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A SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY SYMPOSIUM

"HOW TO WIN THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM"

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. POLLACK: Good morning. Welcome to the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution and to our symposium on "How to Win the War Against Terrorism."

We thought we would start with that grandiose title because we're pretty confident that given the line of speakers we have today, that by the end of the day we'll actually know how to win the war on terrorism, having succeeded where the Bush administration and many other governments have failed for over the past 50 years.

We may not live up to those standards, but at the very least, obviously, we're going to try.

The reason for this symposium, the reason that we decided that we would have the symposium was the confluence of several fortuitous events, the first two of which were two major new arrivals which seemed to suggest that maybe it was time to start thinking about terrorism again.

The first of those new arrivals was a new book by Dan Byman. Some of you are probably aware that Dan Byman, in addition to being the head of the Securities Studies Program at Georgetown University, is also a senior non-resident fellow at the Saban Center, where he's done a number of very important pieces for us over the years. And Dan has just published a new book called "Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism" from Cambridge University Press, which by the way, is on sale at our bookstore outside.

"Deadly Connections" is a terrific book. And one of the things that it does so well is it puts back into focus the enormous challenges that face us in the war on terrorism, and in particular, the challenge of convincing states that have seen fit to sponsor terrorism, who have used terrorism as an element of their national policy for years if not decades, that this is no longer appropriate in the new international environment.

And I think that Dan does an excellent job of laying out those challenges and also discussing the various tools that are available to countries like the United States that would very much like to realize that goal.

Now the second arrival that we've had at the Saban Center comes in the form of a person by the name of Avi Dicter, who you'll be meeting in just a moment. And Avi was another major arrival. And I will introduce him to you in just a few moments here.

But the confluence of Dan's book arriving and Avi, who is a major figure in the realm of Israeli counter-terrorism, suggested to us that maybe it was time to look at terrorism again.

And of course another event that converged in the last few months was of course the fact that we're starting a second Bush administration. The first Bush administration made what it called the global war on terrorism its highest priority. And I think there's no question that there have certainly been achievements by that first Bush administration.

But by the same token, there are also things that have been left undone, challenges that have not yet been accomplished. And we thought that this would be a

major, a very good opportunity to bring together a group of experts on the subject and to ask the question, what is it that we've achieved and what is it that we have yet to accomplish?

Because, I'll be frank with you, even though I am someone who tries very hard to follow these developments, I find it difficult at times to do so. It's very tough to know exactly what it is that we've done to al-Qa'ida.

Have we crippled the organization? Or have we simply forced it to transform itself into something new but equally deadly? To what extent have we convinced other states around the world that it's no longer in their interest to support terrorism?

For me, I'll be honest with you, these are still open questions. And I hope that, at the very least, I will have a better idea at the end of the day from our experts, but I hope you will as well.

And I hope there will be a variety of different things that you'll take away from this day. And I hope that this will be a moment when we can all think back over the last four years and think about what it is that we have achieved and haven't achieved and also about what it is that we still need to accomplish and what changes we may need to make to tackle those new challenges.

So with those introductory remarks, let me bring up to the podium Avi Dicter. Avi is, as I said, a major figure in Israeli counter-terrorism. He has had a long and distinguished career in the Israeli Security Services. And he ended his time as the head of Israel's Shin Bet, its internal security agency.

And there are few people who know more about fighting terrorism than Avi Dicter. And so we are delighted to have him here at the Saban Center, where he will be with us for a number of months, where he will do a little writing, a little talking, a whole lot of thinking, and hopefully he'll contribute to our understanding and also develop his own.

And so we're delighted to have Avi come up here and give introductory remarks on his own lessons, from his own experience, about fighting terrorism.

Avi, welcome to the Saban Center. The stage is yours.

MR. DICTER: Thank you very much, Ken. I think that except for the fact that I was born a baby of eight pounds, you've said everything about me.

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. DICTER: It's really a great honor to talk here in front of the Brookings audience as a fellow of the Saban Center and to talk about terrorism or, as a matter of fact, about fighting against terrorism.

If I may, Ken, I would have changed the name of this day. Instead of "war against terrorism," I would have chosen, "war against terrorists," because during my career, I always fought against terrorists. I don't remember myself waking up in the morning and thinking about working or acting or fighting against terrorism.

And I've been in this issue for the last 34 years. I've been swimming in this pool for so many years and have seen everything there. I've seen sharks. I've seen dolphins. I've seen sardines and I've seen jellyfish.

Some of the dolphins became sharks. I don't remember if sharks became dolphins. Some of the sardines became sharks. And some of the sharks became sardines. One thing I can assure you, all those that started as jellyfish remain jellyfish.

One statement must be said right at the beginning. From my point of view, a democratic country always wins the battle against terrorism provided that it holds to two basic issues. One is determination, long-lasting determination. And the second is transparency, transparency towards its people, toward the citizens of the country. I mean transparency not in the operational sense of acting against terrorism or against terrorists, but in the principle, how it should be done. How a country should fight against terrorists, should be transparent to the citizens in order to get their backing, the support of the people in your country.

Although, in some cases, such a transparency might weaken a little bit the determination of the country, but that's democracy.

I'm quite sure about what I said before about the winning of any war against terrorists by democratic countries because terrorists take a panoramic view of their targets, whereas democratic countries take a telescopic view of their targets.

Terrorists, their goal, their system is simply to murder anyone, whether it's adults, kids, men, women, soldiers, security men, civilians. The number is important.

I remember Hezbollah used to pay to *intifada* terrorists according to the number of deaths inflicted. Whenever a terror attack was ended with no losses, there was no payment. And the reason why a country should take a telescopic view of its targets is because otherwise a country might find itself going down a slippery slope in terms of obeying the law.

There is a huge mistake made by many countries, and I must say even made by Israel during the beginning of this session of violence which is called the *intifada*. Because we thought at the beginning of this session of violence that each counterterrorism step, whenever it gets tougher, escalates the level of terror attacks against Israel. But we were wrong.

I think some other countries, including the United States, England, Egypt and maybe some others have made this mistake. And the fact is, we all must understand that terror infrastructure will always hit first if you don't have the information. If you are weak in intelligence about a cell, about its infrastructure, it will always hit first.

And after the first shot by this terror organization, if it responds to a weak response by a country, the next terror attack will be tougher, will be more painful.

I would say that a country is like a boxer that is put on a stage with something on his head or with his eyes closed, waiting for the first punch. And then after the first punch, he has to respond. I would say that countries should nip terrorists in the bud because at the end of the day this bud is going to flower anyway.

So believe me that there is no other way to fight against terrorists. There is no "fair fight" against terrorists. Never has been and never will be.

And deterrence in fighting against terrorists, that's probably the name of the game. Deterrence can be achieved in many ways, but it's something that you have to accumulate step by step.

Super powers, let alone smaller countries, prefer to use moderate means of warfare in the beginning of a session of violence, believing that the escalation might

be slower if the counterterrorism steps will not be to a high degree. But as I said before, we found this to be a mistake.

Whenever you fight against terrorists, it means that you have to fight first of all against the generators of terror. Generators of terror are the main issue – they generate terror attacks by building an infrastructure and afterward sponsoring, maintaining, and pushing forward all kinds of terror attacks whether it's tougher or even tougher.

I would say the fear, or shall we say the hesitation, to use some heavy means of warfare is something that you can find in many countries. And we have seen it in Israel. I believe you have similar examples, including the United States, Afghanistan, and England within the last year against Islamic terrorists and probably Egypt in Sinai during the last two years.

As a matter of fact, a country has rifles, has helicopters, has combat jets, and has all means of warfare to be used, including against terrorists. In the first year of the *intifada*, we thought that there was some kind of a “fair fight” against terrorists. And we fought only against certain level of terrorists. It took us probably a year-and-a-half until we acknowledged that this “fair fight” is going to cause us so many losses that we must stop it at once.

And only after March 2002, a whole month of violence, a month that we in Israel suffered, in one month, 135 fatalities, 700 injuries. If you figure it out in U.S. numbers, it's 50 times bigger. And everybody can imagine what the States would have done in case of, God forbid, 7,000 fatalities, 35,000 injuries in one month.

So only after such a horrible month of terror attacks, Israel launched some new steps against terrorists. And since then, since April 2002, we saw a decline in the number of Israeli losses and Israeli injuries because terrorists had to spend more time on survival than on planning attacks.

So from a situation of 90 percent freedom to deal with planning terror attacks and 10 percent to spend on survival, they had to spend 90 percent on hiding themselves and 10 percent, only 10 percent, on planning new attacks.

By the way, Hamas, when they announced in last January the period of calm, *tahadia*, it was announced only for one reason. In the West Bank, Hamas understood that the Hamas infrastructure, the terrorist infrastructure was almost completely destroyed. While in the Gaza Strip, the leadership of Hamas, starting from Sheik Yassin and down to the other high-ranking terrorists or top brass terrorists, all of them started to live as fugitives and to live as a leader and fugitive at the same time. It's okay for the first week, for the first month. But when it lasts six months, a year, two years, it becomes very complicated for the leaders.

That's the reason why last January they announced unilaterally a period of calm for a month. Later they extended it under the Egyptian umbrella of talks in Egypt until the end of 2005. And now there are some discussions about extending it into 2006.

Deterrence can be achieved by many ways. One of the best ways that I've seen that deterrence can be achieved is by using those heavy weapons, heavy means of warfare that the country, a normal country has within its variety. And whenever it's necessary, you can use the rifle, M-16 in order to create deterrence and to reach your targets.

So if the M-16 sends the message, sometimes the F-16 delivers it much better.

We've all seen that terrorists are hiding within neighborhoods, refugee camps, surrounding themselves with civilians, part of them willingly, part of them unwillingly. And they use those civilians as, simply, human shields. Nevertheless, Israel never attacked a target that was an innocent person. Although, I must admit, that in some cases we did things wrongly and innocent people got killed or injured due to the fact that they were surrounded by or surrounding prominent terrorists, generators of terror.

In one case I remember – a tough operation - we dropped a bomb on a very senior terrorist in Gaza. We postponed this special operation for about three or four times because we knew that his daughter was together with him at his home. And only when the intelligence said that the daughter was not going to be at his home, we dropped the bomb. But we were wrong. She was there.

Many civilians, Palestinian civilians, got killed and injured due to accidents within which an Israeli hand hadn't participated. It was pure Palestinian terrorists that decided to build their laboratories, their factories, their whole R and D system within neighborhoods, refugee camps, houses in the middle of Gaza City. In all of those accidents, dozens of Palestinians got killed, hundreds got injured. Nothing has been done until now by the PA, by the Palestinian Authority against those terrorists, against those generators of terror that deliberately build their factories within neighborhoods and refugee camps.

On the other hand, many terrorists are still alive, are still succeeding to survive just because of one fact. They knew and they know that Israel will never attack them while they are surrounded by innocent people.

And if you need the best example, I will take September 6th, 2003. All of the leadership of Hamas in Gaza Strip were concentrated in one house in Gaza City; nine or 10 people, including Sheik Yassin, and other prominent terrorists. And it was a tough debate among ourselves which bomb should be dropped, if at all, because it came a few weeks after the former failure that I mentioned before. Although in the failure, the high-up terrorist was targeted down.

So after a tough debate, we decided to drop the smallest bomb. And all of the dream team of Hamas that was there succeeded to escape. The bomb simply destroyed only the upper floor. So we didn't harm any innocent persons, but we failed to solve the problem, a huge problem. So part of the problem was solved later on. And I remember in one of my meetings, some one, a reporter from Ramallah, a senior reporter, asked me, "Avi, why whenever you mention Sheik Yassin, you don't say, 'The late Yassin?'"

So I answered him, "You're right. I should say, 'The too late Yassin.'" Because I think that nobody knows how many Israelis got killed and injured due to the fact that Sheik Yassin lived some more months as a generator of terror.

Today we still have three countries; three prominent countries that we know for sure are sponsoring, trading, hosting terrorists. The main country of course is, Iran. The two others, Lebanon and Syria.

Iran owns Hezbollah, which we still call from--my point of view is a mistake--a terror organization. Hezbollah is not a terror organization. Hezbollah is an army. But it's an army of terrorists. An army of terrorists that gets equipped by Iran with the most sophisticated weapons and sits on Lebanese land, with the Lebanese authorities turning a blind eye to this phenomenon, knowing exactly what it does in South Lebanon, in the Beka Valley, and within Beirut capital itself.

Syria hosts the headquarters of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, PIJ. And we all understand that if, God forbid, a tough terror attack will be launched from one of these countries only then will superpowers decide to act against these three countries, three, I would say, states of terror.

Looking towards the Palestinian Authority, at this time, we all understand that they are situated in a very crucial situation. They're in front of a junction or maybe in the middle of a junction that splits into two ways. And they have to decide, whether to become the fourth country to host terrorists, to maintain terrorists, to turn a blind eye towards terrorism, or maybe to join some other system, some other countries, Jordan, Egypt, and some other countries that are fighting against terrorists in the best way they can, although not always with successes.

By the way, even in Israel, we're not counting only successes. We had some failures. But standing at this junction, if the PA, the Palestinian Authority, decides to go the right way and become a country that fights against terrorists, to deter terrorism, that prevents terror attacks from its land- they will assist themselves and us, Israel, and maybe the whole region to build a paradise on the ground, and both the PA and Israel are going to enjoy the fruits of this paradise.

But if the PA decides to go the other way, and to become the fourth country that sponsors terrorism - and they're going to create hell on the ground, I can assure you and again assure them, that there are going to enjoy the fruits of the hell only by themselves.

Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE.]

MR. POLLACK: Okay, since we have a little time, we thought we would take a few questions. And I think the easiest thing to do is, why don't we collect a few questions. And then we'll let Avi take his pick of what exactly he'd like to answer.

So, questions for Avi out there.

Why don't you start. And if you could stand and identify yourself.

QUESTIONER: Hi, my name is Sanaz Sayfi. I'm a recent graduate from the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech.

Mr. Dicter, you mentioned that deterrence is going to work against terrorists. But given the amorphous and asymmetrical nature of terrorists and I'm not sure if you're familiar with Dr. Chang (ph) and Cha (ph) and Kang's (ph) work on nuclear North Korea. And they noted the prospect theory.

If the terrorists are in the domain of losses, then deterrence won't work because it will push them further in the domain of losses, which will make them take a riskier action and possibly have a greater attack, to gather more support for their cause.

So, can you explain the logic behind why using heavy weaponry or using something that you think might scare them, when these people participate in suicide bombings and aren't really worried about the consequences of their death. One section

dies and there's another section to replace it. It's not that there's a certain name and face that is supporting the cause.

So if you could please explain that logic. Thank you.

MR. POLLACK: How about in the back right there.

QUESTIONER: Thanks. Hi, my name is Alex Pascal, and I'm a student at SAIS across the street. And my question is: If Mr. Dicter could discuss some of the different strategies and tactics for fighting external terrorists, people coming from outside the country versus potential internal terrorists, when the terrorists might be your own citizens as exemplified by the run-up to the disengagement from Gaza.

MR. POLLACK: Okay, we're going to take one more. Sir, in the back.

QUESTIONER: Hello, my name is P.K. Ewing. I'm a reserve officer. I just came from a tour in Iraq. I was a military advisor in Bulgaria, and am going to be the intelligence officer for my unit.

My experience in Iraq led me to agree with you on using an overwhelming response to deter terrorism. But how do you convince the civilian authorities and our national command authority to allow us to do so in a vigorous fashion.

We discovered in Iraq that if you were the worse of two evils, if you exercise a great deal of military force in an area, the people themselves ran the terrorists away. Whereas, if you were gentle, they allowed the terrorists to come in and abuse them as well as attack us.

How do you get, how do you convince the powers that be to pursue the logical path?

MR. POLLACK: Hard question. Let me add my own to that list. And then Avi, you can answer as many or all of them if you like.

Looking at our global war on terrorism from a strategic perspective, if you got 30 minutes alone with President Bush, what would you say to him that we need to do that we haven't been doing? What is out there, from your perspective, on the American approach to terror, that you think still needs to be done.

So, Avi, over to you.

MR. DICTER: Thank you for the questions that probably need another talk.

Anyway to the first question, I must say that I'm looking backward to my experience in Israel. It simply worked. It simply worked after two years, it didn't fail.

We started the first year of this session of violence with 235 fatalities in the first year alone. And it increased into 451 fatalities in 2002. And then we understood that if we are not going to change the strategy, it's probably going to increase to higher numbers.

So we changed the strategy. And it brought down the number of our fatalities in 2003 to 210 killed. In 2004, to 114. And this year till today, 35 fatalities, which means it works.

Now it works as I said there right at the beginning because of two reasons: determination and transparency.

We let the Israeli people, and probably the entire world, know exactly what principles we were working on. When we started to launch targeted killings, it was published that we were using target killings.

By the way, the United States put an embargo on spare parts for helicopters in the first or maybe the second year of the *intifada*. After 9/11, of course, everything has changed. Because people, even here in the States, understood that when fighting against terrorists, you must understand the terrorists' way of thinking.

You cannot respond with a rifle towards a rifle, with a missile towards a missile. You have to use all of your means of force in order to fight against terrorists. Otherwise, the terrorists are deciding about the pace.

Now I don't know the theory that you've mentioned, but I think it's never been translated into Arabic.

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. DICTER: So, I know that it's very difficult to convince people at the political level. I, myself, as a director of the internal service, I tried to convince not only the political level and in some cases even the security level, that the barrier, the physical barrier between the Palestinian Authority and Israel should be built--I mean the fence. And it took more than a year and hundreds, hundreds of fatalities and thousands of injuries to start building this fence.

And only the results convinced the political level to continue and to continue it faster. And if we take the Samaria area, Samaria area terrorists are responsible for 50 percent of Israeli losses. More than 500 of the Israeli losses, almost all of them civilians, have been due to terror attacks coming from the Samaria area, which is the north part of the West Bank.

So we have launched the building of the fence in the Samaria area or between the Samaria area and Israel.

So if you take those 500 fatalities till today, during the last five years and you divide, you will see that 90 percent of them were murdered from terrorists coming from Samaria before establishment of the fence. And only 10 percent afterwards.

So the political level is very tough in Israel. But I think, one, if you show results, you show successes, it works. The political level looks, seeks a solution. I could see this in the political level in Israel after any terror attack, tough terror attack--and we had a lot--and we suffered some tough terror attacks every day. And the only way to convince them and the only apparatuses to convince them are the security apparatuses. And they know that these security apparatuses must bring a solution. Otherwise, I'm sure that I and some other leaders, security leaders would have been replaced. So I think that results, facts are convincing more than anything else.

The withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the disengagement, as a matter of fact, doesn't change anything in terms of security because the Gaza Strip was a Palestinian Authority land except the Israeli settlements since 1994. We didn't penetrate the citizens in the Gaza Strip. And when we used targeted killing, it was only against terrorists, generators of terror, especially by helicopters or by special operations. But it was completely different with the West Bank.

Once we pulled out the rug from under their feet, the terrorists' feet, with the disengagement, by pulling out the settlements, the settlers, and the troops of the IDF, the Israeli Defense Force, so today they cannot carry out terror attacks with rifles, with side bombs, with car bombs. And we almost all know that the Gaza Strip is surrounded with a fence since 1994, 1995.

During the last five years, not even one suicide bomber, not even one suicide bomber succeeded in crossing through the fence from the Gaza Strip to carry out a terror attack within Israel, within the Green Line. The two events that they succeeded in were by entering through crossing points and we failed to detect them. One was the two people carrying British passports, Pakistani origin people, who crossed and exploded themselves. And the other one was two terrorists that crossed through the Erez crossing point in a double deck container and exploded in the Ashdod port.

Coming to your question, Ken, 30 minutes with Bush. First of all, I must say, I don't know why, but some people find many similarities in the way that my face and Bush's face look. So we have to check it.

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. POLLACK: Separated at birth.

MR. DICTER: And no, as someone who was in charge of protecting the prime minister and the ministers in Israel and the VIPs, so we always looked for somebody who looked like the prime minister in order to put him in a vehicle. So in my free time I...

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. DICTER: But I think that coming to your question, Ken, I would raise two points. One of them is in security terms. Because whenever you have intelligence, good information, it's much easier. The problem starts when you don't have good information.

And to be honest with you, in many, in most of the terror attacks, or the tough terror attacks, we haven't the information, neither in Israel nor in other countries. Even 9/11 is the same story.

But then the security system is built in Israel on two rings. One is the intelligence. Once it fails, you have the second ring which is the whole detection system on the ground--security guards, body guards, detection in airports, et cetera. But in Israel, we've built a third ring to deal with threats on board, within an airplane. Because once the second ring fails and you are up in the sky, no one is going to assist you, except in the movies in Hollywood like Air Force One, et cetera, where people are coming from outside to the plane.

And this third ring in Israel, we call them the air marshals. I started by career in Shin Bet as an air marshal 31 years ago. And I remember the slogan was written in our training room, a saying said by Samuel Colt, the one who built the famous pistol. And it was written, "Fear no man, no matter the size. Count on me, I'll equalize."

Now try to imagine what would have happened on 9/11 if on board were air marshals. When I was head of the protection division, people tried in Israel to convince me to get rid of the air marshals because it's very expensive. But I convinced the director in those days to give a negative answer.

When I became director, people returned and told me, "Avi, let's get rid of the air marshals, it's expensive, it's a modus operandi that belongs to history." But then I was director so I could respond with a tough answer. And I answered them, even if passenger airplanes may be UMVs, unmanned vehicles, and no cabin attendants

because it's self service, even then air marshals on Israeli flights will remain. After 9/11, nobody returned to ask me any question about it.

So if I had those 30 minutes, I would recommend that the President shouldn't save on air marshals. Because there is no alternative.

The second issue is half politics, half security. And I take it from my experience: Don't accept the culture of *ya'ani*, and I'm going to explain this word. Don't accept the culture of *ya'ani*. *Ya'ani* is a word in Arabic that can not be translated to any other language as far as I know.

Don't accept the culture of *ya'ani* whenever you deal with problems. Because the culture of *ya'ani* will lead you nowhere. In too many meetings, whether it's bilateral meetings between us and the Palestinians, trilateral meetings between us and the Palestinians and the Egyptians, or multi-lateral meetings between the Palestinians, Israelis, Egyptians and the Americans, the result of the meeting was that the answer from the Palestinian side was *ya'ani*. And just to make sure that it's well understood, I'll tell you a short story, which is a real one.

In the end of 2001, terrorists used to launch mortar shells from Bethlehem towards Jerusalem. And after tough pressure, including pressure by the United States, Chairman Arafat - the late Arafat - promised the President of the United States that this man is going to be in jail. And a few weeks later he informed him that this man is under arrest.

Now we knew that he's not under arrest from good and accurate intelligence. So in one of the meetings between the Israeli minister of foreign affairs and the Palestinian delegation, there were seated three Palestinian delegates, Abu Ala, Saeb

Erekat and Jibril Rajoub, my colleague, my counterpart in the West Bank. And the minister in those days, Shimon Peres, called me urgently to the meeting because he told me, "Avi, my people here say that this man is under arrest."

So I talked to Abu Ala, and Abu Ala told me, "Avi, you must know that this man is under arrest." I'm said, "I'm sorry Abu Ala, but this man is not under arrest. And I'm sure about what I'm saying."

We stared at Saeb Erekat, who said, "Definitely he's under arrest," although he didn't know anything about this man. And both men stared at Jibril Rajoub, because he was the man who was supposed to arrest him. Now Jibril knew that the terrorist was not under arrest because he didn't arrest him.

But Jibril knew that I know that this man is not under arrest as well. But the most important issue, Jibril knew that I know that he knows that he's not under arrest.

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. DICTER: And then both of them Abu Ala and Saeb Erekat stared at Jibril and asked him, "Jibril isn't he in jail?" And Jibril used the native word in Arabic for such case, and said, "*ya'ani*." *Ya'ani* means that he's under arrest, *ya'ani* means that he's not under arrest, and *ya'ani* means everything that you want it to.

Therefore, I recommend to you and you may hand it over to the President of the United States, don't accept the culture of *ya'ani*.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE.]

MR. POLLACK: Avi, thank you very much for that stimulating presentation to kick off our symposium today. Let me ask the first panel to come on up.

We'll go right into the first panel. And just to let you know, we'll take a break at the end of the first panel.

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