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# THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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## Press Briefing by National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice

James S. Brady Briefing Room

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9:45 A.M. EDT

DR. RICE: Good morning. Last week at the Army War College, President Bush spoke about his vision for a democratic, secure and prosperous Iraq in the heart of the Middle East. As the President said, a free and self-governing Iraq will deny terrorists a base of operation and discredit their ideology. A free **Iraq** will make America safer and more secure, and serve as a beacon of reform in the region.

To achieve the goal of a democratic and free Iraq, the President outlined his five-point plan for transfer of sovereignty to Iraqis. Step one of this plan is to hand over authority to a sovereign Iraqi government. Step two, to help establish the stability and security in Iraq the democracy requires. Step three, the continue building Iraq's infrastructure that was neglected for so many decades. Step four, to encourage more international support. And step five of the President's plan is to move forward toward free national elections that will bring forward Iraq's first ever democratically elected government.

As part of this five-point plan, today in Iraq, U.N. Special Advisor Lakhdar Brahimi, and the Iraqis have announced the formation and composition of the Iraqi interim government, which will help set conditions for Iraq's first reelections. That government includes six women, five regional officials -- including governors of large areas like Dewanee-a and Sala-Hadeen. It has four members of the former Iraqi Governing Council.

As you know, Mr. Brahimi has spent weeks consulting with the Iraqi people on their interim government, including consultations with a large number of representatives of Iraq's public, political parties, professional organizations, women's and youth organizations, trade unions, tribal and religious leaders, and academics. Today's announcement is a positive step for the future of a free Iraq and the President and all of us want to thank Mr. Brahimi for his tireless efforts under what were very demanding circumstances.

**Looking ahead in the next week-and-a-half**, the President will continue his close consultations with his international counterparts as he leaves now on a trip for Europe. On Thursday, the President and First Lady will begin travel to Italy and France. On Friday, June 4th, the President will meet with Italian President Ciampi. Mrs. Bush will then join the President to call upon his Holiness, Pope John Paul II, following which, the President and Mrs. Bush will lay a wreath at Fosse Ardeatine Friday evening, the President and Mrs. Bush will join Prime Minister Berlusconi for dinner.

On Saturday, June 5th, the President will meet with Prime Minister Berlusconi and the two leaders will then have a joint press availability. The President and Mrs. Bush will depart for Paris, where the President will meet with President Chirac, followed by a joint press availability and working dinner. On Sunday, June 6th, the 60th anniversary of the D-Day landings, the President and Mrs. Bush will travel to Normandy, France. They will visit and pay their respects at the American Cemetery, where the President will also deliver remarks. President and Mrs. Bush will then participate with other world leaders in a multi-national lunch and ceremony. At the conclusion of that ceremony, the President and Mrs. Bush will depart for Sea Island, Georgia, where they will host the 2004 G8 Summit.

This year's G8 Summit will focus on advancing freedom by strengthening international cooperation in order to make the world safer and better. Key discussions will take place on the President's broader Middle East initiative, action against WMD proliferation, peace-keeping issues, a secure and facilitated international travel initiative on Africa and on private sector-led growth and development.

On Tuesday, June 8th, the President will host a working lunch with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan, followed by a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Martin. President Bush will also host bilateral meetings with Chancellor Schroeder of Germany, and President Putin of Russia. In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush will host a social dinner for G8 leaders and spouses.

On Wednesday, June 9th, the President will begin his morning with a working breakfast with Prime Minister Blair of Great Britain. The President then will open the G8 Summit with a morning plenary session. During lunch, the G8 leaders will be joined by the leaders of Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Turkey and Yemen. This is an opportunity for the G8 to discuss how it can support freedom and political, economic and social progress in the Middle East, and to hear from these leaders about their efforts to pursue democracy and reform in their countries, as well as to hear about Turkey's success in developing secular democracy in a country with a mainly Muslim population.

The afternoon will include a plenary session on the preeminent security issues of WMD, proliferation and global terrorism.

On Thursday, June 10th, the President will meet with Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi and then with French President Chirac. Following the bilateral meetings, the President will participate in a wrap-up session of the G8.

The G8 leaders will then have lunch with the leaders of Algeria, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and

Uganda. This lunch is an opportunity for the G8 and African leaders to discuss how they can cooperate to accelerate private sector-led growth and development in Africa. The discussion will cover key issues including, among others, entrepreneurship, foreign direct investment and trade, famine, food security and agricultural productivity. HIV/AIDS and polio will also be discussed, as well as peacekeeping and support to peace operations on the continent.

This lunch reflects the President's strong commitment to Africa and, with the rest of the G-8, continued support for the new partnership for Africa's development and the G-8 Africa Action Plan.

Following the lunch, the President will travel to Savannah, Georgia, where he will meet all of you in a press conference, and then he will return to Washington. If there are any updates to the schedule, and there may well be, we'll get them too you.

All right, I'm happy to take questions. Steve.

Q Can you talk a little bit about the internal machinations that led to this **interim government** emerging? And were you concerned when Aman Pachichi pulled out of the running for the job?

DR. RICE: Well, it was a very extensive process, and it was a process that began weeks ago with Mr. Brahimi meeting with large numbers of people, traveling around the country, meeting with people, meeting with associations and professional groups. He then came back to start consideration of lists, as you might imagine.

I want to be very clear. We very early on with Mr. Brahimi, as he was developing short lists, had an understanding with him that the names that he was considering were all acceptable to the United States. And, indeed, Great Britain was involved in that as well.

The process by which he had to determine who was acceptable to the largest number of Iraqis who might have the largest amount of support was like any political process, lots of people coming in and talking. I'm sure that there were people lobbying; all kinds of things were going on.

But I can tell you firmly and without any contradiction, this is a terrific list, a really good government, and we're very pleased with the names that have emerged.

John.

Q There's a sense, Dr. Rice, that the U.S. and perhaps, Brahimi, as well, kind of, if you will, got rolled by the IGC here, that they were the ones that came out with the announcement on Allawi at the end of the week. They were against your choice of -- or the suggestion of Pachichi for President and put forward their own candidate. Can you disabuse us of any notion that they were the ones who were pulling the strings on this?

DR. RICE: I can absolutely tell you, John, that the Governing Council members, as some of them, as people who represented some of the largest parties, certainly had a say in this. But this was really a process in which Mr. Brahimi canvassed, discussed, took the temperature of lots of people about who would be the most effective leaders for this particular point in time in Iraq's history.

I can tell you, for instance, that the United States did not have a single candidate for President. That is simply wrong. The United States was aware that there were a couple, at one time, other names, but at least two people who were being considered, and that they were acceptable to us. And so the idea that we had single candidates

is simply wrong. This was a very intense process of consultation and negotiation, mostly among the Iraqis, as well as it should be, not just among the Governing Council but wide numbers of Iraqis. And I would just call your attention to the fact that the new government, there are, with the government, that means the Presidency, the Prime Ministership, and all of the Cabinet members, there are only four numbers of the current Iraqi Governing Council.

Q But in terms of the top two positions, isn't it true that the Iraqi Governing Council got just what it wanted?

DR. RICE: I don't know if the Iraqi Governing Council got just what it wanted or not. I do know that in Prime Minister Allawi and in President Ghazi, all of the parties believe that these are very, very good choices. And that includes, by the way, the United States. I just want to emphasize, we did not have a single candidate for the Presidency.

Q Does the new government and a changing landscape in Iraq make it any easier to -- for the President to recruit other members or build international support in Iraq? Where do you see that going?

DR. RICE: Well, Terry, we'll see. But I do believe that people understand that this is now moving forward. There has been among most of the members of the international community, both those who were part of the coalition and those who were not, a sense that it was extremely important to end the occupation, to have the transfer of full sovereignty to the Iraqis. And that process is now very much underway with this excellent government that Mr. Brahimi has been able to put together.

The conversations that I've had with my counterparts around the world suggest that what people are now focused on is trying to get a U.N. Security Council resolution to support that government, trying to get a U.N. Security Council resolution that will put in place a multinational force -- all of the things that need to be done -- because there is an understanding that the Iraqis now are going to have control of their own political future and that that needs to be supported by the international community.

So, in short, yes, I do think that the movement toward a government that can now govern in Iraq on behalf of the Iraqi people -- by the way, govern only until there are elections. I mean, it's extremely important to note that this is an interim government, this is not the final stage in the Iraqi political transition. There will be elections either at the end of the year or at the beginning of next year. And the most important thing that this government will be doing is to try to create the conditions under which those elections can take place.

Helen.

Q To put this all in perspective, what is the latest rationale of why we invaded Iraq --

DR. RICE: Well, Helen, the rationale --

Q Especially without any **weapons of mass destruction**.

DR. RICE: The rationale has been the same from the very beginning. Saddam Hussein was a very dangerous man, in the world's most dangerous region. This is someone who had acquired weapons of mass destruction, used them before, been sanctioned by the United Nations for 12 years, by his refusal to give them up. In Resolution 1441, had been ordered by the international community to finally disarm, and had failed to do so. He had invaded his neighbors, he had gassed his own people --

Q Twelve years ago and he had been punished for that.

DR. RICE: Helen, would you like to let me answer the question?

He had gassed his own people, he had gasses his neighbors, he was paying \$25,000 to suicide bombers. He was the world's -- a dangerous man in the world's most dangerous region.

The President and a coalition, a large coalition of states decided it was time to put an end to this problem and to give the Iraqi people a chance at freedom and to give the Middle East a chance at a more stable environment in which democracy might --

Q Do you acknowledge there was no imminent threat?

DR. RICE: Helen, I believe the President --

Q It was sold on the fact that he was an imminent threat --

DR. RICE: -- I believe the President -- Helen, would you like me to finish answering the question? I believe the President said in his speech at Cincinnati, some say that we must wait until this threat is imminent. What there was, was a threat from Saddam Hussein --

Q What was --

DR. RICE: -- threats to his neighbors. This was, after all, someone against whom we had gone to war in 1991, against whom we had gone to acts of war in 1998, who was flying missions against our pilots, trying to patrol the no-fly zone every day. This was the world's most dangerous reason; Saddam Hussein had to be taken care of and the world is better for it.

Terry.

Q Dr. Rice, back to the **interim government**. You said, and the administration has said, that the main job of this government will be to prepare for elections. And Mr. Brahimi said he thought it should be mostly technocrats, and that if you want to get into those elections, don't get into this government.

Well, it seems the campaign has begun. You have a lot of very active political figures in this government. And two questions on that. First, is the job of this new government now essentially to run for office in the next government, as well? And, second, many of these figures have said they want more control over the armed forces on their territory. Will Mr. Allawi and his colleagues be involved at the U.N. as this United Nations Security Council resolution is structured on that issue?

DR. RICE: Well, first of all, the Iraqis obviously will be involved in how the U.N. Security Council resolution is structured, because their views will be taken into account by the Security Council. And I suspect that there will be Iraqi officials pretty soon traveling to New York to engage in those discussions.

As to the Iraqi chain of command over its own armed forces, I think that it's been very clear in all that we've said that we expect there to be an Iraqi chain of command over their armed forces. That is no different than many other members -- than other members of the coalition. There is an American chain of command over our forces, there's a British chain of command over the British forces, there's a Polish chain of command over the Polish forces. The Iraqis will, of course, have control of their own forces. We want them to have full

sovereignty.

Now, when it comes to the operations of the multinational force, I think we will have discussions with a now empowered Iraqi government about how this will proceed. But let's be realistic. We've been doing this for years in all kinds of countries around the world; we do it in Bosnia, we do it in Afghanistan. We know how to do this. We know how to develop cooperative and coordinating mechanisms with the sovereign government to make certain that together we can deal with the security threat until the Iraqis are capable of dealing with the security threat themselves.

So I think that this is something that always looks harder on theory than it will be in practice.

Terry, just to your other question about technocrats, I think there was a time at which it was thought that maybe a technocratic government was an option. Mr. Brahimi, I won't speak for him, but I know that when these discussions began, it became pretty clear that there was widespread view that there also needed to be some figures who could handle the political side. This is political time in Iraq that political leadership would be important to the Iraqi people. And surprise, surprise, politics has broken out in Iraq. People are considering their political futures, they're talking about the future of the country. They're going to try to do a good job and impress Iraqis that they're doing a good job. I think that's why we went to liberate the Iraqis, so they could engage in exactly that kind of activity.

Q And if this new interim government were to ask the U.S.-led occupation forces to leave, would the U.S. honor that?

DR. RICE: We have just seen statements from members of the new Iraqi government, I believe from the Prime Minister, saying that the help of coalition and allies would be needed. We expect that the Iraqis fully understand what we all understand, which is that Iraq must now take responsibility for its own democratic development. That also means that we want, and the Iraqis want, a much longer, larger role in their own security, but that they do not, at this particular point in time, have the forces to take care of the threats that are there.

So I just, frankly, don't think that this is going to be an issue. I think that they will want our help, we will be prepared to give them our help. But the key is going to be to secure Iraq so that democracy can take place.

Q Dr. Rice, for many years, **Mr. Chalabi** was the savior of the White House and the Pentagon and the Washington circle. What is the present relationship between the White House and Mr. Chalabi?

DR. RICE: Well, look, Ahmed Chalabi did, I think, a lot of good work on behalf of his country when he was in exile. And, yes, there was a relationship. It has not been an easy relationship of late -- I think that you can see that, that's not hard to see. But Iraq is a complicated place and we're going to continue to work with whomever we need to in that complicated place. The United States has never wanted to try and pick and choose among Iraqi's future leaders. I think we made that clear months ago, that really at the time of the liberation, that the United States was not going to bet on a particular horse or bet on a particular candidate. And that's been proven out here. There was a process in place instead, and that's what has gone on. So it has been a not easy relationship, but there's no reason that it has to remain that way.

Q Dr. Rice, under what legal authority was this government formed today? Is it correct to speak of Allawi right now as the Prime Minister? And tell us legally what the status of the government is right now.

DR. RICE: It is currently the **interim government** in a non-sovereign Iraq. It will, upon transfer of authority, be the interim government of a sovereign Iraq. So there are two different processes here. One is forming the government as an interim government, which was envisioned in the transitional administrative law that was passed several months ago. That government then, of course, is responsible for organizing elections, managing the country through a ministerial system until there can be elections. That will then be a transitional government with a legislature. And that government then will prepare a constitution and you will have elections for a permanent government.

So its status comes out of the TAL. It is currently the governing body of Iraq, but it is not the sovereign governing body of Iraq -- that happens when we transfer authority.

Q And Allawi is currently the Prime Minister?

DR. RICE: Allawi is the Prime Minister, yes.

Q And one quick question on the Middle East, if I might. Yasser Arafat claimed in a television interview over the weekend that although President Bush has had no personal contact with him, that Mr. Bush responds to Chairman Arafat's letters. Is that true?

DR. RICE: I don't have any idea what the Chairman is talking about.

Q Dr. Rice, is the administration, though, at all concerned that this new President has in recent televised interviews criticized the U.S. presence in Iraq and has attributed some of the worsening conditions in Iraq to what he called the blunderings of the U.S. military?

DR. RICE: Look, these are not America's puppets. These are independent-minded Iraqis who are determined to take their country to security and democracy. That's why we liberated Iraq, is to begin a process by which the Iraqis can have leadership that can speak on their behalf, act on their behalf. This government, of course, we hope is acceptable to Iraqis. Soon, they will go through a process of increasing legitimacy, until they have a permanent government that will speak on behalf of the people of Iraq.

A part of democracy, a part of free speech, part of politics is to have open dialogue and open criticism. It's not as if, by the way, some of our longest-standing democratic allies don't find fault from time to time with American policy. And so I don't think that you will see the United States concerned or cringing every time an Iraqi leader wishes to comment either on something that we've done in the past or something we've done in the present. You get it from -- we get it from Karzai, from time to time.

The goal is -- and we believe that the key here is that we now have a functioning government in Iraq that will be able to work with us to do what we all want to do, which is to bring security to Iraq, to bring elections to Iraq, to bring democratic development to Iraq, and to make it a stable, prosperous and democratic country. That's what this is about, and I'm quite certain, because the President has had a conversation with this particular -- with the new President, that that is the goal of the President, the new President of Iraq and that he fully shares that vision and will work toward how to get that vision done.

Q When was that conversation?

DR. RICE: The President called him after he -- when Mr. Salim was assassinated and when Mr. Ghazi took office, the President called him at that time. Not as the new President, that's right. In the past, John. Sorry to

confuse you.

Yes.

Q With the establishment of an interim government, would you expect a reduction in violence directed at American forces there? And secondly, will this interim government have the ability to enter into international agreements on things needed to move forward their redevelopment, including oil and international debt?

DR. RICE: I will get you the details on the second question because this is handled in the TAL annex and I've not, myself, had a chance to read the TAL annex. My understanding is that, in respect for the limited role that it was expected to play under the TAL, this government has taken some self-limiting steps into what kinds of agreements it can enter into. But as we understand it, there's nothing in the TAL that would keep it from entering into the kinds of agreements that are believed to be necessary in the short term. For instance, we believe that they can engage in discussions on debt and the like.

But I should just say, and I want to reserve because we haven't seen the final TAL annex that was just passed today by the Governing Council before it was dissolved or before it dissolved itself -- it doesn't appear that there's any self-limitation that would get in the way of it functioning between now and elections. But it will undertake some self-limitations because of the way that the TAL was structured.

As to the violence and whether there will be a reduction, I think that no one knows. It's entirely possible that there will be an increase in violence for a while, as the former regime elements and the terrorists try and test this new government, try to test the will of the coalition in this new phase, as they've been trying to test the will of the coalition and Iraqis for the last several months. I think it's entirely possible you'll see an uptick.

But the important thing is that the political process is underway and it's continuing. Their claim to the future of Iraq has never been one of a vision of democracy and prosperity and a better life for their people. They don't have a political vision that is attractive to the Iraqi people, and so as this political vision now plays out with Iraqis in control of it, the hope is that the violence will eventually begin to subside. But I want to be very clear, I think in the short term, you could see more violence because I think these are people who are -- who know they have no place in the future of Iraq.

Q Sorry, can I ask about the **G-8** and the discussion of the democracy initiative? Saudi Arabia's not coming, Egypt is not coming. It does not sound like this initiative is catching fire.

DR. RICE: No, we are in contact with and have discussions with both of those countries. Their leaders, for a variety of reasons, are unable to come to the G-8. We have a number of leaders who are actively engaged in reform in their own countries: Bahrain, Jordan, Yemen. And the broader Middle East initiative will remain open to all states that want to be involved in it.

But we've had lots of discussions with the Egyptians, particularly after the Alexandria Library Conference, about how Egypt wants to move forward. We've had discussions with the Saudis about their municipal elections. This is an opportunity for the G-8 to offer an opening to states in the region to be involved in reform discussions and process with the G-8. But what we're quite aware of is that most of this is going to take place on the ground in the Middle East, not in the G-8. And so we will continue those discussions. This will be a very good discussion with some of the most reform-minded states in the Middle East.

Q Dr. Rice -- **Prime Minister Howard's** visit --

DR. RICE: Sure, why don't we do that, yes.

Q Prime Minister Howard's coming on, meeting him on Thursday. Will the President be looking for more troops from Australia? You've talked about the need for more forces to go to Iraq. And also, will the President be able to give the Prime Minister assurances that a couple of the detainees at Guantanamo Bay who have alleged, or who it has been alleged have been beaten by American forces in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay, that those claims will be properly and thoroughly investigated?

DR. RICE: On the second point, if there are any questions about the treatment of Australian detainees, the President and his entire team are prepared to discuss them and to address them, because Prime Minister Howard and the Australians have been terrific allies. We are determined to make certain that any claims of mistreatment would, of course, be thoroughly investigated. We'll be happy to talk about that issue.

In terms of forces, my understanding is that Australia is doing what it can and that contribution is completely appreciated and, we believe, the appropriate contribution for Australia. It's obviously up to Australia if it wishes to do more, but -- and I want to make a very clear point about the foreign troop issue.

Yes, it is entirely possible that after the U.N. Security Council resolution that there could be other states that might be willing to send a few troops here, a few troops there. But no one really believes that we are about to have a massive infusion of foreign forces into Iraq, and in fact, I think that you will hear the Iraqis say more and more that what they would really like to have people concentrate on is training their troops, their police, getting their forces in a particular -- in a state to take care of their own security circumstances.

And so probably what we should all be looking to is how any and all of us who want to help the Iraqis in this time can give them more training, more help in getting their forces up to speed, because I think that's what the Iraqis are particularly interested in.

And I didn't get the last one.

Q Dr. Rice, given the recent history of governments to try to affect a change in Iraq and the weight of that history, what makes this attempt any different and what gives you the **optimism** this time that there's going to be a happier ending?

DR. RICE: Well, I think that the Iraqis haven't had a chance in a long time to try and pursue prosperity and democracy side by side. I mean, Saddam Hussein, for almost 30 years, this was the most -- one of the most brutal dictatorships of modern times. And what you saw, and what you've begun to see, is that despite that, despite the trauma of that, there remained a spirit underneath of Iraqis wanting to live together in a unified Iraq.

I've been very struck by the fact that when there's been an attack of the kind that Zarqawi talked about, of Kurds, of Shia against Kurds, which he thought would cause civil war, or Sunnis against Shia, which he hoped to cause civil war, that instead, the Iraqi people have rallied to each other.

I think that you see that a spirit has remained of wanting to have a better life. If you got out, I'm told -- I've not, unfortunately, had the chance to do it myself -- but if you go out to provincial councils and you go out to regional councils, you see that people are voting and city councils are worrying daily about how to deal with a lot of the same problems that people deal with in any town in the United States, how you get the sewage running, how do you deal with electricity and so forth. That that spirit has remained underneath that period of

terrible, bloody dictatorship. And as I said in the answer to Terry's, surprise, surprise, politics has broken out in Iraq. People are actually care about their own role in the future of Iraq. So I think those are very hopeful signs.

One interesting point is that poll after poll after poll shows that while, obviously, the Iraqis don't like occupation, nobody would, that the one thing they remain tremendously focused on, the largest demonstrations that have been Iraq have been to have elections. And so clearly, they associate a better life and a better future with being able to have elections. And that, in and of itself, I think, is a very good sign for the future of Iraq.

Thanks very much. I'll see you on the road.

Q Dr. Rice -- **on France.**

Q One more.

DR. RICE: France, yes.

Q I'll be short.

DR. RICE: Yes.

Q President Bush and President Chirac will meet four times during this month of June, which is pretty rare.

DR. RICE: It's a lot, yes.

Q What do you expect from France?

DR. RICE: We have had, really, very good conversations, Colin with his new counterpart, I with my counterpart, the Foreign Policy Advisor to President Chirac, and a couple of times on the phone to President Chirac and President Bush.

We have a broad agenda. Look, we've had our differences. We've had difficulties over Iraq. But I sense in all of the countries of the alliance, all of the countries of the free world, a fundamental understanding that, however, whatever differences we had in the past, that a free and prosperous and stable Iraq is a linchpin and a key to a stable Middle East is understood, and that people are looking for ways that they can help to get that done.

I also think that President Bush and President Chirac have a lot to discuss on the Middle East. Of course, they have common interests on the work that is being done by the Quartet in the Middle East peace process. But they've also had very good discussions on Lebanon, on Syria, where President Chirac, of course, spearheaded the conference for Libya -- for Lebanon, not too long ago, and we were supportive of that.

So this will be a broad agenda and I think there will be very good discussions. But the spirit is good between the United States and France, and I expect that to have dividends.

Thanks very much.