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**Presenter: Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for  
Public Affairs Lawrence Di Rita**

**Thursday, July 21, 2005 2:08 p.m.  
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### **Report to Congress Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq**

(Also participating in the briefing was Peter Rodman, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and Lieutenant General Walter Sharp, Director, Strategic Plans and Policy)

MR. DI RITA: Thanks for coming today. We do have, unfortunately, a fairly tight time frame because we have two briefers today who are spending time on the Hill and have to go back. So I think you can appreciate our desire to get you the information you're looking for. You don't appreciate it, Charlie? I think some of your colleagues do.

We have Assistant Secretary of Defense Peter Rodman and the director of the Strategic Plans and Policy for the Joint Staff, General Sharp, to talk about the report that is now with some of the committees of Congress, will be with some others later today. We'll be circulating it up on the Hill.

I must say we're going to talk about this topic and only this topic. And I know there's other news of the day, but that's all they're prepared to talk about today. And I do apologize that they're on a very tight time frame. They'll have some comments, be able to take a couple of questions, and then we'll have to let them get back up to the Hill.

So with that, I'll turn it over to these two gentlemen.

GEN. SHARP: Thank you, sir.

MR. RODMAN: Thanks, Larry. Good.

We call this the Iraq Metrics Report. The recent supplemental appropriations bill asked DOD to report every 90 days on ways of measuring progress in Iraq -- in the political field, economic field, and the security field. I just want to make a couple points first.

Metrics is something we do ourselves. As you know, Secretary Rumsfeld is passionate about metrics. It's a management tool. Long before Congress asked us for this report, we have been doing our best to apply rigorous standards of performance, particularly in the training, the field of training Iraqi forces. So we have done this ourselves and we think it's a good thing to do, and we think it's perfectly appropriate that Congress asked us to share some of this with them and with the public.

Secondly, we've told the Congress that precisely because these are things we do ourselves, we reserve the right to improve them, to revise them in future reports. Secretary Rumsfeld is always looking at slides or charts or briefs and saying, you know, "This doesn't tell me what I want. Let's do this better. Let's find a better way to measure." So we are constantly trying to improve the quality of our own standards and our ways of measuring and monitoring things. And so we've told the Congress that future reports might -- you know, might vary a little bit, and they understood that.

Let me say a word briefly about political and economic areas, and General Sharp will discuss the security dimension.

It's important that the political dimension is covered in this report because in an important sense the strategic prize in Iraq is this political process. If you look at it from the bad guys' perspective, and you know, what are their metrics, I think their strategic objective is to derail this political process; that's what they're trying to do. And the fact that they have failed with repeated violence to derail or slow down or disrupt the political process is an important indicator of -- I think -- of their failure.

And I think this is a key dimension to watch, and the metrics are, of course, the timeline, the schedule of political developments that we're looking for the rest of this year. The drafting of the constitution, which we hope will be done by August 15th; that's their deadline; a national referendum on October 15th on a new constitution. If the constitution is approved, new elections around December 15th. So this is the momentum that we hope to continue, and we hope to see this succeed. It will continue the momentum of what we all saw on January 30th, and I think that's -- that is a crucial indicator of whose strategy is succeeding.

On the economic side, I mean, the report has a lot of economic indicators. I think you're familiar with the basic situation. It's a mixed picture. Unemployment is high. There are a lot of obstacles to increasing electricity and oil production, and so forth, and the report has a lot of that information.

But we think there are some positive news as well. We see business formation. We see a lot of economic activity as we see the beginnings of a modern market economy. The electricity actually has met the target that we had set for this period. Unfortunately, demand is high. It's high because it's summer. Demand is high, of course, because again, as the economy starts to get off the ground, that itself demands electricity. So that's an issue. And the security situation is clearly a factor in that element, and it's equally true of the oil industry, which is an important revenue earner. Of course they benefit from the high price of oil, but it's an important sector for that economy, and there are clearly some problems.

So the report, in sum, in the economic area, lays out some of the basic facts, you know -- good news, bad news -- because these are obviously relevant to progress.

So with that, let me turn it over to General Sharp to talk about the security picture.

GEN. SHARP: Thanks, Peter.

The report basically lays out in the security sector three different parts that are in the report. The first talks a little bit about the insurgency, how they are doing, the effectiveness of that. The second talks about the rule of law, how the court system is doing. And then the third part of it is how the Iraqi security forces are doing. So let me give you a couple snippets that are out of the report for each one of those different sections as we go through.

First off, on how the insurgents are doing. Along with in the report where it talks attacks, we also have to remember, I think, that one of the measures of Iraqi security force -- or, the Iraqi insurgent capability is, what is it

doing to the people? What is it doing to the people's will within the country? And I think we are clearly seeing from polls out there that the Iraqi people themselves are saying, we are not going to let the insurgents take us off mark. They proved that in the elections last January, they have proved that in all of the polls that we have seen so far as they want a constitution to come out, and they want to vote on that constitution. And they want a vote in December to go out. So their will is there, and the insurgents have not broken their will.

Secondly, if you look at the polls for the Iraqi security forces, what do the people think of their capabilities? They've always been high -- had confidence in Iraqi security forces, and they are continuing to get even higher. They see the Iraqi security forces out there in great numbers in an attack against insurgents, trying to protect them across the board.

When you look specifically at attacks, it lays it out in the report over time what has been the number of attacks -- average weekly attacks out there. We are at less attacks now during the sovereignty period, or the period just prior to the elections and during the election periods itself.

There are still many attacks that are going on out there, but a couple of things I think that are -- that you need to take away.

First off, they are focused in four provinces. This is not widespread across the country. And four provinces account for 84 percent of the different attacks that are out there on any given basis. And you wouldn't be surprised where the provinces are. They're Baghdad, Al-Anbar, Nineveh, and Salahuddin. Again, in those provinces, 84 percent of the attacks take place.

And what are they attacking? I think that what we have seen is a shift in the insurgents from attacking coalition forces to now realizing that they've got to go to softer targets. The number of civilian casualties has increased, and that's where they're starting to target right now. The number of coalition casualties is down since the pre-sovereignty -- or since the sovereignty period. The number against Iraqi security forces is slightly up, but again, that is primarily based upon the number of Iraqi security forces that are out there and actually doing the fight.

So it goes across the difference as far as what the insurgents are doing and what their capabilities are.

Also talks a little bit about attacks against infrastructure, specifically against oil and electricity infrastructure. And again, we're working -- the Iraqis are working very hard to help protect their infrastructure out there, and the number of attacks that we are seeing now against infrastructure is significantly less than it was during just prior to the election period. That's out there.

Next part talks a little bit about rule of law, and cites that the Iraqi Central Criminal Court of Iraq is holding trials. It cites the fact that over 300 cases have been tried, with over 353 convictions. Again, some cases have more than one individual in it. Talks a little bit about the Iraqi special tribunal and then the fact of our FBI assistance in helping them investigate terrorist acts.

Then the third part of it is, again -- is it talks about Iraqi security forces and the capabilities that are -- or the amount of Iraqi security forces that are out there. What we lay out in the report is how many are out there doing work today, fighting the insurgents and attacking them to help keep the people of Iraq safe.

The report lays out that till today, there's about 77,000 Ministry of Defense forces out in the fight and approximately 94,000 Ministry of Interior forces out in the fight, for a total of about 171,000 soldiers and policemen that have been school-trained, that are out in the fight.

The report then goes on to lay out how do we measure the effectiveness not of only these individuals but

the units that they are in and their ability to be able to execute the fight. And as -- I think you've been briefed before, but let me just quickly go over the different levels that we have out there.

We go through what we call a top level, a level one, which are Iraqi units that are capable of fighting the insurgency on their own. They need no help from the coalition.

The second one is Iraqi security forces who are in the lead and are fighting the insurgency, but with a little bit of our help.

What do I mean by "a little bit of our help"? They may have to -- they may call for medevac. They may call for some artillery or for some close air support. But they are doing the planning, the executing and operating of -- against the insurgency out there.

The third category are those units that again are in the fight, but we are helping them significantly. But every one of the soldiers in those battalions are in the fight. We may be helping them with planning. We may be embedding them with our units out there that really try to be able to get at the insurgents. We may be mentoring them. But again, it doesn't mean they're off to the sidelines. Those level three units are all in the fight out there.

And then the fourth level are those that are just forming up right now, those that we're trying to put together to get them to level three units, so that they can actually get in the fight. And we've made significant progress along those lines.

We do not give the numbers that are in those different categories, I think for pretty obvious reasons. We don't report our numbers. We think that that is very important that this evaluation that we and Iraqis do together is to help the Iraqi forces get what they need in order to be able to execute the fight. And saying what those numbers would, I think, bring great aid to the enemy -- the same reason we do not give them to ours. But it does -- we do lay out in the report where we have the total numbers that are out there to be able to do that.

So I think it's a good report. We -- the first report was due that we just got to Congress today, and then Congress has asked us to update the report every 90 days.

And with that, I'll turn it over for any questions.

Q: Mr. Secretary, General, you say you can't give any breakdown of figures. What this is is a 26-page report on metrics, process, how to measure, and it gives no analysis on how many of the Iraqi forces and what types of Iraqi forces are prepared to fight.

And yet, a seven-sentence unclassified report sent by General Pace to the Senate Armed Services Committee on June 29th lays out a lot of these figures, which while perhaps not intended, is damning in terms that approximately one-third of their army battalions are capable of planning, with coalition support; approximately two-thirds of their army battalions and one-half of their police are partially capable, with coalition units.

I mean, why wasn't this in this report? It's unclassified. Do you just not want them to see it?

MR. RODMAN: Let me say that we're all talking about the same figures. First of all, the figures that we have given to Congress on a classified basis are much more detailed than that. So that general statement reflects the same figures in very general terms.

Q: But why isn't this in here?

MR. RODMAN: But the way to characterize -- well, what General Sharp is describing is what these different categories mean, and he's giving you a richer description of what this is all about than is in that paragraph.

Q: You're not giving us any kind of percentages or figures --

Q: (Off mike) -- percentage or any kind of concept at all of how many you have -- most, a few -- anything like that.

Q: I mean, this suggests that most, most Iraqi security forces -- army and police, border guard, whatever -- are incapable on their own currently of effectively fighting the insurgency. Is that true?

MR. RODMAN: I don't think that's what General Pace is saying. General Pace is discussing the same data that we're discussing. And I think General Sharp has given you a characterization of the different categories --

Q: What he says here, only a small number of Iraqi -- this is June 29th -- only a small number of Iraqi security forces are taking on the insurgents and terrorists by themselves.

GEN. SHARP: Right. And that is the Category 1. But I will go on to read what he said: Two-thirds of the army battalions and half of the police battalions are partially capable of conducting insurgency operations in conjunction with coalition units. That is what I was talking about in this other levels. And I don't want to minimize what "partially capable" means, because again, every one of the individuals, every one of the Iraqis in those two-thirds of the units out there are fighting. What it means, though, is that we are alongside them helping them, enabling them to be able to do that. You should not minimize this as far as Iraqi security forces' bravery or capability. It's what we take in order to make sure that those units are capable of actually executing operations and helping them effectively do that.

So I think that that's a good news story.

Q: I think the bottom line of what Congress wants to know -- correct me if I'm wrong -- is when these forces will be able to take over the security of Iraq, and when will U.S. forces be able to leave. Your report gives no indication of that. And these figures seem to suggest that it will be quite awhile. Am I wrong?

MR. RODMAN: But let me -- no, I think you are. Let me say two things.

First of all, what the categories -- the breakdown of the categories that General Sharp gave you is much more precise and actually more elaborate and is a reflection of what our own internal metrics are, whereas General Pace's comments were much more general. So I think what the report has, what General Sharp has is actually the way we categorize them.

Secondly, we have described to the Congress in the classified annexes, you know, the numbers. So the Congress got, on a classified basis, much more detail about numbers and percentages, and they can make their own calculations.

And rotation, we've discussed this with Congress and again in classified briefings what our expectations are, but as Secretary Rumsfeld and the president have said, our planning is condition based. You know, we can do some planning in the sense of, you know, our military are always organizing for contingencies, but the decisions that will be made about when American troops can start coming down is going to depend on the conditions on the ground and our success in training Iraqi forces, the success of the political process, the

success of the economic conditions and so forth. And so that information -- I mean, we've said the same to the Congress, although with a little more granularity. But we don't have the answers to the questions you asked.

Q: General, could I ask you --

MR. DI RITA: I made a commitment that we'd get these gentlemen out by 2:30. I do apologize. So we

--

Q: We've got five minutes.

General, can I ask you -- I'm probably just slow, but I don't understand, if you don't identify the units that you're talking about, how does it help the insurgents if you were to say what percentage of the Iraqi forces were in each level? What would that tell them? How would that --

GEN. SHARP: Sir, it's the same as with our units. We do not want to give overall capabilities assessment to the enemy.

Q: Based on General Pace's comments and what you're saying, that two-thirds of the soldiers are in level two and level three? Is that -- or is it two, three and four?

GEN. SHARP: It's one, two and three.

Q: One, two and three are -- two-thirds are in one, two and three.

GEN. SHARP: That are partially capable, roger. Again, the level four units are not out fighting, they are just now being formed. So when we say capable of conducting insurgency, counterinsurgency operations, that includes the top three levels.

Q: Sir, could you put a little flesh on this in here about the infrastructure attacks? You said the number of attacks are down. But it appears to me -- and I don't have access to the same metrics you do -- that while the numbers are down, the size, the scope and the targeting is much more effective now. Just this week we're hearing that, for example, the electricity in Baghdad, they're going from four hours a day of shortages to 10 hours a day where they're not going to have electricity. How do those two resolve with one another?

GEN. SHARP: Actually, the latest figures that I saw as far as average hours per day for electricity country-wide was most recently between 12 and 14 hours per day, which is significantly up from what it was in the past.

But let me get at your specifics on the infrastructure protection. Now, a lot is and has been -- is being done, as far as protecting the infrastructure. As I think you know, the Iraqis have formed some infrastructure protection battalions that are helping to do that. But they're taking this a lot further than that. Delivery of electricity to individual people out there requires the ability to be able to have redundant systems, to make sure that the Ministry of Oil and the Ministry of Electricity are properly linked up to be able to do this.

So it's much more than just infrastructure protection, which they are taking on -- they, the Iraqis are taking on across the board so that they can provide the basic services to include oil and electricity that's needed for the people. But, the insurgents see this. They understand that this is very important, and so you do see attacks against infrastructure. But it is a focus of the Iraqis to try to protect those, and make sure that they can deliver to --

Q: What I'm trying to get at, sir, is the metric that you're giving Congress is the numbers, but it's really

the effects that -- what are the effects? I mean, is it the effectiveness of the insurgents? Has that gone down? Up? Is it static?

GEN. SHARP: I think the effect in this, as I said when I first started talking, is they are being forced to shift to easier, softer targets. That's why you see more civilian casualties.

Q: Could you tell us -- I understand --

MR. RODMAN: Let me just (go ahead ?) and (respond ?) -- (inaudible).

Q: I understand that, sir --

MR. RODMAN: This better be a good one -- (inaudible).

Q: Withdrawal of -- it's going to be good.

The withdrawal of U.S. troops is conditions-based. And you have metrics now where you're looking at those conditions. What is the tipping point in the metrics? Where do Iraqi security forces need to be? Fifty percent of them capable of independent operations, 100 percent of them capable? Where do those need to be in order for a significant reduction of U.S. troops?

GEN. SHARP: I'll start, then let Peter chime in at the end. There's a lot of conditions. And it's not just Iraqi security forces capability out there. It is -- has the political process continued to move? That affects the enemy. Has the electricity, has the infrastructure, the basic needs that the people have -- are they being -- continue to progress with that? How is the economy? All of those affect both the insurgency and the conditions that we need to be able to have on the ground.

The key, though, is -- can Iraqis handle the insurgency within their area of operation, based upon the insurgents that are out there? So we take a look at all of those different conditions that are out there -- not country-wide, but very specifically, area by area, with a goal -- and we're already starting to do this -- with a goal of turning areas over to Iraqis to be able to handle their own security. And that has already started to happen in several different areas across the country.

And the last thing I'll say on it is keep in mind, this is really coalition working with Iraqis to establish what those conditions are. We are not going to unilaterally do that. We don't do that just with the United States. We don't just do it with the coalition. The Iraqis and us are working together on this to determine what conditions need to be met in areas with their goal of taking over control and responsibility for security in their area.

MR. RODMAN: I would add I think -- I expect you'll see a gradual process. As they become more capable, they'll take over more responsibility. It's not going to be a dramatic shift from one day, you know, we're there; the next day, we're gone.

And as General Sharp said, part of it will be you'll see the process of areas of the country -- where they're clearly able to take control, they will start doing that, and they already have started doing that.

Q: What's the percentage of areas they control now?

Q: Thank you very much.

Q: Thank you.

Q: Thank you.

Q: Can you say what the --

(Mr. Rodman and General Sharp depart.)

MR. DI RITA: Let me just make one or two -- some housekeeping points.

Q: Can we ask you a few follow-up questions on the subject?

MR. DI RITA: I doubt I'm as knowledgeable as they are, but I'll try. The --

Q: But you're here.

MR. DIRITA: But I am here. I'm available. I'm easy.

Q: (Laughs.)

MR. DIRITA: The -- one or two things:

There was some comments or some announcements made earlier in the day about elevated security here at the Pentagon, and I want to be very clear that it's -- these are precautionary measures. There are certainly no specific threats that anybody's aware of. It's more or less just increased vigilance by the Pentagon Force Protection Agency, as one might expect, given the events of the day. So I wouldn't want anybody to read more into that than they might otherwise.

And I'll try and do one or two, if that would be helpful to you.

Q: Larry, what is it that --

MR. DI RITA: We've had the secretary out three times this week --

Q: Why is it that only half of the Iraqi police are capable -- and only two-thirds of the other security forces -- why is that, a year on into the training?

MR. DI RITA: We've talked a lot about how each of these forces -- you know, we're working with the ministries. Each of these force groups are controlled by one ministry or another. And the challenges that they face are not the same. You know, the Iraqi army faces a different set of challenges than the Facilities Protection Service, which faces a different set than the police. And it's just -- it's based, as is everything else we've been talking about, on the conditions, and the conditions are different, and so one shouldn't expect that they'd all be at the same level, because the conditions that they're facing aren't at the same level.

Q: Was there an inherent --

MR. DI RITA: One point I want to really emphasize is the last point that they made. We're not measuring yet -- at some point we may well -- how much of Iraq has been turned over to Iraqi security forces, but we have had instances that we've talked about; that General Taluto, for example, talked last week up in his area of responsibility, that they've turned a couple of areas in the Salahuddin province over to Iraqi security forces. We had the Diwaniyah area that was turned over from the El Salvador unit to an Iraqi battalion. So that's beginning to happen. And that's not by itself one of the metrics, but it's one of the things we're observing.

So there's some subjective aspects to this, and there's our -- we're doing our best to make it objective.

I have time for maybe one more.

Q: Larry, very -- you know, there's 170,000 troops out there. There's been very few --

MR. DI RITA: A hundred and seventy-one thousand, three hundred, I believe.

Q: Sorry. Thank you.

There have been very few sort of squad-on-squad fights because of the nature of this battle, which is done with roadside bombs. How do you know with any sort of precision what group the Iraqi police and soldiers fall into? How do you really know if they're Level 1 or Level 2 or Level 3? They're not really battle-tested.

MR. DI RITA: Well, you know, it's an interesting question because it's the same thing the secretary spoke about yesterday with respect to our own units. You measure things that you can measure. But then there's the immeasurables that really tell you what's the esprit, what's the ability to -- how does the chain of command look. Those are things that are hard to measure, and over time and as they get more tested, I think both the Iraqi commanders and U.S. commanders -- coalition commanders, will have varying degrees of confidence in individual units regardless of what the metric says. In other words, a unit that is only partially equipped but has been in a lot of combat action, even if it's with coalition forces, may in the end be a more ready unit than a unit that has 100 percent equipment, can operate entirely without the coalition, but has never seen combat.

So there is some subjectivity to this. That's the caution that the secretary tried to make yesterday, is you do your best to identify what you want to measure, but then there's judgment. And that's what military commanders do all the time, is make judgments about how good individual units are. And I think that's how this will -- when you say what's the tipping point -- to a previous question -- it will be based at least as much on the judgment of individual commanders as it will be on our ability to measure these numbers.

Let's make this the last one. I've got to go.

Q: Is it true that only three of 28 Iraqi army battalions are now prepared to operate independently?

MR. DIRITA: I don't know. I don't know. I don't know where you got that number from.

Q: I heard it.

MR. DIRITA: I just don't know.

Thanks a lot, folks.

Thank you.

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