

**Statement by Entifadh K. Qanbar, Special Envoy of the United Iraqi Alliance and Spokesperson of the Iraqi National Congress.  
March 9, 2005**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman. It is a great honor for me to appear before this Commission with such a distinguished group of witnesses. I would like to thank you and the members of the United States Helsinki Commission for giving me this opportunity during my visit here to Washington from Baghdad. I will make a short presentation and then I will welcome your questions.

Mr. Chairman, two weeks ago, on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Iraqi people watched as Al-Iraqiya, the main Iraqi television channel, broadcast a startling interview with the commander of a terrorist group who had recently been captured inside Iraq. A bearded man dressed in a gray jacket and shirt introduced himself, "My name is Anas Ahmed Al-Essa. I live in Aleppo. I am from Syria," he said.

A voice off-camera asked him, "What is your job?"

"I am a lieutenant in intelligence."

"Which intelligence?" asked the voice.

"Syrian intelligence," he replied.

Lt. Al-Essa then went on to detail how he recruited and commanded a terrorist group inside Iraq in order to "cause chaos" as he said. "We received all our instructions from Syrian intelligence," he stated. He went on to describe how weapons and explosives came to the group from Syria and how he was required to send reports of their attacks back to a colonel in Syrian intelligence.

Lt. Al-Essa and his group, which included 8 Syrians, 12 Egyptians, 10 Sudanese and a number of Iraqis, were arrested the day before the Iraqi elections. They were carrying guns, explosives, and maps of the voting centers.

Iraqi television has broadcast a number of other interviews with captured Iraqi terrorists who confirmed that they received training in Syria before being sent back to Iraq to kill Iraqis and Americans. Several of the captured terrorists stated that they had practiced beheadings on animals in Syria so that they would be able to use the technique on human beings in Iraq. One terrorist said that a member of his network needed to have completed 10 beheadings in order to be promoted to ‘amir’ or group leader.

Mr. Chairman, these televised interviews confirm what we have known for a long time: that Syria is the logistical, financial and training base for the terrorists in Iraq. The leaders of the Iraqi terror campaign are high-ranking Baathist officials from Saddam Hussein’s regime and all of them take refuge in Syria. One of the key leaders of the anti-Iraq forces, Mohammed Younis Al-Ahmed, is known to travel back and forth across the Syrian border into northern Iraq. We know from interrogations of senior Baathist prisoners that even Saddam’s murderous sons Uday and Qusay had been sheltered in Syria before they returned to Iraq to take part in the fight against the Coalition forces. Just last month, General Hassan Zeidan Al Lahaimy, a former commander of the Iraqi Army Third Corps under Saddam, was arrested crossing the border from Syria with a large amount of cash. He is a high-ranking Baathist and one of the leaders of the terror campaign. And of course we know that Syria recently handed over Saddam’s half-brother Sabawi and a number of other senior Baathists who had been sheltering there.

The Baathists in Iraq, directed from Syria, have made great strides in penetrating the military, police and security services established by the interim government of Ayad Allawi. Statistics show that as Baathists and members of Saddam’s security forces were integrated into the new Iraqi armed forces by Allawi, attacks against Iraqis and Coalition forces have steadily risen as have US and Iraqi casualties. The only way to win the war on terror in Iraq is to cut off the Baathists’ support from Syria and expel them from the Iraqi government and specifically from the security, police and Army. Terrorism in Iraq is led by the Baath Party and not by Al-Qaeda or Abu Musab Zarqawi. Foreign fighters are minority of the terrorists.

Mr. Chairman, the Baath party in Iraq and Syria is a racist, fascist organization that takes its inspiration directly from the genocidal ideologies of 1930’s Europe. Baathism has no place in a democratic Iraq because the Baathists do not respect democracy. Their goal is power at all costs. The

Iraqi people lived under the Baathist tyranny for 35 years and they know this well. That is why de-Baathification is overwhelmingly popular in Iraq.

Mr. Chairman, the time has come for the United States and all other democratic countries to list the Baath party as a terrorist organization.

Thank you.