

Statement

Ambassador and Special Presidential Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad

Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

June 7, 2005

Mr. Chairman, Senator Biden, distinguished Members of the Committee, I am here before you as the President's nominee to be Ambassador to Iraq. I look forward to sharing with you my thoughts on the priorities for U.S. policy in Iraq and to hearing your views on this very difficult and most crucial of foreign policy issues.

Mr. Chairman, eighteen months ago, I appeared before this committee as the President's nominee to serve as Ambassador to Afghanistan. We faced great challenges and opportunities. I spoke of the administration's commitment to accelerate progress in Afghanistan. Working in partnership with President Karzai and the Afghan people, all Americans can be proud of the progress that we have made since then.

I wish to express my appreciation for the support the Mission received from the Congress, and this committee in particular, both in terms of visits and support for our programs. This support has helped Afghans put their country on a positive trajectory. Afghanistan has a long way to go, and we should stay with the Afghans until they can stand on their own feet.

After the end of my mission in Afghanistan, my expectation was to come back to be with my family in Washington or in a non-hardship post. However, the President and Secretary Rice have asked me to serve as Ambassador to Iraq. In my view, Iraq must succeed. Therefore, I have agreed to serve, assuming that this is also the will of the Senate.

In agreeing to serve in Iraq, I am mindful of – and inspired by – the tremendous sacrifices being made by American and Coalition servicemen and women, diplomats, civilians, and their families in the effort to build a free Iraq.

If confirmed, I plan to work with President Talabani, Prime Minister Jaafari, and the other members of the new Iraqi government. I have many friends, both inside and outside of the Iraqi government, from my period serving as Special Presidential Envoy to the Free Iraqis in 2002 and 2003.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance American goals in consolidating a free, secure, and prosperous Iraq. I would like to thank the members of the Senate and the House for their recent approval of funding to build a new Embassy compound in Baghdad.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will work in partnership with all Iraqis – all sects, all ethnic groups, men and women – to accelerate success in Iraq. By *success*, I mean an Iraq that can stand on its own feet, providing an open and representative political process

in which all Iraqis can take part, establishing security for its people, and creating economic prosperity that will enable Iraqi families to have access to education, health care, and other basic services.

With the support of the United States and others, Iraqis have made progress in all of these areas.

- The election on January 30, in which 58 percent of eligible Iraqis turned out to vote despite security threats and intimidation, put in place a transitional national assembly that formed the new government. Women account for 31 percent of the new parliament.
- Iraq has introduced a new and stable currency, is exercising fiscal discipline, and has taken significant steps to re-integrate into the world economy, including reaching an unprecedented debt-reduction agreement with the Paris Club of creditor nations.
- More than 91,000 police and other security forces in the Ministry of Interior and 76,000 personnel in the Ministry of Defense have undergone initial training and equipping, and some units have taken over the security tasks previously performed by forces of the United States and its Coalition partners.

- Thousands of reconstruction projects are underway and hundreds have been completed to rebuild schools, clinics, hospitals, roads, airports, ports, railroads, telecommunications facilities, water and sanitation, and electrical power generation.
- Iraqi civil society is flowering through new newspapers and electronic media, as well as associations and civic organizations of all kinds. Exchange programs are underway to reconnect Iraqi society to the wider world.

However, Iraq faces great challenges. The country is at a crossroads. Foreign terrorists and hard-line Baathists want Iraq to descend into a civil war that would draw in regional powers. Foreign terrorists are using the Iraqi people as cannon fodder in pursuit of their own unholy agenda of promoting civil war in Iraq, dominating the Islamic world, and triggering a conflict of civilizations globally. They do not care about Iraq or the Iraqis. Hard-line Baathists want to foster an all out civil war in the hope of either restoring dictatorship and their control of Iraq or taking the country down with them. The Iraqi people, on the other hand, want to build a successful nation. Like people everywhere, they want a country in which they and their families can live normal lives in peace and prosperity.

We are witnessing daily the suffering of the Iraqi people – and Americans are horrified at the attacks inflicted by the unscrupulous terrorists upon ordinary people and newly trained police and others who are trying to bring security to the people. If I am

confirmed, together with Iraqis and others, we will work on seven fronts to end this difficult transition period and make significant progress in realizing Iraqi aspirations for a secure and prosperous life.

First, to prevent the terrorists from achieving their goal of an all out civil war, I will work to unite the common people against the terrorists and hard-line Baathists. I will reach out to all of Iraq's communities to help them develop a common and unifying vision – a national compact for their nation's political future. This compact can only be built by all Iraqis working together. This common understanding among all Iraqi groups should be reflected in an enlightened and sound constitution that embraces democracy, pluralism, and individual rights and that is developed through an inclusive process. In this process of reconciliation, no community should be held responsible for the past crimes committed by a few among them. The success of this process should bring out of the fight those elements that are acting out of fears about the future direction of Iraq and the role of their own community.

Second, I will work with Iraqis to break the back of the insurgency. I will work with our military and intelligence services to ensure that we have a good understanding of the enemy – its weaknesses and strengths – and an integrated strategy that strikes the proper balance among the use of all of our instruments of policy. We will continue to increase the number and enhance the capabilities of Iraqi security forces. We should seek to steadily expand the security of the Iraqi people and progressively isolate and ultimately defeat the foreign terrorists and hard-line Baathists.

Third, we will work with the Iraqis to create a more favorable regional environment to stabilize and rebuild Iraq. Some neighbors, such as Turkey, are playing helpful roles, while others are being unhelpful. We will take steps to neutralize unhelpful activities by some of Iraq's neighbors who are allowing their territory to be used by the enemies of Iraq or who are seeking to dominate parts of Iraq or its key institutions. We will also encourage our friends in the region to play more active and positive roles by encouraging Iraqis to come together on a common vision for their country, by sending ambassadors to Baghdad, by forgiving Iraq's debt to them, by helping to reconstruct the Iraqi economy, and by investing in the new Iraq.

Fourth, Iraqis, Americans, and other friends of Iraq will work together to accelerate the building of Iraqi institutions. We will place more emphasis on supporting capacity building to improve governance and the rule of law, to enable Iraqis to sustain newly built infrastructure, and to achieve Iraqi self reliance.

Fifth, I will continue build on the good work that has already been done to reconstruct Iraq. Despite the security problems that have impacted the pace of reconstruction, a great deal has been accomplished. Going forward, Americans and Iraqis should adjust our assistance program to give greater ownership and responsibility to the Iraqi government and people. In doing so, I will put added emphasis on economic cooperation designed to spur decentralization through giving a greater voice in reconstruction planning and implementation to the elected provincial councils, to utilize

to a greater extent Iraqi firms and employees, to improve delivery of power, and to revive key sectors such as agriculture. As we improve security, we will work with the Iraqi government to deliver enduring reconstruction benefits to local communities.

Sixth, I will be more proactive in using public diplomacy to explain our goals and policies to the Iraqi people in order to strengthen their confidence in the United States. I will explain that the United States seeks to accelerate the achievement of Iraqi self reliance. I will impress upon Iraqis that Americans do not covet Iraqi resources or territory. I will tell the story of America's success in building its political and economic systems on the universal ideals of freedom, democracy, rule of law, economic liberty, and self reliance of its citizens. Iraqis can then draw on their own traditions, as well as the experience of others, to achieve greatness again. I will also explain that the path of extremism leads to a dead end.

Seventh, I will work with Iraqis to set the conditions for a successful election under the new constitution – one that is held according to the timeline set forth in U.N. resolutions, that builds legitimacy through the participation of all Iraqi communities, and that establishes a foundation for a stable and moderate Iraq led by a government that represents Iraq in all its ethnic, religious, and political diversity.

With successful implementation of this approach, the back of the insurgency can be broken within a reasonable period of time.

Iraq has been at the center of great civilizations across the centuries. It has known periods of glory and great flourishing of culture. For centuries, the city of Baghdad created and attracted great scholars and innovators in every field. Najaf also fostered a culture of innovation and learning for centuries. Kirkuk fostered a spirit of tolerance and diversity as peoples of different faiths and languages met to conduct business at one of the trading posts that connected east and west.

Iraqis already possess many attributes needed to address these challenges and secure their country's success. They have great resources, particularly oil and water, and an educated population. They have the right ratio of land to population. They have a millennia-long history of innovation, great learning, and wealth creation. They have friends, including the United States, who can provide some elements of success such as modern technology that they currently lack. And despite the great suffering they have experienced, they remain hopeful about their futures.

I am optimistic about Iraq's future. It can rise to new heights by continuing the hard work of embracing the universal ideals of freedom, representative government, individual rights, and the rule of law in a manner consistent with local traditions.

This is Iraq's moment of opportunity. I urge Iraqis to seize this moment by building an Iraq in which all Iraqis are vital and active participants and everyone's rights are respected. When the Iraqis succeed, they will become an example or model of a thriving democratic state and prosperous society for the wider region.

We have a lot at stake in Iraq. Helping Iraqis succeed is in our own vital national interest. It is also the right thing to do.

If confirmed for this new assignment, I will be results oriented. Afghanistan and Iraq are the keystones of the wider political and economic transformation of the region. Succeeding in this effort is the defining challenge of our time.