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THE IRAN NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE  
AND INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT CAPABILITIES

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**Introduction and Moderator:**

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. POLLACK: This is a not for attribution off-the-record session. That way everyone around the table (and we've got some interesting characters around the table as you can all see), will hopefully be glad to share his or her piece of the puzzle regarding this NIE.

MR. PILLAR: Thanks, Ken, and hello everyone. There have been two waves of reaction and commentary to this estimate that the intelligence community released the week before last, the first of which reached a crescendo in the very first 24 or 36 hours after the release, the gist of which was that this was a major reversal of views and judgments on the part of the intelligence community. It was no such thing, and I find it hard to think of a better example of overplaying reported differences between one set of views and another set of views than the reportage in that first wave, major reversal, never seen anything like this before, intelligence community turning around its views, and so on.

One should review for a moment what did not change with regard to not just the reality of the Iranian nuclear issue but also what the intelligence community was saying about it, that Iran is continuing a uranium-enrichment program, which as the analysts would say, is the pacing element in determining when Tehran would have the capability to fabricate a nuclear weapon. And reflecting that, that the community's projected timetable for when that capability may materialize was essentially unchanged. They are still talking about the early to mid part of the next decade. That the Iranians claim that they are interested solely in a civilian energy program as the only purpose of their nuclear activities is, to put it bluntly, a lie based not only on the things that have been openly known for some time such as the past duplicity with the IAEA and the continued insistence on having the full nuclear fuel cycle, but also, as was highlighted by this most recent document, past clandestine activities to design a weapon. And finally, that whether Iran ever exercises its option

to develop a nuclear weapon will depend on a host of Iranian decisions yet to be taken in the future which in turn will depend on the Iranians' perceptions of a great number of factors: the costs, the risks, the threats, and the opportunities, that they face.

What did change? Evidently the community (and I stress the *evidently* since I have no inside information on this of course, as I have long since surrendered the badges and clearances) had new information acquired over the last couple of years on clandestine weapons design work--both that it had been going on, and that it reportedly had been suspended as of 2003, the one item that got the biggest headline, although there apparently was some disagreement within the community as to exactly how much of the previous work was suspended or now confident one should be that the whole set of work was suspended. Related to that, the community was injecting some additional agnosticism with regard to its view of just what the current Iranian state of mind is in thinking about developing weapons.

There were comparisons made with a previous intelligence estimate from 2005, and one of the things that should be pointed out about that previous estimate is that it made no judgment whatever one way or another about the status of a clandestine military weapons design program. It just did not. There was not sufficient information to make a judgment one way or another. So if the judgment about suspending that part of a program which got the headline in this newest document was a reversal of a previous judgment, one searches in vain for that previous judgment because it simply did not exist.

There has been a second wave of commentary, much better informed in my view, that has pointed out some of what I just pointed out, namely, what has not changed. There have been a number of excellent pieces, a Tom Friedman column that quoted Gary extensively (last week I think it was), and I would agree with basically everything that was in that piece that Gary said and that Friedman said. Henry Kissinger had an extended piece in the *Washington Post*

last week and with one exception that I will refer to in a moment, I pretty much agree with everything in that one, too, which was pretty critical of what the intelligence community has done here. But I think that first wave of reaction, which involved an overstatement of how much has changed, has clearly had a considerable effect on opinion here in the United States and abroad, and the outside-the-Beltway perception of a big change is, I am afraid, what is going to linger.

Given that there has been not a big fundamental change in the intelligence judgment, there is certainly no change in the fundamental policy questions which before two weeks ago and again now still merit continued attention and debate as to how to deal with this Iranian nuclear issue. Do we need more carrots, more sticks, or a better coordination of carrots and sticks? What about the question of engagement and dialogue with Iran? What about the question of what role, if any, threat of military forces should play? All those things are basically

still important questions and still unchanged with regard to the parameters of the debate, and that is to say they should be unchanged. Not to mention the question behind that of just how much difference an Iranian nuclear weapon, if it did materialize, would make to U.S. interests. Logically, the policy debate should not have changed.

The stories or issues where there is something new to say then (and I am going to just comment briefly on each of these) are: Number one, exactly what have been the effects, however illogical or unwarranted, that the release of this document did have? Number two, why did it have those effects? Number three, why the estimate writers would produce something that would have these effects? And number four, what are the lessons from all of this about what intelligence can and cannot do or should or should not do on these sorts of issues?

First of all, about the effects that reaction to the NIE has had. I think there are three issues here. One, that option that many people were



taking pains to say ought to be on the table--the threat of military force--is off the table. A number of people have made that comment and I would agree with that observation, at least for the time being. If we had something like an altercation or a military clash in the Persian Gulf tomorrow, then all bets would be off and it could be quickly put back on the table. Secondly, it has made the diplomatic task, which the Administration faces in trying to line up support for additional sanctions in New York, more difficult than it was going to be. It was going to be hard anyway with regard to selling it to the Russians and Chinese, but as we all saw, those two permanent members, especially the Chinese, wasted no time in making it clear that they were even less inclined to than they might have been before to support a new round of sanctions. Number three is the question of just how the Iranians would react, and I would just pose it as a question because there is a lot of expertise around the table that I think might profitably add to our discussion. Might the Iranians

be feeling less pressure now because of the first two effects, and therefore be inclined to press the envelope a bit more and a bit faster than they otherwise would, thus spinning a few more centrifuges more quickly and sooner than they might otherwise have, that sort of thing? I will just leave that as a question.

Next, why did the new document have these effects? I think it is basically an issue of presentation rather than substance, or certainly presentation more than substance, both in old estimates and in the new one. In that 2005 estimate that was referred to, I think one thing there was the unfortunate choice of the word "determined" as part of a judgment back then that attempted to describe the Iranian perspective with regard to their intentions on their nuclear program with weapons. What happens with these things, people get fixated on one word and they do not read the rest of the sentence--which is in this case was one of these sentences written by a committee after hours of negotiation which said they are

determined, but not currently, and they are not immovable, which is sort of another way of saying they are not really determined, and I think the estimate writers 2 years ago can be criticized for promulgating an oxymoronic sentence more than anything else. But even more so, the new estimate, the one released this year, was one in which the estimate writers structured their document in a way that invited an exaggerated view of how much had changed, and I think there were two things that did what invited this reaction--that first wave that I mentioned. One is to use the term "nuclear weapons program" to apply only to this clandestine weapons design and weaponization work and not to include the thing that we have all been worrying about and have been focusing on for so long--the uranium-enrichment program--even though that is, as I mentioned, the pacing element in determining when they would get a nuclear weapons capability should they choose to get it. They certainly did not have to use the terminology in that way.

The second thing they did is they added this matrix after their judgments of supposed key differences between the estimate two years ago and the new estimate, and I saw two problems with that. One is they were not just key differences, they were key similarities, particularly with regard to the timetable on Iranian ability to make a weapon. And secondly, some of what was compared in the matrices was apples and oranges, where you had on the left side a judgment about intentions, and on the right side a judgment about capabilities. Bear in mind what I pointed out before that the 2005 estimate made no judgment one way or another about the status of a clandestine military program. So if you were really going to have a logical matrix, you would have had an empty cell in the left-hand column. Just imagine for a moment if some of those judgments in the newest assessment had been rearranged, not changed, just rearranged, so that the lead sentence was something like, "We reaffirm our previous judgment that it will be the early to mid part of the next decade when Iran

would acquire the capability of making a nuclear weapon," and take it from there. The business about suspending the military program four years ago still would have gotten headlines, and it should have gotten headlines, but I do not think you would have had, even with just a rearrangement and not a change of judgments, this major reversal reaction that you did.

Next question is, why did the estimate writers construct it this way? I hasten to add, I have absolutely no direct information on this. I have had a grand total of one conversation with a serious person in one intelligence agency about this, but this was not someone who was directly involved in producing the estimate so what I have to say is based solely on my sense of how these things work grounded on previous experience. I should point out that in terms of putting out this estimate at all, and partly Ken's initial questions, there was a congressional request to produce such an NIE, so the answer is they were responding to a congressional question. As to whether to put an unclassified version, I think the director

of national intelligence and the White House really had little choice about this and I suspect there was some conversation between Admiral McConnell and Stephen Hadley to the effect that with something like this item about suspension of the military work four years ago, the chances that it would leak within the next several months if you did not have an unclassified version would be about 98 percent, and once that happened, if it happens several years from now, there would be even more of a furor directed at both the White House and the intelligence community, so better to get out an unclassified version despite the untoward effects that it has had on the politics and diplomacy.

Another point I would make in just how to think about this is do not assume that the estimate writers in constructing things the way they did were able to predict accurately just what the public reaction would be. I have made that point to some journalists and foreign diplomats I discussed this with and they do not believe that. The people who

wrote this should have anticipated the prediction. I would say they are smart people who write these things, but they are not journalists who write for the public regularly, they are not politicians, they are not public-relations people, and in my experience there have certainly been instances of public judgments or pronouncements the reaction to which surprised me, and I think I see some indication in this latest document that the estimate writers hoped and expected there would be a bit more of a balanced reaction. Look at that first sentence which is really just two sentences molded into one by virtue of a semicolon, it was the first half that got all the attention about the suspension of the military work, and then the second half was we still think they are at least maintaining the option to build a weapon or words to that effect. This first sentence or pair of sentences molded into one probably reflected about 16 hours of intense negotiations around the coordination table and I think it reflected an effort to achieve some kind of balance, hence the semicolon and two

sentences into one. So do not assume that the writers should not have been surprised or were not surprised by some of that first wave of reaction.

There is a perception that has become widespread among some of the commentators, even taken for granted in the Henry Kissinger piece that I cited as one example of this, that the people who wrote this estimate were intentionally trying to influence the policy debate, and in particular probably trying to get that military option off the table. I cannot rule that out, but I do not believe it is true for several reasons. One, the reason I just mentioned, do not assume that they could have predicted the exact reaction to what they wrote. Secondly, to try to influence the policy debate in line with what might have been personal policy predilections, or in this case fears of the use of military force on the part of intelligence officers, would be unprofessional and unethical, and I believe most of the people sitting around that coordination table share the same sense of professional ethics that I just expressed. Thirdly,



even if that were an intention, or the thought that entered the minds of the estimators, to try to write this in a way that would take the military option off the table, I think they would have been smart enough to realize it is a pretty blunt instrument with which to play that particular kind of game, and even those who might have been happy to see it in terms of their personal policy preferences to have the military instrument off the table, I doubt many of them would have been happy to see the diplomacy complicated the way it has been, and certainly I cannot imagine anyone in the U.S. government, inside or outside of the intelligence community, who would have wanted to see that other possibility I raised, that the Iranians might feel even less restrained in pushing forward farther and faster with their nuclear program.

I think the main reason this estimate was constructed the way it was, was I would say institutional defensiveness. It was partly about being seen to be independent of the Administration and that has been voiced a number of times, but I think

even more so, bending over backwards to show willingness to question previous judgments and not be bound by previous assumptions. How many times have you heard criticism of the intelligence community lately along that theme? They are stuck in a mindset, they do not change their minds, and that sort of thing.

Indeed, one of the most extraordinary things about this document was in the scope note before you get to the judgments. There is this bold-faced paragraph that says, "We are not assuming that Iran wants a nuclear weapon." I have never seen anything like that in an intelligence estimate. Usually, the scope note is used as the rest of this one was to point out what you are assuming to make your scope management, and in this case it says we are not assuming there is going to be a political revolution in Iran, we are basically taking the current political order for granted, otherwise it would be an intractable estimate, but there are clearly signs of considerable defensiveness there.

With this new document the intelligence community received some favorable press. There was a piece in the *Post* that I think Joby Warrick and Walter Pincus wrote that we have these wonderful new analytic procedures in which the intelligence officers are willing to say if they do not know something; there is nothing new about this. These were themes that Bob Gates, when he was running analysis at the CIA, was pounding into people 25 years ago. But it was good press.

I cannot rule out that it was at least thus in the backs of the minds of the estimators along the lines of the Kissinger piece that they might have been happy to see something like that military option taken off the table. Kissinger and some others, and I will quote from his piece, seem to take it for granted that it was the intention. He said, "I am extremely concerned about the tendency of the intelligence community to turn itself into a kind of check on instead of a part of the Executive Branch." He is raising a legitimate issue there as to whether the

intelligence community should be a check on policymakers as opposed to just part of the Executive Branch, but it is certainly not for the intelligence community itself to decide that question. And the only other comment I would make beyond that is that it is up to the Congress and the American people to decide the question of what role their intelligence community should play. If you look at a lot of the recriminations and the vilification in the whole Iraq weapons issue, much of it did implicitly assume that the intelligence community should be a check on the Executive Branch and not just part of it. There were key things, for example, the whole business about the Nigerian uranium supposed purchase, yellow cake purchase, where it was not enough that the community judged things correctly themselves, the question was how loudly did they scream and how hard did they kick when the policymakers wanted to still run with something, the whole idea of a check.

Finally, what are a few lessons out of all this? I would make three basic points. One lesson

is, this is another example of (and perhaps a particularly clear one but hardly unique) major disconnects between what intelligence says and the public reaction to it, or public perception of it. The main tendency here is one we have seen over and over: a tendency to greatly oversimplify in which the reading of an intelligence judgment is made into strictly binary form, it is 1 or it is 0, it is up or it is down, they are doing it or they do not do it, they have weapons or they do not have weapons, they are making weapons or they are not making weapons. All the nuance, all the complexity, and certainly something like the Iranian nuclear program is very complex, gets lost. That is going to continue to happen no matter what and we just have to take it as one of the givens of judgments being made public.

Secondly, assessments of a target as hard as foreign nuclear programs are such that the only thing you are ever going to get from the intelligence community is its best snapshot of what is going on and what seems to be the direction, and it is not as has

seem to have become the case a matter of things called national intelligence estimates that are etched in stone and some kind of authoritative pronouncement of what is a fact as opposed to a judgment. The community always has been and always will be faced with two huge challenges in trying to come up with that snapshot. One is the traditional one of secrecy, people, whether it is the Iranians or anyone else, or terrorist groups, keeping hidden what we would like to find out. The second thing is, and very important in this particular issue, the impossibility of predicting future events that are based on decisions yet to be made particularly when as in the case of the Iranian nuclear program those decisions will be affected in large part by things the United States itself does on the policy side. Thirdly, the last point and I will close with this, is that intelligence is not a substitute for or a determinant of the policy debate. There has been a long tendency, another unfortunate tendency, for intelligence judgments to be looked at some way of resolving a policy question when they

really are not and this goes back to arms-control issues during the Cold War era where despite intelligence officers' best efforts to remind people that all they do is monitor, they do not even verify, let alone provide an answer, to such questions as what should be the U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union, here too we still have all those very important policy questions still on the table about how to handle this Iranian nuclear issue and the previous intelligence judgments did not resolve those issues, and this latest one that came out two weeks ago does not resolve them either. I will stop there.

MR. POLLACK: Thanks, Paul. Gary?

MR. SAMORE: Thank you very much. Paul has done a really terrific job of dissecting the NIE which I completely agree with, so that will save me from having to repeat some of the things he said, and I will try to be brief. What I would like to focus on is the most important technical significance of the NIE as well as its implications for diplomatic efforts

to prevent or delay Iran from acquiring a nuclear-weapons capability or option.

When I talk about nuclear-weapons capability or option, I mainly mean the ability to produce large quantities of weapons-grade uranium or highly enriched uranium, so-called HEU, which as Paul has said is the most significant technical barrier to being able to produce nuclear weapons, and in the case of a country like Iran, you can assume that they would need about 20 or 25 kilograms of HEU for every weapon. The most important technical conclusion of the NIE is that Iran is still probably a few years away from being able to produce enough HEU for even a single nuclear weapon from its centrifuge program which of course was resumed in January 2006. As Paul has pointed out, this is not a new conclusion, it is a confirmation of an earlier conclusion the CIA reached, and even though Iran has been for almost two years working to install new centrifuge machines and to work out some of the inevitable technical problems that one experiences with a new technology, it still appears that Iran is



having some technical problems operating the centrifuge machines, the P1 type that they got from Pakistan, at full efficiency. This is because the P1 is a notoriously tricky machine. It is an early version of centrifuge machines before the technology was really perfected, it dates back to the 1960s, it has a number of moving parts, and if there is any imperfection in the manufacture of these parts, the assembly of the machine, or the operation of the machine, it can cause the machines to not operate properly or even break at very high speeds (and centrifuges have to operate at extremely high speeds in order to be effective).

According to the latest IAEA report, Iran has completed a pilot-scale facility of 3,000 P1 centrifuge machines, but according to the IAEA numbers, these are being operated at very low efficiency, far below their design production in terms of how much low-enriched uranium they are producing every month. I think it is very difficult to know exactly what is causing these technical problems and

it is very difficult to anticipate or estimate how quickly Iran can overcome them. Most likely the problems are due to a number of different difficulties and they will have to diagnose and fix those individually. So you are likely to see an incremental improvement in efficiency rather than a sudden transformation from low efficiency to maximum efficiency. It is likely to be a range over time, over months, or even years.

As a consequence of that difficulty of assessing how quickly Iran can truly master the technology, the NIE gives a very broad range, judging with moderate confidence that Iran will be technically able to produce enough HEU for a single weapon sometime between 2010 and 2015. And of course, as long as the IAEA continues to have access to the enrichment facility, we will have some means to monitor how well the facility is actually performing and, therefore, we can adjust that assessment every time the IAEA issues a report.

I think it is important to keep in mind that the technical capability to produce enough HEU for a single weapon is not the same as a credible nuclear-weapons option, and this is assuming that Iran uses its safeguarded declared enrichment facilities to produce a nuclear weapon. For example, even if Iran worked out all of its problems and it were able to operate its pilot-scale facility of 3,000 machines at maximum efficiency, it would still take a year if they were operating with natural uranium, or at least a few months if they were starting with low-enriched uranium, to produce enough HEU for a single bomb, and during that period Iran would be very vulnerable and exposed to international pressure, or even a military attack.

In contrast, it seems to me Iran might choose to wait until they had a much larger enrichment facility, something that could produce HEU very quickly before international action could be taken. For example, a large industrial-scale facility which is intended to have 50,000 centrifuge machines can

produce enough HEU for a single weapon within a few weeks or even a few days depending upon the scenario and in that case Iran would be able to break out with much less risk of its facility being preempted before they could produce enough HEU for a weapon. Further, it is not just one weapon. One weapon is not a very good deterrent. You would like to have at least a couple of weapons so you have a little bit of redundancy and a little bit more of a credible deterrent. So enough HEU for one weapon is a bare minimum, but for a country like Iran, it might make much more sense to wait until they had a substantial enrichment capacity to produce enough HEU for a couple of weapons or a dozen weapons.

To complicate matters, as the NIE points out, Iran might decide to use covert enrichment facilities rather than its declared plants to produce HEU. Of course, this would mean that we would have no advanced warning if the covert facility was not detected. The NIE judges that Iran has "probably" not restarted its covert enrichment activity since at

least mid-2007, but this is obviously an area of great uncertainty and I think some foreign intelligence agencies would not agree with the CIA's assessment that Iran has probably not restarted covert enrichment activities. For example, the IAEA still has questions about whether Iran has fully declared all of the research-and-development work it has carried out on a so-called P2 centrifuge machine which is a more advanced type that Iran acquired from Pakistan. The P2 is more efficient and in some ways easier to operate than the P1, so it would be an ideal machine for a covert enrichment program.

Furthermore, as Iran develops and expands its declared facilities, it probably makes it easier to hide a small covert plant. It is easier to divert materials and equipment that is being produced for the declared facility and use that for a covert facility in the future. One of the key questions is whether or not or how strong our capability is to detect a small covert enrichment facility if Iran decides at some point in the future to build such a facility. I think

it is very difficult to give a judgment without really having complete information about the sources and methods that we are using in order to detect Iran's nuclear activities.

All I will say just from my experience in the government dating back to the mid-1980s, of all the hard nuclear targets, Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, I would say that Iran was the least successful in hiding its activities from the United States and I suspect in part that is because of the nature of the society and the political system being not quite a totalitarian police state and their counterintelligence services probably being a little less effective. Of course, whether that will give us much confidence in the future is hard to predict, but just my experience is that we have generally had better insight into Iran's activities than we have in the case of Iraq and North Korea where we have been almost completely blind.

From a technical standpoint, the NIE's assessment of the enrichment program is far more

important, as Paul has mentioned, than the judgment that Iran halted its nuclear design and weaponization program in 2003. As many people have pointed out, Iran can afford to delay its weaponization program until the more important piece--fissile material production--is in place. Furthermore, I think it is very smart for Iran to halt weaponization work because that helps to strengthen their position that their nuclear program is purely civil and therefore complicates efforts by the West to gain support for international sanctions and pressure. And at the same time, Iran retains the option at some point in the future to revive weaponization once they have a sufficient enrichment capacity in place. Finally, weaponization is inherently much harder to detect because it involves a smaller number of people, smaller facilities, and Iran might have much more confidence that it could get away with secret weaponization work than it could with trying to build a secret enrichment plant. So the good news from the NIE is that we appear to have more time to play out

our diplomatic hand before Iran acquires a nuclear weapons capability.

Unfortunately, we have been playing a losing hand for the last 2 years. Despite mounting international pressure and sanctions, Iran has continued to develop its enrichment program and ignored two U.N. Security Council resolutions demanding that Iran suspend its enrichment program as a condition for beginning International negotiations with the permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany. Even before the NIE, I think our chances of creating sufficient pressure to compel Iran to accept the U.N. Security Council demands were quite poor. As Paul has already suggested, I think the NIE has weakened our position even further because it provides an excuse for countries like Russia and China to oppose stronger sanctions whether informal or formally mandated through the U.N. because they can argue that the threat is not urgent.

I think it is likely from the discussions I have had with diplomats up in New York that we will



see a third Security Council resolution early next year, but I think it will be pretty hollow. I do not think it will have any significant strengthening of the existing sanctions beyond adding a few more individuals and entities to the list of those already sanctioned, so I doubt it will make a significant impact in terms of Iran's calculation of the risk of punishment they run by continuing to ignore U.N. Security Council demands that they suspend enrichment.

Furthermore, it seems to me the NIE reinforces or can be used to reinforce an underlying disagreement among the big powers. The U.S., France, and the U.K., the Western powers, argue that Iran should not have any enrichment capacity at all even under IAEA safeguards because of the risk that they will ultimately use that for military purposes. Whereas Russia and China seem much more willing to tolerate a safeguarded enrichment facility in Iran as long as there is so-called "confidence" established in Iran's nuclear intentions, as long as they are not actively pursuing a nuclear weapons program. It seems

to me the NIE can be used to support the argument that Iran will be content to achieve a latent nuclear weapons breakout capability by establishing a large enrichment plant without ever translating that into the production of actual nuclear weapons, and that is exactly what Iranian officials say privately they want to do. So the NIE can be used by those who want to argue that we should be willing to live with Iran having a safeguarded enrichment plant because they have apparently halted their efforts to build nuclear weapons, and that will be very divisive in our future diplomacy.

Finally, whether intentional or not, as Paul has already said, the NIE has undercut any rationale for using military force against Iran's nuclear facilities, at least in the near term. Whatever the wisdom of actually using military force, I think a credible threat is an absolutely essential diplomatic tool, and Tehran is very likely to see the reaction to the NIE as further proof (they already claim they are confident that the U.S. cannot hurt them because of

Iraq), but presumably they will be even further emboldened to believe that they can proceed at least for the time being with relatively little risk of a U.S. military attack. In conclusion, I think our current diplomatic strategy of pressuring Iran to accept suspension of enrichment as a condition for international negotiations was already failing even before the NIE, and I think the NIE has weakened it even further.

Assuming that the strategy continues to fail, I think it is inevitable that the U.S. will eventually try the alternative approach of trying to negotiate directly with Iran without condition on a broad range of issues including nuclear issues, terrorism, the peace process, regional security, and so forth. As you know, this alternative approach has already been very widely endorsed including by all the major Democratic candidates and a number of prominent Republicans such as Senator Hagel and many pundits as well.

As I said, I think it is inevitable that we will play that card, but I think we have to play it very carefully for three reasons. First, no matter how you package it, it will be seen in Tehran as a huge concession which will validate the hard-line policies of President Ahmadinejad and, therefore, I think make it even less likely that Iran would agree to significant delays or limits on their enrichment program. Furthermore, because the Iranians can continue to develop their enrichment program while they negotiate, they would have every incentive to drag out the talks with hints of concession, misdirection, and the usual kinds of techniques which the Iranians are very, very expert in. Anybody who has dealt with the Iranians knows that they are really good at delay tactics. That is something that their culture has perfected.

SPEAKER: Carpets.

MR. SAMORE: Carpets, exactly. It is the bazaar carpet culture.

Second, if we decide to go down this route, we are going to have to manage the negative reaction from our allies in Europe and the Middle East who will be very upset that we have dropped the condition of suspension and that we are pursuing direct talks with Iran instead of talks within a multilateral context. The Gulf Arabs, for example, are already paranoid that the U.S. is willing to accept Iran as a nuclear power and give Iran some share of control over security in the Persian Gulf in exchange for Iran helping the U.S. to extricate itself from Iraq, and the French and the British will be very upset as well, so we are going to have to manage our alliance relations if we decide to make this pretty big shift in policy.

Third, and I think most important, I really doubt that the current Iranian leadership is prepared to agree to a nuclear deal that would be acceptable to us at any price. Basically, Iran and the U.S. have irreconcilable positions. Iran wants to develop a nuclear-weapons option in the form of a large safeguarded enrichment plant, while we want to deny

Iran the acquisition of a breakout capability by halting or, at least, limiting and delaying their enrichment program. And any technical solution that would be acceptable to us, the example, a limited enrichment capability under strict international monitoring, is not likely to be acceptable to Tehran because it would deny them what they are trying to achieve--a breakout capability. It seems to me that the incentives we have to offer to the current Iranian leadership--security assurances, political normalization, and lifting economic sanctions--I really doubt that is likely to be attractive enough to the current leadership to justify foregoing an achievement of a nuclear weapons option. In some ways, those incentives are very unattractive to the current leadership. They actually prefer to have a confrontational and hostile relationship with the U.S. So before we change policy and enter into these talks with Iran, I think we need to be very careful about trying to pave the way and reaching agreement with other countries that we are going to put forward a

reasonable proposal and that failure to reach agreement can be blamed on Iran which we can then use to justify subsequent steps, be it more serious sanctions or even military action, and I think the ability to orchestrate that kind of a diplomatic campaign is much more likely to be successfully carried out by the next Administration than by this administration. Thank you.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Gary. For those of you who have questions, if you will all indicate to me with a hand or a finger, preferably the index finger, and I will take a list and we will go around. Shibley, you raised first.

MR. TELHAMI: I thought these were terrific presentations. They were really excellent and covered a lot of material. I have just three quick questions for Paul. One is on the piece of information that seems to be there about 2003. I thought conventional wisdom had been that it is "clean" information that allowed them to speak with confidence and you seem to

suggest disagreement about how clean it was, and it would be helpful to hear your comments on that.

The second is about the professional outlook that you suggested really is behind this report rather than any politics or intended consequence in public opinion. You did mention though one thing that I think was about public opinion which is that they wanted to demonstrate their institutional independence because of the attacks they had been under, particularly pertaining to the Iraq war, and so I think that is what people are talking about. I am not sure how you separate those two. Basically they do not want to be in the same position they were in pertaining to the Iraq war, so how much of that is highlighting the information that demonstrates their institutional independence by putting that up front?

The third is any information or ideas that you may have about the Administration itself. Obviously they had the power to put out this summary of the report regardless, but there were many rumors about who was pushing for it from the Administration



to put it out, whether it was the Secretary of State, whether as she said it was the President who wanted this out. What is your take on this?

MR. PILLAR: On the third one, Shibley, I really have no take, and I would just note again that the community was obliged to respond to a congressional request, they were not obliged to put out an unclassified statement, and we can talk about the pros and cons of unclassified judgments, but I just do not know on that one.

On your first point about just how clean or clear the current information was about what was suspended in 2003, the one partial dissent in there was identified with the Department of Energy and the National Intelligence Council saying they only had moderate confidence that the whole program was suspended. One thing that struck me about the reactions to this document, I do not really see much of anything, maybe I missed it if it is out there, that highlighted the DOE partial dissent because if your recall, in the Iraq case there were a lot of

people who were saying, the Department of Energy, they are the ones who really knew about this, so we ought to pay attention to what they said about aluminum tubes. It is all there. If you want to pay attention to what DOE said about aluminum tubes, it is there. Yet there has not been much commentary to the effect that not only is there a partial dissent at least with regard to level of confidence that involves the Department of Energy who ought to know about these things more than anyone else, so that is not quite clean and clear in that regard.

On your second one about what the community was demonstrating here, I have a couple of points. One, although the institutional independence was part of it, what I was trying to say was I think demonstrating the ability to question one's assumptions and previous judgments was at least as big a part of it. Hence, the matrix about differences from 2005, even though it was comparing apples and oranges, and as I pointed out, with some of the things

there just was not a judgment in 2005 that was reversed.

I think implicit in your question, Shibley, is what is the propriety of all this. I do not think it is proper to engineer an intelligence document where the main purpose being served or one of the principal purposes being served is institutional self-justification, and I think we would all agree with that. That is not the same as, and I draw a very clear distinction, between that and trying to influence the policy debate, and this gets more into the show our independence from the administration kind of thing, which would be like Kissinger and others have sort of taken for granted, that these intelligence officers wanted to take the military option off the table and so they wrote an estimate that would do that. As I said, I do not believe at least that was in the front of their minds. Given the whole sordid, unhappy recent experience with Iraq, I cannot rule out that it was in the backs of their minds. Do you see the distinction I am making between

independence from a policy judgment and just showing we are using good analytic tradecraft and questioning our assumptions?

MR. POLLACK: Gary?

MR. SAMORE: Yes, I just wanted to add one thing that Paul has not mentioned. The way that this NIE was notified to our allies was really appalling and I think to me that is one of the truly inexcusable parts of this episode. As I understand it, most of our very good allies were completely taken by surprise and it seems to me, at a minimum, we should have at least tried to cushion the blow a little bit by giving some advance notice or at least doing a better job of coordinating among our intelligence services so that people felt they had an opportunity to influence the work that was underway. But I think part of the shock and dismay around the world was because, as I understand it, people were just completely taken unawares.

MR. POLLACK: Next is Barbara, and could we keep the questions short, please, because the list is starting to grow?

SPEAKER: Two questions. One for Gary. Do you think it was coincidence that the Russians provided the fuel for Bushehr after this NIE came out or do you think the Russians were taking this as the green light to finally complete this project?

Then for both of you, the reaction in Iran has been interesting. Are you so sure that this NIE is really going to help Ahmadinejad and the more hard-line elements given that it takes away that menace, that threat of attack, which he has used very successfully to repress domestic opponents and to create this sense of crisis? Thanks.

MR. SAMORE: Barbara, let me respond to that second one. I am very glad you raised it because I was hoping that was the kind of consideration that expert people like yourself around the table would raise when I just put the question on the table of how Iran would react. It is a mistake, although we all

fall into this pattern now and then, to talk about what Iran perceives, what Iran thinks, what Iran is going to do, and we forget about all that politicking going on inside Tehran and inside the regime. So I think, yes, it can play both ways. On the one hand, as I think Gary and I both suggested at least with the current leadership, it may be feeling less pressure, less trepidation about pushing farther and faster, but counteracting that and bearing in mind that at least I believe one of the inducements to pushing ahead toward an eventual nuclear weapon is the sense of threat from the United States and how any relief from that sense may affect the political debate inside the regime, and it could work the other way.

SPEAKER: On the Bushehr question, my understanding is that the Russians notified us even before the NIE that they had decided to proceed with the fuel. But nonetheless, the appearance of further collapse of the international consensus to punish Iran for its nuclear program, I think, is very significant. From Iran's standpoint, this has to be seen as an

important victory because to the extent that we were able to deny them support for their civil nuclear power program, and the most important piece of that was the Russian decision to withhold the fuel, that has now collapsed and the efforts by the Administration to portray this as a positive development I think are really pretty sad.

On your question about Iranian domestic politics, it is far too complicated and convoluted to figure out what the ultimate consequences will be. For every development there are four or five different countervailing implications. But as you know, a number of people do believe there is a pretty good chance that Ahmadinejad [inaudible] in the presidential elections in mid-2009 and if that is true, then I think there is a stronger argument for the U.S. engaging in a direct negotiation with Iran. To do it with Ahmadinejad as president and seemingly having operational control over the day-to-day nuclear negotiations through Mr. Jalili, just strikes me, as I have said, as a pretty feckless exercise.

MR. POLLACK: We have just passed the threshold where I need to start paring questions. We will start with Dan and then Martin [inaudible]

SPEAKER: I was wondering if either of you could shed some light on 2003. One of the interesting points in the NIE was that there was a significant change in 2003. Keeping in mind Paul's point that enrichment is still the driver of the concern here, nevertheless, we are moving away from a weapons program, and it suggests that perhaps there was a policy success, perhaps something was going on that we would like to do again, whatever that is. But this is not only a fascinating analytic issue, to me it is an important policy question, but actually in my own mind I have not been able to figure out what happened in 2003 that we should try to be repeating, whether it is invading another country or something else, but I would welcome your thoughts.

MR. POLLACK: Martin?

MR. INDYK: Henry Kissinger said something yesterday which he did not put in his op-ed piece. He



was in Boston doing a public event, endorsing Senator John McCain's run for president, and he said in justifying his support for John McCain that a strong president would never have allowed such a thing to have happened.

MR. POLLACK: The NIE?

MR. INDYK: The publication of the NIE in its form. Going back to your first point, Paul, about the intentions of the authors, that they probably did not predict accurately how it would be received, certainly the White House would have known how it would have been received. So I wonder if you would comment on the fact that this president was unable to affect the way that the NIE was presented and whether any president could have done that, whether that is an indication of the consequences of what has happened in the politicizing of intelligence production.

For Gary I want to just focus on regional reaction for a moment, first of all just to add to Barbara's point, that we now seem to know that Saddam Hussein was bluffing about his weapons of mass

destruction because he needed the appearance that he had weapons of mass destruction. And Ahmadinejad not only has used this for internal purposes, but he has certainly used it for regional purposes to great effect and that is gone now it would seem, although you have been in the Gulf, and so I wonder do they still perceive, and I am not talking about the nuclear program, but the Iranian bid for dominance in the region, in the same way today as they saw it before the NIE.

Then of course, you never mentioned Israel, nobody mentioned Israel, and since it has a big stake in this, would either of you care to estimate how it impacts Israel's calculations about what it needs to do about the Iranian nuclear program.

MR. SAMORE: Shall I start? Very quickly for Dan, I just do not think there is any question that the decision in 2003 was taken out of fear, that the Iranians felt very exposed after the successful overthrow of regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, they were very nervous about being referred to the Security

Council, and they saw the decision to declare their covert enrichment facilities and to cooperate with the IAEA and halt their nuclear-weapons program as a way to fend off that pressure. Of course, they made overtures to the United States, as Suzanne knows. When that was rebuffed, they went to the Europeans and they were willing to suspend their enrichment program for almost two years, at least bits and pieces of it, in the course of their negotiations. The reason why that collapsed is because they lost their fear. They saw the U.S. being bogged down in Iraq and weak, they calculated that the big powers were not prepared to truly work together to impose serious sanctions, there was a shift internally to Ahmadinejad, and they walked away from the deal with the Europeans, and the reason why we do not have any traction in our diplomacy is because they are not afraid.

How do we restore that fear? I think it is very difficult because the objective situation for us is not very favorable. We are bogged down in Iraq right now, we do have weaknesses, oil is \$100 a

barrel, so until you correct those structural problems our diplomacy faces problems. I think, it is very difficult for us to have a good bargaining position.

Just to respond briefly to Martin, because I was in the Gulf last week, and of course the Arabs in the Gulf cannot possibly imagine what Paul said could possibly be true, that this was an independent judgment showing professional analysis from the CIA and, of course, it is all part of a big conspiracy. There were lots of different theories, and the dominant one is that the U.S. was gesturing softness on Iran's nuclear program because the Iranians are starting to help the U.S. get itself out of Iraq. The bigger version of this conspiracy is that the U.S. and Iran are going to do a deal that divides control over the Persian Gulf between them, back to the days of the policemen of the Gulf, and then, of course, the Gulf Arabs would be at the mercy of Iran. So I would say, Martin, rather than undercutting the sense of threat, it actually enhanced the sense of threat, and I certainly heard from a number of Gulf Arabs that even

though they do not prefer a military option, they would much rather see the U.S. bomb Iran than to have to live under the shadow of Iran armed with nuclear weapons, and that was the first time I had had people say that so openly which I found quite interesting.

On Israel, obviously Israel was especially dismayed and appalled: (A) because they do not agree with the assessment and, (B) because they, I think, believe that their ability to deal with this problem themselves is quite limited. I think if the Israelis could knock out Iran's nuclear program by themselves as they have done with Iraq and perhaps Syria, they would do it in a heartbeat. I do not think there is any political constraint on Israel. The problem is that they really are not sure they can do the job militarily and I think that from that standpoint that they are heavily dependent on international diplomacy and ultimately the U.S. using military to solve this problem, and I think they must see the erosion of the diplomatic strategy and, at least, the near-term

removal of the military option off the table as being a real threat to Israeli security.

MR. PILLAR: Gary has covered the Israel question, and I have nothing to add on that. On what happened in 2003, I think are just too many variables to reach a conclusion. The invasion of Iraq, I think, was part of it, but there were other things going on too in terms of the European diplomacy, so I am hesitant to draw conclusions.

Martin, on what Kissinger said and he did put in his op-ed some line along the lines of if we had a President who had not been so weakened as this one was, this would never have happened. What he was referring to was his presumption that this was a deliberate attempt to influence the policy debate which, as I said, I do not believe was the case. But then the way you phrased your question, it was more about how an estimate winds up being worded for whatever reason and if indeed the White House was playing that kind of a role, then that would be highly improper politicization which if it came out against

the backdrop of the Iraq experience would engender screams and properly so.

One last comment about Kissinger. When he was in power, he had a very constrained view of what intelligence ought to do and it was not much beyond the Joe Friday, just the facts, ma'am. He was also taking umbrage at the whole idea that the community would even venture the sort of speculative judgment that was in this newest estimate about what might have led to the 2003 decision. That is not their business, it is speculation and let us policymakers worry about it. So I was not surprised that he said that, but I think he is simply wrong about taking for granted what the writers of this estimate were trying to do.

MR. INDYK: Ken, if you will allow me just to follow-up quickly.

MR. POLLACK: Yes, boss.

MR. INDYK: In my own experience, Paul, and I think you can certainly comment on this from your own, it is that there used to be an active debate on wording between policy people in the National Security

Council and the intelligence assessors. I can remember in particular the argument about how we could describe the damage we were going to do after *Desert Fox*. Is that no longer possible now because of the politicization?

SPEAKER: It depends on what kind of product you are talking about. If you are talking about a product like a National Intelligence Estimate, or any one of the number of art forms that come out under the name of "Issued by the Director of National Intelligence," that is different from any other kind of public statement that is perhaps promulgated by the State Department or the White House. I am not sure exactly which things you are recalling, Martin. But if it is the art form like this one that was released two weeks ago, no policymaker role [inaudible]. Perhaps your comments and mine reflect some different perceptions about what is taking place here when there is a dialogue. You may recall for example in George Tenet's memoir and talking about some of the Iraq stuff, I cannot remember which piece it was, but



something was sent to the White House as kind of a heads up, this is what we are going to release in a couple of days, here are the drafts so you are not surprised with it, then the White House comes back with here is how we would like it changed, the response was, no, this was just for your information, it was not a draft for coordination, and I think you get the last couple of generations of intelligence officers agreeing that that was the right posture.

MR. POLLACK: We will do two more rounds of questions. First Charles Perkins and then [inaudible]

MR. PERKINS: Both of you said that I think what has become conventional wisdom that the military option, use of force is off the table for the time being, but again you did both qualify it by saying for the time being or in the near term. Do you foresee any circumstances in which the use of force could again become at least for the purposes of diplomatic leverage which I think many of us agree is its primary use could come back onto the table whether it would be new information about exactly what was halted in 2003

or whether or not, indeed, it has completely been ceased and that that cessation continues to this day, or a growing sense that the Iranians are indeed going to continue to be truly intransigent and continue with the enrichment in the foreseeable future, let's say 2 years to 18 months, is indeed the military option at least for the U.S., I will leave aside other nations who have other calculus, but for the U.S. is it completely off the table?

SPEAKER: I would like to go back to the issue of process. Clearly, the NIE had policy implications. It could be the writers did not necessarily appreciate what those implications were. And even if we stipulate that it was maybe institutional defensiveness and not calculated motive, you talk also about the disconnect that exists between the nuances of the NIE and how it is received. And even assuming that policymakers should not be involved in this process, do you see a role for the intelligence community itself to reassess how it puts out these documents given the kind of impact it has,

which may be different than the impact that some of the writers around the coordinating committee see it?

SPEAKER: Let me take the second question first. There has been already a debate inside the community and outside as well as to the propriety of having unclassified versions of assessments, and we have had a number of these unclassified key judgments of national intelligence estimates. There was one on terrorism, there have been a couple on Iraq, and now we have had this one. Reportedly, as of about 3 months or so ago, Admiral McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence, had expressed the view that he wanted to cut back on that, that he was not personally in favor of continuing what has become more of a pattern in these couple of years of having unclassified assessments. And now he has been criticized, by the way, for supposedly having that preference but now releasing this one on Iran which has added to the accusations that this was intended to shape a particular policy debate. No, I think he and the White House basically did not have a choice given

the nature of the issue and the nature of the information.

I think there are legitimate arguments both ways about releasing or not releasing public versions. To oversimplify, the main reason against it is, I think, the kind of reaction we have just seen with this and the oversimplification, losing the nuances and all that sort of thing. Although one quickly must qualify that by saying if pieces of it are going to leak out anyway, you are going to get an even more distorted public version that will be out there, so you might as well try to control it by having an unclassified one.

Then, the other basic pro-release argument I think is the simple one of the public right to know. If 44 or whatever how many billion dollars of our taxpayers' money is going to the intelligence community, the little bit of it that is being used to pay analysts to assess these things, we taxpayers ought to have a right to know what at least their best guess is on matters of high importance.

Quickly on the other question about the use of force, the most likely contingency in which use of force would not be placed on the table but it would actually be used is if we had some untoward incident in the Gulf, the Iranians fire on one of our warships, people get killed, an airplane gets shot down, something like that, and then I would think the chance of military retaliation in which perhaps nuclear targets would become part of the target list, as well as other things, would go up. In the absence of that, if the question is just getting it back on the table, it is hard to see many things happening in the next 13 months that would put it on the table, and depending on what happens next November, there may be even less chance that it is effectively on the table as of January 20, 2009.

MR. POLLACK: Then one last round of three questions.

SPEAKER: I will be very quick. On the use of force, I think as long as our diplomacy continues to fail and Iran continues to develop its enrichment

program, we will eventually face the choice between accepting them as a nuclear-capable country in the sense that they have a latent capacity to produce enough HEU for weapons, or bombing them. I do not think that choice is going to come in the next one or two years, but it is very likely to face the next Administration though, and whether or not we can credibly threaten, military force will have a lot to do with whether or not the next Administration's diplomacy can be effective, because I think the Iranians will be very sensitive to the calculation that the U.S. might be free to attack them. I have been trying to make the argument as I go around that the next Administration will have a much stronger position to threaten the use of force than the current Administration in part because the next President hopefully will have more confidence and trust from the American public and U.S. allies that they could use military force in a wise and judicious way, and that we might be able to turn around the situation a little bit in the Middle East, more stability in Iraq, more

progress on the peace front, et cetera, which could put us in a better position to actually use military force. And if we can create that impression or illusion, whatever you want to call it, that might have an impact on Iran's calculations and might make our diplomatic overtures more attractive to them.

MR. POLLACK: The last three, Bruce (inaudible) and then Ari.

SPEAKER: Mine has already been asked.

MR. POLLACK: Really?

SPEAKER: Talking about military action, I think the silent war between Saudi Arabia and Iran and the Saudi and pro-Saudi Arabian countries lobbying the U.S. and Israel to hit Iran, I think it is a very tricky game because any military attack from our perspective would leave the Arab world shattered and especially Saudi Arabia destroyed. And I think Ahmadinejad's visits to Saudi Arabia, not him personally, but the Iranians understood that in the case of any attack they would retaliate against Saudi Arabia. So we see that throughout the Middle East and

especially in Lebanon and Iraq there is a silent war to gain more and more power in the Middle East, and honestly I do not see it very dangerous or very threatening to the minorities. I come from the minority in Lebanon and I do not feel threatened by the Iranians as much as I am threatened by the *fatwas* of the Wahabis and I think a nuclear weapon is definitely very dangerous and I would like to see a Middle East free of nukes.

But at the same time, what is more threatening today are all those lunatic mullahs out in Afghanistan and all over the world taking advantage of this void left in the books in Islam and coming up with all sorts of *fatwas* which are much more dangerous and deadly than the nukes. I think the U.S. must use very quickly its friendship or whatever ties with Saudi Arabia. The Saudis have to clean from this and they need to shut the doors to *fatwas*. They need to come up with a reform plan, this is very serious, and I think when you are talking about a new war against Iran whether in one, two, or three years, honestly, as



a minority I would rather leave with my family because the region will definitely turn into a bloodbath. It is not going to be at all what you think. It is not a tactical thing. The Iranians are very smart. They are not Arabs. They think and they plan ahead. They expect it and they expect the war since last year, and it will not be easy I think.

SPEAKER: I am wondering if I can piggyback on Barbara and Martin's question whether or not this NIE actually weakens the diplomatic cause that Iran has with Europe as well because if the fear in Europe was this crazy administration in Washington that wants to go to war no matter what and now the war option is off the table, whether or not that makes it easier for more countries, and not just in Europe, to sign onto a more hard-line policy with respect to enrichment.

Paul, you said that these professionals, and I am not going to dispute that, but can you tell us a little bit about the coordination process? Because with the coordination process you are talking about people, especially the NIC leadership, that is far

more sophisticated, that when you look at this particular NIE and just changing two or three sentences as you yourself pointed out would provide a completely different perspective, and that the NIC leadership did not see this is to me a little bit surprising.

SPEAKER: It should not be surprising. It is not a matter of not seeing it. You are talking about people who are trying to manage 16 agencies, and it is like herding 16 cats, and are also dealing with the whole political context that has already been discussed here. And just to come up with any kind of outcome that reflects whatever consensus you have in the community and walks whatever policy tightrope there is to walk and come up with something without years and years of negotiation and delay is probably seen as an accomplishment. I really do not have much more to add on that one, Ari, except do not overestimate the ability to manage the impression because what you are getting is a document that had many hands in it. You talked about NIC leadership.

This is not a statement of the NIC leadership. It is not a statement even just of the DNI, although it is his name and title on the title page. It is all the plusses and minuses of having a community statement, and this might be one of the minuses.

On the issue about how the diplomacy might work, I think it is an open question. It could work either way. Just put one other data point on the table in terms of how Europeans react to what they perceive as an impetuous U.S. president, going back to how Libya was handled in the 1980s, the air strikes against Libya in 1986 after the La Belle disco bombing, part of the European reaction there was, no, what is that crazy Reagan going to do next? And part of the positive effect was greater European enlistment with regard to things like U.N. sanctions and more peaceful ways of dealing with the Libyan problem. So that would suggest in this case not just the threat, but the actual use of force was an encouragement to the Europeans to work harder on the more peaceful measures. So it could work that way or it could work

the other way. I think we just have to wait and see. On your comment, I would just say you have expressed very well concerns that I share.

SPEAKER: On that, I was not saying that war would be easy. I was just reporting the conversations I had in the Gulf especially in Saudi Arabia from people who said that they would rather if they have to choose, they do not want war, but they would much rather have the United States attack Iran than to have to manage or live with Iran having nuclear weapons. I asked about blowback and they said we know how to deal with that, we have dealt with that in the past. When I asked them how many Saudi F-15s they were going to contribute to the raid, I was told that they would probably stay on the ground.

SPEAKER: [inaudible]

SPEAKER: But I did find it quite remarkable that I was being encouraged to send the message back that we should be planning to bomb.

SPEAKER: [inaudible]

SPEAKER: I do not think so, actually, but who knows?

On the question about the Europeans, I think the problem with the Europeans is that to really get significant sanctions, it has got to be through the U.N. Security Council. What you can do outside the Security Council will have some impact, and I think there has been in fact some success partly because of Washington and partly because of London and Paris, but there is so much resistance in other important capitals such as Berlin, Rome, and Madrid, to sanctions that are *ad hoc* and informal because of the argument which is a valid argument, that the Russians, Chinese, and Indians will simply rush in to fill the vacuum and the only consequence will be to hurt their business interests. So I very much focus on the U.N. Security Council as the best vehicle for imposing significant economic sanctions which have the biggest political impact. And I think in the case of the Russians and Chinese, they simply do not share our assessment that Iran having a nuclear-weapons

capability is an intolerable threat. They do not like it, but I think they are much more prepared to live with it than we are. So I think from that standpoint the NIE really undercuts our position. And adding to that, the fact that this is a fading Administration with poor bilateral relations especially with the Russians, I just think it makes it much more difficult for us to orchestrate an effective international diplomatic campaign.

Unfortunately, I guess my main message is, I do not think we are likely to achieve much next year, no diplomatic breakthroughs, no bombing, the Iranians will keep plugging away, and I think the next Administration will just have to inherit this problem and deal with it as best it can.

MR. POLLACK: I think that it is a great tribute for our two speakers that I have the distinct impression that all of you would be glad to sit around for several more hours asking questions and discussing this issue. Unfortunately, I have some place else to be, so I am going to bring the meeting to a close.

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