

Statement of Rep. Dana Rohrabacher
Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Hearing on “The Iraqi Documents: A Glimpse Into the Regime of
Saddam Hussein”
April 6, 2006

Good afternoon. The Committee on International Relations’ Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations is called to order.

The purpose of today’s hearing is to evaluate the importance of recently declassified Iraqi Documents found by American troops during Operation Iraqi Freedom. A mammoth declassification process is about to commence under the auspices of the Director of National Intelligence. I want to applaud our colleague, Chairman Pete Hoekstra of the House Intelligence Committee. He has spearheaded the effort to convince the Executive Branch to publicly release millions of pages of captured Iraqi documents, recordings and other data. Without Chairman Hoekstra’s efforts, the information, which will now be available to the public, would have been locked up and seen by no one. Instead, the power of the Internet and public participation will speed the process of translation and dissemination as never before. Decision-makers will have invaluable information now, and historians will have primary source material for many years.

The United States has nearly 48,000 boxes of documents and hundreds of hours of recorded conversations, many by Saddam Hussein, that have yet to be thoroughly translated and analyzed. There are more than two million pages of information contained within this untapped archive. This treasure trove of data will yield an unprecedented

understanding of a defeated enemy regime. We may well be treated to surprise revelations for years to come. Like any good Stalinist dictatorship, Saddam Hussein's regime documented nearly everything, so we're talking about a mountain of data.

Interestingly, one of the first Iraqi documents to be declassified appears to address the fate of Kuwaiti prisoners of war. Among his many cruelties, Saddam never accounted for or returned at least 605 prisoners of war. Most of these victims were civilians, captured during the brutal and, yes, murderous 1990 invasion of Kuwait. As part of the ceasefire agreement in early 1991, Saddam agreed to account for their whereabouts. Needless to say, Saddam failed to keep his word. All these years and no word of the prisoners.

The agony of the Kuwaiti people over their missing family members was painful and omnipresent. By scale of comparison, 605 prisoners of war to a small country like Kuwait would be the population equivalent of 250,000 Americans being held.

Until now there has been no solid information about the fate of the Kuwaiti prisoners. In fact, there is question as to the authenticity of the documents concerning Kuwaiti prisoners that have emerged. These documents, however, serve a purpose in stimulating discussion and examination of the issue, which is, in and of itself, a positive outcome of the document declassification. Here to comment on Iraq's monstrous cruelty to its Kuwaiti prisoners is Ibrahim M. Al-Shaheen, Deputy Chairman the National

Committee for Missing & Prisoners of War – from the Government of Kuwait. We welcome him and look forward to his views.

On the broader subject, we will hear from Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Woods, US Army, retired, the lead author of the “Iraqi Perspectives Project,” this path-breaking new study, and his project manager, General Tony Cucolo (pron. KOOK-a-low). From the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (Ambassador Negroponte’s office) is Dan Butler, who will comment on the declassification process and how the rollout of these documents will unfold.

This hearing, focusing on the wholesale declassification of documents, seeks to improve our understanding of the evil nature of the regime we deposed. Saddam Hussein’s megalomania and virulent hatred of the United States, and his intentions of removing United States influence from the Middle East, are confirmed in documents waiting to be found and published. Through these documents, we also are provided with greater insight into the abject fear that Saddam inspired in his government and military leaders causing mistakes and abuses. It remains to be seen what else we will find when more of these documents become public, but I believe this is an important opportunity to learn more about the monster who ruled Iraq, the monster we drove from power and was, eventually, found hiding in a hole. I look forward to hearing from our eminently qualified witnesses.

Today we are here to proclaim that when it comes to information, the more and the quicker, the better. The massive document disclosure America is about to engage

upon will create an intellectual dynamic that can only happen in a free society. Not all the documents will be authentic, but in total, they will present a more vivid and complete picture of recent history that is so important to us today.

I now yield to the Ranking Democratic Member, Mr DELLA-hunt, for opening comments.