

A Brookings Iraq Series Briefing

THE POWER AND PERIL OF HIGH-SPEED WARFARE

**Will an Attack on Iraq be Clean and Quick --
or a Series of Nasty Surprises?**



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MR. JAMES B. STEINBERG: Good morning and welcome to our weekly briefing.

It was not a matter of having inside information that we scheduled our briefing this morning to talk about some of the military as well as the diplomatic dimensions of the current crisis, but I think it was fairly obvious as the timetable has gone along that we would be close if not in the middle of military operations as we start the day today. Obviously the nature of the start is itself a matter of great interest and we'll have a chance to talk about that this morning and the kind of operation that has already taken place, what we're likely to be seeing in the days ahead, what the choices are and what the likely implications are going to be.

With us this morning we have two distinguished members of the leadership of our Saban Center, Martin Indyk, the Director of the Saban Center and a Senior Fellow here at Brookings, and Ken Pollack, the Director of Research at the Saban Center, also a Senior Fellow at Brookings. And we're also delighted to welcome Rear Admiral John Sigler here this morning.

Admiral Sigler had an extraordinary career in the Navy. He is a graduate of the Naval Academy and also Stanford University and the Naval War College. But he served during his career in every U.S. theater of operation. And perhaps most significant of all during his final tour, Admiral Sigler was the J5, the plans and policy officer for Central Command, which gives him a unique perspective on the issues that we're going to talk about today.

What I'd like to do is begin by asking Admiral Sigler to talk a little bit about the unfolding military operation and what we can expect, how we should understand the bombing attack that took place last night and the broader campaign that's about to begin. Then Ken will look at the problem from the Iraqi side and how the Iraqis are going to be trying to respond to this. Then finally Martin will talk about the Israeli and Palestinian dimensions and the broader diplomatic issues that the United States and the international community are going to be facing in the days and weeks ahead.

Let me say by the way, we hoped perhaps that General Nash will be able to join us, but he is detained. I don't think he's been called up to active duty, but as you can imagine there are great demands on everybody these days.

So Admiral Sigler.



RADM JOHN SIGLER: Thank you.

When Ken called me and told me what the timing was, I've stayed reasonably current with what the plans look like and I was wondering at that point whether we were going to talk about the events to unfold or the events as they unfold, and obviously it's the latter.

He also asked me to talk about some things that perhaps would add a dimension or two that had not already been discussed either on the television or in the newspapers, and I've tried to keep current on all of that. There really isn't a lot that hasn't been written about on this operation. I think that's one of the remarkable parts about it. We all have a pretty good idea in general of what this plan looks like at this point.

I thought I would talk to my own personal strength which is planning and put perhaps some background information on planning and how it's unfolding so that helps you put your articles in perspective.

I'd like to start with this mantra that you hear over and over again that no plan survives contact with the enemy. In this case it appears that this plan didn't even survive no contact with the enemy. [Laughter] But actually, I'd like to debunk that mantra a little bit because it's not quite true.

In fact good plans are written with a lot of built-in flexibility. Particularly in our planning system they allow for very rapid change. They have multiple branches that take into account the what ifs, and they try to reduce to the minimum the amount of ad hocism that takes place in a war, that inevitably takes place in a war so that you can concentrate on those things that you haven't thought about and not worry so much about the ones that you have.

The major parts of a plan, there are major parts of all plans that have to be very well mapped out in great detail and generally do survive almost completely intact. I'll give you a couple of examples.

As you know, we had two major theater war plans. One was in Central Command, the other was in Pacific Command, the other in Pacific Command -- one for Korea, one for Iraq. We only have so many resources, so how do you apportion these constrained resources? That's part of the deliberate planning process.

The deployment plan that has to take place. How do you get the people and the material to flow in a sequenced way into a theater given that you only have so much lift? That's part of the plan that almost always survives intact. Although that can change and I'll tell you how it changes.

You have to make assumptions as you start the planning. One of the assumptions about

this particular conflict is are you going to see early use of chemical/biological weapons or are you not? That affects what kind of medical things you flow into theater, and of course those medical things compete with warfighters and ammunition and those kinds of things for this limited lift. So you have to make those kind of assumptions.

If something happens that wasn't in your initial assumption you have to have a plan that's flexible enough so you can change that rapidly. That's one of our transformations, by the way, and I'll talk a little bit more about that in my closing remarks.

The communications plans. There are, as you might imagine, a thousand circuits including voice circuits and datalinks. You have to deal with bandwidth and all those things. That communication plan has to be very detailed and has to accommodate when one circuit goes down what the backups are and so forth. That has to be laid out.

And there's something called the pre-ATO, the pre-Air Tasking Order which is basically the first three days of bombing and that's laid out in great detail before any conflict begins. That also can be changed.

What are the reasons that plans change? I'd like to take a slightly different view of this than most people do. You've got an enemy who's trying to mess up your plans, but again going back, we have to make assumptions and sometimes our assumptions are not entirely correct. That causes a change in the plans.

Each plan as you might imagine has thousands upon thousands of variables and with respect to those variables the world is the stochastic world. In other words, things happen with some probability. And I'd like to just for a moment say there's a big difference between good decisions and good outcomes. You can make perfect decisions and have very bad outcomes. I'll give you a weather analogy to this. Your weatherman says there's a 20 percent chance of rain tomorrow. You decide to go have a picnic and it does rain. That was a good decision based on what you knew but it was a bad outcome. The same thing in far more serious terms can happen during combat. So you have to be aware that there are no absolutes.

The outcome of this particular war is going to be somewhere along a continuum of possible outcomes. The best case is a capitulation within days and then we quickly achieve stability after that and you move on to a transformation of the government and the country.

The worst case at the other end of this continuum is we underestimated the resolve of the Republican Guard, we have a bloody urban combat that could last months, we have humanitarian problems and ongoing instability after combat.

The actual case, what will actually happen is somewhere in between those two. A really

good plan drives the outcome toward the best case. It won't get to the best case but it will drive it toward the best case if you've written a good plan, and I believe they have.

Let's talk about this plan a little bit. This is a combination of one of the two major theater war plans that I mentioned earlier that was written after 1991, after Desert Storm, and has been continuously updated since then. And, I say it's a combination, it's a combination of that and a branch plan that was written in early 1999. It was called Desert Crossing. I'll talk about that name in a second. But it had two parts to it, this branch plan to the major war plan. One was how to change the regime and the other was what to do afterwards. The reason it had two parts to it was that that regime change could happen because Saddam got hit by a bus or had an internal insurrection or we were ordered to do that, any number of reasons, so we wanted to know how do you stabilize Iraq afterwards.

We're probably right now on the 10th or 20th variation of that original plan that was written in 1999. Why did we write that plan in 1999? Then Secretary Albright said we can no longer live with this guy in a speech, and based on that speech which was in late 1998 we decided we better figure out what we have to do if we're not living with this guy.

Desert Crossing was picked because in Arabic, and I've forgotten the translation, but in Arabic Desert Crossing actually has a meaning that means a complete change of life. So it had a real meaning.

The reason I mention this is because I was up in New York last night and somebody asked me how do these operations get named. In general it's just a random name generator, but in this case we had a specific reason for it.

Let me move very quickly to execution since we are in execution. I'm going to talk a little bit about some things that have already been written about but I want to talk a little bit more in detail about some of them.

U.S. force advantages in this war. One that's obvious but that you may not know some of the details about are superior training. Our forces have superior training. I don't think, I wouldn't take the tact that we're any smarter or dumber or intellectually, you know, stronger or any of those things but we are far more better trained than our adversary.

Our training is better at every level. At the individual level we have used in our military the latest techniques in education including distance learning and all of those kinds of things. We have excellent unit level training. Our services, it's a continuum, take the unit level training, combine it into for example in the Navy fleet level training, in the Army corps level training, and we do it in a combined arms way which is within a service, and Marine Corps is a great example of this. They bring all the arms to bear on whatever the problem is. Then we take it to the next

level. Joint Forces Command has done a really good job of this over the last few years of our joint training where all the services operate together in a very synchronized way.

This is the level you're probably not aware of. We are also including a U.S. military training, what we call interagency training. This is how do we synchronize military operations with the political decisions that must be made that overlay what we're doing.

Next level up, multinational level operations, operating with our allies and coalition partners, and both at the military and political level. We've even included in our most recent exercises operating with NGOs and how we synchronize what we're doing. They're not particularly interested in getting into our planning loop or being subject to us, but we want to know how to operate with them in these very complex operations.

The second advantage we have is superior equipment. I won't go into that. You've seen much about that in recent writing and media.

The third one is one that's not as well covered and that's we have very superior doctrine. We are in a transformation. The Secretary talks about transforming the military. We are well into a transformation.

The Iraqis still base their operations on the old rather ponderous Soviet system and there are two parts of that that are a tremendous disadvantage for them. One is centralized command and control; and the other is, and it kind of goes along with the same thing, it's individual initiative is highly discouraged in their system. It's discouraged through some draconian ways. As a flag officer, I never would have wanted to be a flag officer in Saddam's military and gotten the message Saddam would like to have a meeting with you. [Laughter]

On the other hand, the United States has given -- and it traditionally has done this but we've even now taken it a step further. We have given a great deal of initiative right down to the non-commissioned officer level. One of the strengths of U.S. military forces that is not shared around the world, is shared with many of our allies but not around the world, is the strength, training and initiative of our non-commissioned officers, the senior enlisted people.

The second one is that we have built through our transformation a great deal of flexibility and agility into our doctrine. Flexibility is given a change in what you're dealing with how far can you swing, and agility is how fast can you make that change. Both of those have improved dramatically since '91.

Finally, our way of doing business these days is based on what we call effects-based synchronized operations. We're looking for the effect as opposed to what caused the effect. So if a 2,000 pound bomb is the right way to do it, fine, let's use a 2,000 pound bomb. But if hacking

into a computer achieves the effect we're looking for, let's do it that way.

Finally, all of these advantages have been enhanced by this ongoing transformation. We have far greater visibility on the battlefield than we've ever had before. There is still fog of war, but that fog has been reduced greatly, by probably an order of magnitude since '91, and we share that common picture among all of our forces even down to the individual soldier on the battlefield and among our allies as well.

One that you're probably not aware of but is a major change in the way we do business these days is greatly reduced decision cycles. If you looked at decision cycles in World War II they were probably on the order of a week or so. Desert Storm, it was one to three days, depending on what you were talking about. The Marine Corps has written tremendous doctrine that allowed them to get their decision cycle from the time they were given a mission to executing it, six hours. We are down today to minutes. And it looks to the enemy like continuous decision cycles as opposed to stop, wait and see what you did and then move on.

How do we do that? Our decisionmakers are all netted via datalinks -- computers. It's a self-repairing net. If one node of that net is taken out for some reason, lose communications or a battle damage, it self heals and the battle moves on.

We also have a capability that's coming on-line rapidly called near real time simulation. This gives us the ability to actually say okay, we've got to change this plan slightly. Let's see how it's going to play out. We run it very quickly in ten times real time and we can actually see what the computer says the results of our change in plans might be.

Then it gets into the mundane but very important areas. For example, logistics which you've all heard is the long pole in any military operation. We've gone since '91, you may recall that a lot of material arrived at the wrong, we got it all there but it arrived at the wrong place and didn't match up with the right units. We've gone to commercial style inventory and tracking systems, the same thing that UPS and FedEx use. And we now have a much better ability to make sure that the right item gets to the right person at the right time.

It's these kinds of things that give us this tremendous advantage and during the question and answer period I'd be glad to answer more specific questions about any of these items.

MR. STEINBERG: Thank you. Let me just ask in terms of this flexibility and decision cycles, now that the war began differently than the plan had foreseen, what kinds of things will the planners be thinking about now? How will this early start, as it were, different kind of start, affect their calculations? What will be running through their minds?

RADM SIGLER: I think this early start is really a good example of what I'm talking

about right now. They had the ability to make a very rapid assessment and change to the major plan, the way this would unfold, rapidly. Right now, to answer the specific question -- So they had what's being called a target of opportunity. They were able to take advantage of that target of opportunity by this rapid, very tight decision cycle that we have, that is synchronized with the political decisions that need to be made.

Right now what they're doing is saying given what just happened, how does this change the first three days of our operation? My suspicion is that it doesn't. We never were going to achieve strategic surprise in this campaign. We were going to achieve operational surprise. In other words, they're not surprised that we're coming and the general timeframe of when we're coming. They're going to be surprised by what they're going to see.

MR. STEINBERG: Ken, we've heard about the Soviet style rigid command and control Iraqi military. Is it hopeless for them? Are they just going to, are they waiting to be taken? How do the Iraqis think about that? They know a lot of the things that the Admiral talked about.



MR. KENNETH M. POLLACK: I'll start by saying I hope it is hopeless for them, and I think that they've really got their work cut out for them. But I think there's no question that Saddam does have a strategy. First let me start by caveating everything I say by of course saying that I don't have Saddam's plans in front of me and I'm not certain that Saddam even has his plans in front of him. A lot of this may just be in his head, how he thinks he's going to do a lot of this stuff.

But as best we understand it there does seem to be a cohesive strategy evolving. I think the place to start is actually back in 1991 with what Saddam seems to have learned and not learned from the Gulf War.

I think the two big things that are out there that Saddam seems to have learned from the Gulf War that is playing into how he's handling things now is one, he does now understand that his forces cannot beat our forces in the open field. In the open field his forces are going to get obliterated, and that happened time and again during the Gulf War.

The second thing he seems to have figured out is it is very difficult for him to move his forces under our air attack over long distances.

There are two other things out there that he is clinging to, that he believes are critical elements of what are going to allow him to actually win in some reasonable fashion. I'll talk about what I think winning means for Saddam.

Those two assumptions are one, he still believes that the United States can't take casualties and that if he can present the United States with a scenario in which we are likely to take large numbers of casualties we will pull our punch, and that is really the key to how he thinks he is going to prevail in this war as best we can tell.

The second one is that even though he knows he can't move his forces over long distances because of our air power, he still seems to believe that he can move them over short distances. Again, the experience of the Gulf War actually is enough to confirm that suspicion.

Our air power in the Gulf War was the most powerful we had ever seen in any war. But it's not true that we prevented all Iraqi movement. That's a myth that's out there. In point of fact the Iraqis did a lot of moving during the Gulf War and in fact they were able to move several divisions, reset a defensive line and do some pretty amazing things even under U.S. air power.

Now clearly our air capabilities have gotten better even since 1991, but Saddam is still operating under the assumption that within a confined space he will be able to move his forces around short distances as he needs to confront the U.S. threat.

What he seems to have done, and you've heard at least parts of this out there, what he seems to have concluded, that the fight for him is going to be about Baghdad. He has deployed his regular army out in the periphery and he's done that for two reasons. First, he doesn't trust them. If he pulls them back by Baghdad he's pretty convinced that someone will try to move against them so he's trying to keep them as far away from Baghdad as he possibly can.

Second, he also doesn't trust them to put up much of a fight against us. He knows, as we do, that the regular army is deeply demoralized, they aren't as good in terms of combat capabilities as even his Republican Guard. And as all of you are well aware, 1991 pointed out that even the Republican Guard isn't very good compared to our forces and the British forces that are deployed out there. But the regular army has even less capability. It's better therefore to keep them out of the periphery. It's clear what he's going to try to do with the regular army is to slow us as best he can, attrit us as best he can. If he can slow the operation down, if he can inflict some casualties on us using the regular army so much the better. It's gravy for him. But he's not counting on the regular army to win the war for him.

He expects that we will overrun the regular army and we will be able to get up to Baghdad. But what he's counting on is that when we get to Baghdad what we're going to see there is going to cause us to think twice about continuing the war. His hope is that he can create what I keep calling a Mesopotamian Stalingrad. The vision of horrible street-to-street fighting in Baghdad with chemical weapons going off, with his best troops surrounding him and willing to fight to the death, and hoping that we will believe that it will take 10,000 or more casualties to reduce Baghdad, we won't be willing to pay that price and therefore we won't go through with

the operation at all.

I will say, and John can add to this as well, I don't think that it will take 10,000 casualties to take down Baghdad. My guess is it won't take anything near that. But nevertheless, this is Saddam's expectation.

What he's done is he's concentrated his four best Republican Guard divisions in the Baghdad area and also at Takrit, his home town. He's concentrated his Special Republican Guard there. They've been building defenses around the city, multiple rings. Somewhat similar to what they did when they defended the city of Basra against the Iranians in 1982 and 1987. Those were successful battles for the Iraqis. They were hard bloody fights, but the Iraqis did prevent the Iranians from gaining control over Basra. Again, our troops are not going to fight anywhere near the way the Iranians did, both in terms of quality and as John pointed out, in terms of our actual operation. But again, this is how the Iraqis know how to defend a city and really what they're going for is a psychological victory.

Saddam doesn't want to get into a situation where he is actually battling us in the streets of Baghdad. He'll take it if he has to, but his preference clearly seems to be to confront us with this threat of horrible street fighting and instead deter us from ever coming in. The hope is, his hope seems to be that once that happens he will be able to then negotiate his way out of the situation. That we will be forced to negotiate our way out of the situation because if you don't hold Baghdad you can't hold Iraq. That's very clear.

Now this strategy has some very important ramifications and implications for what other things we can expect to see from Saddam. The first one, the point's already been made. The likelihood that Saddam was going to mount a preemptive attack was extremely low. As you've seen, he didn't choose to mount a preemptive attack. That was because, again, he is playing for a political victory and he's playing for the victory to be won at the gates of Baghdad. Saddam seems to understand that the worst thing he could possibly do is to take action that would hand the political high ground to the United States. The goal of this is to get us to Baghdad, confront us with this threat of this horrible battle in the city, and also simultaneously maximize the international pressure on the United States.

That means probably holding off on doing a lot of the things that would be worse for us, but would also be worse for him in terms of international public opinion. It's why I think it is, and I don't want to say it's not possible, but I think that it is somewhat unlikely that Saddam will use weapons of mass destruction before we get to Baghdad.

First of all, we've actually been seeing this. All of the intelligence is suggesting that he is distributing chemical munitions to the guard units around Baghdad. There's no evidence out there yet that he's distributed them to units beyond Baghdad. As I said, he might. It's entirely

possible. But it runs very much counter to his strategy, and Saddam is capable of doing things that completely undermine his own strategy but what we've seen in the past is when he's got a strategy he does try to stick with it by and large. My guess is he'll try to stick with this this time around.

If he doesn't use weapons of mass destruction before we get to Baghdad we will have covered 500 kilometers of Iraq and not gotten hit by weapons of mass destruction. What Saddam is hoping is that this will create tremendous pressure on the United States. You will have the international peace movement and all the governments who opposed the war saying see, you've gone 500 kilometers into Iraq and you haven't gotten hit by weapons of mass destruction. He doesn't have them. The war is unjust. You have to stop.

In addition there's also a very important psychological issue out there for Saddam which is the Iraqis are well aware, and we've had conversations with them over the last 11 years about their weapons programs. They are well aware about the limitations on their weapons of mass destruction capability. They know that they don't have the kind of capability that they'd like. They also seem to be aware that we've got pretty good defensive capabilities.

So the issue for Saddam is also one of if I use the weapons of mass destruction before the Americans get to Baghdad, what kind of an impact will it have on them? There is a very real risk for him that it won't have much of an impact. First, it's going to be regular army units using the weapons of mass destruction. They're not good at what they do. They probably can't follow up on the use of WMD, therefore they won't be maximizing the advantage of it. And our troops are very well protected. So if he starts using weapons of mass destruction right from the get-go, it may not do very much damage to us. If that's the case he has taken away a very important aspect of the deterrent of the Baghdad battle. Much better I think from his perspective, and it seems that he also agrees with this, to let us get to Baghdad having never suffered through the WMD attack so that the threat is still looming large in our minds, so that we haven't gone through a WMD attack only to find that it didn't do much damage. Because if that happens it really detracts from that psychological impact.

That's why I think more likely than not, we probably won't see WMD used until we get to Baghdad. I could be wrong, and I get very nervous. My old boss at the CIA, John Halgorsen once said, we will not predict what Saddam Hussein will not do. I get very nervous when I'm predicting what Saddam will not do.

Let me make another one along those lines. The issue of Israel, and Martin is going to talk about it. Here there's also a tough calculation for Saddam Hussein. He's got two things to weigh.

One is the only way he can get to Israel is by using his SCUD missiles. His Al Samouds,

as best we can tell, can't reach Israel. He's got a small number of SCUDs, and what's more, to use SCUDs against Israel he's got to have control of Iraq's western desert. He's got to be able to launch the missiles from the western desert. And he knows, because he's been reading all the news reports and all the leaks out there, that we're planning to take the western desert away from him early on in the campaign. So he's got to ask himself the question, is this a use it or lose it capability? If I don't use the SCUDs against Israel early am I never going to be able to do so? So that's going to be pressing him in one direction.

On the other hand, he's got to weigh how that will work in terms of his overall strategy. If he starts popping off SCUDs at Israel it makes clear he's got SCUDs. It belies all of those claims. It will shift all of the weight of international opinion behind the United States, at least in his mind. It takes away from his ability to implement that strategy of when they get to Baghdad I'm going to make it incredibly difficult for them, I'm going to win this war politically.

In addition, he's got another problem out there which is in 1991 he used conventional SCUDs against Israel and it didn't bring Israel into the war. This time around he might make the calculation well there's Ariel Sharon, maybe he would. But he does know that. Conventional SCUDs against Israel did not do him any good. This time around if the conventional SCUDs don't do the job for him all they do is really undermine his strategy of how he wins the war.

In addition, he's got the issue of well, maybe I can start popping chemical or biologically armed SCUDs at Israel. He's got two problems there. One, as best we understand, the warheads that he has for his chemical and biological SCUDs are terrible. What the inspectors found out from the Iraqi scientists after the war is that they knew the warheads were terrible and totally wouldn't do much damage.

Second, he also believed during the war, as best we can tell, that if he did use chemical and biological warheads against Israel, Israeli might respond with a nuclear weapon, and that clearly is a loss for Saddam Hussein. A nuclear weapon landing on Baghdad is game over for Saddam. There is no way he comes out of that with any kind of a victory.

So he's got to ask himself if I launch my conventional warheads, conventionally armed SCUDs at Israel it may not do the job. In fact it probably won't. The only thing that may really do the job is using the unconventional warheads against Israel and that may provoke the one thing that really takes me out of it and makes it impossible for me to win a victory.

So I think for Saddam there is a real tough call there. Again, my guess -- I don't put an overwhelming probability on it, but my guess is he will also totally wait on Israel. Because the underlying theme for him, at least in the conventional sense -- terrorism is a completely different issue and I think he actually will go after Israel in terms of terrorism and try to get Israel into the war, get Israel to over-react by terrorist operations, but I think that it's more likely than not that

even on terms of missile launches against Israel, he probably will try to wait. The key question there is, can we create that use it or lose it situation and take away from him the option of going against Israel until the very end, until he does realize that his strategy has failed, and make it so that he does realize when his strategy has failed he doesn't have options left to do what we all think is likely, at least all the Iraq experts think is likely, which is exercise what we keep calling the Sampson option and try to pull the temple down around him, lash out as best we can, and there of course we know that Israel will probably be his first target if he does decide that the game is over, he has nothing left to lose, he's going down with the ship.

Because you remember in 1991, right after the Gulf War, what the inspectors round out was that Saddam had created a special unit of SCUDs manned by his SSO, the most loyal security service to him, armed with chemical and biological warheads, and told if Baghdad goes either through an American nuclear strike or because the Americans march on the capital, you don't wait for my orders. You launch everything you've got at Israel as my final last act of vengeance.

MR. STEINBERG: I'm looking forward to asking Martin under what circumstances Israel would launch a nuclear weapon against Iraq. But before I do, the one other piece that you alluded to was the Iraqi terrorist threat. I just wondered as you're in the non-predictive mode here -- [Laughter] -- we've seen reports of efforts by the U.S. intelligence community to wrap up Iraqi intelligence activities overseas. How much capability do you think they still have and how great a risk do you think there is that even if Saddam up until now has not shared WMD with al Qaeda or other terrorist groups, that now, although he may be deterred from using it for the reasons you said, he may have a greater incentive to pass it along?

MR. POLLACK: To start with the first part of your question, I think Iraq's own terrorist capabilities is one of the great unknowns out there. We've seen Iraqi terrorist operations in the past and been amazed at how poor they have been by and large. In 1991 they mounted a number of terrorist attacks as part of their Gulf War strategy and they were unbelievably incompetent. We rolled them up easily.

In 1993 when they tried to assassinate George Bush, the same thing. You had Iraqi agents in Kuwait calling back to the Muhabarat and talking over open lines about the operation. Just unbelievably incompetent operation.

What no one knows is if the Iraqis have gotten better since then. We obviously have been watching their intelligence operations and CIA and for that matter Mussad also are still pretty comfortable that they haven't seen a dramatic improvement in Iraq's own intelligence and terrorist capabilities, but no one's certain. I think there is a real question in people's minds of have the Iraqis actually made a lot of progress and successfully hidden it from us? It's one of the few things that the Iraqis are really good at is hiding things like that from us so you can't be

certain about it.

I think for me the bigger concern, and this gets to the second part of your question, is the al Qaeda operation. I think there's no question the Iraqis are going to try to mount terrorist attacks against us. Just no question. There's no real downside for them. They've said they're going to strike us everywhere in the world, everyone knows they've got these kind of capabilities. I think their expectation is that in the Arab world these kind of operations are considered perfectly legitimate. What's more, in most cases unless we do roll up the operation immediately the Iraqis will have some degree of plausible deniability. They will probably want people to believe, in fact they'll probably phone in messages that the terrorist attack didn't come from the Muhabarat, it came from the Front for Justice in Iraq or something like that. These groups that we've never heard of before but the Iraqis will try to make them out to be Arab groups who are showing their solidarity with Iraq by lashing out. So there will be some element of plausible deniability.

I think the bigger issue out there is al Qaeda which I think would love to be able to take advantage of this to score some huge successes with us. You heard, those of you who were here, you heard Dan Byman up here a few weeks ago who made the point that one of the things about al Qaeda that in some ways may be reassuring is that they're actually quite patient. If they see the target alert and defended, they might choose to hold off on the operation. So al Qaeda may or may not actually go ahead with attacks they've planned now, depending on the operational circumstances. But al Qaeda really knows what it's doing. They know how to inflict real casualties on us in a way we've never actually seen the Iraqis do it before.

Just to come to your final question in terms of weapons of mass destruction, going back to Saddam's strategy and assuming that Saddam's strategy is as I described it. Again, we may find out after the war that he had something completely different in mind, but what we're seeing is absolutely consistent with what I laid out for you. I think under those circumstances as well, Saddam is probably going to be reticent to turn over weapons of mass destruction to al Qaeda until he really believes that the jig is up for him.

He may have set up systems whereby he can try to do it because there, as well, it may be a case where he is worried that it will be a use it or lose it capability. That once we get to Baghdad it will be hard for him to get weapons of mass destruction into the hands of his own operatives or into the hands of al Qaeda and we can't rule out the possibility that he hasn't prepositioned stuff outside of Iraq already. We've not seen indications of it. I know the intelligence community has seen indications of Iraqi intelligence officers going out into the world and doing surveillance for terrorist operations and other things like that. We've not, as far as I know, seen indications that the Iraqis have already started to preposition weapons of mass destruction. Again, that's a problematic one for him. Because if it is ever found out, if we catch them and it's tied to Saddam, then he loses that international support which does seem to be a

key element of this political victory he's seeking. But I think certainly at the end, when the end comes, once he decides that the jig is up, then I think that there's no question he will try to get those weapons into everyone's hands and the question for us is when that happens, have we put him in a position where he can't do that.

MR. STEINBERG: Martin, under what circumstances will the Israelis use nuclear weapons?



MR. MARTIN S. INDYK: I think that Ken has highlighted the critical question of whether the Israelis will have to face this issue. That is when Saddam turns from playing the victim to playing Sampson. That is likely to happen. It's a question of when.

This morning, 12:30 this morning for those of you who were still up, Saddam gave a speech. It was an improvised one. I don't know whether you saw it. He was reading from text, if indeed it was him, with his glasses on which I've never seen before. I don't know whether Ken, you've looked at it, but it struck me that he's likely to get to the Sampson role quicker than we might suspect. It's pretty blood curdling stuff.

"Unsheathe your sword without fear, without hesitation. Unsheathe your sword and let Satan bear witness. Unsheathe your sword, the enemy is smoldering. Saddle the horses and unleash them, for in their wedding there is hope."

I'm not sure what you'd make of that.

But just to back up your point about his strategy, he says "We will fight the invaders and drive them, God willing." Not drive them out, but drive them "to lose their patience and lose their way." Which is interesting. Maybe he figures we don't have a map of downtown Baghdad, but I think it actually is more indicative of what his strategy is as Ken has laid it out.

In this context, and the reason why I really bring this up is that at the end of his performance, he invoked Palestine in two respects. First of all he said that "The evil will be hit," "the evil American Zionist criminal alliance will be hit." Then he said, "Long live Iraq and Palestine" and repeated it.

The invoking of Palestine again may be, to the extent that we read the tea leaves correctly, an indication that he's more focused on the benefit he would get from hitting Israel sooner rather than later. Maybe.

One of the obvious benefits in his cost/benefit calculation is the belief that he can stir up

the Arab world, Arab street, by doing so which is an important part of his calculation, to counter the calculation about playing the victim, he can win international support. We can't tell which way he goes.

But to answer Jim's question, how will Israel respond? I think that the critical issue here is whether Saddam uses his chemical and biological weapons against Israel, and whether he succeeds in getting through the layered defense that Israel and the United States have established. First of all, I assume already by now our forces are in the western part of Iraq trying to shut down that SCUD box where he has to fire from in order to hit Israel. Secondly, you have the Israeli Arrow defense system. Thirdly, you have the Patriot system that actually appears to have broader success in shooting down some of his shorter range missiles this morning.

So there's a good chance that even if he does this, it won't get through. Certainly the Israelis are confident, the guys who developed the Arrow actually are hoping that he will try it so they can prove their system works. And the Israelis certainly are saying, reassuring their public, that it's a very low probability.

The first 48 hours are critical in their minds because that's what it will take to get the forces on the ground in western Iraq and to shut down that operation if there is to be one. Yet they sent children to school with their gas masks today which suggests a level of confidence that he's not going to do it. If he does and he succeeds in using chemical or biological weapons and causes significant casualties, that is the only scenario in which I believe Israel will be hard-pressed to sit quietly. All the scenarios short of that I believe Israel will stay out of the war such as they did last time. Because for them it's of much greater benefit not to complicate our prosecution of the war and not to interfere with our efforts to take out Saddam Hussein.

But the problem, and we can call it the gap that arises, between what we would do if Israel were hit with chemical and biological weapons that caused significant casualties and what Israel would do. The gap arises because Israel, living in a neighborhood in which many of its potential adversaries have chemical weapons and SCUD missiles, particularly the Syrians, but there's also concern about the Iranians, must for deterrent purposes demonstrate that if they get hit by chemical or biological weapons that there is "a devastating consequence" for such an attack. That is exactly the same doctrine that we have enunciated if we get hit by chemical or biological weapons. So it's not surprising that they would want to implement such a doctrine.

The gap arises because they cannot be certain that we would respond with devastating consequences if they get hit by chemical and biological weapons. The reason for that is that we don't want to devastate Iraq, we want to rebuild it; whereas for deterrent purposes they will need to devastate some place, whether it's Takrit or Baghdad. And God forbid it should come to that, but if it does come to that, significant casualties as the result of a chemical or biological attack, and it could be through terrorism rather than through missiles, then the Israelis will feel that they

have to respond. Especially if we do not act in a way that makes it clear that there is a huge price to pay for attacking the Jewish state in this way.

But having laid out this kind of doom and gloom scenario I wanted to focus for a short moment on something a little more hopeful that's been happening in this arena that is important to our prosecution of the war. That is the appointment by Yasser Arafat of an empowered Prime Minister.

It's typical of the nature of the Middle East that just when you least expect it, something happens. In this case regime change has already taken place but not in Baghdad, in effect, in Palestine. Yasser Arafat has been forced to devolve a significant amount of his power to a Prime Minister. This, by the way, I think is unprecedented in Arab politics. I can't think historically of a situation where an Arab leader has been forced by his legislature, which in all cases are rather stamp legislatures, to give up power to a Prime Minister. He tried, and again I don't expect any of you would have had a chance to follow this because it barely got reported here in the last few days, but Arafat tried to prevent the legislative council from giving the Prime Minister the power to appoint his own cabinet. He tried to reserve that power for himself, and he failed. He not only failed in the legislative council, he failed within his own Fattah Central Committee where he has always been able to prevail when he wanted to. This sends a signal to all of the Palestinians that Arafat has in fact lost power. Not just in the formal sense of the powers given to the Prime Minister, but in that much more important psychological sense that he could not hold on to power when his people wanted him to give it up.

That presents a hopeful sign. [Abumazan], the new Prime Minister, who just accepted the job yesterday evening, is a man who does not have blood on his hands like Arafat. He's a man who has come out forcefully against the Intafada and against terrorism. He is a man who Ariel Sharon has said for the last two years he wants to make a deal with.

If, and here is the rub of course, if [Abumazan] is able to establish an effective cabinet and deal with the security situation, confront Hamas, first in Gaza and stop the terrorism and the firing of rockets from Gaza, then Sharon will be put in a situation where he will have to respond.

We know that left to their own devices the Israelis and the Palestinians cannot get themselves out of this situation, and here comes the connection with Iraq. On the way into this war the President had an epiphany in the Rose Garden. He came out and made a personal commitment to the roadmap which is a series of reciprocal steps that the Israelis and Palestinians would take to get out of this crisis. And his personal commitment to that is exactly what is needed to take advantage of the opportunity that has now been opened up by the appointment of [Abumazan]. It comes at a time when there is exhaustion on both sides, Israelis and Palestinians; when the Israeli economy is in serious straits and the government has to take action to deal with

that situation, and the Prime Minister has repeatedly said we need a political initiative to solve our economic crisis. The missing ingredient is U.S. engagement by the President in a sustained and effective way.

For the United States to do that has obvious benefits, not just because it will help Tony Blair, which is the reason why the President said it last week, but rather because it fits into a broader diplomatic strategy which we urgently need to develop. Now. Not after the war, but right now.

The reason for that is, as you're all aware, we blew the diplomatic ramp-up to this conflict and the division in the Security Council represents much more, I would argue, than just the failure of the Security Council or the perfidy of the French. It rather could well serve to be the harbinger of the development of, in effect, two blocks -- a pro-American block and an anti-American block. And we can laugh and we can express our anger at the French, but a block that consists of the French, the Russians, the Chinese and the Germans for starters is not in our interest. It's not in our interest for how we deal with the situation after Saddam Hussein is gone when we will need international legitimacy for our post-Saddam efforts to rebuild Iraq. If we do not secure international legitimacy for that operation, it will be established as a military occupation. Illegitimate in the eyes of much of the world. That will make our task much more difficult, not to speak of the need for international support which we discussed at length a couple of weeks ago, the essential need for broader support for the reconstruction of Iraq, for the feeding of the Iraqi people who have taken care of the humanitarian problem, etc., etc.

But we will be establishing a trusteeship in Iraq and we need international legitimacy for that whole operation. So in addition to trying to avoid this development of two blocks, we need to repair the damage in a way that can secure us international legitimacy. One of the ways in which we can do this is by pursuing the opportunity that has actually opened up to achieve progress in the Israeli-Palestinian arena because that is something that the international community cares about.

The last point in this regard, how to do it. The reason, some of you may have heard me expound on this a couple of weeks ago. The reason that we lost in the Security Council was not because of the French. We knew exactly what the French were going to do, or we should have known what the French were going to do. And it wasn't because we couldn't shift Mexico and Chile which in itself is an astounding commentary. It was because we ignored Russia. Russia in the 1990s, Ken and I and Mo Ziegler had to deal with Iraq. Russia had a strategic commitment to Iraq. Not just a commercial rationale but a strategic rationale. You may remember those were the days of the [Afghani] Primakov and the efforts to stop our expansion of NATO and supporting Iraq was seen in the strategic interest of the Yeltsin government.

Vladimir Putin changed that concept. He developed a strategic concept of partnership

with the United States. Therefore we could have had Russia on board with us. We would have had to pay not so much in promises of contracts -- we did that anyway. We would have had to pay in terms of time and benchmark kinds of things in the Security Council, but we could have won Russian support. If we had Russian support the Chinese would have been with us, the French would have been isolated, all of the undecided non-permanent members would have had cover, and we would have had the international legitimacy we needed.

So it was then, so it will be now. If we bring the Russians around, we can secure the international legitimacy we need. We can isolate the French and thereby establish this objective that I have suggested. And we need to do it.

What you're hearing at the moment from the Russians is station identification. Putin came out with a very strong statement against us today. Last week, I don't know whether you saw it, it was kind of pathetic. The Russian Ambassador, when all the UN Ambassadors were going out in front of the microphones last Friday at the height of the diplomatic negotiations for the resolution, Lavrov said I don't know what diplomacy is going on. Nobody's talked to me for six hours. That I think captures exactly the problem. Why the hell are we ignoring the Russians? Vladimir Putin was a friend of the President. It was represented that the President's greatest act of personal diplomacy was to bring Putin around. And if we try and line up the Russians now I believe that combined with an effort to move forward on the Israeli-Palestinian front could do much to repair the damage and prepare us for the aftermath of Saddam Hussein's demise.

Thank you.

MR. STEINBERG: Thank you, Martin.

[Applause]

MR. STEINBERG: You've got some fans here.

Q&A

MR. STEINBERG: Before I turn to the audience let me go back on the Arafat-Abu Mazen question and ask you, there's been certainly in some of the press coverage, some of the critics within the Palestinian community have said that Abu Mazen becomes damaged goods because he is the selection of the United States and Sharon. How effective can he be in overcoming this? What would he need to do to establish his legitimacy vis-à-vis the Palestinians?

MR. INDYK: I think he comes actually with a lot of legitimacy because of the hats that

he wears. He is in effect the number two person in the PLO hierarchy. He's the Secretary General of the Fatah Executive Committee, he's the head of negotiations, always been the head of negotiations. He has always been seen as Arafat's number two. So he has legitimacy within the institutions of the PLO and I think legitimacy therefore as a result, a broader legitimacy, amongst the Palestinians. But he comes into power at the moment, in a situation where the Palestinians are fed up with Arafat. They have been for some time. His own support has dropped quite dramatically and he has lost legitimacy. In that sense I think he comes in with the hopes of many Palestinians that he's going to be able to change their dreadful situation.

His biggest problem is delivering, and he has two things that he has to do once he's formed his cabinet. He has to deal with the economic situation and quickly find a way to improve the situation of, I think it's now something like 70 percent of Gazans and 50 percent of West Bankers who now are existing under the poverty line and have done so for the last two years. They're in fairly desperate straits. He needs to do something about that.

At the same time he's got to show that he can stop the terrorism, not necessarily everywhere, but at least in one place. He doesn't have a capability at the moment in the West Bank. But there is still a capability to fight terrorists in Gaza, and that's where he could start. With Gaza first, even just northern Gaza, and demonstrate that he can control the situation there. The Israelis would then respond to that, I believe. That would gain him some credibility with Israel and therefore with the United States.

For him to be able to do this he needs international support. He needs a financial injection to deal with the economic situation, and he needs us to come in and do what we promised to do and failed to deliver on for the last year which was to help the Palestinians reconstitute their security services. The Egyptians and Jordanians want to do this, we dropped the ball.

Help give him a capability to confront the terrorists because I believe he has the will, unlike Arafat, to do so.

MR. STEINBERG: Let me turn to your questions.

QUESTION: William Jones, Amnesty International.

Nobody has mentioned the Turks in this and our relationships with them. What's the state of play with that?

MR. INDYK: The Turkish Parliament is apparently going to vote on a lesser requirement than we had originally put forward which is to give us access to their airspace. And I don't know whether that will go through in the prevailing circumstances. I suspect it probably

will because the quid pro quo is going to be that we acquiesce in the Turks putting troops into Northern Iraq which is something that is very important at least to the Turkish General Staff if not for the Turkish government. I think it's probably important to both of them. The reason they want to put troops in there is they want to stop the refugee flow from the north. There are already some refugees moving as you may have noticed. But more importantly, they want to ensure that the Kurds do not establish an independent state there.

Here it's not clear which is better. To have an agreement where we can use airspace but the Turks get to put their troops in there, or no agreement where we simply insist that they not put their troops in there.

I think the first is probably better because in order to control the situation in the north we have got to be in there on the ground. Admiral Sigler may want to comment on this, but at least with use of Turkish airspace we've got a better chance of being able to move in there on the ground, even if it's light infantry, and control the area and in particular control the oil-rich area of Kirkuk which is the strategic prize both for the Turks and the Kurds. Even if the price is that the Turks move a little bit into Kurdistan, if we have a presence there we have the ability to tell them thus far and no further. If we don't have a presence there, then I'm afraid what we're going to see is a race to Kirkuk. The Turks and the Kurds are now both suspicious of each other's intentions.

While we're preoccupied with Baghdad, one or the other will start moving in the direction of Kirkuk and basically provoke a race where the Turks will move in in force and move down to Kirkuk. That will be a very complicating situation for us.

There's a good chance that the Iranians will move in as well up there to protect their own piece of the turf. And if we don't have a presence there, we don't have an ability to control that situation. So imagine a situation where we're trying to deal with problems in Baghdad and suddenly things are coming apart in the north. It will severely complicate not just what we're trying to do in Baghdad, but the aftermath in terms of stabilizing the situation.

RADM SIGLER: First of all, I agree that Kirkuk is the major sub-plot in this whole operation. With respect to the impact on military operations of not having access to Turkish ports, I heard one of the unnamed commanders, active commanders involved in the operation asked this question, and the way the question was posed is on a basis of zero to ten, zero being no effect and ten being worst effect, where did he rank not having access to Turkish ports and airspace, the impact on the operations. He placed it at a two. Based on my knowledge I would have said three, but I think it is relatively low. It's not good, but it's not as bad as it could be.

I heard a foreign observer say yesterday, I was in New York and I heard a foreign observer say that in the aftermath when we go back and look at this it may have been to our advantage to have the Turks actually have the vote they had because we now have leverage over what they can and can't do in Northern Iraq.

I'm probably not qualified to make that judgment, but that's a judgment I heard.

With respect to airspace it would be very helpful to have that. I think in some ways more helpful to have airspace than to have access to the port. We can do the work-around.

As I understand the plans, the work-around consists of using airfields in Northern Iraq to do what we would have done with Turkish airfields. This means establishing expeditionary airfields which is always more difficult and logistically much more challenging to sustain than it would have been to work with a NATO partner with established methodologies, but we're fully capable of doing it.

Again, in terms of this ongoing transformation that we have, that's part of it is expeditionary logistics. We've practiced it, we're good at it, and we can do it. It's just not as easy.

MR. INDYK: What will we put in there if we did that? Used the airspace? What would we put into Northern Iraq?

RADM SIGLER: Well, if we use the Northern Iraq airspace?

MR. INDYK: The Turkish air corridor into Northern Iraq, what would we put in there?

RADM SIGLER: We'll put sustainability support. We can easily get troops into Northern Iraq. The question is sustaining the troops. So what we'll put into the airfields is the ability to sustain the troops.

I'll just give you an example. One of the long poles in the logistics tent is fuel. We have these huge bladders that we can put in place, but it takes a little preparation, as opposed to using already in place fuel tanks that exist in Turkey. We'll have to fly these bladders in, get them set up, put the berms around them to protect the environment, and put force protection in place. This will take some amount of time and effort, will delay how fast we can then start to execute. But that's how you do the backup.

And this is one of the branch plans.

MR. STEINBERG: In a broader sense I think what we're seeing with Turkey is a limitation of the Administration's fundamental diplomatic strategy behind the war which was a belief that if the United States were firm and resolute enough that countries would have little choice but to fall into line. I think it's interesting, and maybe Martin and Ken would want to comment, that that seems to have happened only with respect to one subset of the potential supporters here and that is with the Arab countries where the United States I think has gotten

quite substantial support and really without a lot of difficulty. But almost nowhere else has that worked.

I think it was particularly taken for granted in the case of Turkey, that Turkey would have no other options, that the United States was its key strategic partner, and therefore at the end of the day Turkey would have to come around. This was obviously felt with respect to most of the NATO allies and a lot of the other members of the Security Council. I think it does have very long term implications for thinking about this question because I think an underlying premise of the Administration's long term strategy is that U.S. leadership will induce international followership. We have seen that that has not been a particularly effective strategy. So the question then will become will this change if the United States is successful in Iraq and people acknowledge that they should have lined up behind the United States, or are we seeing a long term shift in which while the United States has considerable power to act on its own, that the premise that somehow people would gravitate, would bandwagon to the super power, is one that is in question.

QUESTION: Michael Baxter, German Business Daily [Hamelsplat].

Mr. Indyk, you said the Administration has to regain the confidence of the Russians, possibly by achieving some progress in the Middle East peace process. But the Administration was not able to do that before the war so how should it be able to do that in a much more serious situation and in a war which is considered to be unjust by large parts of the world?

The diplomatic window has closed. There are no benchmarks left. So what are the actual means of this Administration to reach toward international support?

MR. INDYK: Fair enough. I think the basic concept is one of partnership, in which we'd have to start with the Russians but we'd talk to the others as well, leaving the French until last I would [guess], but certainly with the Germans about two issues. Post-war reconstruction in Iraq. We have something to talk to the Russians about. They have a big interest in what happens after Saddam in Iraq in terms of contracts, oilfields, debt that's owed, and so on. So they have an interest in renewing some understandings that we thought we had, some they thought they had. So that's a very good starting point.

The second relates to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Precisely because the roadmap has been developed by the quartet. Who's the quartet? The United States, the UN, the EU, and the Russians. The Russians have always had this role of co-sponsor of the peace process. You go all the way back to Madrid. It was the Soviet Union and the United States in those days that were the co-sponsors of the Madrid process. So it's very important for Russian foreign policy to be seen as a player in that game. And by the way, as opposed to back in the days of Madrid, the Russians have developed a very good relationship with Israel, which is not true of much of the

Europeans, with the exception of Germany. And that makes them actually a useful player in the Israeli-Palestinian process in a way that they weren't before.

So it's that basis that we can go and talk to them but it requires some high level attention. In the first instance, that's the key. Instead of ignoring them we should be flattering them and paying attention to them as much as possible.

Condolleeza Rice should be in Moscow today.

QUESTION: Jim Matlock with the American Friends Service Committee. It's to Martin Indyk.

Whatever the promise of the new Prime Minister that the Palestinians now bring forward and the context that you've sketched so skillfully, the Palestinians have grave doubts that the U.S. is going to be serious, I think, both commitment and commitment to what end, to what shape.

One of the signals of that would be when the new [loans] and supports that Israel has requested go through the Congress, would it not be appropriate as President Bush, Sr. and James Baker did in a somewhat similar context previously, to say yes to the funds requested and the loans, but to create a condition that says the end of expansion of settlements is serious. The President said that last summer in a very angry public voice. Settlement expansion continues, as you well know. Is that a point at which an appropriate line could be drawn to say there is a limit here and it's more than just an obstacle, it's a killer for the long term possibilities of a real piece of the expansion just rolls on with impunity.

I'm not asking whether it's politically viable in Congress, I'm asking whether you think that is an appropriate step as part of the combined trends that you see giving a little more chance to get to a better place.

MR. INDYK: The political viability is important here, especially if you want to achieve something when you have a little ray of hope. And I don't think that the President is going to do this because he remembers that his father did exactly what you're recommending and it got him in a lot of trouble. This President didn't get elected with a majority of votes and he's looking to an election coming up. So what I would say is to approach this issue differently, and it goes back to what I was saying in answer to Jim Steinberg's question. Palestinians need, desperately need economic assistance. That will help Abu Mazen. We have an interest in that. Israel has an interest in that.

Put a Palestinian component into this package that's gone up, the Iraq supplemental. Israel's in there, Jordan's in there. I'm not sure who else, whether Egypt's in there, but let's put

the Palestinians in there.

We have a reformed finance ministry under [Salaam Fayad]. We have reformed audit processes so that the Israelis are satisfied enough that they're now handing over the revenues that are owed to the Palestinians. So that the infrastructure on the Palestinian side is in place, the political rationale is now there, and I think that would be far more helpful for the process.

I would agree with your proposition that there needs to be an end to settlement activity. That's a folly for Israel. That should be ended. The President has at least gone on record in a very clear way that that should happen, but it's much more likely to happen as a result of an empowered Palestinian Prime Minister capable of meeting the needs of his people, confronting the terrorists, and then the obligation is on Sharon to respond.

QUESTION: This is a question I guess mostly for Martin Indyk but the whole panel. When you talk about Israel massively retaliating if Saddam and some Sampson option uses biological or chemical weapons against Israel, is that a euphemism for nuclear? Is there any massive Israeli response that would qualify short of turning Baghdad into radioactive rubble?

MR. POLLACK: I've already gone out on a limb and made predictions about Iraq, now you want me to make predictions about Israel.

I think the Israelis are going to be exceedingly reluctant to use nuclear weapons. I think the damage to Israel would have to be absolutely catastrophic, and even then, the question is if the damage to Israel is not existential, that is to say Israel will continue to be a state in a functional society after this is after and Saddam's Iraq won't, Israel still needs to live in the world. Are they going to be willing to take the step of having used a nuclear weapon? What will that do to Israel's position? I think that will be a tremendous issue for them to wrestle with and my guess is that under most circumstances, even where they do feel compelled to respond they're going to look very very hard for ways to punish Saddam Hussein, to inflict tremendous damage on Iraq, to send the signal to the rest of the world that you hit Israel and Israel can hit you back hard, but to do it short of using nuclear weapons if at all possible.

I'm actually more concerned of a situation where Israel finds itself with intelligence that Saddam is about to lash out at them and that the damage could be catastrophic. That I think is when they will be more tempted to use nuclear weapons because there the question will be could we prevent doing catastrophic harm to our population by using the weapon. I think it will be a much bigger issue for them beforehand as a preventive measure than afterwards simply as a measure of revenge of fulfilling the deterrent threat.

MR. INDYK: I would just add that they have other capabilities. They have missiles of their own and they have long range aircraft so they can mete out devastating consequences

without using nuclear weapons.

MR. STEINBERG: I think where we're all on the same place on this is that for Israel, its nuclear capability is a question of its survival and the question would be under these circumstances, would using it make Israel's survival more or less likely? And I think what Ken is suggesting is that actually, under these circumstances where existence isn't threatened, it may have the unintended consequence of so delegitimizing Israel and making it such an outlaw state that its long-term survival would actually be more threatened. So I know there is a strong worry in Israel about sustaining deterrence but I think to cross the nuclear threshold, other than in the ultimate resort, I find almost inconceivable.

QUESTION: Paul Richter with LA Times.

A question on that same scenario which is wouldn't the fact that there are tens of thousands of American troops swarming around Baghdad really make it impossible for Israel to use a nuclear weapon?

MR. INDYK: Yes, I don't think they're going to use nuclear weapons anyway. It's just not likely that Saddam will have such devastating consequences that it will require it. But in terms of how they would respond if it came to that, there are other places, presumably, that they could hit like Takrit that would avoid the collateral damage. They obviously will not be interested in causing American casualties. That would be a disaster for them.

MR. STEINBERG: One of the questions maybe the Admiral could comment on is there has been the general problem of deconflicting Israeli and coalition military operations. That is to say how much at least acquiescence would the coalition forces have to provide in order to make it possible for the Israelis, particularly if they wanted to use a manned attack, to have clearance in airspace, protection against friendly fire and the like.

RADM SIGLER: There would have to be at that point shared data and you don't do it at the minute of deciding to do it, it has to be prearranged. I don't have specific information on what arrangements might be in place, but I assume that some have been made and that the protocols are in place if it should come to that.

Just to comment on the methods of attack that might cause something like this, one thing that I would add to what Martin said earlier is that, and I didn't want to talk about transforming equipment, but one of the major transformation equipment in this conflict is Predator, the unmanned vehicle. That capability along with Special Forces that are undoubtedly already in place make the use of missiles as a means of delivery really problematic for the Iraqis. And so I would say if it's going to happen it's going to happen through terrorism and that's a different problem.

Then on the Israeli response I also agree strongly with Martin that there are many many other ways for the Israelis to respond appropriately without the use of nuclear weapons which has a high cost that they don't want to pay. So they will use the other methods, and in use of those methods, to answer the question specifically, there will be appropriate coordination with us.

MR. STEINBERG: It will be a tough call for the United States because this is not something where the United States is going to have the option of saying we didn't know about it. There will have to be at least a judgment to allow it to go forward.

RADM SIGLER: I think we would discourage it as best we could and then decide what to do.

MR. INDYK: It will all depend on the number of casualties and the source of the casualties.

QUESTION: Marvin Zimm, Global Report.

Could you address the question of the range or the killing power of chemical and biological weapons? I realize that's a very broad question but maybe in two instances, in the case of where American troops are in Baghdad and they don't have their gas masks on properly, or in the case of Iraq gets together a warhead that can deliver chemical weapons in Israel, say in Tel Aviv or whatever. I guess what I'm trying to get at is I think we all have some idea what a nuclear weapon can do, but I think we have less understanding of what chemical, particularly chemical weapons can do. I guess biological weapons may take a long time to have their effect.

RADM SIGLER: It's a question which you can't give a single answer to because it's so dependent. If you've got a bunch of VX, and VX is lethal stuff, and you pump it into the air conditioning system of buildings, you could kill thousands of people in the building. If you have perfect dispersal conditions in the air. If you could fly a crop duster across a group of troops or a group of people who were not protected, the air was temperate, there wasn't a lot of wind, you could kill a huge number of those people also.

Under combat conditions it's certainly harder. Again, you do things if you're a smart military person, to increase your chance of killing people by doing things like mixing up chemical rounds of different varieties along with conventional shells so that you're creating all types of problems for the defender. But it is so variable.

I mean is VX out there? That has certain kinds of effects in certain conditions. The Iraqis have mustard gas, they have sarin, they have [kabin]. All of these operate under different

conditions. As I said, wind is a huge factor, temperature is a huge factor. You mentioned the question of our troops aren't prepared. Our troops can get prepared in seconds. They practice doing so. So the question becomes not just are they unprepared when it happens, but is there some reason that they're not able to get prepared very quickly? Do they know about it beforehand? It's very difficult to say.

Against the Iranians during the Iran/Iraq war, the Iraqis were able to inflict thousands of casualties using nerve gas and mustard gas in these battles. But in some sense those battles against the Iranians were the ideal circumstance to use chemical weapons because the Iranians were attacking en masse huge formations of light infantry who had in many cases no protection at all. In other cases all they had was maybe a gas mask. If you've got a beard, chances are the gas mask isn't going to do very good for you either. So there simply is no way to really tell.

I'll be honest with you. My own feeling, our troops are pretty well protected from that stuff. Both because of their defensive capabilities and our offensive capabilities. My expectation is if the Iraqis start using a lot of CW and they use it around Baghdad it's Iraq's civilians who are going to be the ones affected, or affected most.

MR. POLLACK: I agree with that. Answering that question is like answering the question what's going to happen if you drop a bomb. You've got to know how big the bomb is, what kind of a bomb it is and where it's dropped so you can't make a general comment about the effects.

I will say this, a chemical weapon has a point explosion associated with it and you can see where it happened and you can take the appropriate measures. A biological weapon is the more difficult prospect because it may not have a point of explosion. It may be disbursed by a truck driving along with some kind of sprayer and the results may not be seen for a day or two and it may be hard to trace back as to what it was. That's the one that actually could have a more devastating effect, particularly in a terrorist scenario.

MR. STEINBERG: On that sobering note --

QUESTION: -- with Wolf Blitzer. My name is Said Erika. He was quite confident on CNN by dismissing Iraq's use of weapons of mass destruction under any circumstances. He did not explain why but is it possible that he may know something that we don't know?

MR. POLLACK: Honestly, Said, I don't think it's worth speculating. We're going to find out. [Laughter]

MR. STEINBERG: Let me thank Admiral Sigler and my colleagues, and thank you all.

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