

Perle: US needed 'Iraqi De Gaulle' for invasion

Berlin (AFP) Top US neo-conservative Richard Perle, a key former architect of US President George W. Bush's foreign policy, has admitted there were mistakes in the execution of the Iraq war, saying the invasion had needed "an Iraqi De Gaulle".

Perle, who was an adviser to former defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, told German weekly *Die Zeit* in an issue published today that a string of tactical errors had resulted in the chaos reigning in Iraq today.

"The idea was good, the execution was bad," he was quoted as saying in an advance German transcript of the interview. "We should have agreed on a post-war Iraqi leadership" but were thwarted by opposition at the US State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, Perle said. "We should have marched into Baghdad with an Iraqi De Gaulle," he said.

General Charles de Gaulle led the French resistance against the Nazi German occupation during World War II and returned from British exile to a hero's welcome in Paris in 1944, assuming the presidency of the provisional government.

Perle blasted the findings released last week by the Iraq Survey Group mapping a way forward in the country. "I have never seen such a foolish report," he said.

He said proposals such as opening talks with Iran and Syria and planning the withdrawal of US troops were flat wrong. "Syria and Iran have done everything they can to destabilise Iraq and they do not have the slightest interest in another strategy. A report that begins with false premises ends in nothing," Perle said, adding that he did not expect Bush to follow the recommendations.

"I think he will change the strategy: more US troops in Iraqi units, more Iraqis in American [units]. That could improve the impact of both units," he said.

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