

11/01/99

Text: Ambassador Pickering Letter to the Iraqi National Congress

(Says INC must succeed in supporting the forces of change in Iraq)

"The United States is eager to support the rebirth of a strong, unified liberation movement and organization to represent and serve the Iraqi people and to cooperate with neighbors and friends around the world," Ambassador Thomas Pickering, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, said in a letter to members of the Iraqi National Congress prior to their assembly in New York November 1.

"We, and most of all the Iraqi people, need such a partner with which to cooperate -- both to help liberate Iraq from its current nightmare, and to help rebuild it when Iraqis reclaim their freedom and national dignity," Pickering said.

Pickering said "Until there is such a partner in being and in action, there is little the United States or United Nations can do to help free Iraqis from Saddam Hussein's tyranny. We see no alternative to the renewed and reunified Iraqi National Congress. It must succeed, and we are confident that it will succeed, beginning with the upcoming conference in New York, in supporting the forces of change within Iraq."

"I hope each of you will choose to stand together on the world stage in New York in a few days, in the full glare of the world media and the ongoing United Nations General Assembly, to inspire your countrymen with a powerful vision of national unity. I hope likewise to congratulate you as you stand together in Baghdad soon afterwards," Pickering said.

Following is the text of Pickering's letter:
(begin text)

United States Department of State
Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dr. Ayad Allawy
Iraqi National Accord

Seyyed Dr. Mohammed Bahr al-Uloom
Ahl al-Bayt Center

Mr. Massoud Barzani
President, Kurdistan Democratic Congress

Dr. Ahmed al-Chalabi
Iraqi National Congress

Seyyed Baqr al-Hakim
Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq

Sherif Ali Ibn al-Hussein
Constitutional Monarchist Movement

Mr. Jalal al-Talabani
President, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

Gentlemen:

I am writing to you as recognized leaders of significant bodies of free Iraqis and of Iraqi opinion within the democratic opposition to the current Baghdad regime. I know that each of you has worked for the national recovery of Iraq from its current nightmare. Several of you are wholeheartedly committed to reunifying the Iraqi people behind an effective movement to recover your country from within. Several of you have pledged to demonstrate this commitment by stepping forward to lead the Iraqi opposition as both a national and an international movement, beginning with the joint conference of all Iraqi opposition parties in a new Iraqi National Assembly in New York in a few days.

The United States Government wants to hear from a unified Iraqi popular leadership just how it can proceed to support the people of Iraq in promoting the change of regime, as it is the right of you, the Iraqi people, to do. The United States also wants to hear from you how, thereafter, it might support Iraq in a great program of national recovery. The United States stands ready to cooperate with friendly governments as equal partners in common interests. However, the Iraqi people still have no effective or legitimate government to represent and to serve them, and to cooperate with neighbors and friends around the world. That is precisely why we Americans who wish to support Iraqi aspirations are so eager to support the rebirth of a strong, unified liberation movement and organization. We, and most of all the Iraqi people, need such a partner with which to cooperate -- both to help liberate Iraq from its current nightmare, and to help rebuild it when Iraqis reclaim their freedom and national dignity. Until such a partner comes into being and action, there is little the United States or United Nations can do to help free Iraqis from Saddam Hussein's tyranny. We see no alternative to the renewed and reunified Iraqi National Congress. It must succeed, and we are confident that it will succeed, beginning with the upcoming conference in New York, in supporting the forces of change within Iraq.

It is neither the right nor the responsibility, nor is it within the power of the United States, to select or promote Iraqi leaders, now in the Opposition or for a future liberated Iraq. No doubt other brave Iraqis will step forward to join in the task of liberation and recovery, and many more will continue to pay with their lives. I know you face complicated calculations as you consider whether to join forces openly and unconditionally. I hope each of you will choose to stand unconditionally. I hope each of you will choose to stand together on the world stage in New York in a few days, in the full glare of the world media and the ongoing United Nations General Assembly, to inspire your countrymen with a powerful vision of national unity. I hope likewise to congratulate you as you stand together in Baghdad soon afterwards.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Pickering
(Signed)

(end text)