security Advisor Hadley, December 6, 2008[9]

Sunday's New York Times contains an editorial expressing inaccurate and incomplete statements on pre-war intelligence and the war in Iraq.

While the President has repeatedly acknowledged the mistakes in the pre-war intelligence, there is no support for the Times' claim that the President and his national security team "knew or should have known [the intelligence] to be faulty" or that "pressure from the White House" led to particular conclusions. Nothing in the many inquiries conducted into these matters supports the view of the Times' Editorial Board. Indeed, the independent Silberman-Robb Commission and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence concluded that no political pressure was brought to bear on the Intelligence Community.

As the President has stated, he regrets the intelligence was wrong, but it was intelligence that members of Congress, foreign governments as well as the Administration all believed to be accurate. Working with Congress, the President has since put in place a number of intelligence reform measures to try to ensure that such mistakes do not happen again.

While Saddam Hussein did not have stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, he was a threat, and his removal has opened the door to a democratic Iraq in the heart of the Middle East that is an ally of the United States.

The New York Times continues to have difficulty acknowledging the undeniable success of the President's decision to surge an additional 30,000 troops into Iraq. Because of the surge, Iraq is a more stable and secure country. It is the success of the surge that is allowing American troops to withdraw from Iraq and return home with a record of heroic service and still unheralded success.

Remarks by President Bush, December 6, 2008[10]

President George W. Bush delivered these remarks in a radio address

President Bush. Good morning. This weekend I'm attending the Army-Navy game in Philadelphia, and I'm looking forward to a great day of college football. But more importantly, I'm looking forward to spending time with the brave men and women of the United States military.

Throughout the past eight years, I've seen the tremendous talent and courage of those who wear the uniform. Their efforts have overthrown tyrants, made our Nation safer, put terrorists on the run, and opened the door to liberty for more than 50 million people. And now, thanks to their work in Iraq and the courage of the Iraqi people, a hopeful new era is dawning for their democracy and ours.

Earlier this week, Iraq's Presidency Council approved two landmark agreements that will solidify Iraq's democratic gains, affirm its sovereignty, and put its relations with the United States on a strong and steady footing.

The first agreement that America and Iraq have signed is called a Strategic Framework Agreement. This pact sets out a common vision for U.S.-Iraqi relations in the years ahead. Under this agreement, we will work together to bring greater stability to Iraq and the region. We'll promote trade and investment between our nations. And we will support Iraq's leaders and their citizens as they strengthen their democratic institutions.

Only a few years ago, such an agreement was unimaginable. Chaos and violence were consuming Iraq. Terrorists were seizing new ground and using violence to divide the Iraqi people along sectarian lines. And the nation was nearing the point of political collapse and civil war.

Today, violence is down dramatically. Our forces have struck powerful blows against al Qaeda. The Iraqi military is growing in capability, taking the lead in the fight against the extremists, and working across sectarian lines. Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish leaders are sitting together at the same table to peacefully resolve their differences and chart their country's future. And there is hope in the eyes of young Iraqis for the first time in many years.

The second agreement that America and Iraq have signed is a Security Agreement, known as a Status of Forces Agreement. One of the primary purposes of this agreement is to ensure protection for our troops and Defense Department civilians as the Iraqi government begins to exercise greater sovereignty. Our military commanders have assured me that the agreement's provisions meet this purpose. At the same time, it also respects the authority of the Iraqi government. And it lays out a framework for the withdrawal of American forces in Iraq—a withdrawal that is possible because of the success of the surge.

This withdrawal will take place in two stages: The first stage will occur next

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year, when Iraqi forces assume the lead for security operations in all major population centers, while U.S. combat forces move out of Iraqi cities and move into an overwatch role. After this transition has occurred, the drawdown of American forces will continue to the second stage, with all U.S. forces returning home from Iraq by the end of 2011.

As we enter this new phase in America's relations with Iraq, we have an opportunity to adopt a new perspective here at home. There were legitimate differences of opinion about the initial decision to remove Saddam Hussein and the subsequent conduct of the war. But now the surge and the courage of brave Iraqis have turned the situation around. And Americans should be able to agree that it is in our nation's strategic and moral interests to support the free and democratic Iraq that is emerging in the heart of the Middle East.

The American people have sacrificed a great deal to reach this moment. The battle in Iraq has required a large amount of time and a large amount of money. Our men and women in uniform have carried out difficult and dangerous missions and endured long separations from friends and family. And thousands of our finest citizens have given their lives to make our country safer and bring us to this new day. The war in Iraq is not yet over—but thanks to these agreements and the courage of our men and women in Iraq, it is decisively on its way to being won. Thank you for listening.

Remarks by Secretary of Defense Gates, December 13, 2008[11]

Secretary Robert Gates delivered these remarks in Manama, Bahrain

Secretary Gates. Thank you, John [Chipman], for that introduction.

And my thanks to the Kingdom of Bahrain and his majesty King Hamad for graciously hosting us once again. The United States and Bahrain have been friends for decades, and we look forward to working together for many more.

Much has changed in this region since we met last year. Of course, my country has had our share of change. Some of you may have caught in passing news of the presidential election last month.

I bring from President-elect Obama a message of continuity and commitment to our friends and partners in the region. Though the American political process is at times tumultuous—and our open and vigorous debates might seem to indicate deep divisions—I can assure you that a change in administration does not alter our fundamental interests, especially in the Middle East. Throughout my career in government—which began over 42 years ago—the security of the Gulf has been a central concern of every administration for which I have worked. That will not change, especially considering the great challenges we all face—from the need to defeat violent extremism to the necessity of forging a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians that will allow everyone in that region to live in peace and prosperity.

I had thought that my remarks would be a valedictory and farewell, but that was not to be. The President-elect asked me to stay on as Secretary of Defense and, as you know, I accepted. I am honored to continue leading the Department of Defense, and am doing everything in my power to ensure a smooth transition. On that note, I should mention that more extensive planning has been done across the government in preparation for this transition than at any time I can remember—and I have worked for seven presidents, soon to be eight. So anyone who thought that the upcoming months might present opportunities to "test" the new administration would be sorely mistaken. President Obama and his national security team, myself included, will be ready to defend the interests of the United States and our friends and allies from the moment he takes office on January 20th.

For the next few minutes, before taking your questions, I want to talk about some of the most pressing issues that the United States, and all the nations of the Gulf, will face in the years ahead.

Let me start with Iraq. As you know, the United States and Iraq just concluded a Status of Forces agreement that calls for U.S. combat troops to be out of Iraqi cities by the end of June, and out of Iraq by the end of 2011. This agreement balances the interests of both countries as we see the emergence of a sovereign Iraq in full control of its territory—and it also marks an important step forward in the orderly drawdown of the American presence there.

With the passage of the provincial elections law in September, the stage is set for January elections that we hope will draw more fully into the political process Iraqis who have been underrepresented in the government.

All of this indicates, I believe, the dawn of a new era in Iraq—where a sovereign, independent, and representative government has finally taken root. It is a government that increasingly looks at problems from a national, not an ethnic, perspective—and whose solutions are increasingly driven by a nonviolent, if sometimes contentious, political process. It is also a government that desires to, and can, play an important and constructive role in this region.

Of course, that depends in substantial measure on the nations represented here. For the better part of 50 years, Iraq has presented a strategic problem for its neighbors and for the region—inflicting suffering on its own people and on many others.

I mention this because I am aware that, in international affairs, old wounds do not heal easily. If, however, you look closely at Iraq's economic and political potential—about what it can offer the Middle East—you will see that it is in everyone's strategic interest to support the new government and the people of Iraq in whatever way you can.

First, on the diplomatic front. The past year has seen a number of high-profile diplomatic engagements—from meetings between heads of state, to exchanges of ambassadors, and more. I strongly encourage those nations that have not yet taken steps to restore full diplomatic relations with Iraq to do so. Iraq can only play a constructive role in this region if it is on an equal footing diplomatically—which also requires its government to take proactive steps, such as continuing to appoint

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its own ambassadors. Regional engagement also means that Iraq should be included in regional forums for economic and security cooperation, and considered for membership in Middle Eastern organizations, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Second, the economy. Business and trade are key to the growth of Iraq's economy and therefore its long-term security and stability. Expanded trade will also benefit the region as a whole.

• Those countries that have not forgiven Saddam-era debt should try to move forward as quickly as possible and follow through with pledges they have already made.

• Iraq should continue to engage with regional multilateral financial institutions as both a contributor toward and recipient of training and development programs—including the Arab Monetary Fund, the Islamic Development Bank, and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.

Finally, there is the security situation. Earlier I mentioned that great progress has been made. But let me emphasize that it is the opinion of everyone—Americans, Iraqis, civilian leaders, and military commanders—that the gains are still reversible. There remain those who wish to see the government of Iraq fail—and those who will continue to kill innocent civilians to further this goal, as we saw just a few days ago in Kirkuk.

I do not need to impress on the nations represented here the dangers posed by al Qaeda and its ideology. All of us have a stake in Iraq's ongoing fight with extremists. Neighbors must lend support and increase their border-control efforts, especially those that have thus far failed to live up to pledges to tighten border crossings.

Further, I applaud and encourage the nations of the region to continue programs that can dissuade potential recruits from joining extremist groups or rehabilitate those that have. On this point, I should note that much progress has been made with innovative programs to halt the tide of extremism—and offer alternatives to those who are most susceptible to the radical teachings of Al Qaeda. We must keep in mind that this is a fight that will require patience and resolve over many years, if not decades.

Unfortunately, no discussion of the security situation in Iraq is complete without mentioning Iran, a country whose every move seems designed to create maximum anxiety in the international community.

There is no doubt that Iran has been heavily engaged in trying to influence the development and direction of the Iraqi government—and has not been a good neighbor. Much of that effort has been focused on training and supplying groups intent on undermining the government—more often than not through violence and attacks on Iraqi security forces and government installations and officials. Of course, the use of sub-national actors as Iranian proxies should be no surprise considering the financial and military support that Tehran has long given organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah, which also seek to undermine legitimate governments by violent means.

Now, when it comes to Iran's missile programs, we all know that pictures can be deceiving. Even so, it is clear that Iran has, this year, tested long-range missiles that can hit any country in the Middle East. At the same time, Iran has continued its pursuit of a nuclear program that is almost assuredly geared toward developing nuclear weapons. The last thing this region—or the world—needs is a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

So what can be done about Iran? For starters, the international community has come together and has increased pressure on Iran diplomatically and economically. I encourage you to implement fully the financial measures called for by the United Nations.

But I think that you can be even more influential by carrying out many of the actions I mentioned earlier—by welcoming the new Iraq into the Arab fold. Your interests and Iraq's are aligned on a number of levels: in the fight against Al Qaeda and terrorism; in the desire to develop a vibrant and resilient economy; in efforts to bridge the sectarian divides in this part of the world; and, of course, in the necessity to limit Iranian influence and meddling nationally and regionally—meddling that has already cost far too many lives.

There is no doubt that it is tough fight in Afghanistan, but it is one that is critical to the Middle East as a whole.

For other Arabs to withhold support and friendship because of the composition of Iraq's government, or because of past aggressions by a defunct government, would be to increase the risk of the very outcome many in the region fear—just when Iraq is determining its future path at home and with its neighbors. Iraq wants to be your partner. And, given the challenges in the Gulf, and the reality of Iran, you should wish to be theirs.

Let me also say a few words about Afghanistan. As you know, the United States has focused more on Afghanistan in recent months and intends to add more resources and military forces next year.

There is no doubt that it is tough fight in Afghanistan, but it is one that is critical to the Middle East as a whole. Al Qaeda and its ideology were incubated in the failed state of Afghanistan, and the extremists have largely returned their attention to that region in the wake of reversals in Iraq. It is a movement that began in that region, and it is a movement that must end there. As we have seen from attacks across the Middle East, the danger reaches far beyond the borders of Afghanistan or Pakistan.

In the last few years, there has been a substantial increase in resources devoted to Afghanistan. There are 42 nations, hundreds of NGOs, universities, development banks, the United Nations, the European Union, NATO, and more—all working to help a nation beset by crushing poverty, a bumper opium crop, a ruthless and resilient insurgency, and violent extremists of many stripes, not the least of which is al Qaeda. The problem, of course, is that the operation is incredibly complex, and, with so many partners, it is hard to keep everyone on the same page. Nonetheless, I believe the upcoming year will see significant progress—the result of more resources, improved cooperation, and lessons learned over the past seven years.

As with Iraq, the nations of the Middle East have much to offer the Afghan peo-

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ple. An enduring requirement is the ability to rapidly train, equip, and advise Afghan security forces—as we are doing to improve the size and quality of Afghanistan's army.

I was heartened by the pledges made at the Paris Support Conference earlier this year by Gulf nations. I would ask that all the countries here to look at what more they can do, especially with regard to:

• Helping fund the Afghan army sustainment, as well as supporting the 2009 presidential elections;

• Sending security forces or civilian experts to help build Afghan capacity. Some nations have contributed field hospitals, and other needs include more engineers and agricultural experts, medical and de-mining teams, a variety of military equipment, and more;

• And, finally, ensuring that your governments are doing everything in their power to halt financing of the Taliban, whether through the legitimate banking system or illicitly through the drug trade. This should include strengthening counter-terrorism finance laws.

The final topic I want to discuss is related to what I've already mentioned: regional security through venues like the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Gulf Security Dialogue. While the GCC and the GSD cover a wide range of issues—from trade and energy infrastructure security to counter-terrorism and regional stability—I want to focus on two in particular: air and maritime security.

Along with the traditional challenges facing our nations, there is a range of diverse, unconventional threats that transcend national borders. Some are ancient—such as piracy, ethnic strife, and poverty. Others are of more recent vintage: terrorist networks harnessing new technologies; weapons proliferation; environmental degradation; and the emergence of deadly and contagious diseases that can spread more rapidly than ever before in human history.

What these challenges have in common is that they simply cannot be overcome by one, or even two countries, no matter how powerful or wealthy. They require multiple nations acting with uncommon unity.

That is particularly true of air defenses and maritime security—areas where multi-national cooperation is not just a preference, but a necessity.

The momentum from last year's Gulf Security Dialogue meetings led to significant progress in air and missile defense throughout the Middle East. Several Gulf Cooperation Council nations are in the process of acquiring, or have expressed interest in, Shared Early Warning—near real-time information on air and missile attacks that would allow maximum time for a nation to defend itself.

Additionally, all GCC countries have expressed a desire to obtain, or are already obtaining, active defense systems. These procurements demonstrate the GCC's commitment to regional security and interoperability with each other and the United States.

The need for increased maritime security—and potentially new and better means of cooperation—has been highlighted by the recent, high-profile acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden. As with terrorism, piracy is a problem that has serious international implications—and should be of particular concern to any nation that depends on the seas for commerce.

Earlier this year, the United States Fifth Fleet, based here in Bahrain, established a Maritime Security Patrol Area in the Gulf of Aden and is leading an international coalition to keep shipping lanes safe. I thank Saudi Arabia for agreeing to support the effort and encourage other nations to do so.

Given the vast coastal areas of Somalia and Kenya—more than one million square miles—there are limits to patrolling alone. More must be done.

• Under the United Nations Security Council resolution passed last week, members of the international community must work together to aggressively pursue and deter piracy.

• Companies and ships must be more vigilant about staying in recommended traffic corridors—and should consider increasing their security personnel and non-lethal defensive capabilities.

• New efforts for countries represented here might include developing a maritime surface picture and standard operating procedures against seaborne threats beyond just piracy—such as terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and smuggling.

All told, multinational efforts like these are encouraging. They bolster the defensive capabilities of everyone involved, while not diminishing pre-existing bilateral or multilateral relationships. They are, I believe, a model for how all of us can better address the challenges of the 21st century by fostering cooperation between and among the nations of the Gulf.

Let me close with a personal observation. In preparing to—at some point—retire from government service, I have been pondering all I have seen since joining the United States government in 1966. There have been good times and bad times—great successes, and haunting failures. Yet, despite the challenges, no matter how tough the problems, I have always been amazed by the ability of many nations of the world to come together and get the big things right.

For so long, many of the problems in this part of the world have seemed intractable. I believe, however, that there are many reasons for optimism—from an Iraq that is fighting its way out from the darkness of recent decades to the unprecedented cooperation between the nations of the Gulf as they—and we—face incredibly difficult and dangerous threats.

As we look to the future, let us vow to continue and strengthen these activities—to cast aside old animosities and work together in the spirit of friendship—to forge, in the end, a better and brighter future for all of the peoples of the Middle East.

Thank you.

Remarks by President Bush, December 14, 2008[12]

President George W. Bush delivered these remarks in Baghdad, Iraq

President Bush. Thank you for coming out to say hello. General, thank you for the introduction, I am honored to be at Camp Victory.

Laura and I have been having a lot of Christmas parties at the White House, so I thought it would be kind of neat to change

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the scenery.

And I would rather be with the men and women of the United States military than with anybody else.

So as you can see I decided to fly over, and in the spirit of the season we renamed Air Force One to Rudolph One.

Thanks for coming. I bring greetings from a proud and grateful nation—Merry Christmas to you, happy holidays. Congratulations on your inspiring accomplishments here in Iraq. And above all, thank you for volunteering to defend our country in a time of danger.

This is a time of year to give thanks for our many blessings and the greatest blessing we have is freedom and the fact that we've got a United States military to defend that freedom.

So General, thank you very much for your leadership. I'm proud to be with you again. I appreciate the leadership of General Austin, as well. Ambassador Crocker and Christine are with us today. I had the pleasure of meeting Sergeant—Command Sergeant Major Lawrence Wilson; Command Sergeant Major Joe Allen; Major General Hammond—put it together for Hammond.

Command Sergeant Major Gioia.

Major General Oates. How about, have you ever heard of a guy named Redmore?

Thanks for coming out. I am thrilled to be here with the diplomats, embassy personnel who are so critical to our success.

I want to thank the Iraqi citizens who are here with us today. I appreciate your courage. I know there are members of the coalition who are here with us. There have been a lot of troops from around the world who have come to help this young democracy survive and thrive. And so I want to thank the citizens of those country [sic] and the troops who have served here before us.

This is my fourth trip to Iraq—and you've probably heard I'm heading into retirement—so it's going to be my last trip as the President. But thanks to you, the Iraq we stand in tonight is dramatically freer, dramatically safer, and dramatically better than the Iraq we found eight years ago.

And as a result of the sacrifices of our troops, America is safer, and America is more secure.

I want to take you back to what life was like eight years ago here in Iraq. Iraq had a record of supporting terror, a record of developing and using weapons of mass destruction, was routinely firing at American military personnel, systematically violating United Nations resolution. Life for the Iraqi people was a nightmare, with Saddam Hussein torturing and murdering anyone who did not support his repressive rule. Iraq was a sworn enemy of the United States at the heart of the Middle East; the region was a serious threat to the us.

After the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, America concluded we could not tolerate a regime like this in a pivotal region of the world. I gave Saddam Hussein a chance to peacefully resolve the question as to whether or not he had weapons of mass destruction. You might remember, I went to the United Nations, where a body said: disarm, disclose, or face serious consequence. It was his choice to make. And he made the wrong choice. And so the United States military, with a vast coalition removed this man from power and the world is better off for it.

I doubt in his worst nightmares he ever would have dreamt that we'd be standing in one of his palaces.

Thanks to you, 25 million Iraqis are free.

Thanks to you, Iraq is no longer sponsoring terror—it is fighting terror. It's making American people safer as a result.

The enemies of freedom in Iraq are determined, and this fight has been tough. Two years ago, the situation had grown dire—the political process was frozen and sectarian violence was spiraling out of control. Some of you were here then.

Many said the mission was hopeless; many called for retreat. Retreat would have meant failure—and failure is never an option.

So instead of pulling troops out, we sent more troops in—called the surge. And because of you and because of your courage, the surge is one of the greatest successes in the history of the United States military.

Terrorists who once held safe havens across the country are being driven out of their strongholds. The political process that was once stalled is moving forward. Iraqi citizens once afraid to leave their homes are going back to school, and shopping in markets, and leading a more normal life. And American troops are returning home because of success.

The dramatic turnaround you led in Iraq culminated in the two agreements completed last month, which the Prime Minister and I affirmed in a ceremony earlier today.

These agreements formalize the ties between our two democracies in areas ranging from security and diplomacy to culture and trade. These agreements show the way forward toward a historic day—when American forces withdraw from a democratic and successful Iraq, and the war in this land is won.

There's more hard work to do before we reach that day. But if there is any—but if there is no doubt—but there is no doubt in my mind, there's just no doubt that we're going to reach that day. I am confident because our cause is just. And freedom is universal. I'm confident because the Iraqi people are showing unshakable determination and courage.

And above all, I am confident because I know the character and the strength of those who wear the uniform of the United States military.

Over the past five years, you have shown the world some unmistakable truths:

You have shown that when America is tested, we rise to meet the test.

You have shown that the desire for freedom is more powerful than the intimidation of terrorists.

You have shown that there is no task too difficult for the United States military.

And so I have a message for you and all who serve our country: I want to thank you for making the noble choice to serve and to protect your fellow Americans. Sometimes it can be hard to tell when history is being made, particularly if you're in the middle of the action. What you're doing in Iraq is as important, and courageous, and selfless as what American troops did in places like Normandy and Iwo Jima and Korea. Your generation is every bit as great as any that came before it. And the work you do every day will shape history for generations to come.

I guess what I'm telling you is your

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grandchildren some day are going to say, "Thank God you showed up and served."

America now has a strong friend and a partner in the fight against extremism in the heart of the Middle East, and that is historic.

People across this troubled region of the world now have an example for a more hopeful path—a model of liberty that can prevail over tyranny and terror. Killers who wanted to take the lives of Americans back home have been brought to justice before they reached our shores.

Because of you all who work to protect this nation—and all who work to protect the nation, America has done something many said was impossible: We have gone seven years without a terrorist attack.

We think of those who have laid down their lives for freedom here in Iraq. Their children are growing up without a mom or a dad. But all of our children are growing up with something else—the promise of a safer America and a better world. And that is the lasting memorial of all who have sacrificed here in Iraq. And thanks to you, that memorial will be achieved—and their sacrifice will not be in vain.

We think of your comrades who have been wounded. And this nation pledges that we will give them all the care and all the support they need to recover.

We think of all your families back home. I know many of you have a sweetheart who misses you, or a daughter who longs for her dad, or a mom who worries about you day and night. For many of you, it won't be your first holiday away—and that certainly doesn't make it easier. So I'm going to give you an order: When you get out of here, call home or email home; you tell your families you love them; and you tell the Commander-in-Chief came by to thank them for their sacrifice along with yours.

Thanks—thanks for coming by to let me say hello. Thanks for serving the United States of America. They ask me what I'm going to miss as the President. I'll tell you what I'm going to miss: being the Commander-in-Chief of such a fabulous group of folks. May God bless you, and God bless America.

Remarks by President Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki, December 14, 2008[13]

President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki delivered these remarks in Baghdad, Iraq

Prime Minister Maliki. I'd like to welcome the President of the United States, President George W. Bush. I would like to welcome you here as a guest. You have stood by Iraq and the Iraqi people for a very long time, starting with the—getting rid of the dictatorship, helping the Iraqis to fight terrorism.

Your visit today to Iraq, Mr. President, comes after the signing of the agreement between the two countries, which represents—(audio drop)—foundation and draws a road map that will govern and guide the relationship between the two states.

I believe that Iraq, we have performed and have done great work in a cooperative and integrated way in fighting terror. We have succeeded in Iraq, and we hope that efforts also around the world will succeed in defeating terrorism. Today Iraq is moving forward in every field. Through the new Iraqi political system we are working very hard through this, as well as developing the Iraqi economy, and reconstruction of Iraq. We are doing all of this in order for Iraq to restore its rightful place among nations and among the world, and away from the previous reckless policies that focused on wars with the previous regime.

The various political institutions have taken a very strong leadership position and the agreement was ratified, was approved by our political system, our parliament, and various institutions of the Iraqi government. They have approved and ratified the SOFA agreement and the withdrawal of American forces. We believe that these efforts culminated the height of real understanding and cooperation and friendship between Iraq and the United States. Now remains the part of implementing such an agreement. Now we are in the process of forming the proper committees that will carry out all elements of the various two agreements that were signed—and I'm referring to the various fields, military, scientific, educational, commerce, as well as economic fields.

President Bush, you have played a very supportive role in achieving and concluding this agreement and prior to the actual date of starting to implement this agreement, in January 1, '09 we already start working through the United Nations Security Council we are in the process of drafting a resolution that will make it very clear that Iraq no longer represents a threat to world peace and security. And also a resolution that will set the basis for the protection of Iraqi financial capabilities and bring Iraq back to its rightful place among world communities.

Once again I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you, Mr. President. Once again I wish you a very joyful stay here in Baghdad and a safe trip back home.

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your kind invitation and your hospitality. I also want to thank the presidency council for their hospitality, as well. And I'm looking forward to some food.

I am also looking forward to signing the joint statement here affirming two landmark agreements that solidify Iraq's democratic gains, that recognize Iraq's sovereignty, and that puts the relations between our two countries on a solid footing today and a solid footing tomorrow. They cement a strategic partnership between our two countries, and they pave the way for American forces to return home, as the war in Iraq approaches a successful end.

The Strategic Framework Agreement formalizes, as it says in the agreement, formalizes "a relationship of friendship and cooperation" between our two countries in the economic, diplomatic, cultural, and security fields. Under this agreement, we will work together to bring greater stability to Iraq and the region, as well as promote trade and investment between our nations. We will work to strengthen democratic institutions.

I'm sure you can remember what life was two years ago. When we were working together during that period such an agreement seemed unimaginable. Chaos and violence were consuming Iraq. The

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terrorists were seizing new ground, and the Iraqi people were beginning to divide the Iraqi people along sectarian lines. But you were determined, and I was determined to do something differently—not to allow Iraq to fall into civil war.

And our plan is working. You notice I say "our plan." Today, violence is down dramatically. Al Qaeda is driven from its safe havens. Sunnis, Shia, and Kurds are sitting together at the same table to part—to peacefully chart the future of this country. There is hope in the eyes of Iraqis' young. This is a future of what we've been fighting for—a strong and capable democratic Iraq that will be a force of freedom and a force for peace in the heart of the Middle East; a country that will serve as a source for stability in a volatile region; a country that will deny a safe haven to al Qaeda. As a result of these successes, Mr. Prime Minister, the American people are safer.

We're also signing a Security Agreement, sometimes called a Status of Forces Agreement. The agreement provides American troops and Defense Department officials with authorizations and protections to continue supporting Iraq's democracy once the U.N. mandate expires at the end of this year. This agreement respects the sovereignty and the authority of Iraq's democracy. The agreement lays out a framework for the withdrawal of American forces in Iraq—a withdrawal that is possible because of the success of the surge.

These agreements result from careful consultations with the Prime Minister and the officials of Iraq, as well as our diplomats and our military commanders. They represent a shared vision on the way forward in Iraq.

The American people have sacrificed a great deal to reach this moment. The battle in Iraq has required a great amount of time and resources. Thousands of our finest citizens have given their lives to make our country safer and to bring us to this new day.

We also praise the thousands of the coalition forces that came, and the sacrifices that those countries have made. And the Iraqi people have sacrificed a lot. They've suffered car bombings and suicide attacks and IEDs, and desperate efforts by terrorists to destroy a young democracy. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have stepped forward to defend this democracy, and many have paid a dear price.

With these agreements, Mr. Prime Minister, we're honoring the sacrifices that I just described in the best possible way—by building a freer, safer, and more hopeful world. By signing these agreements we're showing the people of Iraq the United States of America keeps its word. And we are showing the people of the Middle East that America stands firmly for liberty and justice and peace. And we are leaving the next President with a stable foundation for the future, and an approach that can enjoy broad bipartisan support at home.

There is still more work to be done. The war is not yet over—but with the conclusion of these agreements and the courage of the Iraqi people and the Iraqi troops and American troops and civilian personnel, it is decisively on its way to being won.

Shukran Jazeelan.

Okay, everybody calm down for a minute. First of all thank you for apologizing on behalf of the Iraqi people. It doesn't bother me. And if you want some—if you want the facts, it's a size 10 shoe that he threw. Thank you for your concern, do not worry about it.

Q. A question, Mr. Prime Minister and others, you all talked about the various gains that will come as a result of signing this agreement. But just quickly I have one question about the withdrawal of American forces. Is this going to be an accelerated process that will happen quickly and perhaps prematurely?

President Bush. First of all, we're here at the Iraqi—at the request of the Iraqi government. It's an elected government. There are certain benchmarks that will be met—such as troops out of the cities by June of '09. And then there's a benchmark at the end of the agreement.

As to the pace of meeting those agreements, that will depend of course upon the Iraqi government, the recommendations of the Iraqi military, and the close coordination between General Odierno and our military.

These are very important agreements. And the government of Iraq worked very hard to get them through the parliament.

Jennifer.

Q. (Inaudible.)

President Bush. So what if a guy threw a shoe at me?

Q. But you are also very (inaudible) about progress—(inaudible). Do you consider this a victory lap?

President Bush. No, I consider it a important step in—on the road toward an Iraq that can sustain itself, govern itself and defend itself.

But let me talk about the guy throwing the shoe. It is one way to gain attention. It's like going to a political rally and having people yell at you. It's like driving down the street and have people not gesturing with all five fingers. It's a way for people to, you know, draw—I don't know what the guy's cause is. But one thing is for certain—he caused you to ask me a question about it. I didn't feel the least bit threatened by it. These journalists here were very apologetic, they were—said, this doesn't represent the Iraqi people. But that's what happens in free societies, where people try to draw attention to themselves. And so I guess he was effected, because he caused you to say something about it.

Now, in terms of the agreements, this is a major achievement. Is it the end? Absolutely not. There is more work to be done. And all this basically says is we made good progress and we'll continue to work together to achieve peace. That's what we want—freedom and peace. And so, no, I'm honored to be back here. It's my fourth visit to Iraq as a sitting President, and I have been looking forward to this visit. It's very kind of you, Mr. Prime Minister, to have invited me here.

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Remarks by President Bush and Iraqi President Talabani, December 14, 2008[14]

President George W. Bush and President Jalal Talabani delivered these remarks in Baghdad, Iraq

President Talabani. Today we have the pleasure and honor of seeing our great friend for the Iraqi people, President George W. Bush, who helped us to liberate our country and to reach this day, which we have democracy, human rights, and prosperity gradually in our country. Thanks to him and his courageous leadership that we are here now in this building.

So we are very glad to have him with us and we discussed with him all our problems very frankly and friendly, and we hope that will continue friendship with him, even he'll be back in Texas.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you and the Vice Presidents for greeting me. I've known these men for a long time, and I have come to admire them for their courage and for their determination to succeed. I am also here to herald the passage of the SFA/SOFA as a reminder of our friendship and as a way forward to help the Iraqi people realize the blessings of a free society.

And the work hasn't been easy, but it has been necessary for American security, Iraqi hope, and world peace. So Mr. President, thank you for your friendship and thank you for your hospitality. I'm looking forward to meeting all folks who are involved in the process, leading this political process. And I am just so grateful that I had a chance to come back to Iraq before my presidency ended.

Excerpts of Remarks by President Bush, December 14, 2008[15]

President George W. Bush was interviewed in a roundtable en route to Afghanistan

Q. Quick ducking there, sir.

President Bush. I was worried about you. I thought you were going to have a heart attack.

Q. I thought I was, too. I'm with you on that.

President Bush. Okay, my opening statement: I didn't know what the guy said, but I saw his sole. You were more concerned than I was. I was watching your faces.

Q. I saw something black and round go by my face.

Q. Just to see that—

President Bush.—his first—other than shoes.

Q.—to duck.

President Bush. I'm pretty good at ducking, as most of you will know—

Q. You were quick.

Q.—ducking—

President Bush. I'm talking about ducking your questions.

Q. So you weren't a lame duck.

President Bush. That bad? You know, I—look, I mean it was just a bizarre moment, but I've had other bizarre moments in the presidency. I remember when Hu Jintao was here. Remember we had the big event? He's speaking, and all of a sudden I hear this noise—had no earthly idea what was taking place, but it was the Falun Gong woman screaming at the top of her lungs. It was kind of an odd moment.

Questions. We're going to Afghanistan now, in case you hadn't been told. You probably thought we were going home, but, no. Then we're going to go to—never mind.

Q. Well, not to belabor the point too much, on this man, but I have a serious question about it. Obviously he's expressing a vein of anger that exists in Iraq, and—

President Bush. How do you know? I mean, how do we know what he's expressing? Who—

Q. We had a translator who said he shouted about the widows and orphans.

President Bush. I don't know. I've heard all kinds of stories. I heard he was representing a Baathist TV station. I don't know the facts, but let's find out the facts. All I'm telling you, it was a bizarre moment.

Q. I wanted to ask something broader.

President Bush. I don't think you can take one guy throwing shoes and say this represents a broad movement in Iraq. You can try to do that if you want to. I don't think it would be accurate.

Q. Well, then, separately from him—

President Bush. That's exactly what he wanted you to do. Like I answered on your question, what he wanted you to do was to pay attention to him. And sure enough, you did. Now, look, I'm not suggesting you can't avoid it. But it—

Q. Well, how do you—how well do you think Iraq will transition from U.S. forces moving out of cities, pulling out, taking over—

President Bush. Well, obviously I think it's going to be that the gains we have made are strong enough to accept the movement of troops into—out of cities into bases by June of this year. But more importantly, that's what General Odierno thinks is possible.

Q.—at this point about when you look at Iraq and you still have over 140,000 troops—what are the challenges you see?

President Bush. I think the challenges—many of the challenges are politi-

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cal. In other words, the first big challenge is to have provincial elections that enable people to vote and feel a part of the system, followed by national elections. That's a challenge. This is a challenge, however, that the Iraqis have met before. And obviously—you know, like the SOFA debate, it was a challenge to get SOFA through the—and SFA through the Council of Representatives because of the politics. But nevertheless, they came together.

Young democracies, when they debate big issues, sometimes can be strained. For example, there's a big debate going on between the central government and the provincial governments. But we went through the same debates ourselves. And as the society matures they're going to be able to handle these debates in better fashion. So one of the important things was the success of the SFA-SOFA.

I remember the headlines: falling apart, may not make, confident it will happen, not confident it will happen. I mean, there was a lot of different opinions about whether or not this would eventually happen. And one reason why is because many of the people from the outside covering the debate on the inside were perplexed by the politics that was going on. But this is a democratic society. So I think the political process will be a challenge.

Q. Sir, you got your first look at a part of Baghdad that wasn't the Green Zone and wasn't a military base. What did you think of it?

President Bush. You know, Mark, look, I can't look at a stretch of road and draw a conclusion. I can only really react to what the people who have been here for a period of time tell me. And I mean, the statistics tell you one thing. Obviously, when you look at the violence chart, it's down. But what's more important from my perspective is can a government meet the needs of its people? Can they get beyond differences and come together and meet the needs of its people? As well as are the Iraqi forces becoming more capable of providing more security—is command and control structure better? Are the training missions better? Are they able to move from point A to point B in a way that is—enable them to have successful missions? When there's actionable intelligence can they move?

And when you couple that with a political process that is relatively new compared to older democracies, and the need to provide basic services for its people—one of the things that struck me was not the road, but was the amount of electricity there was inside Baghdad. It looked like a pretty well-lit city.

The other thing that struck me was there was a lot of activity on the ground. Now, you got to remember, my frame of reference is different from you all, you who have been there. I saw a lot of kids playing soccer; I saw a lot of activity, a lot of street activity on the route we took. And General Odierno said a while ago that wouldn't have been the case.

Q. You've always urged patience in withdrawing troops, coming out; you move slowly on that based on conditions on the ground. Now you're talking about within six months that we'll be drawing combat brigades from the city.

President Bush. Cities—right.

Q. Do you think that the Iraqis are ready to step up to that now? Do you think that there are flaws or there—not flaws, but potential conflicts—

President Bush. First of all, I strongly objected to a politics timetable. The debate over the timetable of withdrawal was a—was one that was unilateral in nature proposed by people who didn't think we ought to be in Iraq in the first place.

Secondly, I agreed to the terms of the SOFA because General Petraeus and General Odierno said that these terms are reasonable terms, and that is we'll be moving troops out of cities, into bases, close by to help if need be. Just because a troop is on a base doesn't mean that that troop won't be available to help the Iraqi forces. So they've come to the considered judgment that in the cities, the Iraqis are capable of providing security.

There is a plan in place that has been executed—successfully executed—that now the Iraqis can assume and continue to fulfill. That's a lot different than it was 18 months ago, when the plan was on paper and hadn't been executed yet. And so there's been a model for success.

Q. Is that what you meant by a bipartisan foundation now looking ahead to the next presidency?

President Bush. I meant by a bipartisan foundation that the debates on whether or not it was the right thing or not are past; the need to make sure that we continue the successes can be a bipartisan—can be bipartisan, and should be bipartisan.

President-Elect Obama has now got a seasoned general in Baghdad with a SFA-SOFA agreed to by the United States and Iraq, and by the way, has been kept abreast upon election about what the SOFA—or the SFA-SOFA means.

And one of the challenges for the Iraqis is going to be—for the U.S. is to get up to our committees and get working on the SFA, which were going to do. Part of my mission here was to remind the Iraqi government that there is still a lot of work to be done on SFA-SOFA—our embassy agrees with that, as well—and that—but I also told them that I—that our transition is going to be a seamless transition, and that—I'm never going to put words into President-Elect Obama's mouth, but by the decisions he made with Secretary Gates, for example, I believe he understands the strategic importance of Iraq, and now he's got a framework from which to make decisions.

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Q. Can you tell me what—define the mission of the troops going in there in January and those who Secretary Gates wants in by the summer, the additional—

President Bush. The mission we had before, which is help this young democracy develop the institutions so it can survive on its own; to not repeat the mistakes of the 1980s, which is achieve an objective and leave, and deny a safe haven for al Qaeda.

Martha asked me the question about the conditions in Afghanistan. No question the violence is up. But one reason why the

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violence is up is that we're now putting troops into places where there hadn't been troops—begin to press these guys in places where they hadn't been pressed.

Just like the surge. You might remember, violence went up when we went into Iraq with more troops. And so the objective is to provide enough security so that a political system can develop that will be a—provide a stable platform for economic viability, and get a good education and good health.

Now the degree of difficulty in Afghanistan is high. This is a significantly larger country than Iraq and significantly poorer. The infrastructure is difficult. But nevertheless, the mission is essential; and that is, we cannot achieve our objective of removing al Qaeda safe havens by kicking out Taliban and saying, okay, now let's leave.

And so I recognize we needed more troops. You know, President-elect Obama is going to be making decisions on troops, and we've been calling upon our NATO allies to put in more troops. One of the things that when—was barely noticed was the quiet surge in Afghanistan. We had kind of level platform of troops; then we moved in quite a few number and so did our NATO allies. And now there's going to be—ramp up some more.

Q. In Pakistan, I know that there are plans being worked up that combine—that you have to look at Pakistan and Afghanistan as the problem. Can you talk a little bit about that?

President Bush. Obviously if Pakistan is a place from which people feel comfortable attacking infrastructure, citizens, troops, then it's still going—it's going to make it difficult to succeed in Afghanistan. That's why we're working with the Pakistan government to keep the pressure on the extremists. And the more that we can get Pakistan and Afghanistan to cooperate, the easier it will be to enforce that part of the border region.

Q. What's your assessment of how Pakistan is doing on that front? Are they—

President Bush. Well, first of all, the first question is, is there a determination—(noise on the plane)—the other shoe just dropped. Look, I'm going to be thinking of shoe jokes for a long time.

Q.—(inaudible)—

President Bush. Are you?

Q. Yes.

President Bush. I haven't heard any good ones yet.

President Zardari is determined. He's said so publicly and he's said so to me privately. He looked at me in the eye and said, you don't need to talk to me about extremist violence; after all, my wife got killed by extremists. Like a lot of other situations in which you're trying to deal with extremists who get embedded in the population, there are two aspects—one is to pressure them and to bring them to justice; and simultaneously try to win the hearts and minds of the local folks, which is what is happening Iraq.

See, in Iraq, just remember, we did a clear, semi-build, and no hold. And it's the same concept in Afghanistan—clear, build, and hold—and it required 30,000 more troops to get that done, plus the training mission in Iraq to get enough troops to hold. Obviously our commanders believe that the hold part is good enough for us to be able to move our troops. You understand the reason I moved troops out of cities into bases is to enhance the credibility of the government.

Well, in Afghanistan, the same principle applies. We have cleared and we have built some, but in certain provinces we have not held. So now more troops will go in, and as they start to move, you'll see violence tick up because they're clearing new areas. PRTs, which were very successful in Iraq, are now being increased in Afghanistan. That's part of the build part. And training up Afghanis to be a part of the hold is going to take a while, but nevertheless, there's optimism there because the Afghan fighters are good fighters, they're proud to be in the military, and we're headed toward 135,000.

Q. You said there were two elements to Pakistan's work, though. You said one was whether Zardari was determined; you said he was. What was the—

President Bush. That's the press—find them and get them, press them hard, and then win the hearts and minds of the locals through economic development.

Q. Sir, was that made more difficult by the use of UAVs? Are you and Hamid Karzai on the same page on that?

President Bush. Well, as you know—you know very well that when it comes to certain matters, the U.S. government doesn't discuss operations.

Q. Sir, Afghanistan is made up of a lot of different ethnic groups.

President Bush. Yes.

Q. A lot of them do not support Hamid Karzai. Is he the right person to lead the country through the next—

President Bush. Well, that will be determined by the Afghanistan people. That's the great thing about elections. He got 55 percent. You know, some of us would have loved to have 55 percent. And—51.5 [percent], not bad.

So the way you resolve a question like that is to have open and transparent elections. I believe strongly in the election process because it is the best way to determine for certain what people think. You know, a controversial decision of mine was to press forward with the elections in the Palestinian territories. I was told, well, the wrong side may win. My attitude is, the best way to determine what the people think is to let them vote.

And Hamas didn't win because they said we promise you violence; Hamas said we'd win because we promise you better services. So my answer to the losers of the election is, if they have credibility at providing better services, why don't you figure out how you can do a better job and respond to the people? That's what elections do.

So the election process in Afghanistan will once again provide people an oppor-

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tunity to say, we're tired of this, or we appreciate that. And it's the good public servant who listens to what the people say.

Q. Mr. President, if there was one—I'm sorry, go ahead.

Q. You mentioned the Middle East. Is there any more to do in your remaining 37 days on that?

President Bush. Ed, we've—Condi is working a U.N. Security Council that affirms the Annapolis process. The question would be, will President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert want to lay out a specific state? And that's to be determined. But there is a way forward now.

The big sea change in the Middle East on this issue is that by far the majority of people recognize that the only way to peace is two states. And in 2001, that was not the case. In 2001, most of the Israeli political class believed that greater Israel was the only way to have security. And the Palestinian Authority was run by a person who could not deliver peace and was not trustworthy. So now you've got a Palestinian President who recognizes Israel's right to exist, and a Israeli political class that says, if we want security, if we want peace, we've got to work for a Palestinian state. So the framework is there.

And the other point—the other significant change was that Annapolis brought many in the Arab world to the table. And in order for there to ever be a Palestinian state, any Palestinian leader is going to have to have strong backing from the neighboring states, which was one of the reasons why Camp David fell apart under my predecessor. In other words—the other reason why is because the interlocutor on the Palestinian side just was—failed the Palestinian people. Not President—this was not President Clinton's fault.

Ms. Perino. Going to take one more.

Q. Just—in fact, it's sort of a wrap-up question—

President Bush. I'm going to go take a nap. Anybody—

Q. If there is one thing you wish—

President Bush. Steven Lee, you want to take a nap?

Q. No, I'm all right.

Q. He doesn't need sleep.

President Bush. You look a little—Mind if I call you Jimmy Lee?

Q. Steven Lee.

President Bush. Stevie Lee, I mean.

Q. Stevie.

Q. If there is anything when you look at this last month or so you have left that you wish you could accomplish, in the foreign policy arena or anything you want to say, if you had a single thing that you want to accomplish, what would it be?

President Bush. Last month? Well, it's to solidify the frameworks that will enable problems to be solved.

Take, for example, the North Korean issue. It is much easier to solve a problem diplomatically when there is more than one voice speaking to the leader of North Korea. And a success of this administration is to put a framework in place that has China, the United States, and South Korea and Russia and Japan all at the table, all saying the same thing. In this case, the message is, we need to have a verifiable process in place to determine whether or not you're fulfilling your obligations.

Secondly, in the old process it used to be, we will give you what you ask for and hope that you respond. Now it is, here's what you must do if you want our help. We've reversed the process. And it's not just the United States speaking. So right now what you're watching is that the leader of North Korea is trying to test the process. First he said something Japan, and now he's saying something about so-and-so. And so the objective is to keep our partners firm on the understanding that the six-party process is the best way to solve the North Korean issue.

So he'll test—and this isn't the first time he's tested. He signed an agreement in September of 2005. Everybody said, great, looks like we're on our way to having the problem solved. And then he tested and changed his mind and did this, that, and the other. And the key is to be firm and patient with a structure that will enable the next President or the next President after that to be able to solve the problem diplomatically.

So there's one area right there that we're working on. Obviously the Security Council resolution on dealing with the Annapolis process. We got the SOFA—SFA-SOFA done on Iraq.

Q. You got India done.

President Bush. Well, India was done, but she said the last month.

Q. Why is it you want to be in Afghanistan?

President Bush. I want to be in Afghanistan to say thank you to President Karzai, to let the people of Afghanistan know that the United States has stood with them and will stand with them. See, it's—if you notice, Steven Lee asked a good question—bipartisan foundation. These nations need to know that the United States has been with them, is with them, and will be with them. So the trip is a way to, say thanks to leaders that I have been working with for a long period of time.

By the way, both leaders in my last conversations, or the last couple of them, have been saying, you must come and visit us before you leave. And of course, I never committed until however long it was ago—48 hours ago.

So, okay, I'm going to go take a nap.

Remarks by Secretary of Defense Gates, December 14, 2008[16]

Secretary Robert Gates delivered these remarks at Balad AFB, Iraq

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Secretary Gates. (In progress)—so I have to tell you I know—I have a little bit of experience in—(inaudible)—and a lot of experience in the government, some of it has been with volunteer institutions. So I hope you haven't had to wait around too long.

When this visit was first planned a few weeks ago, it was supposed to be part of a farewell tour, my last chance as secretary of Defense to give a final goodbye and thanks to our awesome men and women in uniform. As you may have heard, there's been a slight change of plans. All I can tell you is I now have a better appreciation of what it's like to be stop-lossed.

Among the many reasons I visit commanders and troops in the field, one is a little selfish. It gives me a chance to get out of Washington, D.C. You know, Washington is the only place in the world where you can see a prominent person walking down Lover's Lane holding his own hand—a place where people often say, I'll double-cross that bridge when I get to it.

They say Washington is the city of monuments, the most monumental things I've seen in—since I went there over 42 years ago were the egos of some of the people who work there. There's an old story about the time Lyndon Johnson landed in an airfield in Vietnam. An excited airman looked at Marine One, his helicopter, and said, is that your helicopter, Mr. President? And Johnson looked around at everything else on the line, and he said, son, they're all my helicopters.

He one time had the chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Ludwig Erhard to the LBJ Ranch in Texas. And Erhard looked at the president at one point and said, Mr. President, were you born in a log cabin? And Johnson looked down at Erhard, and he said, why, no, Mr. Chancellor, I was born in a manger.

In all seriousness, there were a lot of reasons to accept President-elect Obama's request to stay on as secretary of Defense. Among others, the crucial next phase we are entering here in Iraq, the plus-up of forces in Afghanistan, the tough choices in a tough economy that the Pentagon is going to need to make regarding the budget and priorities and a wounded-warrior care system that still needs more work.

But I will tell you that no reason was more compelling to me than the fact that if hundreds of thousands of young Americans are doing their duty, your duty, without fail and often under difficult and dangerous circumstances, then I really had no choice but to follow suit, although it does mean failing government retirement a second time.

Before opening the floor for questions, I wanted to make a few comments about why I'm here and what I'd like to take away from our discussion. First, I wanted to be able to look you in the eye and thank you on my own behalf, on behalf of our current and future commander in chief and on behalf of the American people.

Each one of you could have done something easier, safer and probably with better pay, but you chose to step forward to wear the country's uniform. You chose to volunteer and, in some cases, re-volunteer, knowing full well that a deployment to a combat theater was the most likely result.

These past two years, I've come to work every day with the belief that the first, second and third priority of the secretary of Defense in war time and the department that he leads is to do everything possible to get troops what they need to accomplish their mission on the battlefield and return home safely. That has been my conviction from day one.

Our forces will draw down over time and become less visible.

And so from virtually a standing start over the last 18 months, we've built and sent to the theater some 12,000 MRAPs. I know they're not the most comfortable vehicles, but they're saving a lot of lives and limbs. We've also increased and are still increasing the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities that you need. And we'll do whatever else it takes to give you the tools to complete your mission and come home safely as well as whatever it takes to create a warrior-care system worthy of the sacrifices made by so many brave troops.

Iraq has been a long and a hard fight. And to be sure, the mission is not over, though its parameters and its focus will change. Iraq and the U.S. recently approved a new status of forces agreement to govern a continuing U.S. military presence in this country.

Our forces will draw down over time and become less visible. Iraqi security forces will continue to shoulder more and more of the burden every day. But despite what you might hear about an increased focus on Afghanistan, let there be no doubt that your mission and the mission of all American troops in Iraq remains incredibly important during this crucial transition period.

The enemies of a stable and self-governing Iraq are resilient. They are lethal, and they are always looking to reverse the gains of the last year and a half. It is vital that we get the end game right here, and that will continue to depend on your courage, commitment and sacrifice.

I understand that we have a pretty good representation of the services and units from this base, the logistical hub of operations of Operation Iraqi Freedom and I'm told the busiest airport in the entire American military. Medical care and MEDEVAC, close-air support, ISR, supply and transport, you do it all. And when it comes to MEDEVAC, you've broken new ground in the history of warfare, and you've saved countless lives in the process. And I thank you for your efforts.

Just a few minutes ago, I met privately with about a dozen E-6s and E-7s representing different services and units here. I've made it a point during my visits to military installations around the world to have these meetings with everyone from junior enlisted to company and field grade officers, from active duty to Guard and Reserves, without the chain of command present.

Hearing their questions, concerns, aspirations unvarnished and uncensored has been bracing. And it's shaped my thinking on everything from day-to-day military operations to enhancing the quality of life for service members and their families. And believe me, testifying in front of Congress is nothing compared to meeting with a group of spouses at Fort Hood.

But I will tell you that it was one of those groups that one of the spouses made

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the suggestion about how about having the authority to share GI Bill education benefits with spouses and with dependents. And that suggestion, as the Jewish prayer goes, from your lips to God's ears, that is now legislation. And the original idea came out of a meeting like this.

I hope this setting won't keep you from being direct and honest with your questions and concerns. Don't worry about the reporters in the back. They're good people.

So at this point, I just want to thank you for your time and your attention. I look forward to your questions. And when we've done some questions, then I'd like the opportunity to thank each one of you individually, get a photograph and give you a coin.

So with that, I'll stop, and you can start. And we've got a couple of microphones here on the side. So fire away. Thank you.

Q. I guess I'll start Mr. Secretary. My last name starts with a Z, so I need to—(inaudible). You spoke in Afghanistan about creating more of a cooperative effort with the government of Afghanistan. What are we doing with the government of Pakistan in the same way, coordinating attacks against terrorists in Pakistan?

Secretary Gates. Well, the problem that we face is that, for most of its history, Pakistan has regarded India as its existential threat. And I think it's only been in the last few months that they have come to realize that what is going on in the western part of their country also represents an existential threat to their country from their own standpoint.

And so we've seen their army going from basically doing nothing in the northwest frontier area earlier this year to being pretty actively engaged in combat. They're getting better a counterinsurgency. They're a little bit like the U.S. Army 10 years ago, just as our Army was principally trained to take on the Soviets at the (inaudible), the Pakistani army is trained largely to take on the Indians.

And so they are learning as we learn here in Iraq how to do counterinsurgency. And they are suffering a lot of casualties. They are in the fight and have been for the last number of weeks.

We are eager the help them. We have to partner with them. We are ready, willing and able, but we are also sensitive to their sovereignty. They are very sensitive to the size of the American footprint in their country. But I think we are beginning to see the growth of trilateral cooperation among Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States in trying to deal with this threat on the border.

I think it's a long-term problem, but I am heartened that the Pakistanis are taking it seriously and do, I think, now appreciate the dangers to them of what is going on out there in those ungoverned spaces.

So it's going slowly at this point, but they are making sacrifices. Pakistanis are dying in conflict with these violent extremists. And we just want to help them as much as we can.

Yeah.

Q. Yes, with the current changes and the status here in Iraq and changes happening in Afghanistan, do you see any changes in the way the units will be rotated through? Will the times continue at the 12 month? Will they change that, or do you see any changes at all?

Secretary Gates. I think for the time being that the Army deployments, at least, will remain at 12 months. What we're trying to do is increase the dwell time back home. And I mean, our goal is to get to a year deployed, two years at home and then, hopefully, someday, three years at home. And then for the Guard and Reserves, a year deployed and five years at home.

I think this will be a gradual process. I think we'll probably go from one to one to one to 15 months or one to 18 months. As we increase that dwell time, as I talked about at lunch, you'll see, I think, a return to full-spectrum training instead of the almost singular focus on counterinsurgency at this point.

But I think that until—we will not have—I am confident we will never have in Afghanistan—I shouldn't say never. Every time I say "never" I get into trouble, like I'll "never" stay on.

But I think that it's highly unlikely that we will ever have a troop presence in Afghanistan anything like what we've had in Iraq. And so I think we'll meet General McKiernan's request for the four additional BCTs over the course of the next year or so.

But as I've said on this trip, I would be very concerned about a substantially bigger U.S. presence than that in Afghanistan. The Soviets were there with 120,000 troops and lost because they didn't have the support of the Afghan people. And at a certain people, we get such a big footprint, we begin to look like an occupier and not the ally and supporter of the Afghans. So the real solution in Afghanistan is the expansion of the Afghan national army and the Afghan police with our international team backing them up.

All of which is to say I think the number of brigade combat teams and enablers that we have deployed outside of the United States or abroad in combat situations over the next year or so overall is going to decline. And that's the point at which we can begin to look first at longer dwell times. And I think General Casey has said publicly that he would like, at some point, to get to nine-month deployments. And that may be possible, but I don't think it's going to be possible, certainly, for the next year and perhaps for two or three more.

Q. Mr. Gates, with a majority of the military operations being counterinsurgency, in light of the economic crisis we're facing, do you feel it's still appropriate to spend billions of dollars in new technology, like the nuclear submarines and aircraft? Do you feel more of that money should be going to more uparmored humvees and vehicles and body armor for troops on the ground?

Secretary Gates. Well, I think we have to provide—my view and what I've argued for the past two years is our first priority is to provide you with what you need out here, whether it's body armor or MRAPs or ISR or anything else. That's our first priority. And if there are unmet needs, then we need to know about them, and we will fix it.

By the same token, we live in a very

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complicated world. And I think it's important for us to sustain our technological superiority and advantage over any possible adversaries. There are some pretty aggressive and ambitious modernization programs being undertaken by the Chinese and the Russians. We're aware of the nuclear programs in both Iran and North Korea. And we have to be prepared and able to deal with those challenges as well.

I think in the current budget environment or the current economic environment, we're going to have to make some hard choices, but I think we have some choices to make. And I think we can make those choices and still sustain the technological advantage that we have and be able to provide confidence to the American people that no matter who the adversary, they won't have a chance against the American military.

Q. Mr. Secretary, what measures, if any, are yourself and the administration taking to provide for career soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in all services during this time of war?

Secretary Gates. Well, I would tell you that I'm old enough to remember what it was like during and after Vietnam in terms of the reaction of the American people to our men and women in uniform. And I'm very happy to say it just couldn't be different.

And I think a good example is one that I just referred to a minute ago, and that is the significant improvements in GI Bill benefits, education benefits under the Webb bill and the Congress's willingness to extend that so that it provides the active force the ability to help their dependents and spouses as well.

In many respects, when it comes to benefits for troops, whatever we sent to the Hill, across the political spectrum, they trump. I went up two years ago and asked for a 3 percent pay increase, they have 3.5 (percent). So I learned my lesson. I went up for 3.5 (percent), in January, you get 3.9 (percent). So I don't know where this ends, but it's all good for you.

And so I think that, in terms of benefits for troops, in terms of what we're trying to do to improve warrior care for those who have been wounded and to care for the families of the fallen, I can't think of a request that we have made, either to the administration, President Bush or the Congress that they have not responded and, I would say, responded generously.

And I think it's a reflection of the extraordinary admiration that the American people have for you all. And you know, you've probably all had the experience of going through airports at home, and it's just, let me tell you, a hell of a lot different than it was 40 years ago.

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary. My question to you is, with the change in presidency, what major change do you foresee for this war?

Secretary Gates. Well, I think that in a way, the signing of the SOFA has pointed the direction for this war, if the drawdowns we already had undertaken didn't do that already.

We're going to have to be out of the cities, out of populated areas by the 30th of June. That represents a really significant change of mission. And it calls for us to have all of our combat units out by the end of 2011.

The fact is that the June 30th date was the date we gave them, not vice-versa, because we believe, our commanders here believe that that's the point at which we will have turned over all 18 provinces to provincial Iraqi control. So we're already in a transition of mission. And so now it really becomes a question of the pacing of the remaining drawdowns of the brigade combat teams.

And the president-elect, as everybody knows, has talked about 16 months, but he's also talked about the drawdowns being responsible, and he's also talked about wanting to listen and hear from commanders on the ground.

So I think this will be—we are in the process of the drawdown. We are, I believe, in terms of the American commitment, in the end game here in Iraq. And so it really becomes a question of the timing for that end game.

And I think the president-elect means exactly what he says. He wants to do it in a responsible way, a way that is safe for our soldiers and with the advice of our commanders.

Q. Mr. Secretary, I read an article that you wrote about the National Defense Strategy in regards to small wars now and in the future. And in that article, you stated that future attacks are more likely to come from a failing state than from an actual aggressive state. What actions are we taking to prevent attacks from future failing states and in the present, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary Gates. Well, I think the most important thing for us to do is to play a constructive role in countries before they become failing or failed states. And this gets at the whole idea of, how do we strengthen our ability to train their security forces? How do we train their military? How do we provide them with the kind of economic, developmental and other kinds of assistance, help them build institutions that prevent them from becoming a failed or failing state?

And I think this is really all about, how do we strengthen the civilian capacity of the American government to play that kind of a role?

Here in Iraq and also in Afghanistan, men and women in uniform have often undertaken those missions because there weren't enough civilians with that expertise, who were deployable, who were expeditionary and who could come out here and help. There are a lot who have, and they're very brave, and they're very talented. But there just aren't enough of them.

And so I think one of the challenges that we've been talking about for the last year, the Congress and the administration and others, is, going forward, how do we strengthen this civilian component that can serve as a complement to what you do but, at the same time, be in early on the ground in places that are having domestic problems and prevent them from becoming a failed state so that we then don't have to deal with terrorists or other violent extremists in those states or the kind of chaos that prevails in a place like Somalia that has contributed to the rise of piracy? It's probably been 200 years since we had an NSC meeting on piracy, but there you go, we're back at it.

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Q. Hello, Mr. Secretary. Specialist Thorpe. My question is, sir, with the type of enemy that we're facing, the terrorists, the extremists, it seems to be a war of ideas and ideologies, more or less we are in the infidel to them, et cetera, et cetera. Is there any hopes in the future of there being some sort of personnel from America and other allied nations, coalition forces to sort of come into these areas where the terrorists are, or people who we consider to be terrorists, and somehow maybe bring some sort of peace since this seems to be a religious war to them and somehow meet people at the playing field, I guess?

Secretary Gates. Well, this gets at the whole area of strategic communications. And as I said in a speech last year, how did we end up in a place where the country that invented public relations ended up being outcommunicated by a guy in a cave? And partly, it's because we haven't devoted enough resources to it. Partly, we don't have enough people doing it. Partly, we are still operating, I think, in communications too much in a 20th century mindset rather than a 21st century in terms of the use of the Internet.

I was in Afghanistan a few months ago, and I flew out to a post province on the Pakistani border. And I'm sitting there with a group of village elders. And here's this old guy in a long, white beard who says, I read your—(inaudible)—lecture at Kansas State on the Internet about balance of power. And I'm thinking, holy cow! Where did he even get electricity much less a computer?

And so that's the world we live in. And so we look at these underdeveloped countries and their poverty and the lack of electric power and reliable water and so on, but they are on the Internet, they watch television, they communicate. And I think that we don't do a very good job of that. And I think we have to think anew how we do this because it is an ideological conflict.

And the irreconcilables, we will have to kill. There's just no two ways about it. But there are a lot of people out there who are susceptible to that message, who are susceptible to being recruited. And we have the opportunity to recruit them away from the extremists or to keep them from turning to the extremists so that in fact we're dealing with a handful of fanatics instead of a larger group of people who are disaffected and who have come to hate us for various reasons.

So I think there's huge opportunity in this, as a matter of fact. But it's going to require some creativity on our part in terms of how we go at this challenge. And I think that that's a real challenge facing the next administration.

Q. Mr. Secretary, PFC Lodella. I'm just wondering if you guys were aware of our vehicles, our MRAPs and all our uparmored vehicles and how they're continuing to have mechanical problems. And with the budget being cut, we have a shortage of supplies for, like, the MRAPs and the ASVs and our humvees. We're having a lot of problems with the undercarriage on these vehicles. Is the government aware of these mechanical problems and how it can be fixed?

Secretary Gates. Actually, we are. And there is money in the budget. I can assure you that we will get them fixed. When we made the decision to get the MRAPs out here as fast as possible, we knew that there were going to be problems because we didn't go through the usual years-long, Defense Department test-and-evaluation process. We didn't go through the process of ensuring that the supply line was full before we deployed them.

It seemed to me that it was more important to get them out here and get troops in them than to make sure we crossed the t's and dotted all the i's. And we knew we'd have to come along behind and fix some of these issues.

Just as an example, one of the reports that I got just last week was that there had been some problems with some of the MRAPs on the fire extinguisher system and that sometimes they leak and sometimes they go off accidentally. And so we've got kits coming out here to try and repair that.

When I was out last summer, they were telling me about the suspension problems and, particularly, the vulnerability of the axles. So I think we're trying to go back and fix all those problems. But we knew what we did last year, the MRAP going from conception to full industrial production in less than a year, was the first major military procurement program like that to do so in less than a year since World War II.

And it just seemed to me more important to get the capability and the protection out here, and then we'll come along behind and fix whatever problems there are. And that's what we're doing. We've got the money for it, and we're doing it as fast as we can.

And we're already in the process of trying to select and then procure a vehicle, an MRAP-lite vehicle, for Afghanistan that is more maneuverable, it is for all terrain and is somewhat lighter.

Q. And I have another question, Mr. Secretary. We also have an ammo shortage. Our supply, like our budget, is, you know, our supply is low. And every time we test fire, you know, we're firing the ammo. And then when we go outside of the wire, it becomes a major concern for us when we're outside of the wire.

Secretary Gates. Well, I think this is my 10th or 11th trip to Iraq, and I have never heard that, but we'll certainly look into it.

Secretary Gates. The one thing you ought to have plenty of is ammunition.

Q. Mr. Secretary, Sergeant Yoke from the 332nd Maintenance Group. My question is about the total military. With the toll this war has caused on the nation, the economy the way it is and a president with a new direction, the addition of AFRICOM and everything that has (inaudible) to effect on the military, what can we expect in the next four years for a total force structure? Are we looking at more drawdowns, new aircraft coming in, old ones going out? What can we expect?

Secretary Gates. Well, I will tell you, I feel very strongly about sustaining the

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number of people in the military in all of the services. I feel very strongly about protecting the increase of 65,000 in the Army, 27,000 in the Marine Corps. I stopped the drawdowns in the Air Force. They were headed to 316,000. They're stopped at 330(,000) or 332,000. The Navy has stopped drawing down and I think in the FY '10 budget wants to add back about 7,000 people.

I think we cut way too far in the 1990s. We have too few people to do all the missions that are expected of the American military.

My view is my highest priority is to sustain the all-volunteer force in all four services at the levels where we are or where we have set a goal. And if we have to cut some major procurement program in order to protect that, then I'm prepared to do that.

I think we have some choices, as I said earlier, but I think that we have to protect our people first. And we'll deal with the other issues as they come along.

I still think we have the capacity to be able to stay ahead of all of our potential adversaries, to fight the wars that we are in and still sustain the force levels that we have. I think that the statements that the president-elect has made about a strong military, he has supported the increase in the size of the Army and the Marine Corps, so I hope that he and I will be on exactly the same page. And based on his public statements, I think we are.

Q. Mr. Secretary, Sergeant First Class Matane, 3rd Expeditionary—(inaudible)—command. I'm a bit of a history buff, and I've been fascinated in seeing the changes in the military in my lifetime. And I also know that the way the military plans for the future, there are things in the works now that we won't see happening for several years. I was just wondering, based on your experience, how do you think the military is going to look different, in general terms in, say, 10, 15 years from now?

Secretary Gates. I was telling the NCOs at lunch that when I was in the intelligence business, we always divided everything we wanted to know into two categories—secrets and mysteries. Secrets were things that were ultimately knowable. And the mysteries were those that we don't.

The answer to your question is a little bit of a mystery and maybe a little bit of a secret.

I think that—I hope that we will see a force that is the size of the one we have now. I think we will—I'll give you an example of something I saw coming out of the future combat systems that it's just—it's going to—two things.

First of all, I think one of the things we have seen in this conflict that has made it different than any other war we have ever fought is the marriage of combat operations and intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance, the ability to have long dwell over a target, the ability for relatively small units to have situational awareness of what's going on, I think, has saved a lot of lives and has made us significantly more effective. And that's why we're pouring as much ISR into both Iraq and Afghanistan as we can.

And I think, as our troop levels here come down, the demand for ISR will probably increase. So I think this use of ISR and the integration of intelligence and operations is something that we will see continue and that is, in many respects, revolutionizing the way we fight.

Related to that, when I was at Fort Bliss a while ago, I saw an experimental UAV as part of the SCS that a PFC carries in a backpack. And so every platoon, if these things are bought, every platoon would have its own UAV. And this thing will go up and hover at a few hundred feet and with the PFC having a little keyboard with the platoon, and he can maneuver this thing so he can see around corners, the roofs of buildings and the whole works.

The implications of that for ground warfare, it seems to me, are just gigantic. I think that this marriage of technology with combat has great opportunities, even at the small-unit level.

I think that would be one of the big changes that I would see. It's already under way, and I can see it intensifying as we go forward. I think there will be some other capabilities that are hard for me to imagine now that will put more into the hands of our troops, more capability.

One area that's been revolutionized during the war in Iraq has been the whole realm of military medicine and our ability to save lives on the battlefield. It's also presented us with some severe challenges because today's soldiers are surviving wounds that in every previous war would have been fatal but are still very severe.

So those are a couple of examples of how I think it will be different. But at the end of the day, 15 years from now, it will be the same as it is today and has been in the past, and that is it will still end up depending on individual mean and women in uniform who have a belief in their mission and a lot of courage.

1 White House Press Release, October 15, 2008.
2 White House Press Release, October 29, 2008.
3 Treasury Department Press Release, November 3, 2008.
4 Dept. of State Press Release, November 10, 2008.
5 White House Press Release, November 27, 2008.
6 White House Press Release, November 27, 2008.
7 White House Press Release, November 27, 2008.
8 Dept. of Defense Press Release, December 2, 2008.
9 White House Press Release, December 6, 2008.
10 White House Press Release, December 6, 2008.
11 Dept. of Defense Press Release, December 13, 2008.
12 White House Press Release, December 14, 2008.
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14 White House Press Release, December 14, 2008.
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