

A Brookings Iraq Series Briefing

IRAQ CONFRONTATION SPLITS THE ALLIES

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MR. JAMES B. STEINBERG: Good afternoon and welcome to Brookings. This is our second in our weekly series of briefings on Iraq and related developments. We've obviously had a very eventful week and therefore a lot for today's panel to talk about in the diplomatic, political and military realm.

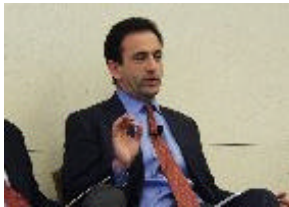
Our panel today consists of two familiar faces here, two Senior Fellows from Brookings, Phil Gordon who is also the Director of our Center on the U.S. and France; and Mike O'Hanlon, world-renowned military analyst and expert.

In a few moments we'll also be joined by Robert Orr, the Vice President and Director of the Washington Office of the Council on Foreign Relations. Bob in particular has served as a deputy to Ambassador Holbrooke at the UN and is going to talk to us a little bit about how the problem looks from the UN perspective. He'll be here in about five or ten minutes and will be joining us as we go forward.

The news has been dominated by issues at the UN, issues at NATO, and particularly issues of managing our relationships with our European allies. I was privileged, I guess is the right word, to be part of the U.S. delegation to the Munich Security Conference this weekend so I had a chance firsthand to see the rather difficult dialogue that's taking place and we'll have a chance to talk about that as we go forward this afternoon.

So I want to begin by asking Phil Gordon to assess just how serious the problem is, what are the choices open to the United States and to our European allies, and what will be the consequences of the disagreements if they're not resolved.

Phil?



MR. PHILIP H. GORDON: Thank you.

I think there are really two central issues when it comes to the crisis with our allies right now. There's a big debate between the United States and certain Europeans about whether to go to war or not; and then there's the smaller but nonetheless important issue of NATO and the French, German, Belgian blocking of assets to Turkey from NATO. Let me say a little bit about both of those.

First I want to say three things. One is generally why the Europeans seem so opposed to this war. Secondly, what they think they're trying to accomplish at the UN in their diplomacy with us. And then finally, the real question is what now and where do we go from here. But I do want to start with the question of why they're so opposed.

One of the striking things about the debate here is that when you hear especially French and German opposition to the war, the first question from a lot of Americans seems to be what's wrong with

them? What could possibly be driving these people? Is it their oil interests or corruption or anti-Americanism? Without actually accepting the plausible, the possibility that they're actually deeply opposed to the war. Rather than taking on face value the fact that 75-80 percent of their public don't want to see this war. People are wondering what else it could be. Again, usually the first suggestions are oil or anti-Americanism.

I won't go on too much about the oil point but I would begin with the assertion or the suggestion that it's not about oil.

One of the striking things in the mutual debate is large majorities of Europeans think that we are doing it for oil and I think that's wrong. We don't have to get into a debate, but we're not. And similarly, large majorities of Americans think that the French motivations are primarily oil. If you actually look at the numbers and the importance of Iraqi trade for the French economy that doesn't hold up either. In fact you could make a very strong argument that if French oil and commercial interests were at the top of their list, the smartest thing for France to do would be to join the United States, invade Iraq, and just insist on a stake of the oil market. At present they're simply not getting any money out of Iraq because of the sanctions.

So if it's not that, what is it? It seems to me four things are essential to this and they're slightly different for the Germans and the French and other Europeans, but most of them cover Europe across the board.

First, and this is mostly true for Germany, it's simply an anti-war pacifism. German history has led Germans to accept war not only as a last resort but for many of them not at all. I think more than anything that is what drove Chancellor Schroeder in his election to just rule out any participation. That's different from France.

What more applies to the French I think and across the board in Europe is fear of terrorism. The Bush Administration has been presenting this to a large degree as an anti-terrorist measure. This is part of the war on terrorism. I think a lot of Europeans believe that this will actually contribute more to terrorism rather than reduce terrorism. The idea of invading an Arab country with lots of civilian casualties and then occupying it, there's a real fear in Europe that this will produce, will be a recruiting tool for al Qaeda and I think that's a genuine concern that shouldn't just be dismissed.

Remember there are four to six million Muslims in France; two to three million Muslims in Germany; and they're worried about spillover onto their own populations.

Don't forget also that European experience with trying to govern Arab states or states that they put together has not been a terribly positive one. There are interesting parallels between what we want to do in Iraq now and the British experience after World War I, when the Brits were absolutely confident that the local Arabs wanted nothing more than to have the British govern them. That turned out to be wrong then, and a lot of Europeans think we're wrong now.

Finally, and this applies I think to the resistance we're seeing particularly by France, Germany and Russia, this is also about world order and not just about Iraq. I think the depths of the European resistance to the U.S. on this is in part for the reasons I just said. They think war is a bad idea. But also in part a way of sending a message to the United States, we're just not prepared to let you decide for the world. We want to do this together. And if large majorities of our population and we think this is a bad idea we're simply not going to defer to the United States.

That I think explains the difference among Europeans. This is not just a trans-Atlantic divide but an internal European divide. And it's not really that these Europeans, the eight who signed the letter and then the ten disagree so much about Iraq, but they disagree about the United States. I think that's why some of them are so dug in.

Let me just say a word about, given that background, what they're trying to accomplish now and then finally end up with where we go from here.

I think everyone is trying to figure out what the French are going to do especially. Why are they pushing this so hard? It seems to me three possible answers.

One is they actually think they can stop the United States. They rally enough supporters at the Security Council -- it will be interesting to hear Bob's comments on this. But they think maybe they can rally nine votes in support of a resolution that says we should have more inspectors for more time. That's probably a miscalculation and a mis-reading of the American debate but it nonetheless seems to be one possible explanation for what they're trying to accomplish.

Another idea is possibly that they're just building up to cut a deal. That's what a lot of Americans still think, that they're going to resist until the last minute but at the end of the day they'll put a price on it and they'll come along.

There's finally another option that I think we should pay serious attention to which is that this is just principled opposition. And contrary to the conventional wisdom here which has been that at the end of the day the French will cave because they don't want to see the UN marginalized and they want to be part of the economic future of Iraq, I think there's a real chance we should consider that the French just stand firm and if we go to war without them then that's our business.

The last thing is what happens now. It's good Bob is arriving just now because it has so much to do with the UN.

It may seem slightly a cop-out to say it depends, but it depends on a lot of factors but two it seems to me most important.

Obviously the Blix report tomorrow. If even Hans Blix comes to the UN and he says I don't

even need more time because I'm just not getting the cooperation I need, it would be very difficult for the French and Germans to rally support around the notion that they should give him more time. So if Blix actually gives the type of report that the Americans want to see I think there's a real chance that even the French would come around and support the use of force.

If on the other hand Blix says I've seen a lot of progress over the past week, I really think we can get this done if we move forward in this way, then I think the French would make the real push, the Germans would stick with them, and in that case what it really depends on is what the other members, and particularly the Russians and the Chinese do. That's where you have the potential for a real clash among allies, if the French were to win support of Russians, Chinese, Germans, and up to nine members of the others to ask for more time, putting the United States in a position where we'd either have to veto this or just do it without it. That I think is a recipe for a much more difficult way of moving forward.

Maybe I'll end up, Jim. The Turkey thing I would simply say this hasn't really been about the defense of Turkey. The vetoing of NATO assets. Turkey will be defended. Turkey can get the assets they need bilaterally from countries and from us. It hasn't really been about that. It goes back to what I said about the world order questions and the French and the Germans not wanting to allow the United States to drive this and say we're going to create a war and it's up to you, NATO allies, to back it.

Let me add, I think that French and German policy on this issue has been completely wrong and counterproductive. It has only led to the hostility of the rest of NATO, of the United States, and even in logical terms the argument that you can't prepare for this because you haven't decided to go to war yet doesn't make any sense. The United States is preparing contingencies, humanitarian, for what might happen in the case of war and nation states are as well, so I don't even think it holds up logically and I think it's counterproductive. But that seems to me what's driving them.

I'll end with the notion, the other question you asked Jim was about how bad this is. It has the potential to be really bad. We have seen crises in NATO before. It is worth reminding ourselves that this is hardly unprecedented. If you take a look at the Suez crisis, we not only resisted an attempt by certain NATO members to use force, we actually made it fail and we cut them off at the knees and we forced them back. So we have seen stuff like this before. NATO, the French kicking the American military out of France in '66, and Euro missiles. We've had serious disputes in NATO in the past.

The open question now is obviously without the Cold War threat to bring countries together, the cost of a lack of alliance seems less to countries and that allows them to act as if they don't value the support of the other side. That's what the open question is here.

I think that as bad as it gets, when the dust settles both sides will still realize that they need the other, but one has to admit that that's an open question.

MR. STEINBERG: It obviously depends to a considerable degree on how it comes out too. I would think that depending on sort of whether there's a successful operation and the allies can come

together around dealing with the aftermath as opposed to a situation where there's a sense that the failure to reach a satisfactory effect of the success is going to make it a bit difficult.

Bob, thank you for joining us. Phil has indicated there are a lot of problems in alliance management. We have not been hearing as much lately from the Russians and the Chinese but that's obviously another big factor at the UN.

How does this look first from John Negraponte's point of view as he's trying to put together coalitions, what are the choices that the U.S. faces? Is it plausible to think that nine other countries would come forward with their own resolution and force the United States to veto? What's the dynamic that we'll be looking for in New York over the next couple of weeks?



MR. ROBERT C. ORR: There is a lot in play right now in New York and in fact with every day more possible scenarios.

I would say there are three major scenarios. One that the U.S. with the U.K. is clearly pushing already a resolution. It's floating informally in the UN. There's informals, informal informals and now I recently heard the term informal informal informals. So that process has begun. We're halfway up the ladder of informals.

That resolution has some traction with certain members on the Council. The French and German resolution or protoresolution has some traction with some on the Council. But I would say of the, what I would call the [inaudible]. The first one being a U.S.-U.K. like resolution, kind of the what the U.S. is looking for. Perhaps not the most likely. A second scenario would be a piece of paper, a second resolution gets through but it's not really what the U.S. wants but it's at least enough of it, something that says Saddam Hussein is in further material breach, full stop. Something like that could get through. Or the third option I would say would be no resolution at all. I don't think there is much of a danger of a French-backed resolution kind of taking nine votes and having the U.S. have to veto it.

I say that though the momentum has been moving in this direction. The Russians and Chinese have been kind of holding their fire and now they're starting to tip their hands towards the French proposals. If you just start counting votes and say that assume that maybe Syria goes that way as well you've got five there. Unless the U.S. can line up every single other vote, all of a sudden the likelihood of the first two scenarios goes down.

It's worth remembering here that there are two Africans on the Council who have French Colonial pasts. That has been a factor in the past. Will the French really pull out all the stops to go get Guinea and Cameroon to sign on? If so, this other resolution may pick up speed.

I think the most likely scenario is that after two resolutions might even be tabled formally, but at least informally, the French and the British, U.S., that there will be some compromise down to the lowest common denominator of a resolution that says there's a problem but doesn't spell out anything

about the solution. Then it allows everyone to go home and claim that they identified the problem and the French can say they brought the U.S. to the table and made us come to the UN. The U.S. can say we've gone to the UN.

MR. STEINBERG: Do you see any prospect that the Administration would decide that it wanted to make the point so sharply that it would force a vote and challenge the French or the Russians or the Chinese to veto?

MR. ORR: It's possible, but clearly for alliance building, for the people that we want on our alliance, whether it's those people or not, that would not be preferable. Certainly it's not what the Administration wants to do.

There are a number of countries that have signed up with the U.S. to go that are right now very aggressively pushing the U.S. not to do that. A number of U.S. allies and friends on this question have already said we'll even send troops with you but we really, really, really want a UN resolution. And quite honestly, they don't really care what that resolution looks like. As long as they can go to their publics and say the U.S. did what we asked them to, they went and they got a resolution. That's why I think that's the most likely scenario. For coalition management on the U.S. side we really just need some piece of paper that we can say there's a resolution. It almost doesn't matter what the words on it are.

MR. STEINBERG: In the NATO context are you seeing that the United States has basically tried to isolate France and Germany and their dowdy friend the Belgians. Do you see a similar scenario in the Security Council where the U.S. would try to line up the nine and basically show that they've got support of other than France, Germany, Russia and China?

MR. ORR: That's exactly what the U.S. is doing. Trying to line up the votes. And if you can say I've got nine in my pocket now you're going to have to look at using the veto. That's where we really are talking about France. People keep talking about France and Germany, but not all Security Council members are created equal. It really is a question of France on this because of the veto.

One dynamic in the Council that's worth thinking about is really the U.S. is the only Security Council member that is willing to use a veto alone without too much trouble. The other four, for various reasons, have a great deal, there's a great deal of pain involved with casting a lone veto.

If the French can get the Russians to hang with them, then there's much more likelihood that they'll push this up to the very end. If the U.S. can tick off Russia and I think China would kind of come in that same basket, then I think the likelihood of France compromising and allowing a U.S.-ish resolution to go through would be much higher.

MR. STEINBERG: Mike, we read today in the newspaper that the war has already begun. That we have forces in Iraq, that a lot of the work that we need to do is underway. First of all how should we interpret reading about this in the newspapers? Is there anything about this that strikes you as

changing the game plan or thinking differently about how this war's going to be run than perhaps you thought about before the latest --



MR. MICHAEL E. O'HANLON: There certainly are interesting developments, Jim. I guess for me the overriding important development is the decision to put 150,000-plus U.S. forces in the region which creates a feeling of inevitability and irreversibility. It's not quite that stark. If there really were a good reason to wait, whether it's six weeks or frankly even nine months we could. Even now. Even with Special Operations teams scouting out parts of Iraq and even with 150,000 forces soon to be in the region. But the question becomes is there a reason that's good enough to justify that kind of effort and that kind of pulling back forces only to have to redeploy them next winter or later this spring. Obviously if we were to go to war later this spring we could just delay and let the Special Operations people keep doing their scouting for a few more weeks and that would be no trouble and the hot weather becomes the bigger issue in forcing your hand.

But I think sort of looking at it from more fundamental points of view, the big question is if you really had to, could you pull forces back to stop this thing in its track and actually arrest the inevitability and arrest the rapid momentum towards war? I think in theory the answer is yes. But in practice the French and the Germans and the Belgians have not come up with anything close to a good enough reason why. And unless they do I think the best they're going to be able to ask for is a few more weeks of face-saving inspections. They're going to have to have a very good reason to come to us and stop this big freight train of the U.S. military getting ready for war.

And it's not just because of a matter of military convenience. It's because the argument for inspecting for a few more weeks or months is really not very powerful in its current form. What's that additional period of time going to buy you? What's the plausible best case for what it buys you and how does that compare to the difficulty of reversing a deployment?

That may not be quite the way you wanted me to go about answering the question, Jim, but to me that's sort of in fundamental terms what's really at stake here.

If the French and the Germans want to have any hope of changing our basic momentum towards war they're going to have to have a very good reason, given how far down the road we've gone. But nothing is inevitable until we start laying siege to Baghdad.

MR. STEINBERG: When I was in government operational military plans were the most closely-held secrets, not even briefed to the policy staff. Now we seem to be reading about them in the newspapers. Is this a terrible terrible breach of security? A deliberate shaping of the environment? What do you think?

MR. O'HANLON: I think that the war plans that came out last summer were a little more detailed than I would have personally liked. For example, when Jordan was learning from the *New York*

Times that it would be asked for bases for U.S. troops. So there were political problems with that.

There was also a warning to Saddam that, which Tom Ricks' piece sort of reiterates today, that you know we may hit Baghdad with ground forces at a different point in this campaign than you think. I would just as soon not have told Saddam that because maybe he gets sloppy and maybe he says I'm going to get two or three weeks notice in the form of an air campaign. I can survive that. I know how to hide from bombs. I can go down into my bunkers, I can move around. So if my strategy of dividing the coalition really fails and the Americans go to war anyway I'll have a few weeks to maneuver about and figure out my underground system of communicating with my forces inside Baghdad, but the July leaks to the *New York Times* and now the Tom Ricks story today reminds Saddam that this could look like a much different sort of battle plan.

So I think there was a little too much detail. On the other hand, let's not make too much of it. Saddam knows that we have the ability to move into his country and penetrate many hundreds of kilometers quickly. He knows his air defenses in the north and the south are a mess. He knows that in Afghanistan we had a whole different style of warfare than we did in Desert Storm. My guess is we would not have caught him napping even if we had been very tight-lipped about what we're planning.

MR. STEINBERG: Any chance that this is a message to generals inside Iraq to say here's our plan, it's a good one, we're coming, maybe you better act now?

MR. O'HANLON: That's a very good question. I think if I were Saddam Hussein I'd be spending every, not just Saturday night, but Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday -- showing movies to my troops and the movie would usually be *Blackhawk Down*. You want to create the idea that we, the Americans, don't have the guts for urban combat, and if we just hang in there, let the Americans come up, let them come up into our trap and then give them a blood nose in Baghdad for a couple of days they'll back off. That's the message you want to send. It's not a totally crazy strategy. I mean it's wrong, but it's not totally without a lot of support in the sense that civilian casualties are going to be numerous, they're going to be visibly televised around the world on al-Jazeera and other channels. We're going to have a lot of political pressure on us to stop this thing. On top of that we have shown an uncertain amount of stomach for urban combat in the recent past and I think that's probably part of Saddam's strategy.

So to the extent that we show him that we've already thought of that and we already have a strategy that would deal with the urban setting and it's not going to be *Blackhawk Down* revisited, I think that maybe we hope we can convince some of his generals if not Saddam himself to take us seriously. But what are the chances? I don't know.

MR. STEINBERG: Obviously the big news on the inspection front is the discovery of the modifications to the Al Samoud. Clearly in Bush's view a technical violation of the agreement. Any military significance to the fact that they may have a greater missile capability than they're allowed under the [inaudible]?

MR. O'HANLON: That's a tough question because Kuwait's close enough that every 10 or 20 or 30 or 40 kilometers helps if you're trying to attack Kuwait City. On the other hand, I would love it if Iraq's worst threat to any neighboring country was its lousy ballistic missile force -- a force they can't even properly test. We all know what happened with those SCUDS and their descent in Desert Storm. Any chemical or biological agents that were in those warheads of any Iraqi ballistic missile I bet would be destroyed upon reentry before they could reach populated areas. Ballistic missiles are not a good way to distribute these kinds of agents to begin with because of course you bring everything down in one place. You really want an airplane or a drone to do this sort of dissemination, not a ballistic missile.

So in broader military terms I would say no, the significance is not that great. But in the sense of Kuwait City being more and more easily accessed by a missile with a little more than 150 kilometers range, in that narrow sense, yes there is some importance to it.

MR. STEINBERG: Why don't we turn to your questions now.

QUESTION: Craig Gilver with the *Milwaukee Journal*.

I guess this is a question for Mr. Orr. Was Resolution 1441 so ambiguous that in a literal sense at least it accommodates both the French and the U.S. position? Or if not, is one side willfully misreading it?



MR. ORR: It's a great question. The UN is quite skilled in the art of crafting resolutions to give everyone a chance to say that they won.

1441 leans pretty strongly towards the U.S. position. It was much more what the U.S. wanted. France claims some victory there but I think the issue now is that legally the U.S. is standing pretty strong on 1441. The question is politically if there's no other resolution will all the U.S. allies be able to bring their publics along for the campaign, not only the military campaign but the political campaign to follow.

There are a lot of governments that are going straight into the teeth of their public opinion right now, in the region and outside the region. So I think it's not really the legal basis of these resolutions at this point that matters. The U.S. kind of won that battle in the last round. It's much more the political coalition basis.

MR. GORDON: I think 1441 itself is not in fact ambiguous, but there was always a different intersection of it. In other words, what Bob said about it leaning towards the American side, if you read the text it does say a final opportunity, as the White House keeps pointing out. Not penultimate, not second to last but a final opportunity. And it says that Iraq has to fully declare all of its weapons and correctively cooperate. It's pretty clear in there.

The problem is that some Europeans, and I think the French, still wanted to believe that the onus would be on the inspections and it didn't necessarily mean if you didn't do both of those things that you would go to war.

The problem though for the French now, it seems to me -- Many in the Bush Administration were worried about falling into a UN trap, an inspection trap by going to the UN. I think the problem that the French are now in is they fall into the UN trap by agreeing to 1441 which puts the onus on Iraq. Because they have an argument that one could make that it's still not worth going to war. That where we are now and having inspections is better than going to war. That's a credible argument. Unfortunately, it's just not consistent with 1441 and they're the ones who are in the UN trap by their own logic, I think.

QUESTION: Sayed Erkat from *Erkutz* Newspaper.

Could it be that there is such an overwhelming opposition to war, I mean outside the American public and probably in Israel, this war is not very popular, especially when they listen to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing the other day. These guys talk about war, they have great war planning, but nobody talks about what's going to happen afterwards. They see this thing is working. They don't want to be trapped into let's say a weather kind of timetable and so on. Could that be the reason why the French are actually -- To go along with your position, that actually have taken a principled position?

MR. GORDON: If you're asking whether they're genuinely opposed to war yes. That's what I began with. I think some in the U.S. are actually surprised by the way it's rising as time moves on.

But you're right. The way that this latest Osama bin Laden tape was seen in the U.S., in this Administration and in Europe, it's totally divergent. Colin Powell is coming forwards and saying this shows that there's a link and all the more reason to invade Iraq. I think large majorities of Europeans in the world are thinking just the opposite. This shows that the threat of attacking Iraq and potentially occupying it could actually increase terrorist and support for bin Laden. That's I think why you're seeing this opposition and why my very first point was we don't need to sort of stand around and wonder what could be driving these people. There are a lot of concerns out there and they're only rising with each passing day.

MR. STEINBERG: Again just to reinforce the point that Phil made before, the problem now is if France had taken a principled position before 1441 it would have some credibility. But having agreed that the threat was sufficient to justify a final warning it becomes very difficult then to back off and say we didn't really mean it because that's been the problem all along. It just reinforces the point that Secretary Rumsfeld made very strongly at the Munich conference this weekend -- 16 resolutions, no action, the United States heeded the views of allies to go back for one more warning to Iraq. And the point at which it would have made sense to make the principled stand was before this.

Now, in addition to questioning whether it's a principled stance or not the question becomes is

France in effect, having played the game with the UN to try to limit the freedom of maneuver of the United States, actually in the process of destroying the Security Council as a result of it.

MR. GORDON: It links back to Bob's point about the nine votes for the vetoes. If the U.S. stops short of actually asking for all necessary means and simply says a declaration that Iraq is in material breach, for France to veto that, I mean keep in mind that 1441 said that they were already in material breach. So to veto a new resolution saying they're in material breach would somehow be to suggest that in the last couple of months they're doing better than they were beforehand. That's when the credibility of the UN really is at stake.

MR. ORR: The U.S.-U.K. resolution as it stands right now has three parts. It is in further material breach, declares that Iraq is in further material breach; that essentially there is no hope of resolution on the current path; and third, that therefore it doesn't use the term "all necessary means" it uses "serious consequences" that to continue in this path will incur "serious consequences".

You can play with that language and get a resolution that does not say this authorizes war. No such resolution will be passed. Anything that authorizes war won't be passed. But you're not, war's not that far away right now to come up with a formulation that over nine countries and probably including Russia and China could sign onto so I don't think it's out of the reach for the U.S.. We could still get a resolution.

QUESTION: I'm Sarah Fritz with the *St. Pete Times*. I have a two-part question.

First for Mr. O'Hanlon. Is there any part of the Ricks story that you disagree with or do you know anything more than what he wrote? In other words, could you more or less put the role of these people in some kind of context? Is this precisely the same role they played in Afghanistan or is there something different about it?

And secondly, could it possibly be that the Administration is very glad to have this debate with France in order to distract from the very thing that's going on on the ground in Iraq already?

MR. O'HANLON: I think what the story says, and I certainly don't have any more information beyond it, is that the part that we already knew was going to be easy maybe is going to be even easier. In other words, going into northern Iraq in particular and western Iraq, no one expected those operations to be very hard although obviously when you get into some of the oil facilities. The big question is who wins the race to the oil facilities. We're trying to do whatever we can to improve our chances of succeeding in that mission. That was never thought to be easy. So perhaps this does help us in that regard.

But these Special Forces are not people walking around the streets of Baghdad with funny disguises having a café and figuring out which building might have the chemical weapons down the street. I don't think they're doing very much of that. I think these people are in the border regions of Iraq

or in the desert regions or in the Kurd and Shia regions and trying to make the first part of the war go more easily. That first part again was never going to be the hardest part. It is important because we do want to protect oil and other kinds of infrastructure and minority populations in those regions, but I see it as helping us do something we're already going to have success at accomplishing for the most part regardless, and the big part is still unanswered which is how much can Special Forces really help us inside of Baghdad. There I doubt that they're doing anything today and I question their ability to do much in the future.

MR. GORDON: I can't think of a single way in which the Bush Administration is happy that this is going on with France, even if it's keeping Special Ops off the front page.

It was going to be hard enough to invade Iraq and impose stability if you had international consensus, UN Security Council resolution, all of that. And then it was going to be slightly harder if the French and the Germans were isolated. But the more the French are managing to whip up public opinion and persuade the Russians and others that maybe we really can stand up to the U.S. and we shouldn't -- and they're having some success in doing that. Probably not enough. But some success. And even getting close to forcing the U.S. to do this without a second resolution which makes it very difficult for Tony Blair and it makes it very difficult for us once we're in there without it.

So I think far from being happy to have something else to talk about this is -- And I think you see the irritation and the comments about France and Germany. I don't think they're happy about this at all. That's an understatement.

MR. STEINBERG: I think that's right, although one could be very conspiratorial about this. I don't think they would have precipitated this. But that there are two potentially indirect positive consequences. One, this clearly is going to lead Saddam Hussein to feel that war is less inevitable. And clearly one of the great fears of the Administration is a last-minute concession by Saddam in which he says okay, here's some of my chemical weapons. In my judgment that would seriously derail the ability to go to war. Therefore, and the experience we all had back in November of '98, this sort of -- The Administration has to be preoccupied with a very very last minute concession which isn't good enough to really represent disarmament but is enough to really change the public opinion dialogue.

The more he doesn't think he's at the last moment the less likely it is that he's going to make that concession. And similarly, the more he thinks he's got a chance to avoid war, the less well prepared he's going to be in the timing.

So while I agree with you it's inconceivable that the Administration would have deliberately provoked this, because the net cost of this disagreement are way higher than the benefits. Nonetheless, it may have the inadvertent positive benefits of having that kind of impact.

QUESTION: Dan Myers from the Kuwait Information Office.

This question might be more for Mr. Gordon. I'm just wondering, there's been a lot written in the papers about the political benefits for the French and Germans of kind of adopting an anti war in Iraq stance. I'm wondering if in the long term this is damaging to the relationship with the United States and NATO in things like that, if there will be repercussions and it's going to damage Chirac and Schroeder in Germany and France.

MR. GORDON: That's a good question. That obviously goes back to Jim's earlier point that it depends on how it goes. Everything we're talking about is actually secondary to how well the operation goes. UN resolution, unit and so on. What really will matter most is whether this is a swift, clean operation with few casualties that actually liberate the Iraqi people and there's joy in the streets, or if there are a lot of casualties bogged down and the opposite of all of that. That's the most important factor which will have to do with their political futures. The same is true for Blair.

But you've also given me the opportunity to stress again that let's not project our public mood on them when we think that they're politically isolated and they're taking great risks. It's not such a great risk for a French President when 80 percent of his public is against the war and 75 percent of his public thinks he should veto a resolution supporting war. And every time he opens the newspaper he's reading encouragement from pundits, opposition politicians, NGOs and everyone to block the war. In his own context it's not a political risk to do what he's doing. It makes perfect sense.

It would be a political risk to do the opposite with Mr. Tony Blair. So we do need to keep that in mind. I think it explains a lot about what the French and German leaders are doing. The ones taking political risks are the Spanish, Italian and British leaders because if it doesn't go well their necks are on the line.

MR. STEINBERG: Let me push you on that. Imagine the scenario that I think many in the Administration anticipate which is we go in relatively successful and quick, and that we get in, there's dancing in the streets of Baghdad, large caches of chemical weapons are found, centrifuges in the process of being assembled. What does that do politically to Schroeder, to Chirac? Where the United States may be gracious, may not be gracious. But basically says you were wrong and we were right.

MR. GORDON: Clearly it makes them look stupid. [Laughter]

MR. STEINBERG: But politically.

MR. GORDON: Politically it's sort of Democrats voting against the first Gulf War Resolution and paid a price for ten years for not having been on the right side of the issue and they were very conscious of that.

Politically I think it's different with Chirac and Schroeder. Chirac, don't forget, is in the strongest political position as you can be. He was massively reelected for a second term. He's not running again. He's got five years ahead of him. He can do whatever he wants on this. So as a political price, there are

few risks for him on that. And even under that scenario, which is a slight risk for him. There are no no-risk options for any politician in this thing. You've got to go one way or the other.

But even under that circumstance, unless we really find a major nuclear program and all sorts of terrorist notes about blowing up Paris and all sorts of things, then he says -- Because it's not going to be as pretty as that. And then he says to his population, look, containment was working. They weren't going to get a nuclear weapon. As it is we went in there, it's messy, give it a couple of years it will be even more messy. I don't think there's a huge risk that he completely gets blown out of the water.

Schroeder's a bit different. He in a way is already politically blown out of the water. The only reason he's Chancellor today is he gambled on this politically and rolled the dice in a high risk thing and he's isolated and he's starting to pay a bit of a price for this, and you probably heard that in Munich. A lot of the opposition and [Starber] has come around to criticize him. But clearly -- I always defer to politicians on their own calculation of their own political risk. They always know more than we do and we tell them oh, that's very risky. The reason they're leading politicians is they know this better than we do and they make their decisions based on political calculations.

MR. STEINBERG: I'd just underscore the point that in Munich [Anle Merkle] said specifically that she would have signed the letter that the eight other Europeans signed [to the United States], so it's now clearly at play. I do think that if it comes out the other way that this could have --

MR. GORDON: Especially where Schroeder is vulnerable anyway and no bandwagon. But Chirac also said he could have signed the letter.

QUESTION: My name is William Eden. I'm a freelance writer.

No one has mentioned the U2 overflight change. I wondered is that marginal and insignificant?

MR. O'HANLON: That's a good question. I think of course we have imaging satellites that we're spending a lot of time keeping over Iraq or having them fly over Iraq as often as we can. Of course they keep moving. There are six of them that are probably looking as often as we can possibly have them look. What that doesn't allow you to do, however, is maintain perfect continuity.

But to the extent you're looking to do more of what Powell presented a short time ago to the UN and have evidence of trucks moving in and out, you want U2s to maintain the ability to stare down continuously.

You can do some of that using combat jets in the no-fly zones, but of course again you've got to keep doing a handoff mission from one combat jet to the next and it's very inconvenient to do that. So the U2 would make life easier. It would provide more of these little smoking guns on a facility-by-facility basis the way that Powell was able to produce that evidence in his UN address.

Fundamentally, though, I don't think it makes much difference. It's not as if you're going to find what's going on inside of buildings from U2s. They don't have any major sensors that other spy satellites don't have or other aircraft don't have. They're not going to know what's going on in a basement or in a mobile weapons laboratory that's close to the outside. They're generally just going to help you maintain that continuity of coverage over individual suspicious sites. So for that reason it would help us develop more evidence against Saddam perhaps but it's not going to radically change the basic situation. It's not going to help us figure out in all likelihood where his weapons of mass destruction stocks already are because he's probably not moving those very much. And if there is any nuclear program it's probably not going to help us find that either because it's going to be underground and fixed. These U2s might see truck traffic in and out of a given facility but they can't really know what's in the trucks or inside the building.

MR. STEINBERG: Ironically, Saddam Hussein is looking for credit in the compliance mark-up for agreeing to something which he had previously agreed to under the old regime. So he in effect, even before he agreed to this he was giving less compliance and less support to UNMVIC than he had given UNSCOM. So it's a very classic Saddam Hussein sort of concession, but it's hard to say that he's moved forward on compliance when he's really only back to where we were in 1998.

QUESTION: [inaudible], Turkey [inaudible] Media Group.

Can the handling of the Iraq case in the UN be an important test for North Korea and Iran for second step? How will Iraq case impact these two countries or others with nuclear programs?

MR. STEINBERG: Let me start by asking Bob particularly to reflect on the fact that there's now this debate about whether the North Korea issue should be brought to the UN or not.

MR. ORR: Well, as of this morning IAEA sent their recommendations to the UN. Does the Security Council take it up? Everyone in Asia is watching this question -- in South Korea, in North Korea, and in all the neighboring states. What happens in Iraq is definitely understood in the region to directly bear on the North Korean calculations of whether or not they should seek a deal and move on with negotiations.

I don't think that the Security Council will become the prime body addressing the North Korean nuclear question. It may be debated there, but that's not where any resolution is going to come. The Administration has been talking about a multilateral solution, but multilateral in this case does not necessarily mean UN. It more likely means the key parties around the Korean Peninsula.

So I think the calculation will affect what happens on Iraq and the UN, it will affect everyone's calculations, but I don't think it will become the principle venue for solving the Korean crisis in particular.

MR. STEINBERG: It's interesting because you can argue this both ways. You can argue that

a successful U.S.-led effort in Iraq will convince Iran and North Korea that the United States means business, that it would be very dangerous for them to continue down this path, and therefore we would have more leverage in trying to convince them not to [inaudible].

But the other lesson you might learn is that the reason we were able to deal with Iraq is because they didn't have nuclear weapons. What North Korea in particular needs to do is quickly build up a stock of nuclear weapons so that it's not at risk of the kind of action that we're going to take against Iraq. Frankly, I think it's very difficult to judge which way that comes out. I don't know whether my colleagues have a view on that or not.

MR. GORDON: I have a view, and I think it's the latter. I think that's exactly what we're seeing. North Korea has decided, and it makes sense, that -- Why are we pushing military solution in Iraq but not North Korea? Because North Korea is a real military threat to us and its neighbors and Iraq is not. There are other elements of a UN Security Council resolution in Iraq and not North Korea, but from Pyongyang's point of view, I think the latter explanation makes more sense.

MR. O'HANLON: It could be true. But we also know the North Koreans of course were developing the uranium enrichment facility in the late 1990s when it looked like Iraq was not going to be invaded, and so you could say North Korea's calculation has changed as a result of being put in the axis of evil and fearing Bush Administration preemption doctrine, and now the decision on regime change most likely coming soon in regard to Iraq.

So I just think we don't know. I think the North Koreans are probably keeping both options open. The option of either cashing in on this nuclear program in some way or the option of viewing it at least as a deterrent if they can't produce something more tangible to their benefit. I'd have a hard time, like you, deciding which of the effects is greater. Somewhat different competing effects than the ones you mentioned, but the same sort of uncertainty in the end.

QUESTION: I'm Jim Burn. I'm with Community Development Publications.

I think I'm asking my question more as a concerned citizen than as a journalist. Just by way of background, some of the most sophisticated coverage of this whole issue is being done by National Catholic Reporter, and people around the world and also here in Washington, in the context of an argument over the just war theory.

Now amazingly there's a lot of movement on that theory even in Rome. It used to be a central part of it was unless you had been attacked you couldn't justify attacking someone else. There's movement on that because we have the case of situations that were made much worse by us not doing anything militarily. There are countless of those in recent years.

I'm wondering just as a simple, practical, prudential judgment, do the four of you believe Saddam's threat is really worth a war? What do you think? [Laughter]

MR. STEINBERG: I'm sure we all have views on this and I'll let Mike start if he wants.
[Laughter]

MR. O'HANLON: I think it's a close call. Let me address the moral side of the question.

I've been a skeptic for much of the last year's debate on the desirability of overthrowing Saddam. I went along with the 1414 logic and proposed something like that. I now find myself with few resorts except to force the President on a decision to use force because I think the peaceful approach failed, or the chance Saddam had to disarm failed. But in moral terms you have to weigh essentially the suffering of the Iraqi people under Saddam versus the suffering of the Iraqi people in the short term during a war. When I do that calculation, even though I think the war could be fairly tough and fairly bloody, I think the Iraqi people on balance will be better off. I'm less nervous about making the judgment that this war will benefit them than I am about making the judgment that it will benefit us because I worry about the threat of backlash and the threat of terrorism possibly going up substantially as a result of this. But in the moral terms, just war theory, I actually support the idea that overthrowing Saddam Hussein is for the benefit of the Iraqi people and I would see that as a definite plus on the ledger when you look at the pros and cons.

MR. GORDON: Mike bought me a little time. [Laughter]

I'll just make two points. One is in the context of just war theory and international law it is important to note, as I think you suggested, we are in a different world now. Those debates all took place before countries had the capability of really wiping out hundreds, thousands and millions of people and that's why it is a different debate and I think the Administration has a point that you can't think of it in the same terms as you thought of wars for the past hundreds of years.

That brings me to my second point about whether it's worth it or not on which I think the essential element for me at least, everyone comes to a different judgment, is the nuclear one.

I think that rather than taking the risk that Saddam Hussein could build a nuclear weapon which I'm strongly distinguishing from biological and chemical, it is worth it. Even if this is going to be a very costly war, to prevent him from having nuclear weapons I would be for that and I have been for that and I think that's why I think the Bush Administration was right to threaten force. Having no inspectors at all and letting Saddam do whatever he wants, over time the risk was too high to get a nuclear weapon.

For me the calculation changes once you're reassured on the nuclear front. In other words I think containment with a serious inspection team that could stop him from getting nukes, that's what tips it for me from being worth the cost and risk to being no longer worth the cost and risk.

MR. ORR: I'll take a shot since I've had two people to buy a little time.

Is the threat posed by Saddam worth war? I think yes. That does not mean, however, that you should not take every possible measure to minimize the possibility of things going wrong, both in the war and after the war. I'm still incredibly concerned about the lack of planning for what comes after -- not just in Iraq but in other countries in the region. There is going to be huge fallout here. Even if the war is successful. And saying that the threat is worth going to war does not mean that we have lined up all our ducks such that we should go to war now. The planning on post war Iraq has not been done properly. It's just not there yet. And as every good general that I've spoken to has said, you don't plan for what comes after after the war is over. It has to happen before the war. It's not done now. So if this is going to be a short war we could end up with some very bad consequences if we don't take care of those pieces now.

MR. STEINBERG: I will not hide beneath the moderator's posture.

I also agree that the threat justifies it but I think it's very important to remember the context. We are in the position we are with Iraq because of the terms in which the first war against Iraq came to an end. That is, there was a judgment made and debated about the willingness not to go to Baghdad and to overthrow the regime. The judgment was that we will be prepared to live with Saddam Hussein from an international security point of view, but only if he did not have weapons of mass destruction. The structure that we developed through the UN Security Council in Resolution 686 and 687 set a set of conditions that basically represented the judgment of the international community about what risk was worth running and what risk was not worth running.

That means two things, which is there was a reason to think, and when we saw it, when we went in in 1991 that this was a man who was both willing to and capable of developing nuclear weapons, and left on his own clearly would because we saw that he had a robust program that was very close to realizing a nuclear ambition. So this was a real objective of his and a real threat that was not acceptable to the international community.

Second, we also believed that this was a framework within which we could manage these challenges in the future. After all, we have to remember that this is in the context of the first President Bush and the new world order. That there was an attempt to try to find vehicles other than unilateral U.S. action to deal with the threats going forward in the post Cold War era.

It's very important to the long-term viability of those kinds of solutions to have some credibility that when the international community makes a judgment about what risks are threats to peace and security under Chapter 7, that we mean it. We've had 12 years of the Council at least not meaning it. We've now come together once again under 1441 to say yep, actually we were right the first time in 687.

To walk away from it now is to say to future Saddam Husseins as well as this one that you don't have to worry about this. You may have to worry about unilateral action by the United States, but that's the only problem you're going to have to deal with. And that's bad both in terms of our interest in non-proliferation and resisting threats to peace and security, but also because I think it's not in our interest to

put the United States in a position where we must act by ourselves because there will be no other credible threat that could be used. And even if we wanted to go to the UN it wouldn't be useful because no one would take seriously that that was an element of a strategy to deal with threats to peace and security.

So I think there's a great deal at stake here. The consequences of them having a nuclear weapon and the disabling of the multilateral mechanisms to deal with it I think would be very costly for us in the long term.

QUESTION: You touched on the threat of terrorism -- [inaudible] Hammond.

Could you perhaps, we know the U.S. position, the Administration's position given the recent reappearance of Osama bin Laden, but could you touch on how you think the other members of the Security Council view that? Do they see it as the U.S. Administration does in terms of evidence, of confirmation that there are linkages between Iraq and al Qaeda? Or do they see it the other way around, that attacking Iraq could indeed fuel terrorist activity?

MR. ORR: I think in the first instance the issue of how the other members of the Security Council see the terrorist threat, there's a great deal of correspondence of views among virtually all the members of the Council on the issue of al Qaeda. Cooperation is pretty broad and deep on law enforcement. Even as we're having the horrible spats at the political level with France and Germany, law enforcement cooperation is going forward quite aggressively between the U.S., France and Germany. But that is mostly on the question of al Qaeda.

When it comes to the question of Iraq and will that cause more problems that may not be worth it on the side of potential terrorism, I think that's where the road starts to diverge. I think, the Europeans, not just France and Germany but more broadly in this case, you can speak a little bit of the Europeans starting to think that it causes a lot more problems.

The U.S. in that calculus starts to look like it's on a road much more by itself.

MR. STEINBERG: Specifically I would say that I think the least persuasive part of Secretary Powell's presentation and subsequent things is the link between al Qaeda and Iraq and I think that for many European capitals, especially the ones who are actually supportive of the United States, it's a worrisome argument precisely because it seems to be weak. It undercuts the stronger arguments and suggests that the Administration is looking for any argument it can find, and that therefore seriousness about the WMD threat is not as great and that they simply want a reason to go in against Iraq. So I think it is, for Europeans, this has been very troubling.

MR. GORDON: And that undercuts support for our war. I think Richard Cohen's piece in the *Post* this morning says that very well. I don't think any way you read Osama's statement yesterday shows a link between him and the regime that we're planning to overthrow. He calls it the socialist infidel

regime, he aligns himself with the Iraqi people and asks them to rise up against us.

When we use that to justify the war in Iraq it leads that skeptical international opinion, which already thinks we're doing this for oil and our own national narrowly defined interests, it leads them to think that's precisely what we're doing. There are good reasons to go to war and arguments for that and we'd be much better off sticking to those than stretching it to this point.

QUESTION: Michael Backfisch, *German Business Daily* [inaudible].

Given the fact that we have other challenges beyond Iraq and North Korea. We have Iran pursuing its own so-called peaceful nuclear program, we have Syria trying to do the same, we have the tensions between India and Pakistan. What does that mean in view of the fact that the Administration has fiercely decided to tackle all the nexus between weapons of mass destruction and terrorism? What does that mean for future risks within the United Nations, NATO, and with a gap on the world political scene?

The question to Phil Gordon.

MR. GORDON: Michael you've covered enormous amounts of ground in that question, what does this all mean for --

The risks are, by defining this issue in the way that it's been defined, and the United States has said we will define when there's a threat and we will decide how and when to deal with it. Whether anybody likes it or not, it raises great possibilities of the risks that you're talking about. That's what we're seeing precisely now. We've got riffs within the UN Security Council, we've got riffs within the NATO Alliance and trans-Atlantic relation in general, we've got riffs within the European Union. One of the things I worry about most is even if the United States is on firm ground in wanting to confront this threat and insisting that previous UN Security Council resolutions be enforced, and even if it is also true that the reality is that we wouldn't even be where we are now if the U.S. hadn't unilaterally threatened to use force. All of that is true and yet still one of the things I worry about most is that we come out of this process with the whole world against us. By defining it in the way we've defined it and not in my view doing enough diplomacy -- I know Colin Powell would say he's been doing a lot of diplomacy. But I think by giving the impression that it's simply up to us to decide what the threats are and how to deal with it, if we end up at the end of this road occupying Iraq ourselves and world opinion against us, I think that is a big net negative for the United States and U.S. foreign policy. That's why we need to be continuing to try as hard as we can to get support for what we're doing and not end up doing it alone.

QUESTION: Miles Benson with Newhouse Newspapers.

You made the case a few minutes ago that an attack on Iraq is going to exaggerate the terrorist threat or quite likely exaggerate the terrorist threat against the U.S. over time. Is there any possible way, any scenario under which our actions in Iraq would diminish the threat of future terrorist actions against

the U.S.?

MR. STEINBERG: I think it is undeniably the case in the short term that the threat will go up. The threat went up in 1991 when we attacked Iraq. There was a measurable increase in the number of threats and attempted attacks. So I think that's really, it would be hard to argue that the situation now is less dangerous or less costly. Just the possibility of relatively unplanned efforts and acting out against U.S. interests I think are going to be extremely high in the run-up to and the immediate aftermath.

In the long term it's a much more uncertain question. A lot of it depends both on one, how the war goes; and two, what happens after. It depends on how we manage the transition in Iraq and whether we're seen as supporting efforts of the Iraqi people to have a better life, that it's not the U.S. coming in to control things or trying to run the Middle East, but rather trying to empower the Iraqis themselves to have more control over their future. It depends on how we deal with other governments in the region. It depends on how we deal with the Israel and Palestinian question. There are so many things that we may or may not do in the aftermath of a military action, which I think will have a profound impact on the long-term terrorist threat. If we handle it right, it is conceivable that this will be a net plus in terms of our dealing with the problem. It will take a tremendous amount of engagement and a willingness not to see this as a one-off effort, but really a major responsibility to deal with the sources of anger and resentment against the United States.

So I really think that it diverges out. I would not be prepared to say for sure that it's going to be a long-term negative effect.

QUESTION: Gary Mitchell.

This is one of these I think, one of the I can't believe you're going to ask this question question, but given our inability so far to track down Osama bin Laden, I'm interested to know whether this group thinks it's axiomatic that we will come away from whatever it is we do in Iraq with Saddam Hussein's head on a plate. And if we don't, what are the sort of short and long term implications of not getting Hussein and therefore how does one sort of define victory in Iraq?

MR. STEINBERG: I think that's an O'Hanlon question.

MR. O'HANLON: Unless you disagree with what I'm about to say which is it doesn't matter strategically if you don't get Saddam. I worry about a hundred things before I worry about that question. He cannot retain control of the country if we go to war against him and that's the important strategic issue. None of us will feel as good about it, it won't be as emotionally satisfying, but strategically I don't see any hope for him of coming back into power if he's displaced, and I see no hope for him of sustaining any kind of control over the country by hopping from one safehouse to another. So strategically it's not that important of a question.

QUESTION: [inaudible], I work with the Bosnian Support Committee.

You can't help but understand why these people that are demonstrating against the war are against the United States looking as an aggressor because of their stance in the Palestine-Israeli War. The United States really didn't make any effort to support Mitzna and they seem to be tremendously behind Sharon who is aggressive. Right after that we're now saying we're going to do another aggressive act, go into a country without the support of the Europeans. Although I agree that for human rights reasons that the war could be successful and would be helpful to the people, I can understand why these people are demonstrating and thinking that we are aggressive.

I would just like you to talk about that a bit. Because this Israeli-Palestinian thing is what Osama bin Laden said, although he's just using the Palestinians and the terrorists are just using these people and going into classrooms on BBC. On BBC they had a program where they showed Hamas going into the classrooms of young children in these occupied territories and teaching them to be suicide bombers. So the Palestinians are really having problems in all areas. If you could speak to that.

MR. STEINBERG: I think it would have been surprising for any Administration to decide they were going to support Mitzna or anybody else in the election, and since the Israeli people didn't support him, it would especially be surprising that the United States would. There's a reason why the Israeli people, even so I think there's strong support for a peace settlement in Israel. I feel under the current environment that the kind of message that Mitzna was offering was not the one that they wanted to pursue.

Many of us have disagreements with the Administration about its level of commitment and involvement in trying to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian question but I think it's hard to equate that with saying that that's somehow a U.S. aggression. And similarly, whatever we think about the balance on going to war in Iraq, it's also hard to see this as an aggression. You just can't step away from the fact that Saddam Hussein doesn't have to do much to avoid a war. He's had 13 years to agree to dismantle his weapons of mass destruction. I do not believe it would be very difficult for him to satisfy Hans Blix if he were at all serious about doing it. Blix is not out there to sort or create a war. I'm sure it's the last thing in the world that he wants to have happen. But notwithstanding that and all the reservations that the Administration had about Blix's toughness, Saddam Hussein has shown absolutely no evidence at all that he wants to show that he doesn't have a WMD program. It's very difficult to understand that or to say that trying to deal with that problem represents an act of aggression.

So I think that it is true that eventually the United States and Israel are going to have to come to terms with some kind of resolution of the crisis, and it won't be solved entirely militarily. But I don't think that links to seeing the action against Iraq as an act of aggression. I think it is more a question of how does the United States show that it is not applying a sort of a short term solution to the problem and not understanding that these other problems have to be dealt with as well.

MR. GORDON: I'd just add a couple of things.

One, to reinforce that, no matter what you think of the Israeli-Palestine thing, it's hard to see that as a reason to do nothing on Iraq and allow Saddam to get a nuclear weapon.

Second, I agree with you that the United States is paying a price and it's harder to build support for Iraq because of what is perceived to be a lack of sympathy for what's going on in Israel-Palestine. The alignment with Sharon is perceived throughout the Arab world and much of Europe as one-sidedness and it's making us, it's harder for us to build support for what we want to do in Iraq.

And three, I also agree with the notion that the two things are linked and that so long as the violence persists between Israelis and Palestinians and is perceived the way it is, that will be fuel for the war on terrorism, even if Osama bin Laden is using it purely cynically, it doesn't change the reality that it is fuel and that it is probably doing more to stimulate terrorism in the world than what was going on in Iraq.

Having said all of that, I wish I could be as confident as the peace protesters and you that there was a quick and easy way of dealing with this. I think the Administration's attitude, and I've also been critical of some of the way they've gone about it, and particularly the impression that they give that it doesn't matter, secondary issue, not interested. Beyond that critique, they are not necessarily wrong that there hasn't been a partner on the Palestinian side, that the Clinton Administration invested eight years doing everything it could to bring about Arab-Israeli peace and it failed. I don't think that's necessarily wrong.

Therefore, the real test comes after Iraq. Then will be the time and the world will be watching and the Arabs will be watching and the Europeans will be watching. Okay, now that you've done Iraq are you going to seriously invest and take political risks and try to bring about Arab-Israeli peace? I hope the answer to that is yes. But then as now, it will depend on people on both sides being willing to do what they haven't been willing to do for decades, but in particular for the past several years.

QUESTION: I'm Jay Branning. I'm from Georgetown University.

I'd just like to ask Jim if he could tell us whether the Administration would really be doing a lot different in North Korea if it wasn't preoccupied with what's going on in Iraq. It seems that their inclination would be not to talk with them unless it's under the right circumstances. Would they be doing a lot different things militarily? Would we have a lot different stance than North Korea if Iraq were somehow contained?

MR. STEINBERG: I'll take a shot at it but I'd like to ask Mike to weigh in as well.

I think the answer is yes, Jay. I think that ironically the Administration, although they are not nominally willing to talk, are also not willing to take seriously this problem, and I think they would have taken it more seriously but for the fact that they simply do not want two crises to deal with at the same time. Whatever the nominal ability to deal with two military contingencies, they simply do not want to

have that going on at the same time that this very complex, difficult and risky operation is going to take place in Iraq.

So I think what one would have seen is a much tougher stance in the first instance to say, to cross the red line. I mean this would have been the first pin on the axis of evil, and that they would have said no, we're not going to talk. But also there are real consequences for you to move forward.

I just can't imagine absent Iraq that the Administration would simply shrug its shoulders while the Iraqis move the fuel rods, sorry the North Koreans move the fuel rods, take all these steps and say well, you know, it's not a crisis, we can live with it. Obviously it's hard to know, but I think it's having a huge impact on how they're pursuing it.

MR. O'HANLON: I agree fully with Jim, and I would just simply add the issue is political and strategic, not military. It's not that we don't have the military wherewithal to again threaten airstrikes against Yongbyon or what have you and to feel pretty good about our ability to help the South Koreans defend themselves.

Yes, it would be hard to deploy forces to both places at the same time, but we have enough combat forces that we could reinforce our Korea position quite substantially, so I don't think that's the main constraint here. The constraint has to do with politics and strategy.

QUESTION: James Harding from *The Financial Times*.

I have a question for Philip Gordon and for Jim. About the letter. Do you think that there was a role that the U.S. Administration played in orchestrating or coordinating the letter? And is there any real long-term downside for the U.S. in having a divided Europe?

MR. GORDON: As far as I know there was no Administration role whatever. It's not to say that they weren't happy that the letter existed and that it was signed, but from what we know about this story, *The Wall Street Journal Europe* initiated the idea, asked [Fer Lestoni] to write it, got in touch with [Aznar], got in touch with Blair, it quickly built momentum and they decided to move ahead even without asking the French and the Germans to sign on.

So I don't think the Administration -- There are a lot of people in Europe and particularly in France who think this was the United States getting its Atlanticist allies to gang up, but that doesn't seem to be the story at all.

The bigger question of whether it's in the U.S. interest to see this or not, Europeans, and Valerie Giscard d'Estaing was here this week making the case that our deepest interest is in a united Europe. From an American point of view the obvious point is that it matters a lot more what Europe stands for and what it's willing to do than the degree to which it's united. If the result of a united Europe were a deep unit against what the United States is trying to do and the willingness to oppose it and not go

along, then obviously it's not in the U.S. interest.

There's a range of possibilities there, and I think that certainly for this Administration but probably for Americans in general, it's better to have a divided Europe where at least some of them are willing to come along. And I'll repeat what I said earlier, the divisions in Europe are not divisions about how to deal with Iraq. I think European publics and even leadership are pretty much on the same line about what the best thing to do with Iraq is and they would almost all prefer containment to war. But the divisions that we're seeing now are, some of them are not willing to pay the price in terms of their relationship with the United States. In that sense a divided Europe is probably better than a Europe that is unified in its opposition to the United States.

MR. STEINBERG: I would just say that while many people think there are unusually close ties between *The Wall Street Journal* and the Administration, I don't see any evidence that this was an orchestrated effort.

I agree with Phil, but I would say that I think clearly the United States does not have an interest in a unified Europe if it unifies against the United States. At the same time the United States needs to be careful about deliberately trying to drive wedges. So the fact of these letters both the eight and the V-10 I think is something that from the U.S. perspective is welcome because it is, we need the support and if we think we're right we should get it. But I also think that statements like Secretary Rumsfeld's talking about the old Europe and the new Europe I do think is unhelpful. I don't think we should have as an overall strategy simply to try to weaken the effort of integration and try to suggest that these are these permanent divisions within Europe going forward. I think we should stake our case on the substance of our position, make clear as we always have that one of the reasons why we have NATO is because we think we need a forum where it is not just the U.S. and the EU but a place where all the allies can come together as individual countries. But not to sort of appear to revel in the idea that there are these divisions between those who support us and those who don't.

Thank you all very much.

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