

from the office of

Senator Edward M. Kennedy

of Massachusetts

Senator Edward M. Kennedy Releases Report
on the Continuing Kurdish Refugee Crisis in Iraq

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Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs, today released a Subcommittee staff report on the continuing plight of the Kurds in Iraq. According to the report, 900,000 Kurds remain at risk of violence and serious deprivation, and actions by Saddam Hussein have created 300,000 new Kurdish refugees since October.

The report finds that the security of the Kurds cannot be guaranteed as long as Saddam Hussein remains in power, and recommends that an international presence continue in the region until the long-term security of the Kurds can be guaranteed. The report also recommends that the existing Allied security zone in Iraq be extended to cover all areas currently under Kurdish control.

In releasing the report, Senator Kennedy said:

"One year after the Gulf war, the tragic human consequences of the conflict continue. International efforts to assist the Kurds have made important gains, but the suffering continues for hundreds of thousands of Kurds living under the threat of Saddam Hussein's brutality.

"Continuing repression of the Kurdish population by Iraqi forces has caused a new wave of refugees at the worst possible time, and has placed unexpected strains on international efforts to provide shelter and food just as the winter season begins.

"Iraq's human tragedy goes on, and the United States and its Allies must remain committed to the security and well-being of the Kurds. We can do so at little cost, but with enormous benefit to the long-suffering Kurds."

The new report, entitled "Aftermath of War, Part II: The Plight of the Iraqi Kurds a Year Later," updates a previous Subcommittee field investigation last May, following the exodus of 1.8 million Kurdish refugees to Turkey and Iran.

The following are some of the principal findings and recommendations of the report:

Findings

1. At least 900,000 Kurdish men, women and children remain at risk of violence and serious deprivation and are likely to remain so until Saddam Hussein is no longer in power and political stability is established in Iraq.
2. Recent harassment by Saddam Hussein in areas outside the Allied security zone has caused 300,000 Kurds to flee their homes since October, 1991.
3. Without an extension of the Allied security zone to include all Kurdish controlled areas, the flow of Kurdish refugees will continue.
4. The refugee problem cannot be solved until the long-term security of Kurdish areas is guaranteed and the political status of the Iraqi Kurdish population is resolved. Such a goal will only come about with strong and consistent international involvement, pressure and oversight.
5. Saddam Hussein has placed an internal economic blockade against the Kurdish controlled areas of northern Iraq. The blockade is placing severe strains on the Kurdish population and enabling Saddam Hussein to use food, medicine and essential goods as weapons to remain in power.

Recommendations

1. The current Allied security zone in northern Iraq should be expanded to include all areas currently under Kurdish control. A long-term commitment must be made by the Allies to remain in the region until political stability is established throughout Iraq.
2. The United Nations, through the Security Council and Resolution 688, should be prepared to evaluate and guarantee compliance with any appropriate autonomy agreement negotiated between the Iraqi government and Kurdish representatives.
3. The United States must work more actively with Iraqi opposition groups, including Shiite leaders, to promote the establishment of democratic government in Iraq. Such efforts will also help stem the growing influence of Islamic fundamentalists in Iran.
4. As U.N. efforts shift into areas of rehabilitation and reconstruction, the U.S. and the international community should not only support such measures, but also provide direct humanitarian assistance to the Kurds.
5. The international community must increase its efforts to enforce the sanctions against the regime of Saddam Hussein and to achieve Iraqi compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 712, calling for the sale of Iraqi oil to provide urgently needed humanitarian goods.

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AFTERMATH OF WAR, PART II:
THE PLIGHT OF THE IRAQI KURDS A YEAR LATER

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

1. Immediate crisis passed but 900,000 remain at risk: The dramatic response of the international community to the flight of 1.8 million Kurds last Spring saved tens of thousands of lives and enabled the Kurds to overcome extraordinary odds to begin rebuilding their lives. However, at least 900,000 Kurdish men, women and children remain at risk of violence and serious deprivation, not just over the coming winter but until Saddam Hussein departs from power and political stability is established in Iraq.

2. 300,000 new refugees posing unexpected strains: Recent harassment by Saddam Hussein in areas outside the Allied security zone has caused 300,000 Kurds to flee their homes since October, 1991. This new refugee population is placing unexpected strains on the international relief efforts this winter, particularly

regarding efforts to provide adequate shelter.

3. Allied security zone insufficient: The Allied "security zone" provides adequate security to roughly one million Kurds living under Allied protection. However, the security zone is limited to a small portion of Iraq north of the 36th parallel and thus provides no security to the estimated two million Iraqi Kurds living outside the zone who are under constant threat of attack and intimidation by Iraqi forces and secret police. Without an extension of the Allied security zone to include all Kurdish controlled areas, the flow of Kurdish refugees will continue.

4. Political solution to refugee problem required: The refugee situation cannot be solved until the long-term security of Kurdish areas is guaranteed and the political status of the Iraqi Kurdish population is resolved. Such a goal will only come about with strong and consistent international involvement, pressure and oversight. Key Kurdish leaders are negotiating such arrangements with the Baghdad government, but a meaningful agreement and its full implementation can only be achieved under continuing international pressure.

5. Lack of knowledge of and contacts with Shiite population: Any long-term solution to the instability in Iraq must include the Shiite population who make up 55% of the Iraqi

population. Current U.S. and international efforts to make contact with this population and gather information are inadequate.

6. Evolving United Nations mandate: The Memorandum of Understanding under which the United Nations is currently operating has been extended until June, 1992. In April, the U.N. plans to shift its role from relief to rehabilitation and development. International support for such an effort will be essential for its success.

7. Saddam's embargo: Saddam Hussein has placed an internal economic blockade against the Kurdish controlled areas of northern Iraq. The blockade is placing severe strains on the Kurdish population and enabling Saddam Hussein to use food, medicine and essential goods as weapons to remain in power.

8. The role of Turkey: The role of Turkey has been indispensable to the success of international efforts to date, but problems remain. Indiscriminate attacks against Kurdish terrorists in northern Iraq by Turkish forces threaten the civilian population. Political pressure in Turkey to bring an early end to the Allied presence in Turkey and northern Iraq threatens the long-term well-being of the Kurdish population in northern Iraq.

9. U.S. policy toward Iraq: U.S. policy toward Iraq remains focused only on the removal of Saddam Hussein and has yet to develop a coherent strategy to promote long-term stability and democracy in Iraq.

Recommendations

1. Facilitate urgent housing arrangements: The international community -- and particularly the Kurdish parties -- must do everything possible within the next few weeks to assure that winter shelter is provided to new refugees.

2. Expand Allied security zone under long-term mandate: In order to prevent the creation of additional refugees and to facilitate continuing relief and rehabilitation efforts in the neediest areas, the current Allied security zone in northern Iraq should be expanded to include all areas currently under Kurdish control. This step can -- and should -- be taken with minimal additional effort and expense by the United States and the Allies. A long-term commitment must be made by the Allies to remain in the region until political stability is established throughout Iraq.

3. International guarantees for possible Kurdish autonomy agreement: The United Nations, through the Security Council, should be prepared to evaluate and guarantee compliance with any

appropriate autonomy agreement negotiated between the Iraqi government and Kurdish representatives. While Saddam Hussein has objected to any international involvement in these negotiations, United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 can be used to provide the international community with such a role.

4. Long-term policy should promote democracy for Iraq:

Administration policy toward Iraq cannot simply be to encourage the elimination of Saddam Hussein. The United States must begin working actively with Iraqi opposition groups, including Shiite leaders, to promote the establishment of democratic government in Iraq. Such efforts will also help stem the growing influence of Islamic fundamentalists.

5. United Nations mandate: The United Nations must be prepared to remain in Iraq until stability is established throughout the country and should begin projects to rebuild Kurdish areas destroyed by Saddam Hussein. As the U.N. shifts into areas of rehabilitation and reconstruction, the U.S. and international community should not only support U.N. efforts, but also provide direct humanitarian assistance to the Kurds. Such a step will provide needed reassurance to the Kurdish population and help alleviate the ongoing refugee problem.

6. Sanctions: The international community must increase its efforts to enforce the sanctions against the regime of Saddam

Hussein and to secure Iraqi compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 712. The resolution calls for the sale of \$1.6 billion in Iraqi oil; the proceeds will be used to cover U.N. expenses, pay compensation and purchase urgently needed food and medical supplies. While recent U.N. negotiations with Iraq are showing the first signs of progress on this issue, the world community must continue to press vigorously for this urgently needed humanitarian resource. Raising the \$1.6 billion cap should be considered.

7. Turkey: The role of Turkey in assisting and facilitating the international relief efforts over the last year is commendable. International efforts must be made to end the ongoing terrorist campaign of the PKK (the Kurdish Workers' Party) forces. International efforts must also be made to stop indiscriminate attacks by Turkish forces against Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq. Negotiations must begin to enable a long-term Allied presence to remain in the region until stability is established throughout Iraq.

AFTERMATH OF WAR, PART II:

THE PLIGHT OF THE IRAQI KURDS A YEAR LATER

I. Introduction

Over a five-day period, from December 10 through December 14, the staff mission visited much of northern Iraq, concentrating on the eastern portion of Iraq currently under control of the Kurdish military forces. We interviewed refugees in eastern camps who had newly fled towns along the military frontier, and who are now desperately seeking adequate shelter for the harsh Kurdish winter. We witnessed Saddam's past devastation in the Qala-Diza in far northeastern Iraq, where no building was left standing and the remnants of Halabjah destroyed in chemical attacks by Iraqi forces in 1988. We toured the tense frontier towns of Kalar and Kifri, where half of the former population is now in refugee camps farther north; and the remaining wary residents are determined to winter in their own homes -- but are packed and ready to leave the moment the anticipated Iraqi onslaught begins.

We also visited the newly liberated cities of Suleimaniya, Dahuk, and Zakho, where many Kurds population have returned to rebuild their lives. In addition, we travelled to Shaqlawa for meetings with the Kurdish leadership and to central northern Iraq for meetings with Kurdish tribal leaders. The delegation is indebted to the Kurdish leadership and people for their generous

hospitality and to the U.S. and Allied forces for their valuable assistance with our mission. This trip would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of these dedicated individuals.

The Kurdish refugee crisis of last spring that shocked the conscience of the world has been largely overcome through the dramatic response of the international community and Operation Provide Comfort. However, the refugee problem continues, and unless the international community takes steps over the next few months to ensure the security of the Kurds, the extraordinary gains of the last year may be lost.

Although the Kurds of northern Iraq are making a remarkable recovery from the massive devastation and loss of life last Spring, Saddam Hussein and his forces have produced yet another wave of refugees.

Since October, Kurdish villages along the military frontier between Kurdish areas and those under Iraqi central control have suffered continued shelling and sporadic attacks from deadly helicopter gunships and artillery fire. This new campaign of low-grade terror has caused at least 300,000 Kurds to flee to safer ground just as the harsh winter approaches. Their flight is triggered in part by Iraqi military violence, but also by memories -- still painfully fresh in Kurdish minds -- that such

actions by Iraqi troops in the past have been a prelude to larger and bloodier campaigns which have claimed the lives of so many of their family members.

This grave situation underscores the need for a continuing and modestly expanded international presence in northern Iraq -- with U.S. participation -- for the assistance and protection of Kurds. If the Kurdish people are to have a meaningful and stable future, Allied forces, through appropriate United Nations resolutions, must be willing to stand as guarantors of appropriate autonomy agreements which Kurdish leaders may be able to negotiate with the Iraqi government. A commitment should be made by the international community to remain in northern Iraq until Saddam Hussein has left power and stability in Iraq is achieved.

II. The Refugee Situation and Continuing Humanitarian Needs

A. Status of Kurds following crisis last Spring

By October 1991, the Kurds, with the help of the international community, had finally eased the crisis of last Spring. Virtually all of the 1.8 million Kurdish refugees who fled in the tragic exodus last March have returned from the refugee camps of Turkey and Iran. They are engaged in the

formidable task of rebuilding their lives in villages and cities that had been devastated by the Kurdish uprising and subsequent Iraqi reprisals earlier in the year, and that had suffered successive waves of violent repression by the Ba'athist government over many years.

Of the 1.8 million who fled last spring, 500,000 remain displaced in northern Iraq, unable to return home. An estimated 20,000-40,000 remain in Iran, 11,000 in Turkey, and another 4,000 in Syria. A new refugee population of 300,000 has been created since last October and another 100,000 to 200,000 stand ready to flee from Iraqi forces posted near their towns. In addition, many Kurds who fled from Iraq in 1988 have not returned home, including 20,000 in Iran and 20,000 in Turkey.

The majority of this population are from cities still under Iraqi control, such as Kirkuk and Mosul, and are unlikely to return home until a long-term political agreement guaranteeing their safety is achieved in a post-Saddam Iraq.

A massive program of food assistance and housing construction had saved countless lives and enabled the majority of the Kurds to restore a semblance of order to their lives. The return of major cities to Kurdish control, such as Dahuk and Suleimaniya, enabled most refugees from last Spring's sudden exodus to return to their homes and resume their lives, albeit

generally under harsh conditions.

In many instances, Kurds were rebuilding makeshift homes with the stone rubble of their former homes destroyed during the massive violence of the 1987-88 period or, in some cases, in the 1970s. Many were three- and four-time refugees, having fled Iraqi attacks and "Arabization" and collectivization programs over the past two decades.

Newly cultivated farm lands were evident as we travelled in Kurdish areas of Iraq, particularly in the West. We were told that the Dahuk-Zakho area of northwestern Iraq had achieved a 34,000 ton wheat and barley harvest, and that Kurds had actually sold 19,000 tons to Baghdad over the summer. However, despite this harvest, Kurds reported shortages of rice and other staples of the Kurdish diet.

A vigorous Turkish petroleum smuggling operation from Mosul through northern Iraq and into Turkey was greatly benefitting both the Turkish and Kurdish economies in the area. Kurds extracted transit fees from Turkish truckers, and the regime of Saddam Hussein benefits from the sale of its petroleum. The trade, primarily in diesel fuel, is a clear violation of the international sanctions against Iraq, and it is estimated to total as much as one million liters per day. The oil-trucking traffic is so extensive that a large portion of the highway from

Mosul in Iraq to Diyarbakir in Turkey, is a giant oil slick. Many international relief workers, including American citizens, have been injured in traffic accidents along this route.

In addition to the Turkish violation of the sanctions, the delegation also heard numerous reports of smuggling of goods from Iran and a steady flow of goods into and from Jordan. Iraqi goods were evident in Amman and Iranian gasoline is widely available in northern Iraq. The failure of the international community to abide by the sanctions is undermining the international effort to isolate Saddam Hussein and is assisting his effort to remain in power.

In addition, the failure of the Iraqi government to comply with the terms of United Nations Security Council Resolution 712 is enabling Saddam Hussein to use food and medicine as a weapon to remain in power. The prices of goods in Iraq, when available, are exorbitant and there are reports of severe shortages of critical humanitarian goods. If implemented, Resolution 712 would enable the Iraqi regime to sell \$1.6 billion in oil in order to purchase urgently needed food and medicine, and pay the costs of the UN operation and compensation to other nations. The international community must prevail on Saddam Hussein to accept the terms of this resolution as soon as possible. A raising of the current cap of \$1.6 billion should also be considered, so that the proceeds of such a sale will provide adequate resources

to meet current needs. While recent U.N. negotiations with Iraqi authorities are showing the first signs of progress in gaining Iraqi compliance, clearly additional pressure on Iraq to abide by the resolution is required.

While the long-oppressed Kurds are clearly encouraged by the prospect of rebuilding their ancestral homes, their hope for a secure future is clouded by well founded apprehension over the tenuous supply of food and fuel for the winter months and by the possibility that Iraqi forces will once again destroy their already fragile existence with military force.

The living conditions of the Kurdish population, particularly in the East, are tenuous at best. International relief officials estimate that 480,000 people remain at risk in the Suleimaniya area, 280,000 in the Irbil vicinity, and 130,000 around Dahuk. While these vulnerable families are not starving at the present, a change in the security situation could bring drastic results, since these populations are clearly living on the edge.

The United Nations has taken important steps to prepare for a sudden new crisis by implementing a contingency plan under which 500,000 tons of food will be stockpiled, to feed the Kurdish population in northern Iraq for two weeks -- the time period estimated for the international community to mobilize a

new relief effort, should one become necessary.

Since the staff mission in May, 1991,* the Kurds, with the generous assistance of the international community, have accomplished dramatic gains in rebuilding their lives. The Allies participating in "Operation: Provide Comfort" deserve high praise for their own extraordinary efforts to provide relief and security for the Kurds. The handful of Allied military personnel who remain in northern Iraq, backed by additional forces stationed in Turkey and the periodic overflights of Allied aircraft, provide a strong sense of security to the Kurds living within the security zone as well as important assistance to the continuing United Nations and voluntary agency programs throughout the Kurdish-controlled areas of northern Iraq.

The agencies of the United Nations, notably the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, have performed ably to assist refugees with the construction of homes, despite initial start-up difficulties. The World Food Program has provided extensive food assistance. The International Organization for Migration bore much of the logistical burden of transporting refugees back to their homes. UNICEF and others also played a vital role in meeting the health and other needs of the population.

*Aftermath of War: The Persian Gulf Refugee Crisis, Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs, Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, S.Prt. 102-31, May 20, 1991.

As is the case in virtually every refugee emergency, voluntary agencies played an essential, life-saving role. We were greatly impressed by the work of Medecins sans Frontieres in setting up field hospitals under harsh conditions and providing for the health of the refugees, as well as the overall Kurdish population. The International Rescue Committee was actively involved in assisting refugees with the construction of housing and other needs. CARE, Global Partners, and many other voluntary agencies performed outstanding tasks against considerable obstacles.

Finally, the Kurds themselves demonstrated what they have shown the world for generations. Their extraordinary resilience and ingenuity have enabled them to survive despite seemingly insurmountable odds.

B. Saddam's economic blockade

A new threat to the Kurds emerged following the capture of the city of Suleimaniya by the Kurdish rebels in early October. On October 26, the Iraqi government imposed an economic blockade on goods flowing to Kurdish-controlled areas throughout northern Iraq. The ban includes major food items, medicines, and other critical supplies and is imposing hardship on the Kurdish population.

Unlike the international embargo on Iraq, which is being violated openly by virtually all of Iraq's neighbors on a daily basis, Saddam's embargo has placed tight and effective controls on the flow of traffic northward to Kurdish-controlled areas. The flow of goods from the south is now less than a quarter of its pre-war level. Food, already expensive when obtained from Baghdad over the summer, now must be bought from Iran and Turkey at even higher prices. The price of gasoline, much of which is smuggled from Iran, now exceeds \$2 per gallon, compared to only seven cents before the war. As long as Saddam's embargo is allowed to continue, the Kurds will be forced to live on the edge.

C. New Refugee Population

The military push by the Kurds into the Kurdish cities of Suleimaniya and those to the South, such as Kalar and Kifri, succeeded in freeing these cities from control of Iraqi forces and permitted the 500,000 Kurds from the region to return home. But Iraqi military action against the towns along the front continues to threaten the Kurdish population in that region. Small scale offensive military actions by Iraqi forces continue and have prompted a new flight of 300,000 Kurds. In the refugee camps visited by the staff mission, we found refugees from Khalikhan, Kifri, Chamchamal, Kalar, and even Kirkuk -- all

saying they fled out of fear of a renewed assault by Iraqi troops.

Officials of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees stationed in north-eastern Iraq report frequent shelling over the last two months of 1991 along the military frontier between Iraqi-controlled areas and those under Kurdish control, running from Irbil to the Chamchala/Kifri area. Kirkuk remains under the control of the Iraqi forces and the Kurds will not return to Kirkuk under current conditions.

While no one has an accurate count of the number of refugees displaced by these recent offensive actions, UNHCR officials estimate that over 300,000 new refugees have fled since October 1. At least 145,000 of these new refugees are known to be in the Suleimaniya area and 160,000 in the Irbil area.

The staff mission viewed refugee encampments in Said Sadiq, Halabjah and Penjwin, all in far eastern Iraq. Already, freezing winter rains had set in, signalling the imminent arrival of the bitter cold of January and February. In Penjwin, located in the high, heavily mined mountains bordering Iran, heavy, wet snow had already begun to fall.

Most of the refugees we interviewed had recently fled from towns south of Suleimaniya along the military frontier under

constant threat of attack from Iraqi forces. Most families had tents, provided by the United Nations, and had packed their large families inside in a futile effort to stay warm and dry. But others, more recently arrived, simply had blankets and shards of cloth to drape over their families in makeshift shanties or were huddled in the rubble of homes previously destroyed by Iraqi forces.

At the time of our visit, approximately one-fourth of this new group, or roughly 12,000 families, are in need of emergency housing for the winter. U.N. officials had not planned for this unexpected new flood of refugees and are scrambling to provide even rudimentary shelter for these families. Officials estimate they have the material to provide housing for roughly two-thirds of these families through a combination of pre-fabricated materials already on hand and the use of hotels, old military bases, and university buildings. Pre-fab housing for the remaining 3300 families is on order from Turkey.

While pre-fab housing for these families can be delivered from Turkey on short notice, the biggest obstacle to the rapid construction of the new housing is a shortage of available and affordable labor. The United Nations cannot afford to hire large-scale construction crews. The housing erected in the summer and early fall for the refugee group from last Spring's exodus was constructed by the families themselves over the course

of several months. But the current housing must be built at a far more rapid pace, as winter has already arrived.

Reports since our visit suggest some progress on the housing issue. However, as of the first week of January, 2,000 families still had not been accommodated. Kurdish political parties reportedly played a helpful role in the past month in recruiting workers to construct emergency housing.

In addition to these new refugees, some 8,000 families -- about 60,000 refugees -- who had fled Kirkuk earlier in the year were in the process of returning to Kirkuk this Fall when the shelling began. These families now remain in the Suleimaniya and Irbil governorates and are in urgent need of housing and international care.

In the two frontier towns visited by the staff mission, Kalar and Kifri, there was clear evidence of occasional Iraqi shelling. In Kifri, Iraqi tanks were easily visible along a ridge no more than 2-3 kilometers away, and their guns were trained directly on the town. A few buildings showed evidence of concentrated, heavy-caliber fire, said to be the work of Iraqi helicopter gunships. And with each night comes random rifle fire from Iraqi forces stationed literally across the street from the town's edge. Their targets included a hospital (now closed due to the absence of medicines), an orphanage and a playground.

Kurdish forces cannot resist occasionally firing on the adjacent Iraqi forces. But the aggressive harassment exhibited in recent weeks by Saddam's troops is similar to past actions which preceded massive assaults and gassing of Kurdish civilians. Such harassment is the direct cause of the most recent flight of the 300,000 Kurdish refugee population most at risk. While the Allied forces have forbidden the use by Iraqi forces of fixed wing aircraft, Saddam has not hesitated to use other forces in his power against the Kurdish population.

While there was some activity in the marketplaces, the residential areas of Kalar and Kifri were virtual ghost towns. We estimate that more than half the residents have fled. The remaining residents we interviewed all had their bags packed for a quick escape. Many also had obtained tents, which they kept in their cars should events suddenly require them to join the ranks of their neighbors already in refugee camps further north. The thought of a winter in a refugee camp without adequate shelter or supplies -- and memories of last winter in the mountains -- had caused them to risk remaining behind. But it was clear that even the smallest escalation in violence could precipitate their flight in a matter of minutes.

III. Current Security Arrangements

An Allied force of 1,750 is stationed in southeastern Turkey to carry out the assistance program to the Kurds. A 5,000 personnel carrier battle group is stationed off the coast of Turkey. The Turkish authorization for the extension of Combined Task Force Provide Comfort II was provided on January 2, 1992 and extends until June 30, 1992. Currently, the international community has banned all fixed-wing Iraqi military aircraft from the skies, and all helicopter traffic above the 36th parallel. This ban is enforced by constant overflights over Iraq by Allied fighters and AWACs.

In addition, the Allies have established a security zone in the northwest corner of Iraq. The zone is staffed by a small group of allied troops based in Zakho, who are led by an able and well-informed American army colonel, and who daily survey the zone for humanitarian and security needs.

Other parts of Iraq are patrolled by United Nations guards. They are responsible for ensuring the protection of civilians and Baghdad's adherence to the various U.N. Security Council resolutions pertaining to Iraq. However, in a number of instances, these guards have proven to be an ineffective deterrent to offensive actions by Iraqi forces. The presence of U.N. guards in the Kalar and Kifri area did not prevent Iraqi forces from shelling those towns. And, in fact, the lightly

armed U.N. guards** fled the area once the shelling began.

On the other hand, Iraqi forces have respected the presence of Allied forces and avoided any conflict with them. There has been no shelling or any other major violation by Iraqi forces in the Allied security zone. When problems emerge with Iraqi forces or government officials related to the zone, they are handled directly with Iraqi military commanders stationed immediately south of the security zone. Reportedly, these problems -- heretofore all relatively minor -- have all been satisfactorily resolved. In fact, some security threats to civilians within the security zone have been from Turkish forces said to be in hot pursuit of Kurdish PKK terrorists.

This security arrangement has proved extremely effective in protecting the Kurds within the Allied security zone and has effectively solved the refugee crisis in that area. Serious problems remain, however, in Kurdish areas outside the Allied security zone where Saddam Hussein continues to use helicopter gunships, artillery, tanks and other military force against the Kurds. Simply expanding the zone to all areas currently under Kurdish control would resolve the current refugee problem, provide the Kurds the security they need to begin rebuilding their lives and help lay the groundwork for a long-term political

**Pursuant to agreements with the Iraqi government, U.N. guards only bear sidearms provided by the Iraqi government.

solution once Saddam Hussein is out of power.

In negotiating the terms of the current security arrangements, the Allied forces did not ban the use by Iraqi forces of helicopters which Saddam has used to attack the Kurds. Extending the threat of Allied retaliation against any Iraqi attack on areas currently under Kurdish control would in all likelihood bring about an immediate halt to all such attacks and help enable the vast majority of Kurds to return home.

IV. Kurdish Political Leadership and the Future of the Iraqi Kurds

At present, Kurdish political and tribal leaders enjoy de facto governmental control of most areas of northern Iraq traditionally inhabited by Kurds. Only four minimally functioning Iraqi ministries remain in the area (water, food, fuel, and health). The remaining Iraqi civil servants (as well as all military) have been withdrawn.

Kurdish parties have organized into an Iraqi Kurdistan Front. While there are clearly great differences between the parties -- and some, in fact, have historically been mortal enemies -- we were encouraged by the political debate emerging in the Kurdish population. There was widespread talk of elections

to a "mini-parliament," and the party leaders were negotiating the terms of those elections. We briefly attended a meeting of the Front at which party leaders developed common platforms regarding elections, assistance to refugees and others in need, and conditions for negotiations with Baghdad.

The two leading political groupings are the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Jalal Talabani, and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), headed by Massoud Barzani. In addition, there are a variety of other political factions, as well as some 40 tribal leaders who continue to exert major influence over the people. Clearly, any political solution involving self-government for Iraqi Kurds must involve these factions.

Both Mr. Talabani and Mr. Barzani see clearly the evaporating attention of the international community toward the Kurdish people. Each is looking for ways of assuring the security and prosperity of Iraqi Kurds in the event international support fades.

The key issue dividing the two major parties is whether to negotiate an autonomy agreement with Saddam Hussein. Those aligned with Mr. Talabani and the PUK are more opposed to efforts to conclude an agreement with Saddam Hussein and believe he will quickly ignore it. They believe that once international attention has faded, he will gradually resume his past practice

of oppressing Kurds. The better course for the Kurds, in their view, is for all of the Iraqi opposition -- Kurds, Shiites, Assyrians, Chaldeans, disaffected Sunnis -- to unite to overthrow the Ba'athists. Mr. Talabani seeks modest international assistance, including military supplies, to assist in that task.

Those aligned with Mr. Barzani and the KDP believe that the proper course for the Kurds is to negotiate the best possible agreement with Saddam before the international community pulls out of the region. Mr. Barzani has conducted negotiations with Baghdad to that end. He does not expect that the international community will pressure Saddam to accommodate Kurdish demands for autonomy, so Kurds must make the best arrangements possible with Baghdad while international attention remains. A number of tribal chiefs have also sought arrangements with Baghdad for the protection of their people.***

The agreement under discussion, as outlined by Mr. Barzani, is based on a past autonomy agreement achieved in 1970 in which Saddam Hussein, not yet President of Iraq, was his government's principle negotiator. That agreement has never been fully

***Over a number of years, Kurdish tribal leaders have reached agreements with Saddam Hussein's government in which Baghdad essentially "bought" their neutrality and guaranteed the security of their tribes. While these chieftains are sometimes called "collaborators," we detected very little if any animosity toward them by Kurds or Kurdish political leaders. In fact, most tribal chiefs joined forces with the uprising early in 1991 in an effort to overthrow Saddam.

implemented or respected by the Iraqi government. The current agreement under discussion would allow the Kurds to return to their ancestral villages, and provide compensation for those uprooted by past Iraqi policies. The Kurdish Peshmerga guerrillas would be dismantled as a military force, but would be reorganized into new police and security units. Substantial lawmaking and executive powers would be shifted to new Kurdish political organs, and free elections would be conducted in Kurdish areas. The economic blockade of Kurdish areas would be lifted during the negotiation and implementation of the agreement.

A number of contentious issues remain in the negotiations, most notably joint administration arrangements for the oil-rich Kurdish city of Kirkuk, the precise arrangements for the demilitarization of the Peshmerga, and curbs on the Iraqi secret police. It is far from clear that the negotiations will be successful. Some suggested that Saddam may stall any negotiations until after the international community has left the region, and then resume his past repression of the Kurds, forsaking any efforts to negotiate with them.

Given the record of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi government of consistently violating agreements with the Kurds in the past, it is unlikely that the current agreement under negotiation will be respected by Saddam without strong international pressure and

oversight. If the international community makes clear that it is prepared to monitor and enforce compliance with such an agreement, it is possible that an agreement could be used as a specific standard for judging Baghdad's actions in the future, and could be an instrument for crying "foul" should any violations occur. If the Kurdish leadership decides to move forward with an agreement, the international community must be prepared to act as that agreement's guarantor. Such assurances could help bring the two parties together and lay the foundation for a long-term political solution for Iraqi Kurds.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 688 provides a means for the international community to play the role of guarantor. That resolution found that the Iraqi repression of the Kurdish population represents a threat to the "international peace and security in the region." It demands that Iraq "immediately end this repression" and expressed the hope ". . . that an open dialogue will take place to ensure that the human and political rights of all Iraqi citizens are respected."

V. Shortsightedness of U.S. Policy Toward Iraq

While the U.S. is actively promoting democracy in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and other areas of past conflict such as Angola and Cambodia, our efforts are less substantial in

Iraq. There appear to be no serious efforts to encourage Iraqi opposition leaders, especially the Shiites, in order to promote democratic change in Iraq, or to lay the groundwork for such a goal once Saddam leaves power.

Little is known about political factions and leaders within the Iraqi Shiite community. We were informed that they are not a pro-Iranian monolith. Many are aligned with and supported by Iran, but many are not -- estimates we heard were that 30% of the Shiites are aligned with Iran, and the rest have no real alignment with any outside factions. Iran has alternately harassed and assisted Iraqi Shiites over the years, and it was suggested to us that many Shiites may be open to dialogue with the U.S. or other Western nations. Testing this possibility is essential if the United States is genuinely interested in promoting democratic government for the people of Iraq.

The current strategy of relying solely on the violent ouster of Saddam leaves the international community with few alternatives if no such coup materializes. The U.S. would be well advised to begin establishing a framework for political arrangements among all factions in Iraq to develop the beginnings of democratic elements. Such a strategy would include discouraging continued Kurdish military operations against the Iraqi forces once security within areas currently under Kurdish control is established.

VI. The Role of Turkey

Last Spring's report of the staff mission on the Kurdish refugee crisis noted the critical role of Turkey in facilitating refugee relief efforts. The dramatic success of Operation Provide Comfort would not have been possible without the assistance of the government of Turkey. The report also outlined several ways in which the government impeded efforts to assist the Kurds, and suggested constructive steps the government could take.

Once again, the delegation commends the government of Turkey for its important role in making the ongoing relief efforts possible and for hosting the Allied presence inside Turkey. But once again, we must underscore areas in which the government of Turkey is obstructing, rather than facilitating, international relief efforts.

During our visit to the region, the authority of the Allied forces under Operation Provide Comfort to remain in Turkey was under review. Turkish authorities suggested the possibility that it would not be renewed, despite the clear need to do so. Only at the last moment did the government finally agree to extend the authority another six months. Such stalling places the international relief efforts at risk and prevents necessary long-term planning.

We heard numerous reports of the government of Turkey's reluctance to extend the agreement permitting Allied forces to remain in its territory, and were told that at times Turkish officials demonstrated outright hostility toward international assistance efforts on behalf of the Kurds. We were told of increased bureaucratic obstacles placed on relief supplies transiting Turkey, Turkish officials extracting bribes from those transporting goods in and out of northern Iraq, and other efforts to harass international relief workers. The violations of the sanctions against Iraq from the Turkish side have been noted.

Much of Turkey's reluctance to permit allied forces and international relief efforts on behalf of the Iraqi Kurds stems from the serious terrorism with which Turkey daily contends. The Turkish Kurds' communist terrorist group -- the PKK -- is a constant security menace; its guerrilla operations are based primarily in Syria, but also in Iraq and Iran. The Turkish military is concerned that the stability and progress which the international presence provides to Kurds in Iraq also provides protective cover for PKK operations out of northern Iraq.

Turkey's heightened concern about PKK terrorism is evidenced by the fact that its counter-terrorism has included numerous heavy bombing raids into Kurdish areas in northern Iraq. These air raids in recent weeks included napalm and cluster bombs and claimed the lives of at least 100 Kurdish civilians. Since last

August, an estimated 100 such attacks, mostly air strikes but also including some ground forces, have been conducted by Turkish forces in northern Iraq. We also heard reports of relief workers being fired on despite the clear display of a white flag. While these forces are said to be in hot pursuit of PKK terrorists, the indiscriminate attack on the civilians is a serious threat to the population.

International and Kurdish efforts, including negotiations to bring an end to the terrorist activities of the PKK must be augmented. Similarly, efforts to address the legitimate concerns of the Kurdish population in Turkey must also be increased. Recent statements by the new government in Turkey indicating a willingness to address those concerns is an important step forward.

However, it is also essential for Turkey to assure the international community, including the allied governments, that humanitarian assistance and a security presence for the Iraqi Kurds will be permitted to continue for as long as is necessary.

Such an indefinite mandate is needed for two reasons. First, it is a signal to Saddam that the allies are prepared to wait him out. We will not precipitously withdraw, and it is in his best interest to accommodate, and not violate, Iraqi Kurds.

Second, it is also an important signal to the Kurds that they will not be quickly forgotten. They can confidently begin to build their future -- and even reach agreements with Baghdad - - and the international community will still stand firm to guarantee them. A premature withdrawal of the Allied presence in the region could reverse the important gains of the last year and invite renewed attacks against the Kurds by Iraqi forces.

VII. Recommendations: A Continuing Role for the United States and the International Community

A pre-condition by Saddam Hussein for negotiation of an autonomy agreement with the Kurds was that there be no outside parties to it. Baghdad wants to view it as an agreement between Iraqi citizens, not as an international agreement. More likely, Saddam wants to be able to violate any agreement without international interference.

However, this "pre-condition" should not preclude international parties from recognizing any appropriate agreement which is achieved, and acting to ensure Iraqi compliance. The international community, through the United Nations, should play the role of guarantor, as in the case of agreements achieved in Angola, Afghanistan, and Cambodia.

A Kurdish autonomy agreement should be formally recognized

by the Security Council as part of Iraqi fulfillment of the requirements of U.N. Security Council Resolution 688, adopted last April to demand humane treatment of the Kurds and the Iraqi population generally. In effect, a violation of Kurdish autonomy would become a violation of the U.N. resolution, and subject Iraq to further international actions.

The Administration should begin working now with U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to signal to the Baghdad government that an appropriate autonomy agreement with the Kurds will be viewed as fulfilling key provisions of resolution 688. A similar message should be delivered to the Kurdish leadership, with assurances that the international community, through the United Nations, is prepared to stand as guarantor of an agreement within the context of the U.N. resolution.

In addition, the Administration, together with our allies, should act to solve the immediate refugee problem by expanding the Allied security zone to encompass all areas currently under Kurdish control. While such a step will not resolve the contentious issue of disputed areas such as the oil-rich centers in Kirkuk and Mosul, it would prevent further Iraqi repression of the Kurdish population and bring stability to the region, pending a long-term solution in all of Iraq.

Just as there have been no significant security violations -

- no shelling or gunship activity, for example -- in the current zone, which is staffed by less than a dozen allied troops, there is reason to expect that security violations in military border districts around Kalar and Kifri would also cease, if those areas are included in an expanded zone staffed by an additional 5-10 soldiers. This expansion would solve the dilemma of hundreds of thousands of refugees, and enable them to return to their own homes for the winter.

Finally, it should be made clear that the expansion of this security zone is indefinite. Our mandate should be to remain until stability and movement toward democracy in Baghdad are achieved.

American patience paid off in stationing hundred of thousands of troops in Europe throughout the Cold War. That commitment ensured stability for over four decades and helped pave the way for the rise of democracy in lands dominated by brutal communist regimes. This same patience should enable a handful of soldiers to be stationed in Northern Iraq until we are certain of the durable security and momentum toward democracy for the Kurds. We were prepared to risk the lives of American soldiers to win the war against Saddam, and we should be no less committed now to winning the peace.