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Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement

A CIVILIAN "SURGE" FOR IRAQ

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PARTICIPANTS:

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

Moderator:

ELIZABETH FERRIS, Co-Director
Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

TRAVIS GARTNER, Director
Community Stabilization Office (Iraq)

BRIGADIER GENERAL DAVID G. REIST
Assistant Deputy Commandant, Installations and Logistics
United States Marine Corps

AMBASSADOR HENRY CLARKE
Former Head of the Office of Provincial Affairs in Iraq

JEANNE PRYOR, Deputy Director, Iraq Office
U.S. Agency for International Development

RABIH TORBAY, Vice President, International Operations
International Medical Corps

MICHEL GABAUDAN
Regional Representative for the United States of America and the Caribbean
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. FERRIS: (In progress) -- I'm a Senior Fellow here at Brookings and Co-Director of the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement. Of course, Iraq has large numbers of internally displaced persons presently estimated between 2.5 and 3 million people. In looking at the future of those IDPs, whether or not they will be able to return to resume normal lives depends a lot on the question of stability in Iraq. So we've organized this roundtable today to talk about a civilian surge, and particularly the role of civilian assistance in providing stability or stabilization to Iraq, an issue that certainly is high on the agenda as discussions abound in the Obama administration and the general public about the upcoming withdrawal or scaling down of U.S. military combat forces.

We have six very distinguished speakers today each of whom brings a unique perspective to the topic and have been given the amazing challenge of speaking to complex issues in only 7 or 8 minutes each, so we'll be watching guys and see how you do. I am not going to read their complete bios. It would take a long time. You have the written versions in your folders, but let me just begin by introducing them one by one, and then I will ask all of them to say a few words before opening it up for discussion. I would also encourage the panelists to think of questions for each other because the issues that we'll be talking about are indeed lively and often controversial.

We'll begin with Travis Gartner from International Relief and Development who works with the Community Stabilization Program Office in Iraq. He will be followed by Brigadier General David Reist who is Assistant Deputy Commandant of Installations and Logistics of the U.S. Marine Corps, who comes speaking about his experiences particularly in al Anbar Province. He will be followed by Ambassador Henry Clarke who was former head of the Office of Provincial Affairs in Iraq and will speak particularly about the role of provincial reconstruction teams and its contribution. We will then move to Jeanne Pryor from the U.S. Agency for International Development who is Deputy Director of the Iraq Office. She will be followed by Rabih Torbay who is Vice President for International Operations of the International Medical Corps, an NGO which is active inside Iraq. And finally we'll listen to the perspectives from the United Nations with Michel Gabaudan who is the Regional Representative for the U.S. and Caribbean of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Although the first five speakers will be talking primarily about U.S. civilian assistance, the role of the U.N. may in fact turn out to be quite important as we look toward the long-term stabilization of Iraq. Let's begin with you, Travis. Do you want to tell us what IRD does, what community stabilization is, and how you see civilian assistance in Iraq?

MR. GARTNER: Before I talk about community stabilization and what it is, I would like to go over some of the conditions on the ground that created the need for this program. As you all know, in 2004-2005 the violence continued to increase, daily attacks against coalition forces, displacement continued, sectarian violence is contributing to this displacement, because at the time USAID had many -- traditional economic development, government's capacity, programs underway in Iraq -- but what happened was the security situation was preventing implementation or effective implementation of these programs. The military was clearing cities and neighborhoods but not holding them, and in fact Fallujah in 2004 an entire city. In 2005, USAID

comes up with the concept for community stabilization. This is a new approach and unlike what we've seen up to this time in terms of stabilization and reconstruction, it's primarily -- funds. It's primarily U.S. military because of the security situation. The strategic component that's missing is the civilian agencies. The objectives of CSP were first and foremost to reduce incentives for young men particularly to participate in violent and insurgent activities, have an immediate impact on the improvement of the daily lives of Iraqis, create employment opportunities, and the long-term goals set the conditions for long-term economic development.

So there were four components and obviously we're working to do this rapidly. We need to go into some of the most dangerous places in Iraq. That's a challenge first and foremost. How are we going to find the people in Ramadi as the general well knows to work for our program? Because unlike other programs, this is going to be Iraqi led. So you have first and foremost public works, infrastructure rehabilitation, small-scale we're talking about clinics, school rehabs, clean-up campaigns, getting rubbish and rubble off the streets, employing thousands of young men from the communities that we're working in to do this. You have vocational skills training and apprenticeship programs. So those laborers are linked to a capacity development program, get a skill, get an apprenticeship. This is a form of engagement and employment. While that's going on we're simultaneously doing micro, small, and medium enterprise development. This is a longer-term component to create sustainable jobs. We're also doing the youth engagement and this is one of the most popular components of the program because it could be soccer championships, it might be learning, reading, and writing for women, sewing, whatever the community felt was important as a means of engagement.

I'd like to give just very quickly an example of how this all worked. I'll just pick one city because it's important to know that the program and how it was implemented, differed by location. But first and foremost its focus. So we're not talking about stabilizing all of Ramadi at one time. I'll use Ramadi as an example since I worked there. We begin with a few neighborhoods. And the USAID rep -- let me step back. One thing I forgot to mention that was missing in 2004-2005 is this unity of effort. So the provincial reconstruction teams that we're all familiar with in Afghanistan, that concept is brought over to Iraq to help the inter-agency to bring together the military, USAID, State Department, Iraqi representatives, advisers, to one table. So this is important in counterinsurgency operations which I'm sure the military can expound on. So that unity of effort is there. And our role through that USAID rep is the military and USAID and the PRTs identify key neighborhoods where we've either cleared or we're about to clear of insurgents and reach at least some modicum of stability that we as the implementing partner can get out there.

We begin by employing 1,000, 2,000, as many as 4,000 people in some of the areas where we started, young men on cleaning up rubble, cleaning up debris. While that's going on we're having soccer championships with those same day laborers, so we're engaging these young men in a meaningful way. And I can tell you I've seen the impact in Ramadi when young men are now able to get out there and not worry about having their arms or legs chopped off as was the case for playing soccer.

While that's going on we're creating a team and we're bringing in our advisers to train them in micro, small, and medium enterprise development. So as I'm cleaning up this street or as my Iraqis are cleaning up this street and repairing it, the damaged sewage line, the water mains, the electrical poles, the shop owners are coming out into the street, the local populace is noticing something is going on. They're asking about micro, small, and medium grants. We're getting them to open their businesses. These are long-term jobs. That then feeds into the vocational training program so that we're linking laborers.

So what I want to stress here before I close is these linkages, and most importantly, the fact that Iraqis are leading this. Many people ask how is that possible in these environments. It was possible because it was Iraqi led. And if you're not engaging the population, the social, political, and economic goals that you set out from the beginning, are never going to be achieved. So CSP was successful because we were Iraqi led. They were the ones doing the work. They're the ones who deserve the credit. It was coordinated through USAID and with the military. Some on this panel may disagree with me. I think it was very effective. My closing statement with regards to a civilian surge would be that as I mentioned earlier, this program was designed to set the conditions for long-term economic development so if we're going to pull back the U.S. military, maybe I shouldn't use this word as an NGO, but counterinsurgency is what's going on over there and that dictates that we pull back militaries and expand the civilian programs, the traditional USAID programs, and in al Anbar right now we're closing out those programs and I would argue there is not sufficient USAID traditional activity to fill that void.

MR. FERRIS: Thank you. General Reist, what's your perspective on the role of civilian assistance and stabilization operations?

BRIG. GEN. REIST: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here. You asked the question do we need a surge. I would respond back what would it look like if we did not have one. I'd like to give you some facts and data points that will just get some thoughts going, and I'm sure they will be picked up by some thoughts that have already been mentioned and some others.

The PRT team in Anbar, and I was there from February 2006 to February 2007, it arrived in Anbar in May 2006 with an interim fill and permanent PRT team leader arrived in September 2006. Civilians were already present or came to Anbar to visit. Security was an issue but it wasn't the overriding issue. We had held economic conferences in Amman, Jordan, on 6 and 7 June with something called the Al Anbar Business Association, and then on the 29th and the 30th of June in Amman with sheikhs. In January 2007 we held a business symposium in Dubai. A sheikh told me in May 2006, "You will win when we let you win." He said that with no bravado but with total confidence. A civilian who had been on the deck for 42 months in October 2006 told me, "You have won in Anbar. Watch what happens in the other Sunni provinces through, Ninawa and Salah ad-Din. He was prescient with that comment.

Unemployment at the height of the Depression in our country was about 25 percent. Unemployment in Anbar is 40 to 60 percent. Conditions are right for discontent. There are limits to military power. We need first-term players I would argue in the inter-agency from phase zero before the war even starts.

Some thoughts. The trick is to bring all elements of national power to bear. This is complex. We are playing three-level chess here, not checkers like some people think. This is hard, rice bowls, inter-agency, things like that, things you've all thought about, all heard about probably. This is not about we're there and you're not there or we need to be in charge. Not at all.

I believe everything in this world is about money. It's all about money, it's always about money. Anbar especially and Iraq across the board are rich with resources. Initiatives that were thought were initiated when I was there, and some have been picked up and some haven't, but let me give you an idea. Before I got there I met an NGO. He was a millionaire from the United States who gave $1 million a month that built 500 homes and provided 5,000 jobs. He was in Fallujah even when four bodies were hung off the bridge. He left because the buys in uniform got too close to him, because when we got too close to him, the bad guys associated him with us.

There's a thing called the Akaz gas and oil fields on the Jordan-Syrian-Iraq border. With estimates at $56 a barrel, it's worth $3.14 trillion, about $5 million to build up and exploit. I'm not an economist. That's a lot of money though. Wireless local loop provides voice and data. The voice is important. It would be nice if Martha can talk to Joan in the different cities. I'm all for that. I like the data. Data means you can do business across and businessmen can start doing what businessmen do in this world. The Iraqi railroad. It ran twice when I was there, all the way out to Alkine. It's a huge effort. Look what it did for our country.

Agriculture. It exists at about 20 percent of the capacity of the Euphrates River. Some things that we do. Canal cleaning, hopefully buying seeds, getting bees out there. Saddam Hussein killed the bees -- obviously what the birds and the bees do that we learned about. Date palm spraying is a huge part of that and for what they do.

Power generation, a huge aspect of what we need to happen at that point in time in there, and this is a long-term effort. Economic free-trade zones. These things would be huge especially on the Syrian-Iraqi border in Western al Anbar.

Cement plants to put people back to work. There's a Deputy Under Secretary of Defense named Paul Brinkley. He's got a task force that's out there that looked at that. Some people didn't like what he was trying to do. All he was looking to do was get a cement plant up, hire some people and produce a product. Is it going to be competitive? The free market will determine that long-term. Get people back to work. Get them off the street is exactly what he was saying.

A sheikh came to me, "We'd like to establish a toll road from Ramadi to the Jordanian border." This sheikh was schooled at USC and got his master's at Harvard. He understands our business better than we do. The toll road would be a toll. It would generate income, but the sheikhs would take care of the security.

Al Assad is an international airport. Somebody from Halliburton came to me about 3 weeks into country and offered a plan already. Somebody was thinking about this. Banking and the global economy. The beautiful thing about Iraq is because they're not plugged into it, the fall that happened throughout the world didn't impact them as much. They've got $20 bills stuffed in

mattresses. What a blessing in disguise. Micro-finance loans as was mentioned are huge things. On top of all this, we need good governance that needs to be in place for financial growth and minimize corruption. Capitalism is a wonderful thing. Let the gangsters of capitalism loose.

Limits to military power. Economic growth, the Iraqis get this. My assumption, everybody wants a slightly better lifestyle. When rich men or women get richer, the level of the water comes up and all boats float up. We must have a balanced effort. It's not a question of if we want one. I think we have to. Our country is too rich with resources not to ask people to come to the fight. I would like to see more people come to the fight. I think that's what we need. And once again, at phase zero, not after we stop. I think that's important. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much, General. I turn now to Ambassador Henry Clarke, to give us your thoughts on provincial reconstruction teams, PRTs, and particularly their role at the provincial governmental level.

AMBASSADOR CLARKE: Let me put out first that our overall objective in Iraq is to develop an Iraq that is self-sustainable both in the government and in its economy, is peaceful and capable of defending itself domestically and against external threats. That's a big, broad agenda. The first thing I would say is it can't do that without the provincial reconstruction team structure that we have set up there.

I believe the provincial structure in Iraq which is undergoing a practically revolutionary degree of change, there was no effective decentralization under Saddam Hussein or even his predecessors. So when we speak of provincial government and provincial economic development, we're talking about a whole new approach and that we have an instrument for that and it's the provincial reconstruction teams.

By reconstruction I certainly do not mean simply rebuilding damaged buildings or replacing roads or what not, although that has been a very large part of our effort. The reconstruction really means recreating new effective governments and economic mechanism throughout the country. I believe this will lead to a degree of decentralization, and I think that it's quite appropriate that we're talking about this on the eve of provincial elections which may include more voters than ever before, at least I hope so. It is my contention which I will try to prove in 7 minutes that because all of the provinces are so different one from another, some mostly one ethnic group, some two ethnic groups evenly divided or nearly evenly divided, some with three ethnic groups no one of which has an actual majority, you cannot get reconciliation in Iraq unless it happens at the provincial and local levels and that's why our assistance needs to have a major part of its work focus at the provincial level.

The teams are there for not just seeking traditional economic development. They have rule-of-law advisers provided by the Justice Department. They are working very closely with the military civil affairs people. They have USAID as in many cases the most important programmatic part of the team and many USAID contractors. Some of the teams with contractors measure now in the hundreds of people in the most active provinces. So we are not talking about a minor effort. This is post-surge numbers that I'm talking about.

You cannot really expect this to work unless the teams themselves are also a decentralized structure. There have been lots of mistakes made in Washington, I would submit in Tampa and in Baghdad, that didn't work throughout the country because conditions were not uniform throughout the country. Therefore it is terribly important that each team be able to develop its own plans and assessments of what is needed and not in some ivory tower or totally isolated in a military base, but rather, in a sense jointly with their Iraqi counterparts so that what they decide to do will in fact be realistic and accepted.

I think, for example, when it comes to projects now we should be concentrating on those projects that didn't ever get finished or were not exactly what the Iraqis wanted and if possible make them more useful rather than spend big bucks on major capital investments in Iraq.

Obviously this puts a great premium on the leadership capacity of the team leaders. Each one is going to have to think for himself and with the advice of all of his team members to come up with plans and priorities that reflect the need of that particular province. I object very strongly to the conclusions of the House Armed Services Oversight Committee which felt that the reconstruction teams in Iraq should be more of a top-down centrally directed operation. I think that would fail perhaps for different reasons than the problems we have had, but it would fail.

I worry a little bit about how we will adjust the PRTs as the military withdraws. After I've used my 7 minutes perhaps we can discuss that more afterwards. But I again do not feel that this can be done with a cookie-cutter approach. It should not be a single decision that we will do the same thing with all the teams. There needs to be assessments of which provinces have already achieved enough so that we can stand down on certain programs, or if we have other programs that have succeeded in one province and failed in another, replace the program where it's not working. But I do not believe you can just simply shut this activity down on a centrally directed basis. I hope that stimulates at least some questions later.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much. We'll have quite a bit of time for discussions and challenges. Jeanne Pryor from the U.S. Agency for International Development, tell us what you see is the future of civilian assistance in Iraq if you can.

MS. PRYOR: Two years ago I had the great privilege of participating in the planning for the surge process, and I'm grateful that you're holding this panel because often times the surge is associated just with the military side of the equation and us poor civilians get locked out. But what was really terrific about this was it really was a unity of effort. Each agency came to the table with their comparative advantage and put their best ideas forward and we all worked together to make those ideas happen.

For USAID that comparative advantage has been in capacity building and economic growth. Yes, jobs, jobs, jobs, and jobs. And one of the issues we wrestled with is how do you balance the need for sort-term jobs and infusions of cash into the economy but also creating long-term jobs, because we can't be there forever creating work.

USAID effectively doubled our staff during the surge. We put staff in all of the PRTs and EPRTs. We provided 50 governance advisers to the PRTs. We provided another 50 advisers to central government ministries in Baghdad. Disbursements rates, to give you an idea of how much we ramped up our activities, we would disburse about $19 million a month for our entire program. Within a year of the start of the surge that number had gone up to $75 million a month. That's like double the annual budget of your average USAID country program.

I could rattle off all kinds of numbers and outputs and success stories and what not, but the thing that stands out in my mind is we have provincial councils that are now able to govern. They're developing strategies for their provinces. They're securing funding from the central government. We're now putting implementing financing in place. Central ministries are executing their budgets. They are getting procurements underway. In Anbar and Baghdad a couple years ago there was no micro finance. Now we have 2,000 loans floating around in Anbar and 15,000 in Baghdad. So that's why small-scale businesses can start up and create the basis for long-term job creation.

There's a lot of anecdotal information that we see that shows the success of the surge. For example, back last spring one of our staff was able to walk around in a neighborhood that just 6 months earlier had been racked by violence and he did so without the requisite flack jacket and helmet that all U.S. government employees must wear. To me the most striking example of the success of the surge was we did an article on the CSP program in Ramadi and when that article came in for my review, I noticed there was a picture of an Iraqi man and his name and his business that was created and as a policy we don't print any identifying information of Iraqis for security reasons. So we went back to Baghdad and said wait a minute. What are you doing? You're putting this man at risk. They said, no, actually he wanted his picture taken and his name and his business. So that shows the vote of confidence of what's going on.

I have to agree with Travis, unity of effort by the U.S. government was invaluable but ultimately it was Iraqis that made it happen. Of the 4,000 implementing partner staff that we have on the ground in Iraq that have been working on the surge, over 3,500 are Iraqis. If we did not have them, none of these programs would have happened or would be successful and they're our best hope that all these efforts will be sustainable over time.

Where are we going from here? That's a good question because we have a new boss and ultimately he'll be telling us where we go from here. What I can say is at the USAID level we've been looking at some of our programs and saying how do we evolve now? We've had 2 years of success with the surge. What more should we be doing? We're looking at phasing out of counterinsurgency programs and trying to look more long term. We would like to do a lot more in terms of long-term job creation. We've had all these efforts with capacity building and governance at the community level through our community action program, the provincial level through our local governance programs, and at the central government level through our national capacity development program. However, we've been busying working on these three distinct levels, now this year we're trying to bring them all together and have them actually work together.

We're shifting our central government efforts out into the directors general out in the provinces and getting them to talk to the provincial councils for the first time so that they can work together and pool their resources. The same thing at the community level, working with them to be able to reach out to the provincial level to get the resources they need for their communities rather than turning to a donor.

We are undergoing a stock-taking exercise internally within USAID. We're doing a number of sector assessments and just trying to take a fresh look of where we've come and where yet do we need to go. And most important in this process is engaging Iraqis. One of the big constraints we all have had is being locked into the Green Zone and not being able to work as collaboratively with Iraqis as we would in other countries in the world. That's starting to shift, so in the sector assessments we are engaging Iraqis more and more to identify what are Iraqis' priorities, what resources do they bring to the table. Most of my career has been spent on Africa and Afghanistan and to work on Iraq is a delight because Iraq has so many resources. And I'm not just talking about oil. I don't even think about oil. Agriculture as the General has pointed out is the large source of employment and it's just ripe for further development. There is a great entrepreneurial class that is starting to grow in Iraq. We have a literate population and relatively well-educated population that works very hard and is incredibly courageous. So these are terrific resources to build on.

What's going to happen? I don't know. We don't have an appropriation yet for fiscal year 2009. I don't know if we'll get one. And right now the discussions are happening within the inter-agency process in terms of where should the administration be going next. So all I can say on that front is stay tuned.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you. We turn now to Rabih Torbay from the International Medical Corps to talk a little bit about your work inside Iraq.

MR. TORBAY: Thank you. The International Medical Corps has been working in Iraq since April 2003. We have about 500 people working all over Iraq in all 18 provinces. We provide essential services to the displaced, but also to the host communities as well as building the capacity of the government both on the central level as well as on the provincial level. I'm not going to talk in detail about what we do because I don't think you're here to listen to me singing our own praises. One of the important things about what we do is providing essential services especially to the displaced, and job creation. It is critical. When we look over the past 5 years, a lot of money has been spent on construction, big projects, big schools, hospitals, without having the staff to provide those services in the clinics and the hospitals those schools. People went without very basic services, water, sanitation, health, electricity, and this definitely is a destabilizing factor. It's something that we don't look at very often, but when a father has three kids and he cannot feed his kids or if his kids are sick and he can't take them to the clinic, he will do anything to feed those kids including joining insurgency groups, and this is something that we always forget. We don't learn from history. We don't see what happened in other places in the Middle East, in South Lebanon or in Gaza where governments were created within those governments just by merely providing those basic services. This is very essential and we shouldn't forget about that.

The civilian surge. In November 2007 we called for a humanitarian surge. We testified on the Hill for the need for a humanitarian surge in Iraq. There is a need for a civilian surge, but I would call it more of a smart surge. We do not need additional bodies just going to Iraq. We've all seen what happened in 2003 and 2004. In the initial days we sent a lot of people. Not all of them were qualified to do the job. Not all of them knew about what Iraq needs. This is very critical for us. We need to see what the needs are and identify people that would address those needs.

Money. Iraq doesn't need too much money. We know over the past couple of years they've had budgets, but one of the main problems they've had is spending the money in their budgets. They didn't know how to go about it. They're not used to doing procurement. All the decisions were made by the central government. All the decisions were made by Saddam. No one dares to buy even a laptop computer up to the minister level. They would wait for the higher authority to authorize it. And that's something critical for us to look at. We need to build that capacity. We need to help them help themselves. And this is something that we need to focus on over the next couple of years in order to help the Iraqis help themselves. They don't need handouts. They just need assistance and technical assistance.

One of the things I would like to talk about, my colleagues luckily covered most of the things I wanted to say so it doesn't leave me with much to say, but what Jeanne said about the uncertainty of additional assistance going to Iraq is very worrisome. Let's not make the same mistake we did in 1989 in Afghanistan when the minute the Soviets were out, we were out too. We didn't provide any assistance at all to Afghanistan, not even small assistance to the government for schools or clinics. We all know where that led us with the Mujahideen and how it continued after and 9/11. We shouldn't make the same mistake. We should learn from our mistakes both in terms of humanitarian work, but also in terms of civilian work and in terms of commitment to the population. Those are the words that I heard when I worked in Afghanistan or in Iraq, let's see how long the U.S. is going to stay. They think that the minute the U.S. beats the insurgency it will forget completely about Iraq. Let's prove them wrong. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much. We turn now to Michel Gabaudan from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. Michel, in maybe most post-conflict situations the U.N. plays a major role in both operations and in coordinating assistance. In Iraq the situation is a little different. What role do you see for the U.N. in Iraq?

MR. GABAUDAN: The U.N. is a big family, so I'll try to speak first of my agency and then a little bit on the rest of the U.N. To start with perhaps I'll mention so far the main role has been that of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq, UNAMI, which has been quite instrumental in pushing the political process which hopefully Saturday will give some positive results on the occasion of these elections. If that happens, it might help in determining legitimate authorities in the different governates and might facilitate our job somehow.

The presence of the U.N. in Baghdad remains extremely limited. We are still constrained by fairly severe security guidelines by our own people given what happened in 2003. For example, we have 100 slots for the whole U.N. family 56 of which are taken by security people. So our attempts to increase our presence in Baghdad is moving slowly. We [UNHCR] were the first

agency to put our representative in Baghdad, moving him from Amman. Since then WHO and UNICEF have followed suit. I think the UNDP is doing the same right now. So slowly we have the U.N. coming back, but we are each fighting for these few slots and we hope that we will be able to extend the number of slots available.

That goes with tremendous demands on the quality of constructions we have to build to house our staff so that we don't have the repeats of the past. So we are constrained a little bit by the history we have lived in in Iraq as a bureaucracy to move in. The High Commission is determined to move 50 percent of our staff who work on Iraq into Baghdad. Now it's about 90 percent -- so we are trying to move back into Baghdad.

Our assessment of the situation in general right now is that, yes, security has in general improved very much. However, the threat level for minorities has not changed and in some places we've seen recently in Mosul, et cetera, it has even increased. So we have to remain careful. And our interest in Iraq is based on three types of populations. The first one which nobody ever talks about because it's a small population, but we're still responsible for refugees from other countries who sought refuge in Iraq and who are still there, and there are still about 45,000 that we had to assist through all these years and we've had to keep on working. Most of them are from Iran or Turkey.

Then we have the IDPs and there we co-chair the Working Group on Protection. Certainly on IDPs what we've seen is that we still, collectively the international community and Iraq's government, are not able to make a rational assessment of what the needs are, how to prioritize, et cetera. And one of our first forays in the Red Zone recently with the international staff we found a group of 4,000 IDPs completely destitute. That's a few miles away from the Green Zone. So we still have dire needs very close to the center of decision making in Baghdad.

Our third concern is to lay the grounds for the return of refugees who are in Syria, Jordan, and other neighboring countries. We've had a few returns take place in the past years. They have gone down this year. Though, in general, we can report positively that returnees have faced no difficulties with the Iraqi army. I think that's a very good sign. And in general the complaints related to protection of returnees have also gone down, another good sign. What is a more negative sign is that more than 30 percent of those who return cannot get to the place where they had initially intended to return so there are still tremendous limitations there. And 60 percent of those who have returned tell us that it was a bad decision, that if they had known they would have stayed back. So there is still some hesitation. And jobs have been raised I think by everybody as the main concern. In our own estimate, barely 10 percent of those who return manage to get back into some sort of earning and that's a tremendous limitation. We see that as a worrying sign because the levels of assistance in neighboring countries for refugees are still catching up with the needs. I think we've consolidated our program, but we are still behind the needs. As a result we fear that some of the reasons for return will be a push factor because of these needs. Rather, the reason for return should be a pull factor, I should return because there is security, because I will find a job, because the government will be able to take care of me, and not because my condition is becoming worse in these other countries. So we are trying to argue

with states now that we need more support to try to progressively work out our extension inside Iraq but that does not mean coming to the reduction of support for refugees.

It's not always very well interpreted either by neighboring countries or by the government of Iraq. We think we would want to hold onto refugees. This is not true. We want them to come back and not to have a destabilizing effect in Iraq. And if too many people are coming back too quickly, I think given all what we've heard, I think it could have a destabilizing effect. So we will have to keep on working on these two aspects.

The High Commissioner has very recently requested Minister Zabari to try to reorganize the way the Ministry of Displacement and Migration looks at the assistance it gives to IDPs and returnees. Right now though the government has made at the top-level the right decision even for example on what is compensation for housing, et cetera, this does not necessarily translate in an efficient response and we see that more than 50 percent of the returnees eventually don't get anything. So there is still a tremendous gap between the will which is expressed at the top level and what happens in the field.

What the High Commissioner is trying to ask the government is to set up, and we're prepared to help them with that, what he calls, I'll have to catch his exact sentence, is a one-counter-does-it-all desk, where when people show up they can do everything they need to in one spot. They can be registered in the public distribution system, compensated for their house, establish restitution, or enroll their children to school. Then level of assistance the government has to give them depending on the level of restitution will be decided, rather than have them run after 10 different offices to try to reorganize their lives. So this is something we are trying to set up now with the government.

The challenge will be for us how to rebuild confidence with communities. Let's not forget that the U.N. in Iraq is still not seen by people. We've been locked in Baghdad for the past few years. We have a past where we are associated with sanctions, which is not something very positive. And I think what we need now is to get back to communities and show them that we can deliver the goods. We have started for example in Diyala and in Sadr City the reconstruction of houses to try to work with the people who have immediate needs and to help them through national NGOs. But these NGOs do not advertise very publicly that they work for the U.N. we are still not so sure they can do that. And in order to reestablish confidence you have to appear yourself at one point and you have to tread carefully between giving up some of the security environment which we still require to work. When we go out to the Red Zone we still go with U.S. protection -- as the U.S. redeploys it's eventually going to be with Iraqi army protection. However, ideally we have to be able to move without anyone. And how do we progressively move independently without taking risks is going to be a very fine game we have to play in the coming months.

I would like to mention that we are not the only humanitarian agency. I see that Alan Jury from the World Food Programme (WFP) is here and I hope he will be able to comment on what WFP might be doing for Iraqis in the discussion. Thank you very much.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you, and thanks to all of you, both for your comments and for your discipline. We have time now for questions. We have a couple of people with microphones will be ready to respond. Please if you can stand and introduce yourselves both with your name and organization. Let's start over here.

SPEAKER: My name is Demitri -- and I have a question to all of you. Is Iraq right now better than before the invasion?

MS. FERRIS: Who would like to begin? Maybe we'll start with you, Travis, and we'll just have a yes or no.

AMBASSADOR CLARKE: I'll volunteer.

MS. FERRIS: Go ahead.

AMBASSADOR CLARKE: I don't mean to steal. I think that answer can only be given by Iraqis and since none of us are Iraqis, it would be rather presumptuous for us to give you a straight answer. But my impression when I left Iraq was that there were some people felt it was inevitably better and thought that it was worse.

MS. FERRIS: Does anybody else want to jump on that?

MR. TORBAY: I can address this since I spent a few weeks in Iraq before the war and I went there right after the war and I'm a frequent flier and visitor to Iraq. I guess every 3 months I go there. There are certain things that are definitely better. There's no doubt about it. When I was there before the war, as you well know, there were absolutely liberties. People could not say what's on their mind. They had absolutely no one to trust, they wouldn't even dare to confide in their brothers or sisters or cousins because of the fear of repercussions about what's going on with the government. Not everybody had opportunities. Opportunities were limited to a certain group of people. This has improved. Security, no. Obviously under Saddam there was a lot of security, at least general security, not individual security because your individual security would depend on what you do and your alliances and allegiances.

Some of the basic services are better, some are not. Electricity is definitely not better. Water for example and sanitation in the south is much better. Again if you look at the south it's much better after than it was before. The center is not. The Kurdish area, they've been doing very well for a number of years. So it's really difficult to generalize across the board, but there in certain aspects Iraq is much better than before.

SPEAKER: A brief follow-up?

MS. FERRIS: Very briefly because we do have a number of others.

SPEAKER: Yes, very brief. Why are there so many refugees from Iraq right now if it's, as I understand your answer, very good? Why are people fleeing from Iraq?

MR. TORBAY: I think you're asking me as well. One of the things I mentioned that's not better is security which was the central factor in a lot of people leaving Iraq, their personal security, in addition to the sectarian fighting that took place after the bombing of the mosque and some others, and that was the main reason. Now they are waiting for things to improve. They want to make sure that they can go back to their houses. They want to make sure that some of the essential services are being delivered especially in the central region, as well as their security, and that's the main thing. And as I mentioned, security is not better than it was before.

MS. FERRIS: Michel, do you want to comment on the refugee question?

MR. GABAUDAN: Just perhaps one comment on the refugees. Let's not forget that among the refugees there is a certain percentage, we're not quite sure but maybe 20 percent or 25 percent who had left in the times of Saddam. There was very little movement of refugees outside of the Iraq between 2003 and 2006. Actually we were repatriating. I think we repatriated about 400,000 refugees during 2003 and 2006 and it's the sectarian violence in 2006 that led to the massive movements that we've seen after. So now what we need and I think it's in the process is to rebuild confidence and trust and that doesn't happen overnight. So I think we need to be patient with that. But the movement of refugees, the number of refugees we talk about, is not 2 million refugees produced by 2003. It hasn't worked like that.

MS. FERRIS: Are there other questions?

SPEAKER: My name is -- I want to thank all of you for your comments today. I'm a graduate of Georgetown University. I'm a Iraqi-American. I've lost eight people in my family since 2003 so this has had a very personal and emotional toll on myself and my family. A lot of my cousins now are refugees in Syria or in Jordan. What I see is that a lot of these people who have been affected have been the youth and the future generation of Iraq and the future of Iraq is very much dependent on these youth. You were talking about civilian assistance programs for agriculture and for roads and toll roads and all of these things, but I didn't really hear anything about education. And I feel that education is the most important thing because Iraqis are very well educated people and anyone who knows the recent history, the modern history of Iraq knows that amongst most of the region, Iraqis have the best educational system, the best institutions. People came from across the region to study, become doctors and what not in Iraq. Now we have a brain drain. There's a brain drain in Iraq so what are we going to do about the doctors that were either killed or that are living or escaping through the E.U. trying to come into the U.S. or whatever it is they're doing? And how are we going to build -- so my question is, are there civilian assistance programs that work with education and how are we going to fill this gap and how are we going to work with the future youth of Iraq so that they are the ones who will also be able to start taking initiative in their country? Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Education? Jeanne?

MS. PRYOR: Excellent point, and one near and dear to my heart, actually. I'm a big believer in education programs in these kinds of environments. USAID did start off with an education program in 2003 and 2004. We worked with the U.N. to kind of jump-start the school system

again. We also have a university linkages program with universities in this country and Iraqi universities because you're right, they're well known. However, we were unable to secure resources to continue those programs so we were never able to address the systemic issues of education in Iraq. All we could do was a Band-Aid approach basically. And unless we get more resources, we're stuck. We really can't engage in the education sector.

As part of the stock-taking exercise, we are looking at education. We want to be in a position that in the event that the new administration or the Congress says what do you think, we'd like to be able to put some good ideas on the table about where Iraqis want to take education and where they think that our assistance would be best placed, but it's all going to be contingent upon resources.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you. Let's take some questions in the back. Adriana, perhaps right here.

MS. BEARDEN: This is actually a follow-up question to that. My name is Barbara Bearden and I'm a master's graduate from A.U. With youth, I've worked in Kosovo in the post-conflict kind of area during the reconstruction there and one of the largest problems that we had with youth and with people who had experienced the genocide there was psychosocial services and actually healing what had been a trauma for a lot of the kids. There has been rampant drug use and problems with unemployment due to a whole host of issues. So are there any kinds of initiatives going on to fix that?

MS. PRYOR: Again, the same challenge. Initially we started working in the health sector, could not secure the resources to continue it. I know the health attaché at the embassy, this is his area of expertise and he's been very, very interested in these issues, but absent resources our hands are tied.

MS. FERRIS: Jeanne, let me ask you this. Whenever you talk about civilian assistance in Iraq it always come up that the Iraqi government is not a poor government.

MS. PRYOR: Right.

MS. FERRIS: There are billions of dollars. Why isn't the Iraqi government providing psychosocial support programs and education?

MS. PRYOR: It gets back to the ability to know how to execute your budget. We've radically altered their system. They had a centralized system not for the benefit of the Iraqi people, and instead we've come in and we put a new one in place, saying here's how you do a procurement based on international standards that will be open and transparent and not corrupt. Here is how you do a budget planning process. It's effectively starting over in terms of governance and it takes a while to acquire those skills in the critical mass in the government so that you can really begin to provide those kinds of services.

MS. FERRIS: Rabih?

MR. TORBAY: Can I add something on the psychosocial and mental health? There is a little bit being done, and even the Iraqi government now is seeing this as a problem. They've actually sent a delegation of mental-health professionals here to the U.S. to work on the continuing medical education and we are doing the same thing in Iraq as well as in the region with the Iraqi refugees. It's still a very small program. You have to understand also in the Middle East that mental health is not a very popular subject so trying to get people to look at that is groundbreaking as well. But the Iraqi government and the international community is looking at that and they've started to address some of those issues, but I fully agree with you that it is a major, major issue in Iraq as well as with the refugees.

MS. FERRIS: Ambassador Clarke, and then Travis.

AMBASSADOR CLARKE: At the risk if stating the obvious, the capacity of Iraq to pay for things is enormous and the issue is what element can we bring to the development process that is not available already in Iraq. I think we will have for some years to come if we are to be successful technical assistance programs for upgrading the quality of let us say education and health care, but we are already at the point where we need to have the money flowing from Iraqi sources through the Iraqi budget and the provincial reconstruction teams, every one of them has people who work specifically on the issue of budget construction and budget execution.

MS. FERRIS: Travis, did you want to comment on this before I move on?

MR. GARTNER: Yes. I just wanted to go back to this program, this concept of stabilization. I shouldn't say our program, USAID's program of stabilization and the approach. Talking about youth and they're the future of Iraq, I agree with you 100 percent, and the concern about resources, the beauty of this stabilization program, its flexibility, its approach, was that there actually are doctors out there who are very well trained as you said, very well educated. We would work with them on simple programs, produce leaflets, and I'm talking about the Iraqis that you're referring to that are well educated that did stay actually and doctors and organize these youth programs, conflict mitigation, actually bringing together Shi’a out into Fallujah to have a soccer match and then having them sit down and talk with the doctor, which builds his confidence and his capacity because he's organizing it and he's using the community leaders to bring these youth together and to talk about their problems.

Now these are baby steps and it's hardly what the person in the back mentioned about psychosocial programs. It's not quite there. The civilian surge that I keep talking about, that's why we're here, to say that it's stable, it's sufficient enough for the military to leave, we can just cancel all these community stabilization programs and we'll do psychosocial programs when we get resources, when we get the people together, but in the mean time the youth are the ones who are suffering and who have nothing to do and aren't being engaged.

In Samarra, we all know what happened in Samarra, the Al-Askari mosque. We brought Shi’a and not just youth but adults and community leaders up to the shrine to engage with Sunni youth to have a massive soccer championship and festivities and they handed out leaflets talking about the future, about education, using the internet. It was amazing, and the military members

of the PRT said how did you do this? How was that possible? We did it through the Iraqis that you're talking about, the youth that want to do these programs.

And I want to add that another reason we can do these programs is because I lived in the city of Ramadi. I lived in the community where people had access to me, so that's a very important component where I think one of the challenges of provincial reconstruction and I think even the members of the PRT that I worked with also would agree with me, that they're on a forward operations base. They're moving around in Humvees. They're being escorted by the military. They're not necessarily distinguished from or viewed as separate from the military, and I think our ability to have access and knowledge of the Iraqis and knowledge of their needs and understanding gave us an advantage. So I'm going to continue to argue for the civilian surge that includes more funding for programs that are actually on the ground resources are available.

MS. FERRIS: Other questions?

MR. KUBBA: My name is Laith Kubba. I run the Middle East Program at the National Endowment for Democracy, but I also served as the prime minister's office of the Iraqi government in 2005. I can tell you out of my experience there that at least at that time the programs that were delivered, on paper they looked great, they sound great, but just looking closely at them in reality they materialized very little. Maybe at that time the conditions were hard and there were a combination of reasons why this happened.

My concern is currently now what we are not spelling out is for these programs to become effective I think you need to look closer at what type of governance there is in Iraq not in political terms, but for example the level of corruption. Without that and without having a functional clean government there, I think a lot of programs will be delivered with little effect.

Maybe one needs a more intelligent civilian surge there where Washington and international organizations and USAID need not work under the pressure of literally delivering these irrespective of burning money more or less because it has to be done for political reasons, but really turning it into what becomes effective even if it means delaying some of that goodwill and those programs. And as I said, I do welcome your comment on seeing the reality in Iraq and what modifications that can be done at this end to make sure that the money is more effective.

MS. FERRIS: Why don't we have a response and then perhaps we'll start to group questions? Would anybody like to respond to the question of governance and corruption? Ambassador?

AMBASSADOR CLARKE: I don't think it is possible for foreign advisers in any country in the world to prevent corruption. It's a process that seems to spring up everywhere including right here in this city. I do think however that one of the arguments for provincial-level support in Iraq and not funneling all our efforts through the center is that by working on a daily basis at the provincial level and assisting with the budgets and budgetary execution there are additional eyes on where the money is going and whether it's actually resulting in something, and this has an inhibiting effect, I would say, if not a preventative effect on corruption.

MS. FERRIS: General?

BRIG. GEN. REIST: A couple of thoughts on that. I think you have to be careful of who you put your arm around. Just a perception. It's very tribal over there I think as everyone knows. When you embrace one, you automatically distance yourself from another. I think that's human nature. I think we need to be seen more as a viceroy type function as opposed to leading and imposing an American system or value on anyone in the world.

We're seen as arrogant as Americans. Some might disagree with that, but most of the people I've met in the world, as a collective group we are, as individuals we're very well accepted. But that doesn't come across well when we come in and let me tell you how we do it our country. We got it right, you got it wrong.

MS. PRYOR: There are a couple of different factors that come into play in this issue. In 2005 the U.S. Government Foreign Assistance Program in Iraq which was much bigger than USAID at that point in time, USAID was about a quarter of the assistance at that point, was heavily concentrated on large-scale infrastructure and you can have a whole panel on whether or not large-scale infrastructure is the way to go in a reconstruction environment or not or if it was effective or not. There was a very, very different program at that point in time. Two other things played too in 2005. No one quite expected the level of insecurity and so we were a little unprepared for that at the time. We couldn't get out and monitor our projects like we would elsewhere in the world. So as a result we had to come up with an assortment of different ways of doing monitoring so that we can make sure that these activities are happening on the ground. Provincial reconstruction teams had been significant in helping us to do that. Now we have staff out there in each of the provinces who can get out and take a look. And working closely with the military what we would do is if you're going down this way, can you take a look at this GPS coordinate and make sure that this is happening? So again the unity of effort is important in these kinds of environments to help us in terms of monitoring.

We also set up a project whose purpose is to monitor. It is overwhelmingly staffed by Iraqis who go out, we give them a list, and ask them to please check and make sure this has happened, and so now we have a much more rigorous process of monitoring. And because it's Iraqis there's a real stake. They want to see that these projects are happening as well.

Another factor involved is because of the insecurity a lot of aid projects are under the radar screen. You won't see them easily. For example, if someone is going through a USAID training, it's not like they have a stamp on their head saying I went to USAID training. You just see them do their work. Anything that was a structure of any kind, other countries in the world we would put a USAID logo. Not in Iraq because it would jeopardize the lives of those who are working there and those who are benefiting from that particular project. So a lot of assistance that USAID has done does not get recognized as such. Often times it's passed off as an Iraqi project from an Iraqi NGO for security reasons.

MR. GARTNER: Very quickly, I appreciate that you make the point that a lot of what we're doing out there is under the radar screen because in fact there are a lot of good things going on in

Iraq. It's very frustrating that all -- and to be associated with that program -- I come back to the States and people say you're working in Iraq. It's all corruption. In fact, there are some very good programs and projects going on out there and I would respectfully disagree with the gentleman that Iraq is tribal. I think there's parts of Iraq that are tribal, but in fact we didn't have such a problem working with Iraqis and I'm glad to put my arm around many of them and have full faith and confidence and trust.

BRIG. GEN. REIST: I speak of only Anbar.

MS. FERRIS: Here and then here. Let's take them together.

MR. JURY: As Michel said I'm Allan Jury, the Director of the World Food Programme office here in DC. I think food security and food assistance has illustrated over the years many of these challenges. That's where we've been involved and we've been involved since really before the war and doing the war. The food security system is built around the national system, the public distribution system which existed before and in a sense international assistance has gone up and down and its characters change as the capacity of that distribution system has changed. Right after the war, the system almost completely collapsed. WFP was pretty much doing all the procurement and we had a civilian surge. We were doing an awful lot in Iraq. It was like one-third of our total volume program and we had a huge billion-dollar program from the U.S. to run that.

The public distribution system now is for the most part functioning but it misses a lot of vulnerable groups and so our program now is heavily focused on internally displaced persons who are outside of their governance and the registration and implementation systems are not very good at picking them up when they're not in their home community. I think the security issue that Michel addressed is really critical for the U.N. it's a special problem and we're trying to address it, the UNHCR, WFP, and some of the more operational agencies not just in Iraq but elsewhere. We have a U.N. system that's too oriented toward bunker mentality, stay in the capital, and it victimizes very honestly those of us like UNHCR and WFP and to some extent UNICEF who want to get out because the system doesn't really manage the risks versus what the program does. It's just like it's all one sided risk and we're working on that collectively. We're having some success.

I think what we see now as we look at the civilian surge in terms of the food security sector is that first, there have been real improvements. We have been able to do comprehensive food security and vulnerability assessments and the number of acutely vulnerable people has decreased particularly in the last year or so. But as you go into the development phase, the traditional view will be food assistance type programs, that's relief, but let's remember that in every society in the world there are safety net social protection systems, we still have food stamps in the United States of America, it's a different system and I think that's the big challenge. We need to see that the food security system is going to be moving toward adapting the national system to be the most effective safety net possible for the remaining vulnerable groups if we achieve some of these successes in employment. We're not in a situation of feed the whole country, but we need to avoid a situation where we say relief is over and we don't need to

develop safety net systems that cope with those people who are still vulnerable or who are still unemployed. And certainly as we look toward the future and the food security role in any kind of civilian part of the U.N., it's going to be very much working with the Iraqi government to transform the public distribution system to more of a safety net system than a kind of general food distribution system. It's going to be a challenge but I think it's going to be the key in the long term of at least what the U.N. can do in terms of the transition from relief to recovery and development in the food sector where we work.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you. Let's take the gentleman back here.

MR. STACEY: Jeff Stacey from SCRS at the State Department. Another really terrific panel by Brookings and I think the work that your organizations have done is extremely vital and indeed the work that you as individuals have done I think the sum total of what your organizations and all the others involved have done is really truly astonishing, and I mean that sincerely despite what I'm about to ask. A lot of the advances that you speak of are real. Some of them have stopped short. Others are already being reversed. Al-Maliki and others in the Iraqi government are not sharing power or resources. If we think about the flashpoints of Mosul and Kirkuk in particular, we could be talking about the entire unraveling of all of it in one way. The provincial elections that we speak of, if they go a certain way more likely than not, Ninewah will be experiencing a whole series of explosions, both literal and figurative. If we put all that to the side, posit that none of that will go awry and we think just about the drawdown that's coming and we assume that it takes 24 months to do, the question I have is what are each of your organizations doing in terms of contingency planning for the bad scenarios? If we think about a drawdown south from Diyala and east to Baghdad from Anbar, say we're 18 months into this process and bloodshed erupts because as we all know, the Iraqi forces are not truly standing up and we can hope that in 18 months they will be, but some of us might not be betting on it, if bloodletting ensues, what sort of plans do your organizations have for that kind of scenario? I may be Chicago born, but I'm really not a marching optimist anymore. It may be a personal defect, but I look forward to what each of you have to say. Thanks.

MS. FERRIS: Thanks. Why don't we take one more question to give you guys time to think about how to answer that question?

MR. STANISICH: I'm Michael Stanisich with the International Organization for Migration. Just a couple of quick comments and then a couple of big questions. A comment related to psychosocial services. There were 90 psychiatrists prior to the war in Iraq. In 2005 there were less than 10, just to give you an understanding of the cultural significance of psychosocial services not only in Iraq but in the region. Secondly, one thing about the Iraqi-led programming that is very good, but this isn't something that we strategized or tactically decided we would do, we backed into this as a result of the insecure environment, donors don't generally like to have nationals lead programming and this was no different in Iraq. Something that wasn't touched upon that I'd ask you to address is the fact that there's been ethnoreligious and tribal cleansing take place throughout Iraq. Governorates have been essentially quarantined by their provincial leaders. And what do you suppose is going to happen as a result? When is the reconciliation going to take place? Finally, most importantly in my opinion, property issues. This wasn't

addressed. Jobs are good, but unless we know who's living where, we don't know what's going to happen.

MS. FERRIS: Let's stop and give you a chance to respond really to several questions. One on contingency planning, one on reconciliation, sectarian and other cleansing that's gone on. And third, if you'd like to comment on property issues. Who would like to begin? Travis, we'll start with you and then we'll come to the ambassador.

MR. GARTNER: Just on this gentleman's question about contingency planning, that's the responsibility of USAID, but I can say with USAID here that I don't think anybody is better positioned than we are to [inaudible] essentially when we have our funding for FY 2009 we looked at from Diyala, Bakuba, and drew a line on up into Mosul as the most dangerous areas or those that have the potential to go the wrong way or reverse gains that we've made in terms of the military surge as well as stabilization. So the funding allocations are there and those are priority cities.

Unlike any other organization because we have all the staff on the ground, we have in each one of these programs 100 to 150 Iraqis on the ground. As I said in my opening remarks, we transitioned toward longer-term developement away from the short-term quick impact activities that support perhaps a surge operation or Iraqi security operation. We can easily move back to that. We can also with additional funding continue to expand beyond just a few neighborhoods within those cities to even some of the rural areas and actually it's not just urban problems that we're confronted with over there. The insurgents are moving into rural areas and then coming and doing attacks in urban centers and then moving back. So just stabilizing a city won't be enough. Contingency planning is part of what USAID has to come up with and I'm sure the provincial reconstruction teams are discussing this right now and USAID would be a major player in that.

MS. PRYOR: USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance has substantial resources available for Iraq and they have an outstanding network of implementing partners who have been there for years and know their communities well so that there is an infrastructure in place that can be mobilized in the event that there is some kind of humanitarian emergency that happens. We've seen that capacity kick in on a small-scale level in the event that there is for example a bombing in a city how rapidly are the teams there able to mobilize to be able to respond. So we do have that capacity on the ground.

MS. FERRIS: Other comments? What if it's more than just a bomb in a city, but it's a collapse and resurgence of widespread warfare? Are you planning for that?

AMBASSADOR CLARKE: Let me just point out that I was in Iraq in 2007 and the level of violence peaked and then began to subside after I left. I should have left sooner. We were operating teams with hundreds of people with daily contact in some parts of the country and other teams whose best contacts were over the telephone because they couldn't go to meet with the people that they needed to see. So the provincial reconstruction teams can operate in quite different environments and I would argue that the planning for what do you draw down first and

what do you reduce in the event the security situation becomes less permissive, that's something that has to be done on province-by-province basis.

MR. TORBAY: Just one more thing on contingency planning. I think anybody working in Iraq, if they do not have 200 contingency plans they shouldn't be in Iraq to start with because the situation is so fluid that it changes every day. For us, we're an emergency response agency and that's what we do for a living. Of course we do development as well. We're one of many partners. But also at the same time [inaudible] relying heavily on us. What we've been doing over the past couple of years is work with the provincial governments on strengthening their avenues to respond to some of those emergencies because NGOs are not going to be there forever, hopefully not, and we work with the government of Karbala, with Najaf, contingency plans for mass displacement especially there because of the hajj that goes there, and this is what we need to emphasize. We have to go sooner or later and we have to work with the Iraqis, but also at the same time we've been putting a lot of focus on USAID and the U.S. government. There are a lot of other donors out there that we're engaging and we need to engage. You never put all of your eggs in one basket and we shouldn't be doing that. And this is up to us as well to try to push other donors to actually chip in.

MS. FERRIS: General Reist?

BRIG. GEN. REIST: Sir, your question on the contingency, I think it's going to be very delicate for whether U.S. reengagement or any sort of NATO across the world or what do we expect the Iraqi security forces to do? Men far smarter than I will make that call, but you've all heard the analogy of holding the back of your child's bike when you teach him to ride, they're going to fall and they're going to scrape their knee. When do you help your kid up on the bike or when do you say get back up on your bike and ride, I'm not always going to be there?

On the issue of property rights, as explained to me by Iraqis, this is not the U.S. mindset at all. Deeded property like when we buy a house here in the United States, that's not it. It's tied to some ancient records within a centralized government. It's tied to sheikh ownership of land and property in Anbar. I don't know how the other provinces do it. But that was explained to me by both a Sunni and a Shia who live in Anbar, so it was agreed upon that, yes, this is the way. I think we've got to watch how we view this through the lens of an American looking at this problem.

MS. FERRIS: Other questions?

SPEAKER: My name is -- I'm an Iraqi student currently at Georgetown doing a master's. Given the substantial improvement in security I think that has been captured so well in Brookings' Iraq index reports and given both the wealth of the Iraqi government but also the state of the U.S. economy as well as the European economies, is it not time that we encourage more U.S. business, more European business, to go in and invest in Iraq that has the advantages of being more long term, that has the advantages of profiting Iraqis in terms of expertise, but also has the added advantage of profiting the American economy, the British economy, the European economies?

MS. FERRIS: Thanks.

BRIG. GEN. REIST: Mr. Paul Brinkley, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense has an organization that was over there. He was actively trying to engage the U.S. corporations to look at investing and seeing who will be the highest profit, take this from a market-driven economy like businessmen do here in the U.S. We were also, collectively both Mr. Brinkley and us working with the tribes looking at getting wealthy sheikhs to reinvest but for them it's market driven also. When their investment is secure, and I don't mean security as physical security, secure that they won't lose it, that's when they'll come back.

MS. FERRIS: Let's take a couple more over here, this gentleman and then in the back.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I think it's a very interesting panel. My name is -- I'm an Iraqi Kurd. I was here in 2006 and I was on a Fulbright scholarship. Now I'm back to do more graduate schooling. On the way here I was talking to a friend about the number of events on Iraq that are offered by the think tanks and how they have shrank since 2006 and given the number of turnout as well as the quantity of the events on Iraq, I think there is an alarm that there is a disengagement happening in terms of American disengagement from Iraq. And I think it's inevitable given the challenges ahead for this country, but I think our fates are now tied so strongly that it will be difficult to untie them. And I think there is a shift of mindset for the future and for the civilian involvement. So far the U.S. civilian engagement in Iraq has been on an emergency spending mindset. What I would like to suggest is to shift that mindset into an investment and institutionalization mindset rather than spending money, throwing money at problems and this is what we can do now, I think we should be on the mindset of investing the money in institutions that will stay beyond when the American military and civilians withdraw. I'll give two examples from my personal experience. One is actually the Fulbright program which is an excellent outcome of this war of the Operation Iraqi Freedom and liberation. And some of us who have seen the benefits of this operation are happy about it, others who have seen the negative aspects of it are obviously not as happy.

But I am a Fulbright scholar and I have benefited from that, but it's been a very good activity. What's the institution that will nurture me? What's next now that I got the Fulbright? What's next for America and what's next for Iraq? I went back. No one said hi. Me and my friends, we went home and many of our friends and relatives actually said boo, you're so stupid. You came back because there isn't anything, there isn't an institution [inaudible] not American to actually host us and make benefit of us. It's a huge investment that America is spending on us but there isn't really a utilization process. There isn't really an institution that brings us together and makes sure that we are being used. And this is what I mean by the investors' mindset.

The other example is I was working for many of the American projects and one of them is the Local Governance Capacity Building Program which is a USAID project implemented by RTI. It's great. We have been doing a lot of good work. But the money was cut off and so were the activities in the programs. Where is the institute, the public administration institute, that we should have left behind once the American money was cut so someone else, a European donor, or an Iraqi probably one barrel of oil a day for that institution that will continue the legacy? So I

think the way forward is to invest in institutions and not just activities and to have this investors' mindset, one dollar we spend should be multiplied in the future and not just putting it on a report and filing it back to Washington, D.C. Thank you.

MS. PRYOR: If I could respond. Yes, I agree. That's why capacity building has been such a hallmark of the civilian surge. It's that recognition that we could build all the power plants we want, but unless we have the capacity in place to run them, it's wasted money. Unfortunately, that's not something that turns around overnight. USAID spends decades working in countries trying to build that kind of capacity to be able to fully take it over. We succeed here and there, but it's going to take some time, and a lot is going to depend upon the resources that are available.

What I've seen as a gap in terms of assistance programs in addition to health and education, I don't think there are enough resources that go into small and medium enterprises which is the key source of creating jobs so that when you do go back to Iraq you have something to go back to. So that's been a missing link as well. But then it's all contingent upon resources and it's going to take time. There is no quick solution on that front. But I totally agree that's where the resources need to go is building those institutions so that they will carry on after we leave.

MS. FERRIS: Let's go to Michel and then --

MR. GABAUDAN: Just to answer the question of our colleague from IOM which I did not answer. You raised two issues which are somehow linked. One is the partitioning which is taking place in Iraq, and then the question of compensation for housing, and of course they are linked. I think on the partitioning, if you look at the map of Baghdad today and 5 years ago, it gives you the answer. Very few areas are mixed now and they are basically consolidated with Sunni and Shia, et cetera. This is a question for Iraqis to sort out, how do they want the solution to be in the future. It's a political process in Iraq -- sort it out.

We are working on the housing compensation scheme because this is essential to allow people to come back. The system now is slowly taking shape. A year ago the government wouldn't hear about it. But we've been working with 40 Iraq lawyers to try to set up a scheme and of course the government of Iraq will have to fund it. So I think we can work on that and make sure there is a system that responds to the future distribution of the population. We cannot have opinions on how they should distribute themselves. This is for them to decide.

And on the contingency plan, yes, we all have plenty of contingency plans. One difficulty that would come up of course very clearly should your doomsday scenario take place is that there would be people trying to leave the country and the neighboring countries that have paid a high price and accepted a large number of people have recently strengthened their borders and if there is a new outflow what would be the capacity of the international community to convince them to let more people in? This would be a very tough negotiation, and of course if they don't let people in, what you would have is plenty of people sliding into a worse destitution than the one experienced by some of the IDPs right now. So this is the drama and all of us will have to try to

think what do we offer Syria, Jordan, and these other countries for them to keep on accepting people.

MS. FERRIS: The gentleman here in the back.

MR. CHEN: Chow Chen, freelance correspondent. I have one observation. The planning and coordination are very important in this civilian surge. Is there a person or office in charge of this civilian surge in terms of planning and coordination? Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Jeanne, do you want to answer that?

MS. PRYOR: In terms of structure, the NSC is basically the coordinator of all the agencies.

MS. FERRIS: The National Security Council?

MS. PRYOR: Yes. Right. They're the ones who plan the meetings and what not. And then in Baghdad it's the ambassador and the country team. So there is a structure in place for it and we coordinate ad nauseum. There is no lack of coordination. And the surge actually was a good example of good planning because we really did all come together to put together the strategy, whereas I think in the early days of Iraq as many people read, it was a bit more disconnected between agencies. So we're come a long way in terms of inner agency coordination and planning.

MS. FERRIS: Travis, and then we'll take a few more?

MR. GARTNER: I just wanted to add to that what we talked about earlier with the ambassador and Jeanne, that as the surge brought together inter-agency cooperation and we proved that we've all learned from it, but I think it's going to have to transform itself and adjust to the military drawdowns because these PRTs are dominated by military personnel and as they pull back and play a lesser role, which is what should happen, and the civilian agencies play a greater role and a leading role in the future operations whether it's traditional economic development, government capacity, the mindset change that you talked about for government's institutional capacity building, that has to come from civilian agencies and we need to see a greater role for them. So that's why we're here talking about a civilian surge.

MR. AMIN: My name is Radan Amin. I've working in humanitarian aid in Iraq since 1999. I have a question for the U.N. family and just a comment that during the work I had in Iraq the population in general, they know the U.N., but they find it difficult to recognize the NGOs. I can give you an example that there are some institutions that we provide supplies to every 2 weeks and always when I visit them they think that we are UNICEF. They thought that we are UNICEF. They cannot recognize the NGO. They just know the U.N. Everything is about the U.N. So the U.N. I believe has a good reputation in Iraq at least before 2003 and after 2003 I don't think there is anything changed. So my question is what's your indication as the U.N. family as to the level of security necessary for the agencies to be able to come back? And you mentioned that you are working through the NGOs of local NGOs because you shouldn't be recognized, you cannot use your logo for example on the supplies or the aid you provide. So my

question is what's your indication for that when you think you will be ready to put the UNHCR logo on the supplies and send it to the people directly instead of going through the NGOs or local NGOs and maybe the NGOs they will not be happy, but this is just a question to know what are your plans for that. Thanks.

MS. FERRIS: Is it okay if we take a couple more? There's a man in the back standing up.

MR. AHMED: My name is Adi Ahmed from Iraqi TV and my friend is a journalist from Iraq who just came days ago from Baghdad and he has a question about the coordination and cooperation between your agencies and the Iraqi government, because some Iraqis officials are complaining that the coordination and cooperation between your agencies and the Iraqi government is not quite good. For example there is a project about drilling water which is built by the U.S. military and when they hand it to the provisional council and those provinces, they don't have an Iraqi staff to run that project because it's been built and the provincial council in that province they don't have an idea about that project. So can you elaborate about that, please?

MS. FERRIS: Responses? We have the question about the UNHCR logo.

AMBASSADOR CLARKE: On the question of the coordination with the Iraqi government, that is the critical requirement for the team leader in each provincial reconstruction team to resolve. And to the extent that we are now in the position of encouraging Iraqis to use their own resources, they are managing growing amounts of the resources being spent. I think this is a problem that is more difficult perhaps at the national than at the provincial level.

MS. PRYOR: I think it was a bigger issue when we were doing infrastructure activities.

AMBASSADOR CLARKE: Yes.

MS. PRYOR: And there were a number of different U.S. government actors who were doing infrastructure activities. USAID has an approach, what we call asset transfer. As a matter of our policy and practice around the world we negotiate first with whoever is going to have to be responsible for it in the end. We usually put in place a memorandum of understanding saying here's what we're going to do, here's what you're going to do. That way it's clear what the roles and the responsibilities are. That hasn't always happened in Iraq, but on the USAID front that's a standard tool and we try to do that in Iraq.

MR. TORBAY: On the coordination I agree with you there is a lack of coordination, but also some of that coordination comes from within the Iraqi government. With the decentralization there is a disconnect between the central government and some of the provincial governments so what the central government might know they don't necessarily pass it on to the provincial government and it is causing problems as well.

A lot of us actually have tasked the ministries both on the central level as well as on the provincial level to avoid that, but if I tell you everything is great I'll be lying to you. There is a disconnect. We should also be doing a better job at that. And as Jeanne mentioned, one of the

major problems, and I think before 2006-2007 was much bigger because people were coming in with money, they built schools and the Ministry of Education doesn't know anything about it. They build hospitals and clinics and the Ministry of Health wouldn't necessarily know anything about it. I think now it's getting more systemized and everything, we're trying to work through all the different ministries. Again one of the problems we have is the communications within the ministries and central and provincial levels.

MS. FERRIS: Michel?

MR. GABAUDAN: We're ready to go. The problem is when can we move freely inside Iraq? That I cannot tell you. We will be stretching the security impositions we have from the U.N. slowly, as Allan said, to try to reach people more and more, but we have to be cautious as we do it because we don't want to have one reversal and then the whole thing gets set back for years. Right now the Iraqi staff works for us. They spend 2 hours a day in checkpoints just to get in the Green Zone. So in terms of efficiency we're not very efficient and we recognize that. But I think we'll just be able to stretch of all these impositions slowly. I think it's not one day when we say this day we can start doing that. We all get information on what's happening in terms of security from different sources. We try to analyze that and to take the best advantage of it. But I can't tell you which day it's going to work.

MR. AMIN: [inaudible] between you and the NGOs? Why are the NGOs able to do that? Why is the U.N. not able while they have a good reputation, I can even say better than the NGOs because they are familiar to the Iraqi population? Why are the NGOs able to do that, to be more in contact with the population while the U.N. cannot? That was mainly the question.

MR. GABAUDAN: As you know, the U.N. is a bureaucracy. After the 2003 bombing of the U.N. and the losses we've had, the system has imposed fairly strict guidelines on what are the security rules we have to observe, and we are divided within the U.N. family between the more development agencies and the more humanitarian ones. We want to move ahead faster, the others don't want, and it's a negotiation.

MS. FERRIS: Let's take just a couple more questions and then give you each a chance to say something in closing or to respond to them. Back in the back. Anybody else?

MR. TURNER: First of all, thank you for your service on Iraq. My name is Jim Turner. I work in the Office of Iraq in the Department of State. I just wanted to make one or two comments because some of the speakers and some of the commentators expressed great concern that we were just going to walk away from Iraq a la our experience in Afghanistan. I think we learned from that experience and at this point there doesn't seem to be any intention by the past administration or the current administration to walk away. Iraq and the amount of resources we devoted to Iraq is very unique and I don't think that situation will remain the same. And Jeanne you said I think six or eight times that it all comes down to a matter of resources, and that's really all about money isn't it? So it gets back to the fact that we have an agreement, we have an SFA, that will guide our relationship with the Iraqis. And Secretary Clinton in her testimony said that she would seek to have a robust fulfillment of that agreement much of which deals with

education, capacity development, and professional exchanges, but she didn't put a dollar figure on that.

At this point, we don't know whether the new administration wants to increase the amount of resources we have or decrease. But it's not just the new administration, it's the Congress and the big question there is how much do they want to devote toward Iraq. So that's one issue.

A second issue is there does seem to be a shift away from Iraq toward Afghanistan at a time as others have mentioned that the U.S. economy and other economies have received some difficulties and so the willingness to devote increased resources may not be there. And in Congress you get a lot of questions about how much is enough, what should we be doing, not that we'll stop whatever we're doing, but what does a normal assistance relationship consist of. And this gets back to your point about smart assistance, and I think that's really the key question, how do we configure our assistance program so that it uses whatever amount of resources we have the most effectively, and I think capacity development and professional and educational exchanges is probably one of the best ways that we can maximize our investment in Iraq. So I'd be interested in your comments about where you think our smart assistance could be going. What would be the best use of our money at this point?

MS. FERRIS: Thank you. Would you like to respond to that and anything else you'd like to say, a question that hasn't been asked that you are prepared to answer? Travis?

MR. GARTNER: I thought Jeanne might want to answer where she thought the priorities --

MS. FERRIS: Do you want to tell us?

MS. PRYOR: Be careful with that one because like I said we have a new boss and ultimately it's his decision. The areas that we're looking at, yes, continuing the work that we're doing in capacity development. As the gentleman pointed out, that's what's going to make everything last and work over the long term, so I do think that that's essential. And anything that supports job creation whether it's agriculture or access to credit or the economic policy reform environment. There's been a lot of talk about private-sector investment, and frankly, private-sector investment has the potential to dwarf anything that we contribute to Iraq with a lot fewer strings attached. But the private sector doesn't come in until the policy environment is supportive of them, and so continuing that work with the Iraqi government to dismantle a statist economy and make it one that will be supportive of private-sector growth and development. Education. I'm a big fan of education programs and that way you are creating a skilled labor force for the future so that you can generate new businesses and new jobs. So those are my biases and preferences that others higher up in the food chain may or may not agree with, but those are some of the sectors we're also taking a look at too to see is there a comparative advantage that we have, is there something that we can help the Iraqis do so that they can do more in that area, and that's part of the stock-taking exercise.

MS. FERRIS: Other closing comments, final thoughts?

MR. TORBAY: Just one thing since I guess I mentioned the word smart in my remarks. In addition to what Jeanne said, I think that there are a lot of investment opportunities in Iraq and people in the Middle East actually have realized that and they've started investing. We haven't yet here. I think something as simple as trying to embellish the image of Iraq, working with the media to tell some good stories about Iraq. A lot of good things have happened in Iraq but you don't see it anywhere on the news. All you see is the IEDs that go off here and there and the assassinations. I think that might encourage some people to really take a hard look at Iraq and see what are the potentials that that country has. Education, professional development, but also really, and I can't emphasize that enough, I think we've been traumatized over the past couple of years working very closely with the ministries, they have the will. They really don't know how to go about spending the money. They do not know how to go about prioritizing. Some of them have an idea but this is where I think most of the technical assistance should go because they are I think one of the few countries in the world that has a surplus now.

MS. FERRIS: General, Ambassador?

BRIG. GEN. REIST: Sir, your question from the State Department, I think we should help them as much as we can watch corruption. God knows we've got a lot of experience with that so we should be able to do that. Iraqis, they're tremendously gifted. They built what was there. We don't need to bring in engineers. I met folks who were just off the page on some of the things. Put yourself in their shoes. Watch the U.S. mindset that we try to imprint on them. Very dangerous I think. Thanks.

AMBASSADOR CLARKE: On the investment planning, since I'm retired I'm not speaking for the State Department, both the U.S. government and the Iraqi government apparently decided that privatization was not a good idea in Iraq during the time at least I was there in 2007. And so it still is in terms of large enterprises a statist as you put it, Jeanne, economy. Some day Iraq will have to face privatization, otherwise they are put in the awkward position of constantly defending their inefficient state-owned industries against foreign competition. In 2007 the most absurd situation developed. All over Iraq for obvious reasons there were vast amounts of scrap steel and in that year the price on the international market for scrap steel was quite good if I remember it correctly. Yet somehow the stuff all had to be collected as a governmental action because no one could get their minds around turning it over to the private sector which as far as I know collects steel very efficiently in a great many different countries. So there is a big psychological change that took place in Eastern Europe and to some extent in the former Soviet Union that has not yet come to Iraq to the best of my knowledge. But that I suspect will have to be in the hands of the Iraq government. I do not think we can look to the U.S. government to make or bring about shall I say or encourage every change that needs to be done in Iraq. This is something that will have to be accepted by the Iraqis.

MS. FERRIS: I want to thank all of you for coming out on a Friday afternoon to talk about this, and please join me in thanking our panelists.

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