

“Winning the War, Winning the Peace: A Holistic Strategy for Iraq”
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Thank you, John, for that great introduction. And thank you all for coming here this morning.

This week, I have had productive meetings with President Obama, Vice President Biden, and the leadership of both houses of Congress.

On behalf of the people of Iraq, I would like to tell the American people what I have told America’s leaders:

Your sacrifices over the past decade to help Iraq were not in vain. And we thank you and our other allies for assembling the international coalition to support us in our struggle against terrorism.

And now, as our campaign to defeat these transnational terrorists enters a crucial phase, we ask you to join us in looking ahead to the challenges that we must confront together in order to defeat Daesh, and address the tasks of rebuilding Iraq, reunifying our society, and bringing reconciliation to our region.

We must not only win the war – we must also win the peace. Together, we must take action against the political, economic and social problems that give rise to violent extremism, so that terrorism on the scale of Daesh will never re-emerge to threaten our nation and our neighbors again.

The recent developments in Iraq underscore the fact that winning a military victory – important as that is – will not be enough.

Two weeks ago, I was proud to join our armed forces in raising the Iraqi flag in the liberated city of Tikrit. This victory belongs to all the people of Iraq. It was fought and won by Iraqi heroes on the ground, including the Iraqi Security Forces and the Popular Mobilization Forces, made up of volunteer units from across Iraq, including thousands of local tribal fighters, and local politicians. It was also a victory for all our friends and allies including members of the international coalition, who helped us win this battle.

In many ways, the victory in Tikrit offers a case study for how the rest of Iraq can be liberated militarily, and how federal and local forces can work together to ensure the safe return of displaced people to their homes. The images of thousands of men, women and children returning to their homes under the protection of our security forces is heartening.

But the battle and its aftermath also demonstrate the challenges that lie ahead for rebuilding Iraq and continuing to reach across political, ethnic and sectarian lines to unite the people.

We must continue to crack down on the abuses and excesses of a small minority of fighters that stand in direct opposition to the government's clear policies.

We are investigating all these allegations of criminal conduct. Once corroborated, people involved are held accountable and prosecuted to the fullest weight of the law.

Let me be as clear as I can be: Our government's highest priority is reducing ethnic sectarian tensions and divisions in Iraq. And we have nurtured close working relationships with parliament and Iraq's community leaders and religious institutions to ensure an outcome that is favorable to all our people.

This won't be easy. But this must be done. Many of these divisions are centuries old. Others can be traced to the decades of dictatorship and genocide. But, whatever their cause, we must exert our utmost efforts to ensure they do not paralyze the development of our nation.

As we move forward to liberate Anbar and Mosul, we will learn from and act upon the lessons of Tikrit.

Mosul is our second largest city and a complex environment while Anbar is our largest governorate geographically.

Our goal is not only to liberate Mosul and Anbar from the barbarism of Daesh, but also to restore a level of civilization worthy of our people, our history and our heritage.

That is why all the legs of the strategic stool – humanitarian, infrastructure, as well as military – must be in place before our government moves to liberate these areas. We must be fully prepared not only to retake Mosul, but to rebuild it.

What is true of Mosul is true of all of Iraq. We must rebuild our country so that it is so strong, united and true to our spiritual and civilizational heritage that we will never again be vulnerable to tyranny and terrorism.

As I have often said, at home and abroad, while we welcome the support of our friends and neighbors, partners and allies, this is Iraq's fight to win – and we will win it.

As the American people confront the challenges of transnational terrorism around the world, please remember that the people of Iraq, who have suffered so much, are doing our part to ensure that no other nations need endure what we are enduring.

We are fighting back on the battlefield, and we are working hard on the home-front.

Since I became Prime Minister of Iraq in September, the people of Iraq have set about reconciling our society, reforming our government and our military and security forces, reviving our economy, and restoring relationships with our neighbors.

Over the past 12 years, Iraq has had a succession of free elections. Our government took office in a peaceful political transition in which elected leaders stepped down to make way for new leadership. We want to protect our nascent democracy, and honor the shared sacrifices of our two countries that fought for the freedom and liberty that we all cherish.

Our government represents every political faction in Parliament and every sector of society.

We are doing our best to provide public services, economic opportunities and equal justice for all Iraqis – whatever their religious confession, whatever their ethnic origin and wherever they live.

Our government has successfully concluded a long-sought, interim agreement with our Kurdistan Regional Government. This agreement provides for a fair sharing of oil revenues and the weapons and support that the Peshmerga forces need to participate fully in the fight against Daesh as a part of Iraq's security forces.

We are also restoring relationships with the local tribes in areas threatened or dominated by Daesh. I have met regularly with representatives from the provinces of Anbar, Salahuddin and Mosul. We are reinforcing our support, increasing arms supplies, and providing humanitarian deliveries, including hundreds of tons of food aid.

We are striving to give all our people a system of self-government that is worth fighting for.

As we weed out corruption and incompetence in civil and military institutions, we replaced over 80 senior commanders and officers in the ministries of Defense and Interior. And just last week, we retired more than 300 officers in the Ministry of Defense as part of efforts to rejuvenate our Armed Forces

Military reform means respecting human rights under even the most difficult circumstances. One of my first acts as Commander-in-Chief was to call a halt to the shelling of residential areas, because we value human life, and want to minimize the suffering of innocent civilians who are trapped, while the terrorists of Daesh engage in the slaughter of innocents.

Throughout our country, our government is striving to protect personal freedoms and reinforce the rule of law.

As Prime Minister, I issued an executive order to expedite the release of detainees who have not been charged and established a central registry of those who have been incarcerated.

Because a free society needs a free press, I have met with Iraqi journalists and dropped all pending lawsuits against journalists on behalf of the Prime Minister's Office.

While fighting terrorism and protecting human rights, we are also striving to revive our economy, reform our government, reconcile our society and restore our infrastructure.

Iraq's oil production has increased – in fact, it is reaching record levels, despite some of the damage that Daesh has inflicted on our oil infrastructure.

But with our reliance on oil revenues for 85 percent of our federal budget and the decline in oil prices, we have had to take a new look at our fiscal policies and our economic prospects. We have been forced to turn to new sources of revenue, including taxes on goods and services.

Still, we are looking to the future. In addition to our energy sector, with one of the world's largest reserves of oil, we are exploring alternative industries as well. We once were one of the most diversified economies in OPEC. We will build a diverse economy again. That is why we are investing in agriculture, petrochemicals and other industries.

In order to encourage economic growth, our government must become more efficient and effective.

We need more brain-power, more muscle – and less fat. Our government is trying to cut our budget through spending reductions and economic reforms.

As you know so well here in Washington, D.C., this isn't an easy task. But we are striving to lead by example.

While we are holding the line on spending in many areas, our budget includes \$440 million for rebuilding the areas that we are liberating from Daesh.

In a major government reform, we are decentralizing decision-making from Baghdad to the local governments. Decisions about the local populace will be made at the local level by those closest to the people.

We are moving from a state-dominated system to a more vibrant mixed economy. We are privatizing key sectors, exploring public-private partnerships and entering more joint ventures with international companies, including American firms.

Through these initiatives, we are encouraging domestic and foreign investment, expanding and creating large and small businesses, and ensuring that government supports, not stifles, the private economy.

These efforts are already reaping returns. Major oil companies, manufacturers and banks are investing in Iraq and expanding their operations in our country.

Government reform, economic recovery, and physical and social reconstruction can and must go hand-in-hand.

In an effort towards reconciliation, our cabinet has approved amendments to the accountability and justice law, commonly known as the de-Baathification law.

We need to bridge the sectarian and ethnic divides. But reconciliation is a two-way street. We all must reach out to our fellow Iraqis and reach back when the hand of friendship is offered.

Ultimately, the best ways to achieve reconciliation are restoring a sense of personal safety for all our people and reviving the economy for those without work and the more than a half million high school and college graduates entering our job market every year.

To conclude where I began, just as Iraq is working with the United States and all our international partners to defeat Daesh, we must also work together to rebuild our country in every way – physically, socially, economically and politically.

We ask the United States and the coalition partners to continue to support Iraq militarily through providing weaponry, training, and advisors, the sharing of critical intelligence and doing all that you can to stop the flow of foreign funds and foreign fighters into Iraq.

We also ask the United States, our neighboring nations, our coalition partners and the international financial community to help us to rebuild our country, including restoring the areas that have been devastated by Daesh and assisting more than 2 million internally displaced persons within our borders.

We have devoted hundreds of millions of dollars in scarce resources in our own budget for a stabilization fund for our country. We have had useful discussions with the World Bank and the IMF. And we ask the United States and other Western nations to assist us as well, through public and private investment in rebuilding our infrastructure and reviving our economy.

For all our challenges, Iraq has great strengths and offers great opportunities. Our economic fundamentals are strong – vast energy reserves, an educated population, and rapid growth before the turmoil wrought by Daesh.

As we defeat Daesh, we can realize our potential as a business and investment partner, with growing demand for new transportation, electrical power, and water supply facilities, new schools and hospitals, and new communications and information technologies.

And we will not only become an economic success story. We can become a model for how a society can free itself from tyranny and terrorism and develop an inclusive and effective system of good governance on the local and national levels.

Together, we can and must win the war.

And then, together, we can and must win the peace.

Thank you all for everything you have done and everything you are continuing to do in this great cause.