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**TESTIMONY OF
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**BEFORE THE 108TH CONGRESS
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

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It is an honor to report to this committee on the situation and our actions in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility. As you know, our command is focused on three main priorities: defeating transnational terrorism and creating safe and secure environments in Iraq and Afghanistan. CENTCOM operates within the geographic and ideological heart of the Global War on Terror. It is a war without borders that spans all twenty-five countries in the region. There is no doubt that The War on Terror is connected to our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Success in Afghanistan and Iraq will result in stable States that do not harbor terrorists and provide a visible alternative to the terrorist vision of hatred and conflict.

The over 195,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines now serving in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility are engaged in a wide range of activities, each of them critical to maintaining our national security. These include counter-insurgency, counter-terrorist, stability, and civil-affairs operations. Over twenty ships and 200 aircraft are sustaining our land forces and providing a potent deterrent to our adversaries. Our servicemen and women are also occupied with training exercises designed to increase our ability to operate with regional partners as well as enhance their military effectiveness. I visit our troops and their commanders frequently and they remain confident that we are winning the war on terrorism and winning the peace in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are also realistic and understand that success will not come without cost or without the cooperation of local populations. Those of you who have visited the region understand the great strides our servicemen and women have made toward accomplishing our objectives. We all recognize, however, that there are no easy answers to the problems we face in the region. At CENTCOM we also know that,

while we are the military centerpiece of our national security efforts in the region, none of the problems with which we are engaged will succumb to military force alone. Integrating our efforts with those of other agencies and ensuring that our operations advance our political objectives are essential to our success.

WAR ON TERRORISM

We have had good effect against terrorists throughout the Central Command Area of Responsibility. Our success has not been due to military actions alone. The United States Government, in cooperation with our regional partners, has killed and captured terrorists and attacked their infrastructure. CENTCOM is proud to have played a role in an effort marked by unprecedented cooperation between various agencies, regional partners, and members of the largest international coalition in history.

Despite remarkable victories, the fight against terrorism is far from over. The enemy's ideological base, financial networks and information networks remain strong. Indeed, the demographic and economic conditions that breed terrorists may be worsening and those conditions are heightening the ideological fervor associated with radical Islamist extremism. It is clear that we must continually reassess our efforts and improve our effectiveness.

We at Central Command, partnered as we are with many Islamic nations, recognize that the War on Terrorism is not a war against Islam; it is a war against the enemies of Islam. It is not a war against religion; it is a war against irreligious murderers. Securing all of our futures depends mainly on collective action and international cooperation. Each of the three main Combined Joint Task Forces in our Area of Responsibility has an important role to play in the greater regional effort against

terrorists. Through these task forces and Component Commands, we synergize theater cooperation efforts with other nations and build indigenous capabilities to combat terrorism and control borders. Central Command, our regional partners, and the seventy-one members of the Operation Enduring Freedom Coalition will remain on the offensive until terrorists no longer pose a threat.

IRAQ

In Iraq, our forces are working alongside the Coalition Provisional Authority to provide military capacity in our interagency and international efforts toward building a unified and stable country. The CPA's endstate for Iraq calls for a democratic and sovereign nation, underpinned by new and protected freedoms and a growing market economy, and made secure through the efforts of Iraqis -- able to defend itself, but posing no threat to its neighbors or the international community.¹

Coalition servicemen and women, alongside many Iraqi partners, are fighting our enemies and making progress toward a return of Iraq to the Iraqi people. While Iraqi police capacity still remains below requirements, joint Coalition and Iraqi police operations are bringing to justice criminal gangs that have been preying on the Iraqi people. Neighborhood watch programs are springing up throughout towns and villages. Although large reconstruction projects will require considerable time and resources, military commanders are working with local townspeople to prioritize small reconstruction projects; thousands of these have been completed. Town and city councils are in place throughout the country. The first battalion of the New Iraqi Army

¹ This more closely follows Amb. Bremer's testimony yesterday. It reads: "President Bush's vision, in contrast, provides for an Iraq made secure through the efforts of Iraqis. In addition to a more secure environment, the President's plan provides for an Iraqi economy based on sound economic principles bolstered by a modern,

will graduate on 4 October and the second battalion begins training the next day; these soldiers are proud to be part of the New Iraq. The first two thousand men and women of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps are assuming security responsibilities alongside Coalition soldiers. All this and more has been achieved in just over four months, despite the utter collapse of virtually every Iraqi institution. Our achievements, however, have not come without sacrifice and there is more fighting ahead.

Iraq has tremendous potential, but the Coalition and our Iraqi partners must defeat our enemies and overcome considerable obstacles before the future of Iraq is secure. While all but a very few Iraqis recognize the promise of freedoms they are enjoying for the first time – freedom to express their personal views, freedom to practice their religion, freedom from fear, freedom to determine their own destiny – there are those who would deny the Iraqi people the peace and prosperity they so richly deserve. We continue to experience attacks on Coalition forces, our Iraqi partners, and infrastructure punctuated by larger high-visibility attacks to discredit the Coalition, disrupt reconstruction, and cause unrest. While former regime loyalists remain the focus of our operations, extremists, foreign fighters and terrorist groups are emerging as a major threat to Iraqis, the Coalition, and the international community. Criminal activity continues to frustrate reconstruction efforts and is the major source of instability in some regions. While our enemies are too weak to challenge us militarily, they believe that we do not possess the will to persevere in Iraq. They are wrong.

We are taking the fight to the enemy in Iraq. Attacks against our forces are localized in the Sunni areas and the city of Baghdad. Over seventy-five percent of

reliable infrastructure. And finally, the President's plan provides for a democratic and sovereign Iraq at the earliest reasonable date."

violent incidents and sabotage have occurred in only four of the eighteen provinces. The preponderance of the country, including Baghdad, has achieved a very high degree of security and stability. Iraqis are providing intelligence that permits us to kill or capture the enemy and preempt attacks.

We are focusing our efforts in five areas: improving intelligence, developing Iraqi security forces, internationalizing our security effort, protecting the infrastructure, and helping to communicate our aims, plans, and successes to the Iraqi people. We have also repositioned forces to concentrate our efforts in problem areas and establish a higher degree of control over Iraq's borders. In areas in which we achieve stability, we will disengage our forces and turn over security responsibilities to Iraqis while maintaining the capability to anticipate and respond rapidly to any changes in the situation. Later, as the New Iraq expands its security capacity, we intend to move our forces to less visible locations from which we can react to external threats and prepare to relinquish national defense responsibilities to the New Iraqi Army.

Violence, of course, is not the only obstacle to progress in Iraq. As you know, we must maintain the consent of the Iraqi people. Popular disaffection sets conditions for instability. Disaffection stems from many sources including high expectations, high unemployment, a lack of essential services, suspicion of Coalition motivations for liberating Iraq, residual fear of the Baath Party, and the sudden end to the former regime's patronage system. Our efforts to rebuild Iraq are connected to the security situation because general disaffection among the populace provides available manpower to those who are inciting (and paying for) attacks against Iraqis, the infrastructure and Coalition forces.

We recognize that economic development, political development, and security are interdependent. COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE-7 and CENTCOM are supporting fully the Coalition Provisional Authority's efforts in all areas. In addition to securing critical infrastructure alongside our Iraqi partners, two U.S. Army task forces, Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil and Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity are accelerating progress in restoring Iraq's failed oil economy – the financial engine to move Iraq forward – and providing the key enabler for all economic functions and public needs – electricity. Brigade commanders have partnered with Iraqis to complete over eight thousand reconstruction projects. Also, our commanders and civil affairs personnel worked with Iraqis to establish local and provincial councils as a foundation for regional and national governance.

Over the past four months, we have improved our understanding of the situation and identified what more needs to be done. We know what is working well and what areas require additional attention and resources. CENTCOM, COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE-7, CPA, and our Coalition partners are working together in accordance with our plans. We must remember, however, that the situation in Iraq is complex and dynamic; we are certain to encounter unforeseen difficulties and opportunities and we must remember that the future course of events depends not only on what we plan to do, but on enemy reactions and initiatives that are difficult to predict. We are resolved to reassess continually the situation, refine our plans, be prepared for contingencies, and refocus our efforts whenever necessary.

Our commanders and troops are optimistic and feel that we now have before us an opportunity to gain tremendous momentum. In the short term, we believe that if we

and our partners commit resources to accomplish three things – restore basic services (especially power), build Iraqi security capacity, and improve our ability to communicate our plans and successes to the Iraqi people -- we will accelerate progress in the next months.

AFGHANISTAN

The next year in Afghanistan, with the constitutional Loya Jirga in December and elections scheduled for June 2004, will prove critical to achieving peace and stability there. We have achieved much in Afghanistan, but there is much work that we, the Coalition, and the Afghans have yet to accomplish. As in Iraq, there is no purely military solution to the problems we face there. We must simultaneously defeat our enemies, support the effort to establish representative government and set conditions for economic growth and long-term stability.

The enemy adjusted after the devastating losses inflicted on them since the initiation of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Al Qaeda, Gulbiddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami (HIG) and Taliban forces are conducting low-level guerrilla and terrorist attacks. Their attacks aim to obstruct reconstruction efforts and incite chaos. Al Qaeda and HIG terrorist activity pose the greatest threat in the Northeast while Taliban remnants have shown signs of reorganization and continue anti-Coalition/anti-Afghan operations in the Southeast.

We continue to seek out and defeat Taliban and Al Qaeda forces. Cooperation with the Pakistanis will disrupt further the enemy's ability to reorganize and conduct operations. The formation of the Afghan National Army (ANA) continues to be a success story as units demonstrate their professionalism and gain operational experience. Our conventional force

in Afghanistan is small in comparison to the force in Iraq, but it is very effective due to its ability to conduct joint and combined operations. During a recent mission, COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE-180 successfully brought together U.S. conventional, Special Operations Forces, air, Afghan National Army and Afghan Militia Forces against a long-known Taliban operational base.

Because political and economic initiatives will prove most important in maintaining stability in Afghanistan, we must ensure that our operations support those initiatives. The expansion of Provincial Reconstruction Teams from four to eight and the possibility that NATO might expand its security efforts beyond Kabul are particularly promising.

The most important person in Central Command is the young soldier, Marine, sailor, or airman performing his or her mission on the frontline of freedom in the middle of the night. It goes without saying that our successes will continue to depend on the bright, talented, and courageous servicemen and women who are taking risks and making sacrifices to preserve liberty and protect our nation. Our missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in the Global War on Terror are bound to entail additional risks and sacrifices. However, our airmen, sailors, Marines, and soldiers understand, as we all do, that a lack of perseverance in any of our vital missions would lead to even greater risk and loss. When I talk with them they invariably express to me their belief that we “will either have to fight terrorists over here or fight them at home.” I want to thank this committee for your support to our men and women and for your oversight of the vital operations we are undertaking in Central Command.