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Moderator Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by and welcome to the Assessing the Opening Phase of the War teleconference. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode. However, later there will be opportunity for questions and answers, and I'll give you instructions at that time. As a reminder, this conference is being recorded for digitized replay. If you wish the replay information, please stay on the line at the conclusion of the call.

I would now like to turn the conference over to our host, who is the Director of Research at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, Mr. Ken Pollack.

K. Pollack Thank all of you for joining us. As Kim indicated, this is Ken Pollack, Director of Research at the Saban Center, and also a Senior Fellow in Foreign Policies Studies at Brookings. We're delighted you're with us and, of course, I'm delighted to be joined by Michael O'Hanlon, also a Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution, and one of our best known experts on military and strategic affairs. I will start with some opening remarks, then Mike will have an opportunity to do the same, and then we'll open it up to questions. We're hoping to keep as much time for questions as possible.

Without any further introduction, let me start by making some opening remarks to kind of set the scenes. First, overall the sense that I have is that the military campaign is proceeding basically according to plan. That what we've seen so far in terms of the progress of U.S. troops is essentially what you U.S. CENTCOM had projected. In some cases I think that it's going a bit ahead of schedule.

Obviously, the number of casualties is not insignificant, but it is not significant in military terms. What is important is that we distinguish between what are obviously personal tragedies, but not necessarily

operational setbacks, and so far what we've seen principally are personal tragedies not operational setbacks. I don't think that any of the number of casualties was unexpected for U.S. Central Command, nor do I think that any of the instances, any of the encounters that we've seen so far, are somehow out of the range of expectation for U.S. Central Command.

By and large, the only surprise that U.S. forces or that U.S. intelligence has really encountered to date has been the role of the Fedayeen Saddam. The Fedayeen Saddam are a force of probably around 60,000 light infantry, if you can even call them that, they're really thugs with guns. They were formed in 1994 by Udai Saddam, Saddam's oldest son. They were formed originally as something of a counterweight to all of the internal security forces under the control of Udai's brother, Qusai. They are poorly armed; they are poorly trained. In many cases, they are truly the dregs of Iraqi society, but that are Sunnis and they are fiercely loyal to Saddam.

I don't think that there was an expectation that they would be used in the role that they have, which is sent south to serve as stay-behind forces and harassing forces to cause casualties to the coalition, to slow down their progress toward Baghdad, to confuse the situation, and also, I think in some cases most importantly, to continue to maintain the fear of the Iraqi population that Saddam Hussein is still in control.

The Saddam Fedayeen are Saddam's bully boys, one of many groups he uses for that purpose, and I think that their continued presence in many of these cities is preventing any Iraqis from expressing at the very least gratitude that Saddam Hussein is gone, whether or not they're actually glad to see American troops or not.

In addition, I think it's worth pointing out that what the Saddam Fedayeen, what the attacks over the weekend have no doubt is one potential weakness of the U.S. military operation, but it was always an inherent weakness in the operation, which is very long and not very well protected supply lines.

The plan of action that U.S. Central Command has employed is a very old plan. It's really only using two big American ground divisions and a third smaller British ground division, plus the 101st Airborne Division, an air assault division. This is probably a force big enough to defeat the Iraqi armed forces and take down Saddam's regime, but it's a force that is not big enough to do a very good job of providing route security for the very

long supply lines that are eventually going to stretch 500 kilometers from the Kuwaiti border up to Baghdad. Obviously, this plan had inherent in it the possibility that those supply lines would be open to Iraqi attack exactly as we're seeing over the last few days.

As a final point, I will turn to Saddam's perspective and, of course, it's always important to remember that none of us has good information on exactly what Saddam Hussein is thinking, but my suspicion, my analysis is that Saddam is probably taking some heart from yesterday's developments, from the developments of Sunday. In particular, I think that he totally sees the U.S. media's reaction to the casualties that were inflicted on the U.S. yesterday as being a very important sign that his strategy for winning the war can work.

It's important to remember that Saddam's strategy for winning the war, as best we understand it, was not so much a military strategy as much as it was a political and psychological strategy. Saddam's expectation was not that he would actually beat U.S. forces in the field, but instead that he would be able to do enough damage to U.S. forces and, in particular, would be able to present the United States with the possibility that we would take such heavy casualties in reducing the city of Baghdad that we would be unwilling to do so.

I think that reports from U.S. journalists saying that the U.S. was suffering heavy casualties in the fighting at Nasiriya, at Basra, and Umm Qasar, battles where the U.S. suffered at most 10 or 12 killed in each of these engagements is very heartening to Saddam because he wants to hear that the U.S. regards 10 or 12 killed as being heavy casualties. He believes that if that's the United States' approach to this, that if the United States isn't willing to suffer dozens of casualties, that he could probably inflict dozens of casualties on us, and I think that that reinforces him in his conviction that the U.S. won't have the stomach to actually fight it out for Baghdad.

I will conclude by saying that I don't think that the American people are going to be necessarily turned away from this war just by these low numbers of casualties, nor do I think that Saddam is going to be able to inflict on the United States the kind of casualties that probably would be necessary to really sour public opinion on the war, but I do think that he probably has been greatly heartened and his optimism has been reinforced by the treatment of the casualties that were taken yesterday. Mike, anything you want to add to that?

M. O'Hanlon

Just a couple of quick points. Thanks, Ken. Ken and I both want to make sure that you all got the word that tomorrow we're having a briefing at 10:00 in the morning here at Brookings, just if you haven't gotten that word, I want to reiterate it just to make sure. In any case, just two quick points after Ken's very good summary.

One is that I think the casualty levels we saw yesterday are the sort that you would have to expect on a daily basis once urban combat in Baghdad begins. In fact, I could see casualty levels being two, three, four, or five times as high per day. I don't think the war would last more than a week to two weeks in that face, but I would expect you could see dozens of coalition deaths per day in certain scenarios. So again we have to sort of harden ourselves even if these casualty levels are modest by the standards of warfare. We're going to have to get a little bit braced for them I think.

A second point is the prisoner of war issue. Here I want to say that I think we have to have every expectation that Saddam may view these POWs as essentially hostages, and there's every reason to think that this graphic and repugnant display of the scenes yesterday, especially of the killed Americans, is just the first step in what Saddam is going to try to do with this particular new asset that he has in his hands. He's at some point going to force us to face the reality that these people will be mistreated or even killed if we're not prepared to negotiate certain terms that he may try to force us to compromise.

I don't know what kind of a compromise idea he might have in mind, but whether it is the obviously ridiculous demand that we leave Iraq immediately with all of our forces, or whether it's the more plausible demand that we let him go into exile at some future stage when the inevitable becomes clear to him finally. These POWs may, in effect, become hostages over time, and I think we just have to brace ourselves for that reality as well, and not let ourselves be paralyzed by sort of Jimmy Carter rose garden sort of scenarios where we're getting the hostages back becomes the paramount war aim.

Unfortunately, we all knew that the possibility of hostage taking was real and these American troops knew it too, and we're going to have to be braced for the possibility they could be harmed in captivity. I'll stop there.

K. Pollack

Great. Thank you, Mike. Kim, why don't you turn it over and let's take some questions.

- Moderator Our first question is coming from the *San Francisco Chronicle*. We go to the line of Edward Epstein.
- E. Epstein This is for Ken Pollack, I guess. Could you talk more about Saddam's character? Let's say you were Tommy Franks, what aspects of his character would you have to understand as you're approaching Baghdad about how Saddam seems to be not responding, not in a panic certainly. He seems to be rather serene, if in fact he's still alive.
- K. Pollack Sure. Obviously, there are a lot of things that could be said, but I'll just make two broad points. The first of which, as I intimated before, and I've been reiterating at different points all throughout the last few months is that Saddam is a tremendously optimistic person. He constantly believes that things are going to work out exactly the way that he sees them. He is someone who believes that he is touched by fate, that destiny has marked him out for great things and destiny is watching over him. He also believes that he has kind of a genius and that his genius will never fail him.
- The fact that he has lead Iraq into one foreign policy catastrophe after another is something that he doesn't pay any attention to. He simply looks at the fact that he has wriggled out of every catastrophe he's ever inflicted on his country, and he's still in power and he is still ruling Iraq despite the fact that the Iranians tried to take him out and we tried to take him out, and a lot of other countries have actually tried to take him out.
- This tremendous optimism, on the one hand it's important because we shouldn't believe that we're going to be able to necessarily convince him to throw in the towel, but I'd actually go further than that and say that in many respects it's actually very helpful to the United States for the second reason I'm going to get to, which is that what we've seen of Saddam, what we know about his thinking suggests that when Saddam does finally conclude that the jig is up, that he really has lost it, that the United States is coming to get him and that he can't do anything to turn us aside and there's really nothing for him to save himself, at that point in time everything that we know about him indicates that he is likely to try to exercise what we all keep calling the Sampson Option, and try to pull the temple down around him, to lash out at as many of his foes as he possibly can with whatever is left remaining to him.
- Certainly, obviously, as we draw closer to Baghdad, that's the big concern out there, that at some point in time he is going to figure out that he is

truly doomed, and when that happens he will try to kill as many people as he possibly can. We saw this in the Gulf War, inspectors after the war found out that Saddam had formed a special scud unit manned by Al-Amn al-Khas, his Special Security Organization, equipped with biological and chemical warheads for the scuds.

They had pre-existing orders, pre-delegated orders that if they lost contact with Baghdad, either because of a nuclear strike on the city or because the coalition marched on Baghdad, they were to launch everything they had against Israel. I think the expectation this time around is exactly the same, that when Saddam does finally figure out that the game is over, he will again try to lash out with everything he has at Israel, at the United States, at Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, possibly even at the Iraqi people themselves.

On the one hand, the optimism is very helpful to us because it means that he's unlikely to come to that conclusion until the very end. What we've seen from Saddam repeatedly is he often miscalculates when the turning point comes, when he's reached the point of no return. Hopefully, he will do so again and he won't realize that he's lost it until long after the fact, until we have been able to take away from him most of his options to do damage to the rest of the world, to the rest of the region and to the Iraqi people, but as Tommy Franks' troops get closer, I think he needs to be very cognizant of this fact. Mike, do you want to add anything to that?

M. O'Hanlon No, I think that's well said. You certainly know the Iraqi politics much better than I so we should probably just keep going on to the next question.

Moderator Our next question comes from Howard Witt at the *Chicago Tribune*.

H. Witt A question for both of you actually. It relates to the setbacks of the last few days. If we assume that eventually the United States will win, my question is what if the United States wins, but after a difficult drawn out fight? What if we win ugly, in other words? Is winning ugly essentially losing?

What I mean by that is if you figure that the Bush doctrine and the national security strategy is really built upon this presumption of overwhelming U.S. military dominance in the world, does this failure to secure an instant victory in Iraq shake this myth of this all-powerful U.S. military and, therefore, does it in fact possibly weaken the United States in

the future in terms of emboldening other adversaries, such a North Korea, who conclude, “The United States isn’t as indomitable as they thought they were; they can be fought,” so does it open challenges in the future?

M. O’Hanlon

I’ll start, if you don’t mind, Ken, and then chime in. I think that the answer is no. I’m not worried the way you are. I think it will be just the opposite effect, more than the one you indicate. We’re all subject or somewhat influenced by the latest news, and yesterday’s news was a little disconcerting, but as Ken and I have been emphasizing not out of the ordinary in this kind of war, in fact incredibly low casualty rates when you’re making the kind of strides we are.

I think this will prove that we’re capable of defeating regular forces in terrain where it is not always to our advantage, where we can’t just use long-range airpower, we’re not just fighting in open desert. Yes, we’ll take more casualties, but there will be no doubt about our ability to win this thing very fast and very decisively.

Frankly, I’m not sure North Korea’s willingness to take us on has to do with any doubt about that. I think it’s more because they realize that they can threaten Seoul and we can’t take away that threat, even if we could defeat their military quickly, we could not quickly eliminate the artillery threat to Seoul or at least not fast enough to protect the capital of South Korea.

Anyway, I don’t think that’s the sort of thing that’s driving North Korea’s thinking right now. I do believe that countries will see this to be a remarkable display of yet one more American military capability. They might in some cases have begun to forget about it a little bit, but if you have to harken back to Panama in 1989, to the last time we really had an impressive victory in urban circumstances, maybe people need to be reminded, but I think they will be very soon.

K. Pollack

I think that’s a great answer. I don’t think I can add anything to that. Let’s go on to the next question.

Moderator

Our next question comes from Michael Dobbs at the *Washington Post*.

M. Dobbs

I have a question for Ken. Based on looking at this from Saddam Hussein’s perspective, two points really. Firstly, what are the lessons he has learned from previously wars he has fought, particularly the Gulf

War, Iran/Iraq War, and how is he shaping his strategy this time to avoid the mistakes of the past?

Secondly, from his point of view can there be a victory in military defeat? Can there be a political victory out of a military defeat, particularly regarding Arab public opinion?

K. Pollack Michael, just for clarification, do you mean America's military defeat or Saddam's military defeat?

M. Dobbs No. Can there be a political victory out of Saddam's military defeat? In other words, can he be defeated militarily, but in some sense, particularly with regard to Arab public opinion, gain a political propaganda victory out of that?

K. Pollack Can Saddam gain ...

M. Dobbs Exactly.

K. Pollack Sure, good questions. Let me start with the first one. What has he learned and actually, also, I think it's important too just what he hasn't learned. What's important to him in terms of this war and how he's looking at other wars, the Iran/Iraq War, my guess is that he has drawn two lessons from the Iran/Iraq War. One is that his people will fight hard against a foreign invader. That's how he reads the Iran/Iraq War, and he recognizes that Shi'a are not likely to fight very hard against the United States, and that there was no real expectation that his regular army would. I think that Saddam was counting on the fact that this would be seen as a foreign invader and that some segments of the Iraqi population would be willing to rally around him to fight the foreign invader.

Second, one of the things that the Gulf War didn't disprove in his mind about the lessons of the Iran/Iraq War is Saddam believes that he can defend cities. During the Iran/Iraq War, the Iraqis mounted two colossal defenses of the city of Basra against massive Iranian attacks in 1982 and 1987. These were ferocious fights, lasting in many cases weeks, if not months. The Iranians just kept pounding and pounding on the defenses of Baghdad and the Iraqis prevailed.

Obviously, we had no city fighting in the Gulf War, and I think that it's pretty clear that Saddam believes that the Iraqi armed forces in this kind of urban terrain or in the environs. It's important to remember the Republican Guard is not actually deployed in the city of Baghdad.

They're deployed around the city of Baghdad in its environs, somewhere between 20 to 70 kilometers outside of the city of Baghdad.

I think that he still believes that he will be able to prevail in another fight like Basra or, as I said before, the key issue here, prevail for him, what that means is that we won't be willing to pay the price in casualties that the Iranians were willing to pay when they assaulted Basra.

Obviously, he knows that we won't take quite the number of casualties that the Iranians did when they assaulted Basra, but I think it's also clear that he believes that our tolerance for casualties is so low that he doesn't need to inflict that many, which actually brings up the lessons of the Persian Gulf War, which are, on the one hand, I think Saddam did learn a very important lesson from the Persian Gulf War and we're seeing it play out, and that is that the Iraqi armed forces are simply no match for U.S. forces out in the open field.

He recognizes that deploying his army out in the middle of the Kuwaiti desert and the Iraqi desert, at the end of a long supply line, a vulnerable supply line where they had no cover from air power, where they had no population centers around them, either for sustenance or cover, all of that was a tremendous mistake, but by the same token I think that he believes that in the urban terrain around Baghdad, the built up terrain around Baghdad, the heavier vegetation around Baghdad, all of that is going to greatly discount all of our advantages, our advantages in terms of long-range attack, our air advantages, our advantages in terms of maneuverability.

All of the things that allowed us to prevail so handily during Gulf War, I think Saddam believes are going to be obviated by his new strategy of digging in the Republican Guard divisions around Baghdad and making us slug it out with them, well defended, dug in around Baghdad in the much worse terrain around there.

Finally, your last question in terms of political defeat and military victory, let me put it this way. A military victory against Saddam Hussein is going to mean he loses control of Iraq. For Saddam Hussein I think that's all that matters. The idea that somehow he will win a political victory in the Arab world, I don't think is terribly meaningful for Saddam. Saddam has made it clear any number of times that he equates his own survival with his control over Iraq. In other words, if he's not in control of Iraq he is a dead man. Therefore, I don't think that he expects to survive beyond it, and I don't think that he will necessarily take great comfort in any political

victory in terms of greater agitation in the Arab world against the United States.

At the end of the day when he really does believe that the game is over, as I was suggesting before, the one political victory he will be looking for in terms of his own legacy will be to lash out at all of these different foes because that's what he sees for himself. He's said any number of times that he sees his historic destiny as being the great new Arab leader who strikes blows for Iraq and the Arab world against its greatest enemies – Israel, the United States, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

M. O'Hanlon

I could just add very quickly, because Ken obviously knows this stuff much better than I do, but I would simply point out that we all know that back in '99, and Michael you know this well too, when Serbia was being attacked by NATO airpower, we knew that there were contacts between Serbia and Iraq about ways to counter American and NATO airpower, ways to shut down radars, ways not to leave them on so long, that HARM missiles could lock on.

In other words, there is a certain level of military-to-military contact, or at least watching each other's wars and learning from them. I think we can be very confident that Saddam watched Operation Allied Force in 1999 very carefully, and that he knows there are certain things our airpower has a very hard time doing. It's just a way to reinforce all the points that Ken made, with an additional experience from outside of the immediate region that Saddam, of course, is located in. Then finally, Mogadishu I'm sure is something Saddam hasn't forgotten either, so those are just two additional examples that reinforce lessons he's learned in his own immediate context as well.

Moderator

Our next question comes from the line of Robert Port at *New York Daily News*.

R. Port

I think this question is mostly for Ken, but I'd welcome Michael too. Can you give us a fresh assessment of the likelihood chemical weapons will be used during an assault on Baghdad, what agents would be likely, and maybe describe the range of possibilities for that scenario?

K. Pollack

Mike, shall I start?

M. O'Hanlon

Please.

K. Pollack

I continue to believe that the likelihood is quite high that they will be used. I continue to believe that the Iraqis do have at least chemical and probably biological agents as well. I have every expectation that they will be used at some point in the battle for Baghdad because Saddam does recognize that if he can't hold Baghdad it is all over for him. That said, I think that he will wait as long as he possibly can to do so because, again, his strategy for victory is a political and psychological strategy less a military strategy.

He seemed to be calculating this all along that part of that political victory would come from intense international pressure on the United States to call off the war and intense domestic political pressure, based on the argument that we haven't found any weapons of mass destruction, therefore, he doesn't have them, therefore, the war is illegitimate and we should stop.

Nevertheless, I think that he will ultimately use them at some point during the battle for Baghdad. As for what he will use, I think there's no question he will use some kind of mix of chemical agents. During the Iran/Iraq War, especially toward the end of it, the Iraqis got quite good at mixing agents. They would launch both conventional artillery rounds along with Sarin, Taban, or some other form of nerve gas, along with mustard and, in some cases, some other agents, choking agents, as well.

The range of those, by and large we're talking about artillery and multiple rocket launchers, so they'll have a range of somewhere between 15 and 40 kilometers. The Iraqis have some wonderful artillery pieces that can fire out to about 40 kilometers. We could also see them used biological warfare agents like anthrax, like botulinum toxin. The problem there is that, at least the anthrax takes much longer to have an impact. It could take several days for any of the cases of anthrax to even start to incubate and break out, whereas what you're looking for in this kind of a situation is the immediate battlefield impact.

More likely, I think, is that we might see biological warfare agents used at the end of the battle if Saddam does really believe that he's lost the war and is just trying to lash out, only under those circumstances do I think that it's more likely we'd see lots of biological agents used. Of course, again, the interesting question is what exactly does he have left at that point in time, what are his capabilities to use it, who is willing to actually pull the trigger at that point in time when it becomes clear that Saddam's

regime is going down, and the United States is going to prevail and has said that anyone who uses the stuff will be tried as a war criminal.

Just as a point along those lines, it does look like the Iraqis had set a lot of the oil wells in southern Iraq for demolition, whether Saddam for some reason purposely chose not to give that order, or it was simply that the troops weren't willing to actually execute it for fear of how they'd be treated by coalition forces, we don't know, but I think that that second possibility has got to definitely out there as a possibility. Again, we may see the similar things with the Republican Guards around Baghdad, that once they believe that Saddam is gone they may not be willing to use the stuff either.

M. O'Hanlon

I'm going to add just one very quick point, that I agree fully with Ken that Iraq is likely to use these. This is not based on any detailed reading of the individual people involved or any knowledge thereof, but simply to say look at the history. Why should we think that Saddam is going to give up something that for him has been relatively effective as a military instrument. Previously, the United States has not really proven its ability to fight in a chemical environment in the modern era, so it seems to Saddam perhaps it's one of the many vulnerabilities he wants to explore or try to exploit.

Then finally the argument that somehow he's got too much dignity or too much concern about his role in the era's history books, which is an argument I hear a lot these days, including from Hans Blix, I find just flat out bizarre. It seems to me as well that Saddam would have no trouble rationalizing why he had kept these weapons and hidden them from inspectors. He could simply say, listen, with Israel having nuclear weapons, and with my neighbors all having chemical and biological weapons, the sovereignty of Iraq and the need to protect my country required me to do whatever I could to hide these things from inspectors and I make no apologies for it. I think he would have a very easy time, at least convincing himself that was a viable line of argument.

Somehow the idea that this would shame him to have to admit that he had been lying or caught in a lie seems to ignore what I know about his entire personality and history.

Moderator

The next question comes from the line of Michael Batfish with *Handlesblatt*.

M. Batfish You both are pretty optimistic concerning the duration of the war, so what do you think finally, how long will it last? Secondly, Michael, you mentioned the catch word of Mogadishu, remember that in 1993 the image of killed American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu had a deep impact on American public opinion. Don't you think that something like that has happened or even more cruel on a broad scale so that the public opinion here might be influenced?

M. O'Hanlon If I start with that, I would simply say, Michael, just look at today. Today is the equivalent of the Mogadishu experience that you described. This is the day after which we have seen images of dead Americans on television. I don't sense from any of my conversations, whether it's at home or with my neighbors or here at work, any fragile American will to continue this campaign, any wavering. Certainly, there's a shock, certainly there's a sadness and, as Ken pointed out earlier, we all feel for the families of those involved, but this is not affecting the American public the way that the incident you described did. There's just no comparison whatsoever.

Americans, I think, may be a little too optimistic about this war, but they will not flinch in the face of casualties; they know we have to win this thing. To paraphrase Senator McCain in a line he made popular during the Kosovo war, "We're in it; we've got to win it."

I think even most war doubters can see that point right now, so, no, I do not accept that concern as a serious reason why we might get into trouble here at home with domestic political support. I think you'd have to get major terrorist attacks on the United States or a sense of quagmire and bogging down inside of Iraq, together with high casualties for our troops, before you would have that kind of a reaction.

K. Pollack I agree 100% with Mike. I don't think there's anything I can add to it.

M. Batfish And the duration of the war?

K. Pollack Mike, do you want to go first on that one?

M. O'Hanlon I'll just very quickly say that there's, of course, no way to be exact, but if you look at the Panama analogy, it was a small operation in a small country, but the idea of sort of urban blitzkrieg, which I think is what we'll try here eventually, suggests that one to two weeks is all you need to really seize the major centers in Baghdad where Iraqi forces are going to be setting up their alternative command sites and so forth. How long a

mopping up stage could continue afterwards, I don't know, but I would think that by the middle of April we will be more or less in control of Baghdad, and it could very easily be well before that and I think it probably will be well before then.

K. Pollack

My estimates are very much in accord with Mike's. It is possible that the whole place could come apart. If we start hitting the Republican Guard divisions, if we start really hitting the Medina Division in the next day or two, and we just obliterate them, and as a result the rest of the Republican Guard division starts to fall apart, or if Saddam Hussein is killed at some point, I think with either of those circumstances this thing could be over still in a couple of days.

I think more likely we are talking about at least another week, and probably it's reasonable to believe that it might be even a week beyond that. I think that now that we have gotten up to the Baghdad area, we're going to slow down a little bit and get a lot more cautious in terms of bringing up additional forces. We need to be careful about civilian casualties.

Obviously, we'd like to hit the Republican Guard as hard as we can and as soon as we can, but if the Guard doesn't collapse as a result of some initial pushes by the U.S. military, you might see a slowdown a little bit. So we won't necessarily take down the city quite as fast as we overran Nasiriya, but I don't think that this will drag out into a very protracted campaign.

Moderator

The next question comes from Jim Puzanghera at the *San Jose Mercury News*.

J. Puzanghera

I guess this is mostly for Ken. You mentioned before that one of the lessons you think Saddam learned from the Iraq/Iran War was that his military would fight against a foreign invader. Do you think that that's what's going on here to any extent, that this is viewed differently by the Iraqi military than protecting Kuwait, that this is in a sense protecting their homeland, and how strongly do you think that they will continue to fight, not necessarily for Saddam, but for Iraq?

K. Pollack

I think that some of that probably is going on with the Republican Guard. The morale and the discipline of the Republican Guard in combat has always been a little bit of a mystery. For example, during 1991, during the Persian Gulf War, the Guard stood and fought and died for Kuwait. I think if they stood and fought and died for Kuwait, you have to expect that

they would be willing to stand and fight and die for Iraq, especially because in the interregnum between 1991 and the present, the Guard has become more politicized.

The Guard that went into battle in 1991 was a mostly apolitical force. Most of those people were pulled out of the rank and file, the officer core of the regular army in 1986, not because they had any ties of loyalty to Saddam, but just because they had demonstrated that they were capable soldiers during the course of the fighting. They literally went around and plucked out all of the best soldiers and officers and put them in the Republican Guard and then tried to buy their loyalty.

This time around, since 1991, Saddam has been very systematically including more and more people in the Republican Guard with real ties of loyalty to him. Now that's meant that this Republican Guard probably isn't as skillful even as the 1991 Republican Guard. Of course, you always want to be very careful because the Republican Guard of 1991 was not terribly skillful, and this one probably won't be even as skillful as that one. Nevertheless, they should have even greater ties of loyalty to Saddam. That's why I've always felt that we need to go in expecting that the Republican Guard will fight at least as hard as they did for Kuwait.

J. Puzanghera

As a follow-up, I'm wondering if you see that in other sectors of Iraq as well, that protecting the country, even as a totalitarian regime, that they are protecting or maybe bristling at an invasion by a foreign country, even if it is essentially to liberate them.

K. Pollack

Yes. I'm finding it really hard to do that. It looks like most of the regular army really is melting away. Most of them don't necessarily seem to be surrendering to us, most of them seem to be going home, but that actually is the pattern for the Iraqi army. In 1991, probably four or five times as many Iraqis simply went home as actually surrendered to us. Maybe not quite that many, maybe three or four times as many, but still a very high percentage or a much higher percentage, and that seems to be what's going on now.

The units that are fighting hard for Saddam, the units that we've seen so far, are his greatest loyalists. They are the Fedayeen Saddam, and they are the SSO, Al-Amn al-Khas, the Special Security Organization; both of those groups have tremendous ties of loyalty to Saddam. The SSO in particular, there are about 5,000 of them in the entire country, maybe a little bit more. They're almost all from either Saddam's tribe or from just

three or four other extremely loyal Sunni tribes, who are considered closest to Saddam, the Jabor, the Dulai, the Ubai, the Shimar. These the closest tribes to Saddam; they've been treated very well by him.

If you speak to Iraqi exiles, what they will say is the SSO they all know that they're going to be torn to pieces by the Iraqi people when this is over because they are such an important element of Saddam's terror apparatus, and such an important ingredient of the kind of depredations that have been inflicted on the Iraqi population over the years.

Basically, the same can be said of the Fedayeen Saddam, who were Saddam's bullyboys, who do horrible things like execute women in the street, claiming that they're prostitutes, just behead a woman in the street because they think that she's a prostitute. It could be over any particular reason, so again these are deeply heated people who clearly recognize that they have no future in an Iraq without Saddam Hussein. Those seem to be the groups who are putting up the most fight and those seem to be their motivations.

It's hard to detect real willingness for other elements of the population to stand and fight against invaders of Iraq. I think the only place where I think we probably are going to see some of that is with the Republican Guard. Mike, do you want to add anything to that?

M. O'Hanlon

No thanks, Ken.

Moderator

The next question comes from the line of Craig Gilbert at the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

C. Gilbert

The question already seems to be coming up on a daily basis, where are the weapons of mass destruction. I wondered, at what point do you think it's reasonable to ask that question or to expect the coalition forces to begin to discover evidence, and at what point do you think it's just simply kind of a political problem not to have found them?

K. Pollack

Mike, do you want to start?

M. O'Hanlon

I'll start and then I, unfortunately, have to sign off, but the good news for all of you is that Ken knows more about this and other questions as well, so it will be no great loss.

I'll simply say that the gain so far, obviously, are mostly in open terrain or along specific lines of transportation that we need to get to Baghdad. We're trying hard not to go into places where this sort of infrastructure would presumably be found, and moreover, I don't think Saddam ever put much of it in the southeast. I think you're going to expect to get more and more access to these sorts of sights as we get through lines of Republican Guard forces in the Baghdad vicinity, and I'm not sure it's realistic to expect much before then.

K. Pollack

First, Mike, thank you so much for joining us. I appreciate it and take care.

What I'll add to that is, first, most of Iraq's special weapons facilities were in the Baghdad area. Second, remember Saddam's strategy, he never planned on defending the periphery of the country. In fact, he never planned on defending about 99% of the country. He always intended to make his stand around Baghdad. He basically was willing to surrender control over the entirety of the rest of the country to the U.S. forces, believing that all that would matter in the end was Baghdad.

My expectation was always that the only special weapons, the only weapons of mass destruction that were likely to be found would be located in the immediate environs of Baghdad, within about 50 to 75 kilometers of Baghdad. We are just beginning to punch into that area. We're just beginning to approach that inner sanctum, that Baghdad area where it was always likely that the Iraqis would be keeping their weapons of mass destruction. I'm not particularly surprised that we haven't found any since. I would have been very surprised if we had found some since.

So to answer your question, I think that at this point in time there still is a very important military issue out there, which is that the intelligence indicates that the Republican Guard divisions have been provided with at least chemical, if not biological munitions. As long as those divisions are functional and they are believed to have chemical weapons, that's a big problem for the military; they've got to take care of those weapons.

Beyond that, yes, you're right. I think that there is a political issue out there, but it's hard to note just how important that political issue is. My sense is that the administration, obviously, they're hoping that they will find weapons of mass destruction, but they're also hoping I think that when Saddam does finally fall that the Iraqi people are going to be jubilant, and that that jubilation on the part of the Iraqi people will swamp

whatever is found out about the weapons of mass destruction. Even if there are no weapons of mass destruction found, the joy, the elation of the Iraqi people will justify the war in and of itself. The people will look at it and say, "My God, if these people wanted it so badly, of course, it was justifiable."

Moderator The next question comes from the Chuck McCutcheon at the Newhouse News Service.

C. McCutcheon Ken, this question is a two-part question dealing with the role of intelligence in this war. First of all, the CIA and other agencies have been criticized in the past for sort of an over-reliance on technical collection and not enough on human intelligence, and yet it seems like in this case they've been able to do a lot with recruiting informants within the Republican Guard and elsewhere. I'm just wondering if you could sort of say whether this is an aberration or something that's maybe indicative of the role against fighting terrorism in the future.

The second part of the question is there hasn't been a lot of attention given, although that it's something that a lot of lawmakers are interested in, in MASINT, in measurement and signatures intelligence. I'm wondering if you think that MASINT capability might be particularly good in sort of a post-war, determining whether there are any weapons of mass destruction?

K. Pollack I'll answer the second question first because I think it's an easy one. Yes. When this is all over and done, I think that MASINT will be very important in trying to determine where there are WMD caches.

Obviously, as you're well aware, a lot of the MASINT capabilities require a presence on the ground so that will make things a lot easier. Even then, we're going to have to rely a great deal on humans in the form of Iraqi military personnel and scientists coming forward and saying here's where you need to start looking. This was the problem we had with the inspectors was, not that they didn't have the capabilities, it was that we didn't even know where the heck to send them. This time around, hopefully, that problem will solve itself after Saddam's fall.

With regard to your question about humans, the first thing I'd say is I'd be very cautious about these stories coming out. I think that there is no question that the administration is trying very hard to make contact with Republican Guard officers and other elements of the regime. I don't know for a fact that they actually are, and I'm willing to believe that a lot of the

information that they're getting is actually from technical sources, namely SIGINT, which they don't want people to know about. As a result, they're instead pointing to spies and saying that's how we're getting it.

We have some extraordinarily sensitive capabilities in terms of technical collection, and obviously we've had special forces and CIA paramilitary teams running all over Iraq for weeks now. It would have been pretty easy for them to have installed some of these collection capabilities, which can't be done remotely.

In addition, my experience with Iraq is it's a very, very difficult HUMINT environment, extraordinarily difficult, one of the most difficult countries in the world to collect HUMINT. While I am hopeful that that has changed and it would be terrific if it's true, that we have been able to make contact with a number of these guys, and I will say that for about the last five years we've been collecting that kind of information. We've just been collecting e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, cell phone numbers, for all of these guys in expectation that at some point in time there would be a major push for regime change.

Obviously, when we started the effort the expectation was that it might be a big covert action campaign, not necessarily an invasion, but the expectation was always that at some point we might make a big push for regime change, and when that happened we would want this kind of information. So it is possible that we have been able to make contact, but always important to remember the Mohabharat monitors all of the external communications, that's phone lines, that's cell phones, that's Internet, so it's hard to actually make contact with these guys. Again, it leaves me to believe that it's just as likely that these are actually technical systems, which are doing the work for us and not necessarily humans.

Moderator

The next question comes from the line of Ben Roth at the *Houston Chronicle*.

B. Roth

Today the White House is going to present the initial bill for the war. They're saying between \$70 billion and \$80 billion, with about \$60 some of that billion going for defense needs, the other is for aid to Israel, others in the Mideast, and Homeland Defense. One, does that sound like a reasonable first installment or do you expect it's a little low or high?

Two, and this goes back also to talk about casualties and expectations, the President really until the last few days hasn't talked much about sacrifice

K. Pollack

in terms of the war. It has only been recently they've been talking about a long war. Do you think they adequately prepared Americans both for the cost in terms of human life and in terms of budget, other things, and the reconstruction costs that will follow?

I'll start with the first part of the question. I think that the \$80 billion is probably a good first cut at it. That probably will be enough to cover the cost of the war, unless something truly unexpected happens and things really go radically wrong.

By the same token, I think that the reconstruction might require more added onto that. Obviously, it's going to depend on a bunch of different factors, and it's probably worth pointing out that capturing all of the Rumaila oilfields and related oilfields intact was a huge element of that. There are basically three big oil producing regions in Iraq. There's the Rumaila oilfield in the south, which is responsible for about 60% of production; there's the Kirkuk oilfield in the north right by the Kurds, which is responsible for about 30%, and then the Moshanu fields in the southeast just north of Basra responsible for about another 10%.

So capturing the Rumaila fields intact is enormous in terms of expectations of post-war reconstruction because there were a lot of fears and a lot of calculations that Saddam would destroy those oilfields, and as a result it would be a least one to three years before any of those fields could start producing. Capturing them intact indicates that we will be able to start bringing Iraqi online much faster in much greater quantities than I think most of the estimates predicted.

Nevertheless, it is still true that there is going to be quite a bit of reconstruction to do after the war, and it may well require another supplemental beyond the \$80 billion.

As far as do I think the administration has prepared the country, from my perspective I don't think that the administration has been talking about sacrifice enough, going back to after September 11th. I think it was a mistake of the administration to basically tell the American public that if they really wanted to help the war effort they ought to go shopping, which was in effect what they were saying. I think that they could have done little things like one of my pet projects was issue \$50 war bonds.

In the days after 9/11 every person in the country would have bought \$50 war bonds and you could have generated some money, but far more importantly, it's a way of really personalizing the sacrifice and bringing it

home to the American people that we really are going to have to make some sacrifices. We're really going to need to give a bit back to the collective entity of the United States in order to safeguard ourselves. I think that the administration has not done a very good job all along in making that clear, and I think that what's going on in Iraq is part of that.

That said, just kind of listening to people, talking to my neighbors, talking to my friends, participating in call-in shows and listening for people call in from all over the country, my sense is that there is a strong understanding that this war is going to require sacrifices. It's why I agreed with Mike's depiction earlier of U.S. public opinion, which is that there is an understanding that this war will require sacrifices. It's why there are a number of people who are opposed to the war, and for the people who are in favor of it, I think that they believe that those sacrifices are justified because of the threat that we face.

Moderator Our next question comes from the line of Greg Gitrick at the *New York Daily News*.

K. Pollack I'm afraid this is going to have to be the last question, Greg.

G. Gitrick When it comes to the Republican Guard units, are they still essentially in two defensive rings around Baghdad, and what type of weaponry do they have? If it comes down to it, will Saddam pull the divisions back inside the interior of the city or will he be apprehensive to do that?

K. Pollack Good questions. As best I understand it, they are still deployed in two defensive rings around the city, which is similar to the way that the Iraqis defended Basra in 1987 with multiple concentric rings. Their problem this time around is they don't have enough troops to defend Baghdad the way that they defended Basra. When they defended Basra in 1987, they had something like 15 or 20 divisions. This time around they're trying to do the same thing with three divisions; that's one of the problems that they have.

We talk about how big Baghdad is as a physical city and how hard that might make the fight, it also makes the fight equally hard, if not harder, for the Iraqis, who have to defend such a huge amount of territory, and the Guard is going to be stretched quite thin in doing so. As opposed to the six defensive lines that they had around Basra, this time around they have two and, as best I can tell, they're not all that well held. I think that they

are again concentrating on certain key sectors, obviously the south being one of them.

The kind of equipment they have, P72 tanks, BMP one and two armored personnel carriers, French GCT self-propelled guns with even some American M109s, which they captured from the Iranians. They also have the best call on a bunch of other systems. It was the Republican Guard that always had the largest number of SA14 and SA16 shoulder launched surface to air missiles, which were some of the deadliest anti-air weapons that we faced during the first Gulf War. They have some of the best communications equipment, they have the fist call for supply, the most spare parts, etc.

As for whether he'll be willing to pull them into the city, I think this is an open question. He would really prefer not to get into that. I think he'd really prefer to have the Guard bloody us so badly on the outskirts of the city that we never get to the point where we have to fight inside the city. He recognizes that if we really are fighting in the city that he's probably lost it at that point in time.

Now he's got the special Republican Guard back in the city, and obviously if it really comes down to that he probably will go ahead and call on them to defend the city in a last ditch effort. Pulling the Republican Guard units back into the city, that's a problem for them. It's probably going to be considered a loss. At the end he'll probably be willing to do it because they'll have no other alternative, but you also raise the issue of loyalty; that is another concern.

We have seen a lot of coop attempts from the Republican Guard over the last 11 or 12 years. I think that's one of the reasons why Saddam would like to win the war on the outskirts of Baghdad rather than in the actual interior of the city. Again, just as a final point, it's worth remembering that that is how he won against the Iranians in 1987. They didn't actually fight street to street in Baghdad; they fought on the outskirts of Basra.

Thank you all very much. I'm sorry I don't have more time for you, but I hope that was at least helpful to you. Also remember, as Mike pointed out, that at 10:00 tomorrow morning at the Brookings Institution we will have another press briefing.

Moderator

Ladies and gentlemen, this conference will be available for replay beginning at 5:00 p.m. eastern time today running through midnight

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

Host: Lindsay Hench

March 24, 2003/12:30 p.m. CST

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tomorrow evening. You may access the AT&T Executive Playback Service by dialing one of the following two numbers: either 1-800-475-6701 or 320-365-3844, and the access code for this call is 679714.

That does conclude our conference for today. Thank you for your participation and for using AT&T Executive Teleconference. You may now disconnect.