

RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,1.4(D),B6

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, September 4, 2012 9:20 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: A/S Jones Meetings in Erbil - Quick Readout

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FYI

From: Jones, Beth E
Sent: Tuesday, September 04, 2012 04:46 PM
To: Burns, William J; Sherman, Wendy R; Dibble, Elizabeth L; Sullivan, Jacob J; Zeva, Uzra S; Lakhdhir, Kamala S; Blair, Oni K; Escrogima, Ana A; 'Antony_J._Blinken'; Beecroft, Robert S
Cc: Leaf, Barbara A; Sutphin, Paul R; Pascual, Carlos; Miller, James N; Desrocher, John P
Subject: Fw: A/S Jones Meetings in Erbil - Quick Readout

B6

With thanks to Paul Sutphin and team for this quick read-out. Carlos bore the brunt of the Ashti diatribe in a follow-on meeting, although I got a few licks in over lunch(!). Bottom line with Barzani and Fuad Hussein: we got them to acknowledge that they would continue to engage, on the basis that Steve Beecroft presses hard for progress on political reform and does so all over Baghdad with all parties. More coming shortly on my Baghdad meetings.

From: Sutphin, Paul R
Sent: Tuesday, September 04, 2012 03:36 PM
To: Beecroft, Robert S (Baghdad); Jones, Beth E; Miller, James N; Pascual, Carlos; Marsh, Denise M; Knight, James; Silliman, Douglas A; Leaf, Barbara A
Cc: Pounds, Timothy J; Sutphin, Paul R; Gee, Stephen J (Erbil)
Subject: A/S Jones Meetings in Erbil - Quick Readout

(SBU)

A quick readout courtesy of Tim Pounds, who is working on a front channel report; this report is uncleared by A/S Jones or SE Pascual. Distro restricted pending clearance/sensitivity of discussion.

Summary: In a 90-minute discussion with KRG President Barzani, A/S Jones reported that PM Maliki and other officials had expressed openness to moving forward with reforms, while emphasizing the KRG's willingness to sustain constructive dialogue with Baghdad provided openings for the U.S. to press the Iraqi central government to respond cooperatively. A/S Jones stressed there were many other areas – elections law, the supreme court, term limits, [redacted] – where discussions had stalled and urgently needed resuscitation, but PM Maliki and others appeared committed to making progress. She acknowledged the difficulties of engaging on nettlesome issues and encouraged Barzani and Kurdish leaders to keep trying in the interest of their people. A/S Jones and Barzani spent nearly 30 minutes discussing Syria, largely agreeing on the need to continue working with opposition elements and providing humanitarian aid to refugees and internally displaced people; Barzani explained the KRG's efforts to focus KNC and PYD efforts to oppose the Asad regime. [redacted]

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“Heading toward Dictatorship” in Baghdad:

Barzani expressed hope that Iraqis could resolve their differences through dialogue but maintained he was pessimistic about Iraq's future if current trends continued. He accused PM Maliki and his government of abandoning previous political agreements and constitutional principles, using the word “dictatorship” several

times to characterize how central government policies were increasingly perceived in the KRG and elsewhere in Iraq. The government had, for example, ignored commitments and constitutional requirements to move forward with Article 140 implementation (conduct of a census and referendum in Kirkuk.). Instead, Baghdad was planning to position a new special Army command east of the Tigris in Kirkuk, in violation of the constitution. Federal government check points were creating problems for people. Barzani noted the standoff in Ninewa between Iraqi Army and Peshmerga forces, saying they had come dangerously close to confrontation because of Baghdad's overriding desire to "impose its will on us, and we won't accept this." During a visit to Dohuk the previous day, Barzani explained, officials in Baghdad refused to support his efforts to arrange a meeting with IA and Peshmerga commanders on the Iraqi-Syrian border to discuss ways to reduce tensions. (Note: A/S Jones commended Barzani's initiative and promised we would take up this issue with the GOI.) All of these developments were indicators of the government's decision to ignore previous commitments and to assert control by diktat rather than pursue solutions to problems by dialogue. Summing up current tensions between Baghdad and Erbil,

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B1

[redacted] (In a back and forth with A/S Jones, Barzani acknowledged that his people had suffered terribly as the result of previous wars and therefore he sought to find peaceful solutions whenever possible. "The only thing worse than war is dictatorship," he stipulated, drawing a parallel between the current government and Saddam's reign, and noting Kurds would not compromise their hard-won freedom.

Resolving the KRG's oil production dispute with the central government:



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B1

Syria:

Barzani agreed with A/S Jones' assessment that the Asad regime's appalling use of force against innocent people had undermined its credibility and would eventually lead to its fall. It was infuriating to see a leader in modern times use such barbaric means to cling to power, he said. Dohuk now provided shelter to some 16,000 Syrian refugees, mostly Kurdish. (Note: Most have integrated into Kurdish society,, with approximately 3000 in Dohuk's Domiz camp.) UNHCR had expressed its appreciation for KRG support for these refugees to him the previous day, while warning that more refugees were expected. The refugees weren't just fleeing violence, but had left Syria because they were at risk of starvation. There were roughly 1500 people at the closed border, and KRG wanted to allow them into Iraq. Barzani saw two important challenges: (1) devising a proper democratic government to take power once the Asad regime collapsed; and (2) providing humanitarian assistance inside Syria and to Syrians seeking refuge in neighboring countries. The KRG shared sympathy with Syria's 2-3 million Kurds and wanted to ensure their democratic rights, including citizenship – and the rights of all groups in a future Syria.

He remarked that the KRG had been approached by three different elements of the Free Syrian Army, all claiming to speak for the organization. The lack of unity deeply undermined the group's effectiveness. The KRG had established dialogue with the PYD, despite the group's affinity with the PKK, on grounds that the participation of all groups respecting common principles would strengthen the Syrian opposition, and that the KRG sought to ensure that Kurds were unified in opposition to Asad.

Barzani stressed that KRG efforts were aimed at . He said he told visiting Turkish FM Davotuglu that the KRG would not accept the creation of a (presumed PKK) "base in Syria to threaten Turkey."

Turning to Iran, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] He asked A/S Jones where the current disparity between the regime's firepower and opposition's lack of unity would lead. She replied this was a good question and said she was unsure. [REDACTED]

B1

[REDACTED] A/S Jones thanked the KRG for its work supporting the Kurdish National Committee and [REDACTED] (see Erbil Septel on this for details) She urged Barzani to keep in mind the importance of uniting opposition elements and to minimize infighting.

SBU
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