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"Power and Authority: America's Path Ahead"

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Q&A SESSION

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Q & A

MR. NAAMAT: Thank you, my name is Salameh Naamat I am the bureau chief in Washington for the London-based "Al Hayat International Arab Daily." You mentioned about--something about reconciling between interests and ideas--U.S. interests and U.S. ideas. Now, when it comes to the Middle East and the democratization process, we've seen in Iraq this attempt by the United States not to allow the Shiite majority, the non-secular forces--religious forces to come to the surface despite the fact that they are a majority in Iraq. Now, this has given the impression in the Middle East that the U.S. wants a selective democracy that serves its own interests in the region, rather than the people's interests now.

How do we go about it, considering that the same arguments goes throughout the Middle East, if you allow democracy now you will have the Islamists, the fundamentalists taking power, toppling the secular regimes that exist today. How do you go about tackling this issue? Thank you.

MR. BERGER: I think there are a number of competing demands on us at this stage. Iraqis are saying restore order; stop the looting; get the electricity going; let's resume a political process; there's a tension between all of those competing objectives. I believe it is appropriate and necessary for us to get control of the situation on the ground so that Iraqis feel as if they can keep their stores open; feel as if they're not terrorized at night; feel as if normal life can return.

But I also believe, as I said in my remarks that sooner, rather than later, we need to begin to create a political process in Iraq. Initially, I think, for an Iraqi authority that would be representative broadly and that would be perceived by Iraqis as something that came from Iraqis and not only from the United States. And their actual authority, in the beginning, might be limited and expand over time. And I think, unless we create that political--begin to create that political process, I think the country will politicize along various lines; along religious lines, along regional lines, so I think it's important to get that political started and that it be representative of all the groups. Eventually there'll be elections in Iraq. I'm not sure that that's--at least at a national level, something that is wise early. Perhaps, we can start with local elections, but certainly there needs to be a political mechanism by which Iraqis believe that they are helping to shape the decisions that affect their lives.

MR. WAHBY: Mohammed Wahby, I represent "Al-Mussawar" Magazine in Cairo. Do you think there's any prospect of a Middle East resolution before the next election, presidential elections, and is that why you're not quite even-handed as you have been on other issues when it came to Sharon and Abu Mazen?

MR. BERGER: I think the question, as I understand it, do I think there can be a solution in the Middle East before the next election? No, I don't think there can

be a solution. My hope is that there can be a different dynamic. I don't think we're quickly or easily going back to the kind of final status discussions that were underway at Camp David. Too much blood has gone under the bridge over the last two and a half years for us to get back to those issues very quickly.

But I do think there is a moment opportunity here to change the dynamic. Why is that true? Number one, we have greater leverage in the region after Iraq, whether you agreed with it or not. Number two, the Palestinians have selected a moderate prime minister, Abu Mazen. If he fails, it'll be the last moderate Palestinian leader we see for a very, very long time. Number three, I believe Prime Minister Sharon has evidenced in his statements in the last month a recognition that military force, alone, cannot guarantee enduring Israeli security. Number four, I believe both sides, the ordinary people on both sides are exhausted from this conflict and I always believe there is opportunity that can these stitched from exhaustion. And number five, President Bush has now become personally involved.

So, for all of those reasons, I think this is a moment of opportunity. If we lose this moment, I believe things will spiral downward for another substantial period of time. My hope and expectation is not that there will be lasting agreement here, it's that we will create some breathing space between Palestinians and Israelis and a dynamic by which Israelis can live with greater security and Palestinians can live with greater dignity, as we move forward along a political path. Let me go over here, I don't want to be accused of not going to my right.

MR. GUTMAN: Roy Gutman of USIP and "Newsweek." Mr. Berger, I found your wide ranging critique of the Bush Administration quite fascinating. Of course, they've defined so much of their policy by trying to be the opposite of what you were doing or doing the opposite of what you were doing in the Clinton Administration. I just wonder if you would look at the two issues, Afghanistan and Iraq, reflectively. I mean, do you have any reflections on whether you did enough in Afghanistan, you know, especially in and after 1998. There was a reluctance--it seems to be there was a reluctance after the initial strikes, the Cruise Missile strikes to actually change the environment in which Osama bin Laden was flourishing. And secondly, on Iraq, it's, I'm sort of curious what you would be doing differently from the Bush Administration. I assume that you wouldn't have intervened so quickly, you would have--the timing might have been different, you would have consulted more widely; but isn't the fact in that case, Saddam Hussein we still be in place and you have just now applauded his departure?

MR. BERGER: Well, actually I said I supported the President on Iraq. So maybe you missed that piece. But let me answer both questions.

I think, with respect to Afghanistan, even before 1998, we substantially increased the focus and attention on terrorism. In doubling resources, tripling resources in some cases, stopping a number of devastating potential attacks on the United States; creating an Al Qaeda unit within the intelligence community, in '96 or '97; beginning to roll up cells in cooperation with our European allies.

Now, in 1998, when our embassies were attacked, in August, for the first time, the intelligence community was able to say, clearly, this is an Al Qaeda operation. We know a lot more looking back through the rear view mirror about linkages than we did at the time. But when the embassies were attacked, blown up in August of 1998, for the first time, the intelligence community said, this is Al Qaeda. From that point on, we had a serious and intense effort to get Bin Laden. We had actionable intelligence once; we attacked camps where we had information he would be, in August. We missed him according to the later reports, by a few hours. We killed a number of Al Qaeda operatives. We've learned since then, even with troops in Afghanistan, this is a difficult target.

We moved submarines into the waters off the coasts, kept them stationed there for a year and a half with Cruise missiles, ready to launch at any time, were we to have better information. On a few occasions, we had hopeful information, which as we now all know better, information in this part of the world from individuals, can be unreliable. The President's frustration in 2000 with that problem caused us to go back and essentially develop the Predator as an intelligence platform, which we did in the summer of 2000, we tested it in the fall of 2000 as an intelligence platform so that if we had human intelligence saying that Bin Laden was at a particular location, we would be able to then instantly confirm that in real time. And that was tested at the end of our Administration. That Predator was not put back in the air until after 9/11. And so I would say we were--there's no issue, I can assure you that we were no--that I was not more focused on than getting Bin Laden during the '99-2000 period. We were not inside Afghanistan--we were working with various groups inside Afghanistan, but unlike after 9/11, Pakistan was supporting the Taliban, not supporting us. We were not inside Afghanistan and I don't think the country would have sustained going to war with Afghanistan before 9/11. Indeed, I don't remember any political figure or any journalist proposing war against Afghanistan before 9/11.

So I do think we had a serious effort. I wish we had gotten him, but I think that under the circumstances, it was not for a lack of priority.

On Iraq, I said in my remarks, I think we did the right thing in Iraq. My own view was that the most serious threat posed to the United States was his eventual acquisition of nuclear weapons. I believe that was a few years down the line, therefore, I think we probably had some more time to build greater international support but, clearly, there was a window of opportunity after 9/11 in which the American people were prepared to support that action and I supported it.

MR. DAALDER: Ivo Daalder from Brookings Institution. Just following up on that; you had eight years of the best access, the best intelligence our government had and we're now in the midst of the question of "where are the weapons?" What did you think on March 19 with regard to the weapons? What is your explanation, if any, for where they may be? And what are the consequences of, perhaps, having gotten it wrong or, at least sufficiently wrong that 90 days after the war, we still have only found what the "Guardian" calls killer Winebagos, but nothing else?

MR. BERGER: I think that we had convincing evidence that Saddam Hussein had biological and chemical weapons programs and a nuclear weapons program, although on a longer time frame. That was not only the conclusion that our intelligence community reached, it was a conclusion the French intelligence reached.

I have been surprised that we have not found more in the 90 days since the statue fell, if not the man. And I think there are many possible explanations. It's still there to be found and hidden; it's been privatized; which is a kind of frightening notion, that is it's been taken away by colonels and others to emerge at some other point. It--we didn't do a very good job of protecting the locations and the sites and, therefore, it's disappeared in one fashion or another. Or we overstated the intelligence. And I think, in some respects, particularly on the nuclear, we did overstate what we knew. I think it is profoundly important for us to answer the question, that you asked. I disagree profoundly with my friends who say, it doesn't matter, because the stated reason doesn't have to be the right reason. I think a democracy, you do not go to war under incorrect assumptions or premises. And so I believe we have to determine what happened to the WMD and, perhaps, because it's still in Iraq and a threat to our forces. Perhaps because it has disappeared in some fashion and been destroyed, although we should be able to determine that. Or, perhaps, in some fashion, our intelligence was wrong, in which case, it's extraordinarily important to take an honest look at that.

MS. KAPLAN: Hi, my name is Michele Kaplan and I'm from the Embassy of Israel. And, like you said, both Sharon and Abas have kind of--have a lot of challenges right now; Sharon, as you said, needs to secure his country and--but, you know, keep his commitments to the Palestinians while the--while Abas needs to, you know, be strong for his own people, but also be seen as a partner for peace and you're saying that, from my understanding, you know, Hamas is kind of the lynch pin right now. How does each side deal with that group in a way that both can understand, you know, and be okay with that?

MR. BERGER: Well, there are two ways in which Hamas is going to be dealt with. Either through coercive action or by Israel on its own. And I think that Israel is not going to accept continued attacks and so I think it is extraordinarily important at this moment that the President, Secretary Powell make it clear to the Arab leaders who are at Akaba; to Abu Mazen and to Prime Minister Sharon that it is better to deal with Hamas through concerted action than by Israeli action alone.

That can take many forms. It can take the form of turning back parts of Palestinian areas where they take care of security to Palestinians with Israeli withdrawal. It can take the form of the kind of trilateral security cooperation that took place in the '90s where we had, on the ground, Palestinian security people, Israeli security people, with our own intelligence people, very much looking at the threat matrix, I guess, would be the fashionable term today, in dealing with it. We should be prepared to support that effort, but I think this is a moment for concerted action to deal with those who seek to prevent progress from taking place because it will--if there's not concerted action, there will be unilateral action.

MR. KEDELIA: Seehiy Kedelia, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. You spoke about the way the current U.S. Administration alienated some of it's long-term democratic allies, but you haven't mentioned the way it substituted them for some questionable autocratic friends. More specifically, many are saying that the United States is willing now to turn a blind eye to the conflict in Chechnya and some of the autocratic excesses of President Putin, in terms for some superficial friendship between Bush and Putin. Similarly, some are saying that the United States is willing to take a softer line towards Ukrainian President Kushma in return for getting ground troops in Iraq. Do you see any problems with the U.S. police towards these two particular countries?

MR. BERGER: No, there's, obviously, always a tension here, but I don't think that we have to sacrifice our interest in human rights; in the reasonable disposition of conflicts around the world; in other cases--in the Ukrainian cases of corruption; to secure our interests. I think we have to, you know, the War on Terrorism, the fight against Al Qaeda, required us to enter into relationships with some countries on the periphery of Afghanistan that are not democracies and we need to be very cautious about that in terms of how we embrace those countries. We can work with them in areas of common interest, but we have to also recognize their own limitations and problems, and not embrace them so closely that we reap the whirlwind if the people react.

I think with respect to Russia, I think it is important for us to be honest with President Putin about Chechnya. It is a problem, I think that not only is the world is concerned about, but ultimately is corrosive, I think for President Putin, who I believe, generally is seeking to modernize that country.

MS. KASEEBI: My name is Greta Kaseebi [ph] from Radio Sawa. Regarding--

MR. BERGER: Radio?

MS. KASEEBI: Sawa. Regarding the U.S. image in the Middle East and this anti-American sentiment within the people--the polls are showing that most of the Arab people have more resentment for their own regimes than for the U.S., really. Their real feelings to the U.S. is mostly a mistrust than it is really resentment. And what's more is that the U.S. is still communicating and making with the Arab leaders and not communicating with their people. So, don't you think that a different approach would help the United States start promoting democracy, having more trust within the Arabs?

MR. BERGER: Well, I think it's correct that some of the resentment in the region is really directed at their own authoritarian governments and it deflects to us because of our relationships with those governments. I think it's very important that we encourage the governments in the region to come to grips with two fundamental issues: Number one, the enemy within--the terrorist enemy within. The Saudis thought they could deal with it the easy way and they found out in Riyadh, they can't, they have to deal with it the hard way. And second of all, reform. I--as I said in my speech, there's a line to be walked by the United States, between essentially now seeing Iraq as a paradigm for region in which we seek to create regime change around the region and aligning ourselves with the dynamics of change in each country; whether that's Iran or

Saudi Arabia or elsewhere. And there are countries like Bahrain and Qatar and others in the region that, in fact, are demonstrating that it is absolutely compatible with tradition to modernize; that there can be reconciliation between the past and the future. So there's nothing inherent in Islam or inherent in the region which says this can't be done. And I think it's important for the more rigid governments of the region to understand that for their own survival.

MS. KASEEBI: Can I follow-up on my question?

MR. BERGER: Yes.

MS. KASEEBI: Regarding the influence that successful democratic regime in Iraq could influence on the other Arab countries. Let's take, for example, what's happening in Iran now, the students movement. Do you think this is one of the consequences of what happened in Iraq and how much do you think the U.S. should get involved and really encourage this movement happening?

MR. BERGER: I think Iraq has been an earthquake in this region, which is fundamentally changing a great deal within countries, between countries; between us and the region. I'm not sure, exactly, how this earthquake is going to settle out, but I think that it opens up a great amount of change. Do I think that what is happening in Iran relates to Iraq? Maybe, in part, although it certainly is a logical extension of the frustration that has been building up among young Iraqis for some time; as they have elected democratic governments but have not really gained control of their lives.

I think we have--I think there's a very important difference--I think we have to be supportive of democratic change without intruding ourselves in such a way that we become the issue, not the leadership that the students are objecting to. And, you know, it is, I think, appropriate for us, anywhere when people are speaking out, standing up for their freedom or for their--for greater control over their lives for us to support that. But to the extent that Iranian leadership can demonstrate that there's an American hand in this effort will kill it.

MR. ROMBERG: Alan Romberg, Stimson Center. Sandy, I want to ask you about North Korea. Essentially what I heard you say is we should be willing to negotiate with them and take yes for an answer if we can get that yes. But we should be prepared for consequences if not, including the use of military force if necessary. I can see a scenario where, if we fail in a negotiation we begin to ratchet up pressure in a variety of ways, economically and so forth, but I'd be interested what you think is a use of military force, assuming the North doesn't initiate some kind of hostilities, what an effective use of force would be to get at the nuclear issue?

MR. BERGER: Well, let me back up, Allen, a second because I think it's very important to put this in context. It's like the troop withdrawal from the DMZ; it's a tactic without a strategy, it seems to me, without the context of a strategy. I think there are three parts of what we need to do in North Korea and rather soon.

Number one, I think we need to say to the North, reprocessing that fuel is unacceptable to the United States. We've not said that. We said that in 1993; in '94--we have not said that. Once that fuel is done reprocessed, as you well know and as has been

published in the newspapers, as reported by the newspapers, plutonium the size of a softball is enough to make a nuclear weapon. So once the plutonium is reprocessed there's no way to, quote, "contain" it. You cannot contain softballs. So number one, we need to make clear, it seems to be that we have a red line.

Number two, I think we need to be serious about determining whether there is a negotiated solution here that is acceptable to us. We don't pay--we're not going to pay twice for what we agreed to in '93 and '94; what we need is something more than what we got in 1993 and '94; '93/'94, as you well know, covered mostly the Yung Mong [ph], facility; it brought inspectors into that confined area; it was not nationwide in its coverage. And we need, essentially, at this point, to say to the North Koreans, you've got to back up your non-nuclear commitments and maybe even missile initiatives with nationwide intrusive inspection.

The reason that's important, it seems to me is two-fold: number one, we will never have the support of the South Koreans or the Chinese for coercive action, no matter what form that takes-- unless they are absolutely convinced that this is about the North Koreans, not about us. They're not convinced about that today. Unless they are convinced that the North Koreans have determined to go nuclear, which may well be the case, they will not support us in coercive action. Now, if it is--if we enter into those negotiations and it is absolutely clear that Kim Jung Il has decided that the nuclear Wal-Mart is the wave of the future for him, I think that's unacceptable. I do not want to live in a world in which a terrorist group--we know Al Qaeda has been trying to obtain nuclear weapons for a decade. If North Korea is producing 10 a year, I don't know what the market value of a nuclear weapon is but I suspect it's not that great. And it can wind up in Moscow, it can wind up in Washington, it can wind up in London; it's a much more dangerous world. That is exactly the reason we went to war in Iraq, to prevent terrorists from getting weapons of mass destruction. I think that's a dangerous world, so the nuclear Wal-Mart option, to me is not a very attractive one.

That's why, number two, I would explore fully negotiating an option. If that failed, I think we would have Chinese support and more South Korean support for a more coercive policy. You'd obviously start on the economic side. I believe the Chinese do have leverage with the North Koreans. We saw that to some degree. They turned off the oil for three days. That had something to do with the North Koreans deciding to go to Beijing. I think you cannot take off the table the military option. And I don't want to speculate here. We can talk about it later how I think that would play out. But I think to take it off the table is to say, that you can live with the Wal-Mart--the nuclear Wal-Mart. Let's go back here.

MR. ARIKAT: Thank you, my name is Said Arikat from "Al Quds Arabic Daily" newspaper. Mr. Berger, looking at Iraq today with American forces behaving more like occupiers than liberators, demanding loyalty oath and so on and as you suggested that WMD may have been privatized. Are we more safe in America as the purpose of stability has been better served by going to war, that's one? And second, sir, on the issue--on the Palestinian issue, the President issued some strong words last

Tuesday against targeted assassination. Your Administration had also some clear policy on the targeted assassination and he back-pedaled. Do you think that was ill-advised? And third, sir, Senator Lugar suggests--

MR. BERGER: Just try two, for the time, okay? I think we're better off by the fact that Saddam Hussein is gone and we are there. Do I think that this war ultimately will be judged by the quality of the peace and not the quality of the war? Yes. So the job is not over. How we do in--what we do now, in Iraq, it seems to me will be history's judge of whether this was an appropriate course of action.

Your second question--

MR. ARIKAT: My second question was on the target assassination, the President issued some strong words then he back-pedaled a few days later. Do you think that was also giving Israel a green-light as everybody has been saying?

MR. BERGER: Well, I said in my--listen this is a very delicate time. I said, and Secretary Powell is headed to the region on Friday. I think that number one, there is going to be no peace as long as Hamas is determined to sabotage it. We would be far better off dealing with Hamas in a concerted fashion. The Arab countries, Abu Mazen, Palestinians, with Israel and with the United States than either Israel dealing with it alone or Abu Mazen at this point dealing with it alone. And a third thing I said is that, while I believe that Israel will do what it needs to do to protect it's people every day, I think in this period there is a long-term interest that Israel has in Abu Mazan succeeding. And I think it has to take account of that in the actions that it takes. Back to Phil.

MR. GORDON: Phil Gordon, Brookings. I wanted to ask you about the United Nations. One of the reasons that we had difficulty rallying support for Iraq was that we couldn't get support at the U.N. because a lot of people still thought this was illegal according to the current rules of the game. The problem, of course, is that the current rules of the game were written more than 50 years ago and don't really--aren't really adapted for the world in which we live and we faced this already during Kosovo. So how does the United States deal with that problem where you go anywhere on the spectrum from is it realistic to try to rewrite those rules--some people in the current Administration seem to think it's just not necessary, we go about our business. But how do we think about ensuring legality and legitimacy given what those rules currently are?

MR. BERGER: I think it's not only--I think it's extremely important now, Phil, that we take this opportunity to try to modernize and make more relevant the United Nations. And I think there are at least two parts to that. There's the management efficiency part of it, which, at least over the last few years, Joe Connor and others have tried to deal with. I think the second element is the make up of the Security Council, which has been mired in, you know, arguments for a very long time, but which we have to come to grips with. This is a Security Council that reflects the way the world looked in 1947; not the way the world looks in 2003.

Where is India? Where is Brazil? Where is Japan? So I think a second part is to modernize and reform these Security Council make up. And, third, we have

now had five peace keeping operations in the last ten years. This is the business we're going to be in. And it seems to me it's a role the U.N. can play and particularly on the civil side. On the military side, it'll be a long time before we trust American troops to a U.N.-led force. In Bosnia and Kosovo, as you well know, we have a NATO-led force with a U.N. authority. But every time we have a failed society or a post-conflict society, add East Timor, add a number of others, we re-invent that wheel at the United Nations. You know, Kofi goes through his phone book to try to get an administrator; that takes a month. And then we have to assemble each piece as if we are building this wagon for the very first time. At some point, you know, someone said insanity is doing--the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and thinking you're going to get a different result. At some point, we ought to recognize that we are going to be facing failed societies and post-conflict societies over the next 15 years 20 years; that the United Nations can be, much as NATO is on the military side a place to create a capability to move in quickly within days with all of the elements of civil administration; from humanitarian to, even perhaps on the--on some of the police functions. And these units can train together. These individuals don't have to be waiting in New York for societies to fail or conflicts to be over. I think if that capability--I think after Iraq, if we are there, for a very long period of time, the American people might feel somewhat better about an institution that truly effectively we're able to do post-conflict administration quickly and effectively. I think if we--if you do those two things, I think we'd go a long way to making the U.N. more relevant to the kinds of challenges that we face. Way in the back?

MS. ENOK: Kassalee Enok [ph], from Brookings. I have a question about domestic security and I'm sure you've read--everybody's read the article on the front page of "The Washington Post," yesterday about Randy Biers and I'd like your comments about that. I think it was beautifully written, but it was very, very disturbing.

MR. BERGER: Well, I thought, first of all, Ran worked for me for three years before I stopped correcting his memos to put a "y" after Randy. I was sure it was just a typo, there was no Randy, I learned that his name was Rand. I think he spoke for himself. All I can say is that he is an extraordinarily dedicated, selfless public servant, Vietnam veteran; served, I think initially in the Reagan Administration. Was one of the people that we kept at the NSC from the Bush one, administration. I think he had more seniority at the NSC than almost anyone, when he then went over to the State Department. He's a person of great integrity and not someone who's overly political.

MR. GRADOWSKI: Jonathan Gradowski, Senator Clinton's Office. In regard to Iran and it's nuclear weapons development, I believe you said something to the effect that our policy should be over action in that we need to convince the Iranian people that their leadership is standing in the way of their aspirations. But noticeable absent was the actual weapons. And the red line--what exactly should the U.S. policy be in terms of where our red line is with Iran?

MR. BERGER: Well, what I was suggesting first of all is that let us put on the table the following proposition to Iranian leadership. Everything is on the table.

We're prepared for a more normal economic and political relationship with Iran. You've got to deal with your nuclear program; you've got to deal with your support of terrorism. And I believe that, in and of itself, will create a certain dynamic within Iran because if the Iranian authorities don't want to proceed that way, then they are the obstacle between the Iranian people and their aspirations. Now, if--as the Iranian nuclear program proceeds, I think that we need--I'm glad the IEA has called for Iran to embrace the--all of the protocols of the Non-proliferation Treaty which would allow for inspections nationwide. And I think, at the appropriate time, we should take this issue to the United Nations and seek to build multilateral opposition to a nuclear Iran, which I think would be a very dangerous development for the region.

MODERATOR: I think we have time for one more question, if you want to take two, you can. I just want to remind everybody, you'll be able to find all of this today his actual comments, tomorrow his response to all your comments. And I just want to thank all you all for coming and I'm going to--Sandy will take a couple more questions and then he'll thank you too.

MR. BERGER: Okay, I'll take two more and then we'll stop. Over here. It's the last questions that always get you.

MR. GHANEM: Thank you. It is Pierre Ghanem, Bureau Chief, Middle East Broadcasting Company. You mentioned earlier that the present Administration elevated the preemptive action to be a policy. Do you feel that any Administration in the future will feel that it needs to stick with this policy or will it be easy to get out of it?

MR. BERGER: Every President has both had and most have exercised the option of preemptive action. When we--to go back to your question earlier, we struck those camps in Afghanistan, that was preemptive, so you don't have to wait to be punched before you punch first. What I have a problem with is moving this from an option that every President has and many have exercised to a defining doctrine of American foreign policy, because I believe it is not impossible to imagine that Kim Jung Il, hearing of our understanding our pre-emption policy, watching us, in fact, exercise it against Iraq, number one on the Axis of Evil hit parade, he has to believe he's probably number two, could conclude that Saddam's mistake was not getting his nuclear weapons fast enough. I believe that it has the effect--it can have the effect of accelerating nuclear programs. And I think that any subsequent President always has the right to review policy, I noticed that this President reviewed a few of our policies. Let me go back to that gentleman there. This is the last question.

MR. WINOGRAD: Thank, my name's Jeffrey Winograd, I'm the editor of Focus's "Real Newsletter," here in Washington, D.C. And question will be two parts, if I get away with it. When you speak about bringing Hamas under control, I'd like to pin you down, does that mean disarmament, or cease fire? What would be acceptable? And then when you say the U.S. now has more leverage in the Middle East regarding the peace process, can you be very specific about what that leverage is and who it can be applied against? Thank you.

MR. BERGER: My own view is that, ultimately, it means disarmament. I think even Prime Minister Sharon has realized in the last few days that the Palestinian authority Abu Mazen may not have the capacity to do that immediately and that a cease fire might be an interim step. But I am deeply skeptical, I must say that Hamas will ever buy-in to the fundamental proposition of a two-state solution. So, in the beginning it may be sufficient if there were a genuine cease fire. But I am skeptical about Hamas ever supporting a process that leads to reconciliation.

The question of leverage, listen, I think that the President declared his intention in the Middle East, in Iraq, notwithstanding, opposition from others in the world. Again, whether you agree with it or disagree with it. He moved forward to execute that. And I think that determination is respected in the region. And so, I think, particularly in the Arab world, among Arab leaders the President is in a stronger position and I think it is extraordinarily important now that we use that authority to try to press the Arab leaders to provide as much support to Abu Mazen as they can in this extraordinarily difficult undertaking that he has of gaining control of the situation among his own people.

Thank you very, much.

[End of Q&A Session.]

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