

Iraqi leaders call Bremer 'a dictator' in dispute

Members of the Governing Council believe the American is trying to impose his will on the turnover of power

By Liz Sly and Bill Glauber
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The rift between Iraq's Governing Council and the United States over the nomination of the president erupted in acrimony Monday, with council members accusing the chief U.S. administrator of trying to railroad them into accepting America's choice for the post.

Members of the U.S.-appointed Governing Council were to meet Monday to finalize candidates for the government that will run Iraq after the United States restores limited sovereignty June 30, but when they arrived at the U.S. administration headquarters, they said they were greeted by a message from administrator Paul Bremer that the meeting was postponed.

"Mr. Bremer won't let the council vote, and he says if we vote, he won't accept the result," said Mahmoud Othman, an independent Kurdish council member. "He is a dictator. I don't know how he can behave like that. He's im-

posing his will on everybody."

U.S. officials denied Bremer canceled the meeting or was interfering with the process of assembling a government. U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi had hoped to complete the selection of the 26-member Cabinet by Monday.

"Ambassador Bremer doesn't call their meetings; Ambassador Bremer doesn't cancel their meetings," said Dan Senor, a spokesman for the Coalition Provisional Authority.

As squabbles shook the political process, violence flared again in the country.

U.S. troops clashed with rebel Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's al-Mahdi Army militia late Sunday into Monday, with 20 insurgents killed, according to local news reports. Two U.S. soldiers also died, the military said.

Two U.S. soldiers also were killed as a 500-pound roadside bomb exploded late Sunday in southeast Baghdad.

In Baghdad on Monday, four people were killed and 25 wounded by a remote-detonated car bomb that left twisted metal and body parts on one of the city's main thoroughfares.

The bombing occurred on Al Kindi Street, about a half-mile from a May 17 blast that killed Izzadine Saleem, the head of the Governing Council. The

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target of Monday's bomb attack was unclear, but U.S. authorities said no Iraqi political leaders were near the area of the blast.

"There was a huge explosion and everything went black," said one witness, Ali Kadhem, 40. "I saw two cars on fire."

The wrangling over a largely ceremonial governmental position continued to dominate discussion among those seeking to rule Iraq after the United States hands over power.

A majority of Governing Council members are backing their current president, Ghazi Mashal Ajil al-Yawer, 45, a powerful tribal sheik who has been increasingly critical of U.S. occupation authorities recently, officials said.

The United States and United Nations are backing another council member, former Foreign Minister Adnan Pachachi, 81, who briefly served in the Baathist regime before he was forced into exile in 1971.

It was unclear why the United States appears to be opposed to al-Yawer's candidacy. According to an Iraqi official familiar with the talks, the United States is concerned that giving the presidency to a tribal sheik would rekindle tribal sentiments within Iraq and perhaps stir resentment among other tribes.

Al-Yawer's supporters point out that as leader of Iraq's biggest tribe, the Shammari tribe, which includes Sunnis and Shiites among its 3 million members, al-Yawer is well positioned to unite Iraqis and dampen religious sectarianism.

With the deadlock paralyzing the formation of a new government, which was supposed to be named by the end of May, there were reports that Bremer was considering ending the stalemate by appointing a third candidate to the position from outside the Governing Council.

"It is possible, because the position of president is not exclusive to the Governing Council, but so far we have not

heard of any other names," said council spokesman Hamid Al Kifaey.

Othman said the council would resist pressure from Bremer.

"He should not press Iraqis so much to accept this one or that one," Othman said. "It's not good if they start imposing people."

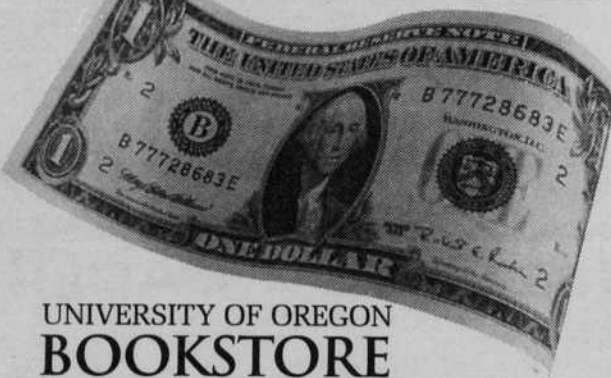
The task of identifying future leaders was entrusted to Brahimi. But after weeks of consultations failed to produce a consensus, the council intervened and last week named as prime minister one of its members, Iyad Allawi, a secular Shiite former exile who was once backed by the CIA.

The council has agreed with the United States and United Nations on most other posts in the new government, but with the contentious issue of the presidency threatening to disrupt the transfer of powers, the United States appears anxious to wrest back control of the process, Iraqi officials said.

"The problem is that there is confusion at the heart of the process," a senior aide to one of the council members said.

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

Today's Birthday (June 1). Establish a solid routine this year so that you can process more and more without collapsing. Be disciplined with the money you earn, only spending on household improvements. You could end up with enough money to last you quite a while.
To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.
Aries (March 21-April 19) _ Today is a 6 _ You're under some stress, simply because it's time to study your financial situation again. Are your stocks and bonds safe and sound? It's best not to leave these things to chance.
Taurus (April 20-May 20) _ Today is a 6 _ You may be busy with other things, but you can still make sure a loved one knows how much you care. Actions speak louder than words, especially here and now. Feel loved, and you will reflect love. It's amazing how that works.
Gemini (May 21-June 21) _ Today is a 6 _ Focus on the job at hand, and don't let yourself be distracted. You'll be amazed at how great you'll feel once this project is finished.
Cancer (June 22-July 22) _ Today is an 8 _ You have worries on your mind, but who doesn't? You also have someone who loves you dearly, or at least someone who could be talked into giving you a foot massage or a nice back rub.
Leo (July 23-Aug. 22) _ Today is a 6 _ You're a very stable person. You like to put down roots. Sometimes problems arise when you try to do this. Today, for example, you could run into a rock. But building on rock is good. Don't complain.
Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) _ Today is a 6 _ Enormous changes are under way, but you're in a good spot. You have plenty, and you're good at

planning ahead. You can make this situation work in your favor. Figure out what you want to make happen, and get busy.
Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) _ Today is a 7 _ Looks like your creative efforts are bringing in money. If you haven't done anything creative recently, this is your big chance. Hawk your wares to someone who can sell them. If you find a good partner, it's money in the bank.
Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) _ Today is a 7 _ Chances are good that you know a person who's at least as stubborn as you are. That's saying a lot _ you're pretty stubborn yourself. If you can't reach an agreement, don't fret. If you can, it will last for centuries.
Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) _ Today is a 7 _ You may suspect that you're being bounced around. This is especially likely if you have to deal with a work-related bureaucracy. You'll have better luck tomorrow.
Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) _ Today is a 7 _ True love is blind to a lot of things. But that doesn't mean a loved one won't notice if you're late for dinner, or if you forget to do something you promised. You may be tempted to make just one more contact. That's not a good idea.
Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) _ Today is a 7 _ You're generally analytical, but in a situation today, faith may be more helpful than analysis. You should be two places at the same time. If anybody can figure out how to beam from here to there, it's you.
Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20) _ Today is a 7 _ Should you go or should you stay? There's some confusion out there. Actually, it looks like somebody else wants to keep you at home. Get back early, at least. You've got a busy day tomorrow.

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