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**Intro:**

We, the Russian Delegation, are here today offering great support to the Republic of Iraq and other nations of the Middle East. Russia is experiencing the threat of Muslim extremist groups within its boarders and sees the damage it causes in other regions as well. We support a unified, structured Iraq and will support any counter-terrorism efforts in the nation and in the region. We strongly condemn any U.S. interference in Iraq and would like to keep Western influence and corruption out of the region all together. With a strong leader in Iraq, and with Russia’s support, the nation can begin to develop itself, and help spread its positive influence to neighboring countries in the Middle East. We will look to strengthen Iraq politically, economically and socially in order to develop the region as a whole and keep power away from extremist groups and Western influence.

**Background:**

In 1922, the Bolsheviks emerged victorious after the 1917 Russian Revolution and created the Soviet Union. This conglomeration of 15 republics was led by one ruler and a single communist party based on Marxist ideologies. The Soviet Union underwent rapid industrialization under Joseph Stalin, but also suffered harsh social conditions, censorship, famines, and forced labor. After defeating Nazi Germany and Japan in World War II, the Soviet Union emerged as a super power. By strengthening its military and expanding its economy after the war, it also maintained strict, centralized control over the region. After Stalin’s death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev took power and began a de-Stalinization effort, in attempt to relieve his citizens from Stalin’s oppressive control. His successor, Leonid Brehznev, established a period of détente with the Western powers in the middle of Cold War tensions in the 1960s. After Brehznev, two transitional figures followed, but the next truly influential successor was Mikahil Gorbachev in 1990. When coming to power, Gorbachev adopted a crumbling economy and fragile political framework, a drastically different circumstance than the situation following World War II. In the mid 1980’s, Gorbechev implemented a system of Perestroika or “restructuring” of the Soviet Union’s economic and political systems. His policy of Glasnost freed the population from censorship and pushed for a more transparent government, which led to a greater freedom of information. However, by 1990, almost all of the Soviet Republics, except for the Russian Republic and Kazakhstan, declared independence from the Union, which directly led to the Soviet Union’s collapse. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned and turned his power over to Boris Yeltsin. The Russian Federation emerged in June of 1991 and aimed to regain power and a place on the world stage. Yeltsin stayed in office for eight years until he unexpectedly resigned in 1999. Vladamir Putin became his temporary successor and then won elections in 2000. In 2008, he became prime minister, and then became president again in 2012. Putin is looking to expand Russia’s influence in the Middle East through Iran, Syria, and Iraq.

Russia’s history with Iraq begins around the formation of the Soviet Union, maintaining a relatively stable relationship since then. Through history, we have always wanted allies in the Middle East to expand our influence in the region, and Iraq continually seeks backing from a strong nation state like us, so the relationship is mutually beneficial. The first connection between us was in 1944 when the Soviet Union and the Kingdom of Iraq established diplomatic relations. At the time, Iraq’s King Faisal II was anti-communist, but he established links with Moscow due its dependence on the United Kingdom. In January 1955, the Soviets criticized the Iraqi Government’s decision to join the Baghdad Pact, which was an agreement with Turkey, Pakistan, Iran and UK to prevent the infiltration of the Soviet Union into the Middle East. This led to Iraq cutting diplomatic relations with the Soviets, but after Faisal II was overthrown in a military coup, the Republic of Iraq emerged and General Abd al-Karim Qasim re-established the cut relations. As soon as the relationship between the Soviet Union and Iraq became strong, the Soviet Union began selling arms, which boosted its own economy and built up Iraq’s military. The Soviet Union took a special interest in Iraq during this time because the Iraqi Communist Party was one of the most successful in the region, although it never was strong enough to take power alone. In 1967, Iraq signed an agreement with the Soviets to supply the nation with oil in exchange for large-scale access to Soviet arms. In 1972, Egypt ordered the Soviet military personnel in the country to leave Egypt, and so Iraq became one of the Soviet Union's closest and only allies in the Middle East. During this time, the Soviet Union and Iraq signed a treaty called, “Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation” in which both countries promised to help each other under threat and to avoid entering hostile alliances against one another. After the October 1973 war, Iraq gained wealth and the price of oil rose drastically, which made Iraq a financially attractive partner for Brezhnev. This strategic partnership continued to strengthen under Gorbachev’s rule. After the Soviet Union’s collapse, Putin’s Russia has remained interested in Iraq for its oil resources, and has supported Iraq against the United States since 1994, strongly opposing U.S. sanctions and its invasion of Iraq in 2003. Currently, our main goal has been to win back the main energy contracts we enjoyed during the Iraq’s Saddam period, namely the West Qurna-II oil field. We have been increasingly active in the Middle East in recent years, and further involvement in Iraq will generally be well received by the Arabs, who have traditionally viewed us as a counterweight to the U.S. Our shared enemies and shared interests make us great political and economic partners, and we hope to continue helping each other as long as we can.

**Key Points:**

1. Extremist Muslim groups in Russia
2. Extremist Muslim groups elsewhere
3. Keeping Syria stable
4. Keeping the U.S. out of regional affairs
5. Oil in Iraq and the region
6. The Ukraine
7. Political influence in the Middle East

**Federalism and Autonomy**

The most important ethnic divide in the Middle East, and particularly in Iraq, is the ongoing battle between the Shia and Sunni Muslims. Iraq’s Sunnis are also divided between Arabs and Kurds, which creates more tension in the struggle for power in the Iraqi government. We think is important for Iraq to have a government controlled mainly by Shia because they compose most of the Iraqi population. Iraq should avoid splitting along any ethnic lines at all costs. If Iraq splits up, power would be scattered amongst smaller non-state actors and extremist groups will have a chance to take power and rise. We have extremist Muslim groups within our own boarders, and we have faced the consequences of suicide bombings and other terrorist acts. Therefore, it is in our best interest to back federalism in Iraq in order to avoid power reaching extremist groups in the region. We also want Iraq to be a strong, stable, state actor so that we will continue to receive oil, meanwhile, they will continue to receive support in the form of aide or arms. We are rich in petroleum and other natural resources, but our economy is struggling otherwise, so any help from Middle Eastern oil is essential. We want Iraq to have a strong, autonomic leader who will not favor a specific ethnic group like Sadaam Hussein did with the Sunnis. A unified state is the best way for extremist groups to stay powerless and out of Russian boarders, and for oil to keep flowing. We don’t care about humanitarian interests in Iraq if these two things remain in our favor.

**Security:**

Internally, we face many security threats from Russian citizens. In 2012, protests were widespread when charges of vote-rigging hit the media after Putin’s presidential election. Protestors held Putin’s government responsible and fought for political change, specifically fighting for a political system without Putin in power. Police and security forces were heavily increased in cities such as Moscow and the government asserted that certain anti-Putin groups were involved in criminal conspiracies, such as a plot by Chechen terrorists to assassinate Putin. Our authorities will use violence to dissipate internal threats and we do not hesitate to quell protests with forcefulness. Our other internal security threats come from extremist Muslims living in Chechnya or other parts of Russia. Over 10 percent of our population is Muslim, and many are Russian are Russified, but some have become attracted to Islamic radicalism. We might be able to deal with our own Islamist security threats by having a Muslim ally like Iraq. We will continually seek to act and be acknowledged as a great power, but our internal struggles could limit to what extent we continue this.

Muslim extremist groups don’t only pose an internal security threat, but also pose an external threat to our allies and influence in the Middle East. By supporting a central government and countering non-state extremists in Iraq, we can avoid any security threats that might emerge. We would also like to preserve the Syrian state because a stronger Assad regime means a stronger Iraq, and a strong Muslim ally is ideal for our security. In 2013, Russia and Iraq signed a $4.3 billion dollar weapons deal, bringing in a lot of money and boosting Iraq’s counterterrorism operations, while simultaneously strengthening our relations with Iraq. Arms exports are a major revenue earner for us, and they are a key part of our attempt to restore influence in the Middle East. However, Iraq is still not capable of being a strong international ally yet because there are too many unresolved domestic conflicts over energy, internal borders, political power, and religious ideals. There is not a clear, unified foreign policy between us yet, but it is imperative that we stay on good terms, to help them develop into a more stable nation and ally.

**2014 Elections**

 Nouri al-Maliki, Iraq’s current Prime Minister is the likely winner of the 2014 elections that will be taking place on April 30th. Maliki is part of the Dawa party and he is part of the Shia minority of Iraq. Iraq’s Independent High Electoral commission has approved 276 political parties to run in the elections, which appear as Kutlas (coalitions) on the ballot. The largest of these coalitions are: the Prime Minister’s State of Law Coalition, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Iraqi National Accord, and the Sadrist Movement (Ahrar). There are a few significant new parties such as Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq, which was a former militant group. His likely re-election is something we are hoping for. We want to continue our relationship with Iraq, but an abrupt change in leadership could disrupt the balance we currently have with them. If Iraq becomes unstable due to controversy over new leadership, our political and economic interests could be directly affected. We need Maliki to stay in power so that we can continue shipping oil to China through Iraq, and maintain the formations of the powerful political bloc that includes China, Syria, Iraq and us. We know Maliki will help counter US and Israeli presence and power, and if he stays in office, we can continue to oppose the US with support from other nations.

**Religion and Sectarianism**

The contentious relationship between Sunni and Shi’a in Iraq stems from a political conflict that dates back thousands of years over the question of who would take over the leadership of the Muslim nation after the death of Muhammad. The Sunnis thought that the position should be one that is elected among capable candidates and the Shi’a thought that power should stay within the Prophet’s own family. In the 1970’s, Saddam Hussein built his power by privileging the Sunni minority over the Shi’a majority. After the fall of Saddam, sectarian violence erupted. Since 2003, there has been ceaseless sectarian violence, especially perpetrated by extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda, backed by Iran and Hezbollah.

Political parties in Iraq are divided by religious sect; 60% of Iraq Muslims are Shi’a while only 30% are Sunni. After the United States got rid of the existing Iraqi army and government bureaucracy, which gave Iraqis a secular national identity, a power vacuum left people resorting to religious affiliations and sectarian parties and militias. This deeply divides the government and the 2010 elections were between the Sunni, Shi’a and Kurds. Shi’a are now back in power, imposing repressive and misogynist version of Sharia law back for Iraq.

As the government grows weaker, there is more sectarian violence and there is a fear of more violence surrounding upcoming elections. Acts of terrorism between Sunni and Shi’a have exacerbated problems, with terrorists using their power to undermine elections in their party’s favor. Women are allowed to vote in Iraq and under Saddam, were given equal status to men. After his overthrow and the consolidation of Shi’a power, women have fewer freedoms. Some have even been tortured and disfigured for breaking Sharia law. However, in some places women are encouraged to vote and participate in politics. The US introduced a quota for 25% of members of Parliament to be women, but they still have little say and cannot be members of the executive branch.

There is definitely a strong youth culture in Iraq that is split between modernizing and becoming more religious. Because Iraqis did not have to fight for their democracy, there is less of an activist youth culture. However, Iraqis followed the Egyptian revolution closely on the internet and social media. Iraqi youth are fighting for a free and safe country without political trauma. Other youth are becoming indoctrinated by the extremist groups due to their frustration with US occupation. Young women are eschewing tradition Islamic clothing and values, which angers the more traditional Shi’a leadership. While there are fewer extremists in Iraq, there is certainly a vocal faction.

**Regional Affairs**

 Although Iraq isn’t technically a theocracy like neighboring Iran, its 97% Muslim population and emphasis on religion plays a big role in its affairs. Shias make up about 65% of the Muslim population, often fighting to repress Sunnis. Sunnis, in return fight back against their minority status, but have problems within their own group because it is split ethnically between Turks, Kurds, and Arabs. Historically, both Sunnis and Shias have faced persecutions from the Iraqi government at different times, and their deep-rooted hate for each other has yet to simmer. We like the Iraqi government, do not support a separate Kurdistan, and are fighting for a unified Iraq to maintain a stable relationship with them.

We tend to support Shia nations to indirectly counter the U.S, who generally supports Sunni nations. We support Iran and Syria and would like to see these nations, have a larger say in Iraqi politics. Syrian refugees have no direct affect on our political situation in the region, and so we are willing to send large amounts of aide (military and humanitarian) to support these refugees and to maintain a relationship with Iraq and Syria. Our main goal in regional affairs is to have a larger say in Middle Eastern politics and to make sure the United States has a regional counter-balance.

**Resources:**

The West Qurna Field is located in southern Iraq and is the second largest oil field in the world. In late 2009, Russia’s Lukoil and Norway’s Statoil companies agreed on a joint partnership, and were awarded the rights to about 12 billion barrels of oil from West Qurna. In 2012, Statoil sold its shares to Lukoil, leaving the us with 75% of the stake, and Iraqi State North Oil Company with only 25%. Estimates suggest that Lukoil’s investment in West Qurna will reach $3.7 billion by 2014. Lukoil also has joint a partnership with ExxonMobil –Shell and three other foreign oil companies to construct a water plant at West Qurna which will help 6 major oil-field development projects by producing 10–12 million barrels of water per day. In 2013, Lukoil also received rights to explore another oil field in southern Iraq called Block 10. If commercial reserves are confirmed on the Block, oil production period will last 20 years with a possible 5-year extension. In 2010, the Russian-Swiss joint venture Wintercroft Capital signed a contract with the authorities of the Maysan province in southeast Iraq on building two thermal power plants.

Our lucrative oil and power projects in Iraq make it imperative to keep a strong relationship and support Iraq politically. Putin pushed for Russian investment in Iraq’s energy, and we maintain a working relationship with Maliki in order to keep economic influence over the region.

**Media:**

Television is the most popular type of media in Russia. We have 3 channels that reach nationwide for broadcasted news and information, as well as several regional channels that are both owned by the state, and by commercial companies. Thousands of local and national newspapers cover several perspectives of news and the internet is available to citizens with access. VK is the world second-largest social media website, and is used primarily by Russian-speaking users in Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Belarus. The Constitution of Russia allows Freedom of the Press, allowing anyone to distribute information in a legal way. However, in 2006, we passed laws called the Federal Law on Combating the Terrorism, the Law on Counteracting the Extremist Activity, and the Federal List of Extremist Materials, which bans racist or extremist publications including Hitler’s Mein Kamf for domestic security reasons. Journalists are free to express how they want, but obviously encouraged to stay within the limits of the law. Those who do not are considered an enemy of the state and will face charges.

With regards to media in Iraq, we continue to support the nation in every way we can. We deeply condemned the U.S. invasion in Iraq and continue to condemn U.S. actions in the region, for the well being of the region and for our own interests.

**5 Main Issues:**

1. Extremist Muslim groups in Russia and elsewhere
2. Keeping the U.S. out of regional affairs
3. Keeping Syria stable
4. Oil in Iraq and the region
5. Political influence in the Middle East