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A NewsHour with Jim Lehrer special for students

EXTRA

PRESIDENT, BLAIR DISCUSS POST-WAR IRAQ

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U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair said Tuesday that the United Nations would have a "vital" role to play in post-war Iraq and that control of a new government would be turned over to the Iraqi people as soon as possible.

President Bush and Prime Minister Blair met Tuesday in Northern Ireland to discuss the war in Iraq and other international issues.

"This new Iraq that will emerge is not to be run either by us or, indeed, by the U.N. That is a false choice. It will be run by the Iraqi people," Blair said.

Creation of an "interim authority"

President Bush said in the immediate aftermath of the war an "**interim authority**" that includes both current Iraqi citizens and **exiles** of the Saddam Hussein regime would govern the country.

"The interim authority will serve until a permanent government can be chosen by the Iraqi people. The rebuilding of Iraq will require the support and expertise of the international community. We're committed to working with international institutions, including the United Nations, which will have a vital role to play in this task," Mr. Bush said.

Nations like France and Germany, along with some U.N. officials have said the international body should play a political role in Iraq and not just be used to help with reconstruction and humanitarian relief.

The role of the United Nations

The Bush administration is reportedly wary of a major political role for the United Nations, while British officials have appeared more supportive of the idea.

During Tuesday's press conference, Blair stressed that differences over approach should not derail the effort to stabilize Iraq.

"The important thing is not to get into some battle about words of the precise role here or there; but let's all work together internationally -- the coalition forces, the international community together -- to do what we really should be doing, which is

making sure that that will of the Iraqi people is properly expressed in institutions that in the end they own, not any outside power or authority," Blair said Tuesday.

However, Blair stressed the need to avoid the diplomatic wrangling that occurred before the war in which the U.N. Security Council failed to endorse a second resolution that would have more directly authorized military action against Iraq.

Although the two coalition leader stressed the need to install an Iraqi-selected government, American officials have said it will take time. On Sunday, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz predicted it might take at least six months to create a new Iraqi government.

The role of exiles

Coalition officials have said little about who might serve in an interim administration, but several key exile leaders have returned or are about to return to the war-torn nation.

Sunday, American forces airlifted hundreds of soldiers from the **Iraqi National Congress**, headed by their leader Ahmed Chalabi, into southern Iraq. General Peter Pace, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said they would help form a future Iraqi army.

But U.S. officials, including the president, have denied that the U.S. has already decided to put that group, or any other, in charge.

"I hear a lot of talk here about how we're going to impose this leader or that leader. Forget it. From day one, we have said the Iraqi people are capable of running their own country," Mr. Bush said Tuesday.

In addition to American-supported opposition groups, at least one major **Shiite** organization based in Iran said its leader would also return to Iraq.

Ayatollah Mohammad Bakr al-Hakim, head of the **Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution** (SCIRI), announced last week that he would soon be moving back to the city of Najaf.

"It could be a few days or a few weeks, depending on the situation," the group's spokesman said. "Iraq is our motherland. We do not need permission to go home."

New U.S. postwar office

Even as exiles continue to return, the Pentagon has established the **Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance** (ORHA), which is preparing to begin operations in the southern Iraq port city of Umm Qasr. ORHA, headed by retired U.S. General Jay Garner, will report to **Central Command's** leader General Tommy Franks, and is intended to organize reconstruction and humanitarian efforts.

Garner is expected to be the top governmental official in Iraq until a transition to interim Iraqi leadership is complete.

Vocabulary

interim authority – (n.) the temporary government of Iraq between the rule of Saddam Hussain and Iraqi chosen rule

exile – (n.) **1 a** : the state or a period of forced absence from one's country or home **b** : the state or a period of voluntary absence from one's country or home
2 : a person who is in exile (Merriam-Webster)

Iraqi National Congress – (n.) An opposition group made up of various ethnic and religious groups including Sunnis, Shias, Kurds and Christians

Shiite - (n.) a Muslim of the Shia branch of Islam

Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution (SCIRI) – (n.) an Iraqi opposition group

Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) - (n.) a postwar planning office, organized within the Defense Department that will oversee the humanitarian and reconstruction in Iraq

U.S. Central Command - (n.) Headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) is one of nine Unified Combatant Commands assigned operational control of U.S. combat forces. A Unified Combatant Command is composed of forces from two or more services, has a broad and continuing mission, and is normally organized on a geographical basis into regions known as "Areas Of Responsibility" (AORs). USCENTCOM's AOR stretches from the Horn of Africa to Central Asia. (www.centcom.mil)