

Iraq's Partial Government Won't Last for Very Long

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

After three months of haggling, horse-trading, and faction fighting, the new Iraqi leadership that emerged from the Jan. 30 elections, announced that it had put together a government—almost. As soon became clear, the government announced by Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari on May 3, was no government at all. Out of 37 ministerial posts planned, five remained essentially vacant: the ministries of oil, defense, electricity, industry, and human rights, which are filled by “acting” ministers. Also vacant are two Deputy Prime Minister positions.

To paper over the problem, Jaafari assumed the role of Acting Defense Minister himself, while Deputy Prime Minister Ahmed Chalabi, the darling of the neo-cons, was told he should be Acting Oil Minister. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice lost no time in calling Chalabi to congratulate him on his new posts, and “to discuss some of the issues still facing the government, in terms of inclusiveness and filling the other positions, and also how we go forward in cooperation,” as State Department spokesman Richard Boucher explained.

The reason that only a partial government could be presented, is that the sectarian strife among Iraq's Shi'ite majority, and Sunni and Kurd minorities, has prevailed in the minds of the chief actors, over and above the urgent need to have a viable government, capable of tackling the enormous problems that the population has to face every day.

The Shi'ites, known in the electoral list as the United Iraqi Alliance, and backed by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, won the lion's share of the votes in the January elections, followed by the Kurds, and then some Sunni groups who did not boycott the elections. Prime Minister Jaafari insisted that he wanted adequate Sunni representation in the government. However, when Sunni candidates were presented for ministerial posts by a number of Sunni groups, they were opposed by the Shi'ites, on grounds that the individuals named had had contacts with the Ba'ath Party of the Saddam Hussein regime.

Jaafari's dilemma is clear: He needs several “token” Sunnis, to make his cabinet appear to represent national unity, but he (and his faction) are reluctant to give any real power to those Sunnis who have an actual constituency in the country.

Thus, the presentation of the cabinet ended up as a farce. More than 90 Parliamentarians reportedly boycotted the session. Ghazi al-Yawer, a Sunni leader who had headed up the committee that presented Sunni candidates for various posts, and who had served as interim President, boycotted the session. Ayad Allawi, who had served as interim Prime Minister, was also absent, officially “away.” Ahmed Najadi, a spokesman for al-Yawer, explained: “Formation of the government is very important, but we said if the candidates from the Sunni side were not approved, we would not participate in the swearing in. Either all of the Sunni ministers go together,” he added, “or they don't go.”

One major point of conflict is the defense ministry position. “We gave them three names for Defense Minister,” Najadi said, “and they didn't accept any of the three. They said if they selected anyone from our list, that candidate would have a relationship to people who carry weapons in Iraq,” that is, to the resistance. It is known that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has repeatedly put in his two cents, specifying to the Iraqi leadership, that changes in the defense and security apparatus were not acceptable.

The insanity of the leadership's position is obvious. If there is any perspective for ending the resistance, led largely by Sunnis, and for preventing a degeneration into full-fledged civil and ethnic/sectarian war, the leadership must include a reconciliation with the Ba'athist political layers, largely Sunnis, who were associated with the former government, civil service, and military. As long as the new Iraqi leadership rejects this approach towards reconciliation, the resistance will escalate, and the specter of civil war will remain on the horizon.

In the Barracks

The tragic absurdity of the current Iraqi political situation can be summed up in one image: The new cabinet (or almost-cabinet) is holed up inside the Green Zone, the heavily protected area in Baghdad where the U.S. occupation forces have their headquarters. Some Arab reports have gone so far as to say that Jaafari is regularly transported by helicopter out of the besieged zone, and taken to neighboring Kuwait to stay overnight, for security reasons.

No wonder: in the two days following the government's



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swearing-in ceremony on May 3, there were no fewer than 100 bomb attacks. On May 4, a suicide bomber blew himself up in Irbil, in the Kurdish area, which was considered to be the safest in the country. Sixty people died and 150 were wounded. The following day, 25 people were killed in a series of attacks in the capital: 15 died in a car bomb explosion, 9 police officers were gunned down in their squad cars, a guard was killed in an attack on the residence of a Deputy Defense Minister, 6 policemen were killed when assailants opened fire on their cars, and 3 others were killed in another shootout in eastern Baghdad.

In the same days, heavy fighting was reported between resistance forces and U.S.-Iraqi forces in Anbar Province, especially Ramadi, where 15 died, including 12 militants, and Iraqi soldier and 2 Iraqi civilians. There was also heavy fighting on the Iraqi-Syrian border.

At the same time, two U.S. Marine Corps F/A-18 planes were reported missing, and the bodies of two pilots were recovered, in undisclosed locations. Although the U.S. authorities claimed that the planes were flying too high to be hit by shoulder-mounted missiles, no explanation for their crash has been given.

Perspectives for the 'New' Iraq

The schedule set down by the occupying authorities planned for elections, followed by the formation of an interim government, which would be tasked with drafting a constitution by August 2005, and holding new elections by December 2005. Considering the vicious political in-fighting that stalled the formation of a government for three months, and the continuing and escalating ethnic/sectarian tensions in the coun-

try, it is reasonable to ask, how could there possibly be agreement on a constitution?

Well-informed Arab sources have told *EIR* that they expect the current quasi-government to last no more than three months, followed by chaos.

The situation of the U.S. forces is also becoming increasingly difficult, as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard Myers, reported to Congress May 2. Japan is expected to announce in September that it will pull out its contingent of 300 troops, when its mandate expires in December. The continuing controversy around the killing of Italian secret service agent Nicola Calipari, by U.S. troops, is putting pressure on Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi to withdraw his 3,000 troops. Soon, the "coalition of the

willing" will be whittled down to an exclusive club of the U.S. and British.

Reportedly, the Iraqis are to beef up their police and military forces, now estimated to count 132,000, so that the U.S.-led foreign forces can leave by 2007. NATO is planning to set up a permanent on-site training station in Iraq, beginning in September, to train 1,000 officers. In an eloquent footnote to this development, it is reported that to guarantee their safety, NATO is engaging the services of a private security firm!

In short: the Iraq quagmire is getting deeper and more treacherous. There is a way out, and it is that which Lyndon LaRouche outlined in detail in April 2004, in his "LaRouche Doctrine" for South West Asia: an orderly, safe withdrawal of U.S. and other forces from the country must be organized within the framework of a regional security arrangement, among four cornerstone nations: Egypt, Syria, Iran, and Turkey.

If Washington were serious about stabilizing the region, that would be the policy. Instead, the neo-cons, led by madman Vice President Cheney and madwoman Rice, are doing everything in their power to destabilize precisely these cornerstone nations. Iran is being threatened with attack, Syria has been targetted through the Lebanon operation, and Egypt is in the throes of civil unrest, abetted by U.S. organizations.

The hope lies in the perspective that a bipartisan grouping in the U.S. Congress, especially the Senate, may move in to take over the reins of foreign policy-making from the current madmen in the White House, and steer a course towards peace. If not, the entire region may go up in flames.