



THE WHITE HOUSE  
PRESIDENT  
GEORGE W. BUSH

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## **Briefing by the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**

Room 450  
Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building

8:42 A.M. EST

SECRETARY RICE: Good morning. Today Secretary Gates and I will head to Capitol Hill to discuss with the Congress the new strategy for Iraq that President Bush outlined last night. All Americans know that the stakes in Iraq are enormous, and we all share the belief that the situation is currently unacceptable. On this we are united.

The President has outlined a strategy that relies on three main points. First, and most importantly, the Iraqis have devised their own strategy -- political, economic, and military -- and our efforts will support theirs. Among Americans and Iraqis, there is no confusion over one basic fact: It is the Iraqis who are responsible for what kind of country Iraq will be; it is they who must decide whether Iraq will be characterized by national unity or sectarian conflict. The President has conveyed to the Iraqi leadership that we will support their good decisions, but that Americans' patience is limited.

Second, we will further decentralize and diversify our civilian presence in Iraq to better assist the Iraqi people. Iraq has a federal government. We must therefore get our civilians out of the embassy, out of the Green Zone, and into the field across Iraq, to support promising local leaders and promising local structures. This will enhance and diversify our chances of success in Iraq.

The mechanism to accomplish this is the provincial reconstruction team, or PRT. The logic behind PRTs is simple: Success in Iraq relies on more than military efforts, it requires robust political and economic progress. Our military operations must be fully supported and integrated with our civilian and diplomatic efforts across the entire U.S. government to help Iraqis clear, hold and build throughout all Iraq.

We in the State Department fully understand our role in this mission and we are prepared to play it. We are already trying -- we are ready to strengthen, indeed, to surge our civilian efforts. We plan to expand our PRTs in Iraq from 10 to at least 18. In Baghdad we will go from one PRT to six, and in Anbar province, from one to three, because local leaders are taking encouraging steps there to confront violent extremists and to build hope for their people.

To oversee our economic support for the Iraqi people, and to ensure that it is closely integrated with

our political assistance and our security strategy, I am pleased to announce today that I am appointing Ambassador Tim Carney to the new position of Coordinator for Iraq Transitional Assistance. Ambassador Carney is formerly our Ambassador to Haiti. He has enormous experience in post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction and development. He will be based in Baghdad where he will coordinate and work closely with his Iraqi counterparts.

Finally, we are anchoring our efforts in Iraq within a regional diplomatic strategy, as the Iraq Study Group recommended. We are supporting the Iraqi government in crafting an international compact with the international community based on mutual obligations. And we are working with Turkey and Iraq on concerns about terrorism from the Kurdish Workers Party.

Iraq is central to the future of the Middle East. The security of this region is an enduring vital interest for the United States. And our continued leadership in this part of the world will contribute greatly to its stability and success.

Our regional diplomacy is based on the substantially changed realities in the Middle East. Historic change is unfolding in the region, unleashing old grievances, new anxieties, and some violence, but is also revealing a promising new strategic realignment in the Middle East. This is the same alignment that we see in Iraq. On one side are the many reformers and responsible leaders who seek to advance their interests peacefully, politically, and diplomatically. On the other side are extremists of every sect and ethnicity who use violence to spread chaos to undermine democratic governments and to impose agendas of hate and intolerance.

Our most urgent diplomatic goal is to empower reformers and responsible leaders across the region, and to confront extremists. The proper partners in our regional diplomacy are those who share these goals -- our allies, Israel and Turkey, of course, but democratic reformers and leaders in places like Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Iraq, and the responsible governments of the Gulf States, plus Egypt and Jordan, or the GCC plus two.

Tomorrow, I leave for the Middle East to continue consultations with our partners. Two governments have unfortunately chosen to align themselves with the forces of extremism -- both in Iraq and across the Middle East. One is Syria. Despite many appeals, including from Syria's fellow Arab states, the leaders in Damascus continue to support terrorism and to destabilize Iraq and their neighbors. The problem here is not a lack of engagement with Syria, but a lack of action by Syria.

Iran is the other. If the government in Tehran wants to help stabilize the region -- as it now claims -- then it should end its support for violent extremists who destroy the aspirations of innocent Lebanese, Palestinians and Iraqis. And it should end its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

I repeat an offer that I've made several times, today. If Iran suspends its uranium enrichment -- which is an international demand, not just an American one -- then the United States is prepared to reverse 27 years of policy. And I will meet with my Iranian counterpart any time, anywhere. Thus we would have the possibility to discuss every facet of our countries' relations. Until then, the international community must continue to hold the Iranian government accountable.

Syria and Iran should end their destabilizing behavior in the region. They cannot be paid to do so. That would only embolden our enemies and demoralize our friends, both in Iraq and across the region, all of whom are watching to see whether America has the will to keep its commitments. The United States will defend its interests and those of our friends and allies in this vital region.

And now I'm happy to turn the podium over to Secretary Gates, who will talk about the military aspect of the plan.

SECRETARY GATES: Thank you, Secretary Rice. This afternoon, General Pace and I will appear before the House Armed Services Committee to discuss the military aspects of the Iraq strategy announced by the President last night. Tomorrow we will appear before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The security plan is designed to have Iraqi forces lead a campaign, with our forces in support, to protect the population of Baghdad from intimidation and violence instigated by Sunni and Shia extremist groups, and to enable the Iraqi government to take the difficult steps necessary to address that nation's underlying issues. This means, above all, strengthening those in Iraq who are prepared to address its problems peacefully against those who seek only violence, death and chaos.

The term "surge" has been used in relation to increasing U.S. troop levels, and an increase certainly will take place. But what is really going on, and what is going to take place, is a surge across all lines of operations -- military and non-military, Iraqi and coalition. The President's plan has Iraqis in the lead and seeks a better balance of U.S. military and non-military efforts than was the case in the past. We cannot succeed in Iraq without the important non-military elements Secretary Rice just mentioned.

The increase in military forces will be phased in. It will not unfold overnight; there will be no D-Day; it won't look like the Gulf War. The timetable for the introduction of additional U.S. forces will provide ample opportunity early on and before many of the additional U.S. troops actually arrive in Iraq to evaluate the progress of this endeavor and whether the Iraqis are fulfilling their commitments to us.

This updated plan builds on the lessons and experiences of the past. It places new emphasis on and adds new resources to the holding and building part of the clear, hold, and build strategy. At this pivotal moment, the credibility of the United States is on the line in Iraq. Governments in the region, both friends and adversaries, are watching what we do and will draw their own conclusions about our resolve and the steadfastness of our commitments.

Whatever one's views on how we got to this point in Iraq, there is widespread agreement that failure there would be a calamity that would haunt our nation in the future, and in the region. The violence in Iraq, if unchecked, could spread outside its borders and draw other states into a regional conflagration. In addition, one would see an emboldened and strengthened Iran, a safe haven and base of operations for Jihadist networks in the heart of the Middle East, a humiliating defeat in the overall campaign against violent extremism worldwide, and an undermining of the credibility of the United States. Given what is at stake, failure in Iraq is not an option.

I would like to conclude my remarks with two announcements. First, the President announced last

night that he would strengthen our military for the long war against terrorism by authorizing an increase in the overall strength of the Army and the Marine Corps. I am recommending to him a total increase in the two services of 92,000 soldiers and Marines over the next five years -- 65,000 soldiers, and 27,000 Marines. The emphasis will be on increasing combat capability.

This increase will be accomplished in two ways. First, we will propose to make permanent the temporary increase of 30,000 for the Army, and 5,000 for the Marine Corps. Then we propose to build up from that base in annual increments of 7,000 troops a year for the Army, and 5,000 for the Marine Corps, until the Marine Corps reaches a level of 202,000, and the Army would be at 547,000.

We should recognize that while it may take some time for these new troops to become available for deployment, it is important that our men and women in uniform know that additional manpower and resources are on the way.

Second, for several months, the Department of Defense has been assessing whether we have the right policies to govern how we manage and deploy members of the Reserves, the National Guard, and our active component units. Based on this assessment and the recommendations of our military leadership, I am making the following changes in Department policy.

First, the mobilization of ground Reserve forces going forward will be managed on a unit, instead of an individual basis. This change will allow us to achieve greater unit cohesion and predictability in how Reserve units train and deploy.

Second, from this moment forward, from this point forward, members of the Reserves who are -- will be involuntarily mobilized for a maximum of one year at a time, in contrast to the current practice of 16 to 24 months.

Third, the planning objective for Guard and Reserve units will remain one year of being mobilized, followed by five years demobilized. However, today's global demands will require a number of selected Guard and Reserve units to be remobilized sooner than this standard. Our intention is that such exceptions be temporary. The goal for the active force rotation cycle remains one year deployed for every two years at home station. Today, most active units are receiving only one year at home station before deploying again. Mobilizing select Guard and Reserve units before this five-year period is complete will allow us to move closer to relieving the stress on the total force.

Fourth, I'm directing the establishment of a new program to compensate individuals in both the active and Reserve components who are required to mobilize or deploy early, or extend beyond the established rotation policy goals.

Fifth, I am also directing that all commands and units review how they administer the hardship waiver program to ensure that they are properly taking into account exceptional circumstances facing military families of deployed service members.

It is important to note that these policy changes have been under discussion for some time within the Department of Defense and would be needed independently of the President's announcement on Iraq

last night. And there will be a handout afterward on the details of these changes since they are a little complicated.

Finally, I'm pleased to report that all active branches of the United States military exceeded their recruiting goals for the month of December, with particularly strong showings by the Army and the Marine Corps. Our nation is truly blessed that so many talented and patriotic young people have stepped forward to defend our nation, and that so many servicemen and women have chosen to continue to serve.

Thank you, and we'll be happy to take your questions.

Q Secretary Gates, how long do you expect to maintain the surge in Iraq? And what happens if the Iraqis do not live up to their commitments?

SECRETARY GATES: Well, as I indicated, we're going to know pretty early on whether the Iraqis are meeting their military commitments, in terms of being able to go into all neighborhoods, in terms of the Iraqis being in the lead and carrying out the leadership and the fighting, and for there not to be political interference in the military operations that are going forward. As I say, this is going to unfold over a period of time, and so I think that as I indicated in my remarks, before very many American soldiers have been sent to Iraq, we'll have pretty good early indications of their performance. We'll have to see, in terms of the length of time. It's really hard to say at this point. It's viewed as a temporary surge. But I think no one has a really clear idea of how long that might be.

Q Can you define what success will be then, sir? If you don't know how long it will be -- I know one of the things over the last few months, the President was saying, we're winning in Iraq, we're winning in Iraq, suddenly he didn't think we were, so how do you define success? How do you know if it's not working? Certainly, there will be a period where it's bloodier, more violent. But at what point do you really know it's working?

SECRETARY GATES: Well, let me take a crack at it and then invite Condi to comment. I think that what we will see over time is a lessening of violence in Baghdad. If this strategy is successful, over time we will see a lessening of violence in Baghdad. We're going to be, to a certain extent, the prisoners of anyone who wants to strap on a bomb and blow themselves up. But if the environment in Baghdad improves to the point where the political process can go forward, where the reconciliation process can go forward, where an oil law can be passed for the distribution of the revenues from the oil sales, where provincial elections can go forward, and where the government is actually beginning to make its writ felt outside Baghdad and we see the government of Iraq beginning to operate more effectively -- I think all of these things -- as the President said last night and as I suggested this morning, it isn't going to be like anything we've experienced before in terms of when we'll know whether or not we're being successful. It's going to take a little time, and we will probably have a better view a couple of months from now in terms of whether we are making headway in terms of getting better control of Baghdad, with the Iraqis in the lead and with the Iraqis beginning to make better progress on the reconciliation process.

But let me ask Secretary Rice to offer her thoughts.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I would underscore the point about political reconciliation. I do think the Iraqis obviously have to pass an oil law, they have to follow through on the promises that they've made to their own people about the inclusiveness of the political process.

I think as to -- I'd make one point about Baghdad and one point about the rest of the country. What has really happened in Baghdad -- and Prime Minister Maliki said this to the President -- is that the Iraqi people have lost confidence in the ability of their government to defend them in their capital, to protect them in their capital. And in fact, there are some, because of the sectarian overtones, who wonder if, in fact, their government is willing to protect them if they come from one sect or another.

And I think what the Iraqi government is trying to do and needs to do is to reestablish civil order, in the sense that they are, in fact, willing to, and capable of protecting all Iraqis who live in Baghdad. That means the kinds of activities that take place in these neighborhoods wouldn't be tolerated and they would, in fact, go after some of the violent people on either side who are causing the problems. And I think that will be a measure of how well they are doing.

In the provinces, it's also important to recognize that not everything -- as important as Baghdad is, not everything rests on Baghdad. One reason that we're diversifying and decentralizing into the provinces and the localities is that you want to strengthen the governance from the bottom up, as well. And we've learned that it is somewhat more effective to be able to deliver governance and economic development and reconstruction at a more local level.

And I think it's starting to have an effect. We've seen it work in Mosul, we've seen it work in Tal Afar, and as the Secretary said -- as Bob said, in Anbar, we're beginning to get some signs that the tribal sheiks there want to fight the violent extremists. And we've been in Anbar for awhile now working politically. So I think you should think of what the government needs to show in Baghdad, but also the building of governance structures outside of the country.

Q Secretary Rice, can I ask you a more fundamental question that applies to Secretary Gates, as well? If you look at the -- what's happened in Iraq, even recently -- I mean, the spectacle of the execution of Saddam Hussein, the trouble in the police ranks, and there's other examples -- why should the American people believe at this point that the Iraqis want reconciliation and a stable democratic government as much as the United States wants it for them?

And for Secretary Gates, I have a tactical question. Is the United States military and/or the Iraqi government prepared now to arrest or kill Muqtada al Sadr as part of this new increase?

SECRETARY RICE: David, on the first point, obviously this is a country that has had years and years of tragedy in which certain people were oppressed by other people. And it's perhaps not surprising that the passions and the anger runs pretty deep, and sometimes it expresses itself in ways that I think are not appropriate -- but it expresses itself. The Saddam trial was extremely unfortunate -- the Saddam hanging was extremely unfortunate. But, of course, we have to keep in mind, too, the victims and remember them first. But these passions do get expressed.

But as to whether the Iraqi people want to live in peace, I think that 12.5 million of them went out and voted against a lot of terrorist threats because they wanted a single Iraq. I think that you have to look at the way that their leaders are trying to work together. One of the things that's interesting about this national oil law, to which they are close, is that that's a very good sign of overcoming sectarian differences for a larger political purpose. And it's not as if they're not sacrificing for this unified Iraq. Tariq al Hashemi, who is the leading Sunni leader, has lost two brothers and a sister -- not actually to sectarianism, but to insurgents who do not want Sunnis to be a part of the process -- and, yet, he remains a part of the process.

So I think both at the level of the population and at the level of the political class, you have people who are intent on staying together in one Iraq, trying to overcome their differences with these fragile, new political institutions, and who are being buffeted and challenged in that by violent people on the extremes who are using sectarian purpose to kill innocent Iraqis. And what the Iraqi government has to do is to demonstrate firmly that it is fully committed to the protection of all Iraqis; it is fully committed to the punishment of any Iraqi who is engaged in killing innocents. And I think then you will begin to see more room for the kind of national reconciliation process that's been going on, but I think has, frankly, been undermined by the sectarian violence since February of '06.

SECRETARY GATES: I think a source of frustration for both Iraqi and American forces in the past has been political interference during clearing operations. And there are a number of instances that we've heard about of someone being detained and then a call being placed from some office in the government and, all of a sudden, that person is released because of political influence.

I think one of the most important commitments that the Prime Minister has made is that in this offensive, the military will have the authority to go after all law-breakers, there are no exceptions -- I'm not going to hang specific targets on specific people, but all law-breakers are susceptible to being detained or taken care of in this campaign.

Q But, sir, why be vague on the -- Sadr, because he has a long history here in this conflict as being on a most wanted list of the United States. Then the Iraqis persuaded the U.S. not to arrest him. He leads the Mahdi Army. I mean, this is the bad guy that the United States makes clear is helping to bring down this government. So why not commit to what our posture is with regard to him now?

SECRETARY GATES: What I will say is that all parts of Baghdad are going to be involved in this campaign, including Sadr City.

Q Could I ask the Chairman a question?

SECRETARY GATES: Please, let the Chairman --

Q We have heard repeatedly over the past year, and President Bush was fairly explicit about it last night, that Iran has been supplying ordinance that has been killing American troops. If this is so, why are we not matching Iranian force with force of our own? And why are we content to continue issuing statements of displeasure -- what do we think that's going to accomplish? And have you made any recommendations along these lines?

GENERAL PACE: What we've been doing, and will continue to do, is to track the networks of individuals, regardless of their nationality, inside of Iraq that are providing weapons that are designed to kill our troops. I think it's instructive that in the last couple of weeks two of those raids that we conduct to go after these folks that are providing these kinds of weapons -- two of those raids had picked up Iranians. So it is clear that the Iranians are complicit in providing weapons, and it's also clear that we will do all we need to do to defend our troops in Iraq by going after the entire network, regardless of where those people come from.

Q Are you going after them in Iran? Why not go to the source?

GENERAL PACE: We can take care of the security for our troops by doing the business we need to do inside of Iraq. And there are other methods, especially the kind that Secretary Rice has outlined, to deal with government-to-government relationships with Iran. But with regard to those who are physically present trying to do harm to our troops, regardless of nationality, we will go after them and defend ourselves.

Q One last attempt at this, let me take one last, different way. Has anyone in the military recommended operations inside Iran?

GENERAL PACE: No.

Q General Pace, can I just ask you a question, as long as he is at the podium?

Q Secretary Rice --

SECRETARY RICE: Why don't you go ahead while he's still at the podium, and I'll referee. (Laughter.)

Q Okay. General Pace, can you talk about the numbers? The President, Secretary Gates, everyone has said this is the most important operation; you have to succeed in there. So why just 20,000 troops? The studies from RAND show a much greater number would probably be needed. Why just 20,000, and is it because we don't really have more troops to go in there? And were there recommendations for much larger numbers of troops within the Joint Staff?

GENERAL PACE: First of all, this is not a re-invasion of Iraq, this is looking at the problem areas, specifically Baghdad and al Anbar, to determine what we can do to help the Iraqi government to protect their own people. In doing the military analysis of that -- let's take Baghdad, for example -- we looked at the Iraqi plan, which is a commander, two division commanders, nine districts, each of which would have an Iraqi brigade at its lead, and then our ability to reinforce each of those brigades with a battalion of our own, and also provide additional advisors inside those battalions.

When you then take a look at the activities that they must conduct -- the patrolling, the checkpoints, the quick reaction forces, the going door-to-door to see the people and let them know that there is a security presence, when you look at those kinds of activities, and you do what we call a "troop-to-task analysis," you end up needing more forces in Baghdad than are currently there -- preferably Iraqi

forces, and the Iraqis are going to provide additional forces -- but when you look at capacity, there are still unique capabilities that the U.S. Armed Forces have that are useful to assisting the Iraqi government. And that's how our commanders on the ground did the analysis, and that's why General Casey and his commanders came forward and asked for additional forces. They asked for additional forces for Baghdad, and they asked for additional forces for al Anbar.

In fact, we have put into the pipeline to go more forces than their analysis on the ground indicated they would need initially to ensure that as the enemy makes decisions and decides what they're going to do, that we have the capacity available to our commanders on the ground to get the job done.

Q -- the fact that we're so stretched.

GENERAL PACE: Being stretched is part of the equation, but it does not impact the recommendation about how many troops are needed. We have sufficient capacity inside the U.S. Armed Forces to be able to do this plus-up. But we should not -- we must be mindful of the fact that our active forces have been rotating in and out at about one year in, one year out. And our Guard and Reserve forces have been going in at about one year and coming out for about five. The total force mix of the United States the Secretary talked about is available to solve this problem in Iraq and also to handle any other problems. So it very much is on our mind as far as how we resource this plus-up. But it had nothing to do with the division -- with the decision of the commanders on the ground as far as how many troops are needed.

They tell us here in Washington how many they need, and once that is accepted as the requirement, then we have the responsibility to find the proper mix of forces to go do that. And that's what General Schoomaker in the Army and that's what General Conway in the Marine Corps will be doing.

Q To be clear, if it appears that the Iraqis are not meeting the commitments they have made, will we withhold sending these troops on this phased-in process?

SECRETARY GATES: I think that if we get some indication that the Iraqis are not fulfilling their commitments, the way this is going to unfold, we are going to have a number of opportunities to go back to the Iraqis and point out where they have failed to meet their commitments, and to move forward. I think that, frankly, based on the President's conversations and the conversations that our Ambassador and General Casey have had, not just with the Prime Minister but with President Talabani and with other leaders in the Iraqi government, that there is a broad commitment in the Iraqi government across several different groups in the government to make this work. So I think our assumption going forward is that they have every intention of making this work, of fulfilling their commitments.

And, frankly, the notion that the Iraqis are standing by while we're doing the fighting is really not an accurate statement. In fact, one of our military folks told me the other day that now more than half of the casualties coming into U.S. military hospitals in Iraq are Iraqi military, so they are fighting. And as we saw in the streets of Baghdad just in the last couple of days, they are fighting. So I think that our belief is they will fulfill these commitments. But if we see them falling short, we will make sure that they know that and how strongly we feel about it.

Q Secretary Rice, there's been a great deal of emphasis on Maliki's government performing and whether or not there's too much pressure being put on him. If you would, in all fairness, respond to a Reuters wire that's just crossed, comments that Reuters reports that was made in an open microphone between television interviews this morning, it quotes you saying, "I don't want to descend on the Maliki government and look like just sort of beat their brains out. The President was pretty tough last night, and we'll be pretty tough today. Give them a little time now to do something, a little breathing space."

Are these accurate comments from Reuters? And is there a sense or a risk of being too hard on Maliki?

SECRETARY RICE: I don't think there is a sense of not being very tough about the commitments and the obligations that we expect. And, yes, it's an accurate quote. It was an open mike, but it was an accurate quote.

And the point was, I was asked, are you going to go to Baghdad right away. And I said that I thought it was important to have the Maliki government have a little time now to make its plan work. After all, this is the Maliki government's plan. They came to the President with this plan in Amman. They said, we need to put together a plan that will help us to deal with the problem that our population doesn't believe that we can secure them. I believe that Bob's point about "they're sitting on the sidelines" is just not the right view.

However, they haven't performed in the past, and so the President is absolutely right -- and we have all been saying to them, you have to perform. I do think now Prime Minister Maliki needs to work with his government, get his Baghdad commander in place, get his forces in place, get his reconstruction coordinator appointed, and then I fully expect at that time, probably in not very long, to go to Baghdad and to work with them. But I do think it's important to give them a little time to get organized.

Q And when you say "breathing space" or, "a little time," do you have a certain sense of the timetable? Is that months?

SECRETARY RICE: No. They have to get organized right away, and they are. He announced a Baghdad commander. They're going to put this in place. I think their forces start to flow in on February 1st, so this is coming in very quick order. But again, the question was, are you going to go immediately to Baghdad, and my point was that I think we've made very clear what the expectations are of the Maliki government, very clear both in public and in private what those expectations are. And now I expect the Maliki government is going to organize itself to carry out those obligations.

Q Can I turn back to Iran for just a second and get a little bit back into what James was talking about? The President's language last night was rather muscular, when he talked about seek and destroy these networks. Does that extend beyond the kinds of operations that General Pace -- if you both could answer this, actually -- beyond the kinds of operations that General Pace was talking about? Was the raid this morning, for instance, part of that? Will we see more of that in the coming days? Can you explain a little bit more about what he meant when he used that language last night?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I think General Pace has spoken to what we think the necessity is and what it is we intend to do. We've made very clear to the Iranian government, and the Syrian government, for that matter, that we don't expect them to continue to engage in behavior that is destabilizing to the Iraqi government, but also that endangers our troops, and that we will do what is necessary for force protection. But we leave to those who deal with issues of force protection how these raids are going to be taken out.

I think you got an indication of that in what has been happening, which is the networks are identified, they are identified through good intelligence. They are then acted upon. It is without regard to whoever is in them, whatever the nationality. And we're going to protect our troops.

Now, as to state-to-state relations or the lack thereof in 27 years, that's a different matter. And we've been very clear with the Iranians that -- through others and publicly -- that they need to stop pursuing a nuclear weapon -- we have a policy on that -- that we have a Chapter Seven resolution, and that we believe that puts Iran in a very unfavorable category of states. And therefore, that people ought to be careful in how they deal with financial relations with the Iranians. And you'll continue to see those efforts, too. But I think General Pace has spoken to what we think we need to do in Iraq.

Q Secretary Rice, could I ask you about the future shape and role of the international coalition in Iraq? And also, the idea of a regional conference for Iraq?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, as to the future shape and coalition, there continue to be coalition forces operating in Iraq. The South Koreans, the Japanese, others, have re-upped their forces again to continue operating in Iraq. And there is a NATO training mission for officers in Iraq. And so I think you'll continue to see that kind of international support.

Now, the international compact for Iraq is a framework in which there can be real support for Iraq that is, in fact, a kind of conditional support the Iraqis undertake to do certain obligations. We undertake, as an international community, to match those obligations with resources. Many of the states that, for instance, the Iraqis owed debt to have agreed to very favorable terms -- 80 percent of debt reduction. We've agreed to 100 percent of debt reduction. And I think you'll see more of that.

Now, I'm going to the Middle East with the GCC because I feel very strongly that those states that are part of an alignment that understands that there are extremist forces that need to be resisted need to be mobilized and rallied in support of this Iraqi government. The states, like Saudi Arabia and Jordan and others, have been helping with Sunni outreach. I hope that they will help with more. But I think the international compact is the right framework for now because it is an international effort that is actually led by the Iraqis and the United Nations, which is really the proper way for Iraq to engage its neighbors.

Q -- for anyone. Is there anything you could do for protection of foreign workers in Iraq, including Russians? Russians have a fair number of workers there.

GENERAL PACE: I think each country that has civilians there is responsible to provide security for their own folks. So if the Russian have folks there that they want to have doing certain activities, I'm

sure that they've taken to account the kind of security they need to provide for them.

Q Secretary Gates, can you explain the practical effect of the mobilization changes you announced today? Does it wipe the slate clean for Guard members who have already gone to Iraq? And do you anticipate having to mobilize units that have already done tours there again?

SECRETARY GATES: Let me ask General Pace to answer that question.

GENERAL PACE: There will be remobilization of forces, and that remobilization has been contemplated before the announcement of these additional forces, because we have a rotation base of active forces that we try to maintain, one year overseas, two years home. And that rotation has gone to one year overseas, one year home.

On the Guard and Reserve side, we try to get one year mobilized and five years demobilized. It's really been more like a year-and-a-half to almost two years mobilized, and then -- so the Secretary's comments not only allow us to remobilize forces that we need to assist in the total force effort that we've got going on in Iraq, but also, significantly, ensure that when we do remobilize -- or for those who have not yet been mobilized, when we mobilize them -- that their time will be one year from the time we call them to active duty, they train up, they deploy, do their mission, come home and demobilize, all inside of one year, which is a significant planning factor for the folks who have been enormously effective and critical to the success of our overall mission. The Guard and Reserve have been wonderful in the way that they perform their assignments.

Q But is the 24-month cumulative requirement that many Guard members have come close to meeting or met already, is that wiped clean now? And are we starting from ground zero in terms of eligibility of Guard members that will be mobilized and report?

GENERAL PACE: Inside the policy of one year mobilized and five years demobilized -- that one year would have been part of the cumulative process. When you have your -- what we call "dwell time" at home, you're not mobilized. When you start again, you're starting again. We're not adding that to the previous. So I'm not sure I'm answering your question exactly accurately, but for any one mobilization we are constrained not to keep anybody more than 24 months. For subsequent mobilization, we're constrained not to keep anybody more than 24 months. What we're committing to is that we will not keep anybody more than one year on a subsequent mobilization.

Q So if you've already been mobilized for 18 months, and you've gone to Iraq for a tour, and your unit gets mobilized, and there's still -- and it's -- you still have -- you went to Iraq -- I'm sorry, but this gets very complicated -- and you went to Iraq fewer than four years ago, you could be mobilized again and have to go. Is that correct?

GENERAL PACE: That is correct. But your time, as the Secretary has indicated, will be no more than 12 months when you go the second time, or if you happen to be a new recruit and you go the first time, it will still be for 12 months.

END 9:21 A.M. EST

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