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**INFORMATION MEMO FOR THE SECRETARY**

FROM: NEA – Acting A/S Jeffrey Feltman  
SUBJECT: Iraq’s Provincial Elections: A Peaceful Milestone

- Iraq’s Provincial Council elections were held on January 31, 2009 without major incident, truly a milestone event. Full participation, including of Sunni groups who largely boycotted in 2005, will remedy representational imbalances at the provincial level, and increase Iraqis’ confidence in the democratic process. In the lead-up to elections, voters cited provision of essential services (electricity, water) as their chief concern, indicating that they would vote less on ethno-sectarian lines, and more for competent candidates.
- Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) successfully provided security with minimal U.S. military over watch. ISF provided a heavy presence on the streets and at polling stations, secured national and provincial borders, and enforced a vehicle ban in cities.
- Voter turnout varied by region with relatively high turnout reported in the northern disputed areas, Baghdad, and Fallujah, and lighter turnout in others such as Salah ad Din and Basrah. Observers reported a jubilant atmosphere, with high turnouts of female voters in some provinces, and in many cases, entire families lining up together. Embassy Baghdad has not received any reports of intimidation or or violence against minority voters.
- Incidents include one death from small arms fire reported in Ninewa, an explosion with no reported injuries in Salah ad Din, and a report of hundreds of Kurds storming an elections office in Khanaquin demanding to vote (though no casualties were reported). Additionally, voters in some places expressed disappointment that election list errors prevented them from voting.
- Initial results are expected within the next few days with certified results released by February 23.

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Approved: NEA/FO J Feltman OK

Drafted: NEA/I-POL K Shaffner xt. 7-5281

Cleared: NEA/I/POL G Sibley OK