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US Official Says Media Wrong to Report “Total Chaos” In Iraq

A State Department official working on Iraq's reconstruction criticized the media coverage of US-led efforts on Tuesday, and said it was wrong for the media to report Iraq is in complete chaos.

"The glass is more than half full," said Robin Raphel, director of the Office of Iraq Reconstruction at the State Department in Washington.

Raphel told a women's foreign policy group here that the media is reporting two "erroneous conceptions" about Iraq as she rejected reports claiming "the country is in total chaos" and that "US troops are there alone."

"The media should also emphasize that basic services have been restored," Raphel said echoing a frequent criticism of defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

The official stressed that 32 countries are participating in Iraq's reconstruction, that a majority of hospitals and clinics are operational, that electricity supplies are back up "to the pre-war level," and that the judicial system is functioning.

At the same time, she said, Internet services are available, and all the country's schools and 22 universities are open for classes.

"More than 150 newspapers are available," Raphel said adding that over 10,000 new jobs had been created since the end of major combat was declared May 1.

She also underlined that some 30,000 Iraqi police officers are helping to restore security, and that 1,500 new police officers are graduating from training every month.

Raphel spoke after one of the bloodiest weekends in Iraq since May, a total of 12 foreign diplomats and contractors were killed, while the US military said it had killed 54 insurgents in northern Iraq.