

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY

CHOOSING VICTORY: A PLAN FOR SUCCESS IN IRAQ

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INTRODUCTION:

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PANELISTS:

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. POLLACK: I am not going to start with any banal statements about this being a critical time in our policy to Iraq or anything else ridiculous like that. I think that that is self-evident. What I will say is this: Obviously, there are a lot of different plans on the table. There are a lot of different people who have very different ideas about what we ought to be doing with regard to our involvement in Iraq.

Today's talk will be the first in a series that the Saban Center is planning to kick off. Most of them, unfortunately, will have to wait until after Christmas because we just can't jam three or four more in tomorrow. But when we get back here in January, we have decided to start a series of different talks where we will invite different proponents of various plans for Iraq and bring them out, have them debated in a forum where I think people can actually engage them at some length, so that we are not just simply

trading seven-second sound bites over the airwaves.

We are delighted that Fred Kagan of AEI was willing to come over here today and be the lead speaker in this series. I think many of you know Fred and know his background. He is currently Resident Scholar at AEI. He formerly was an Associate Professor of Military History at the United States Military Academy at West Point. He has a very distinguished record of publication and has just written an absolutely wonderful new book, the first of a series on the campaigns of Napoleon. Hopefully, this time, everyone will realize we finally got someone who has gotten them right. They have nothing to do with Iraq, but it is a wonderful read, and I highly commend the first volume to you and look forward to the second.

Fred is going to present the findings of a study that he led at AEI very recently where they brought together a group of retired and in some cases even serving military officers and other people familiar with Iraq and familiar with the U.S. Military to work

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through an exercise, to ask the questions of what would be needed in Iraq to try to stabilize the situation there and is it possible for the United States to provide the wherewithal, the resources, both military and civilian, to do so. I think you are aware that Fred's plan, as they are already presenting it, is starting to make a great deal of waves in Washington because they are coming forward and saying that it is possible to succeed there, that it may require some additional increment of troops, but it won't break the bank and it is worth doing. It is obviously a very important contribution to the debate because it is the first time that a group of serious people have sat down, worked out a plan by which they believe that both of those things, and I emphasize both of those things. You have people who have suggested one or the other including our group here at Brookings at the beginning of last year, but Fred's group is the first to emphasize both sections of that and put it out there, and as a result, it is has

caught a great deal of attention.

I will also say that again I think you would have to be brain-dead or out of Washington at the very least not to have recognized that there is a lot of rumor going around that the Bush Administration is looking at adopting something very much like the recommendations of Fred's study. And so, we are just delighted that he has agreed to come over here and present the broad outlines, so that we can hear it in some detail and consider it in all of its different aspects.

To help us do that, we have invited Michael O'Hanlon, a very well known, well respected Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies here at Brookings, the leader of the team working on the Iraq Index, but certainly that is hardly Mike's only claim to fame. We have asked Mike because he is an expert both on Iraqi affairs, at least our involvement in Iraq, and American defense, American military affairs, if he would give us a commentary, his thoughts on the AEI

study and then his thoughts more broadly on the subject.

So we will start off with Fred, and then when Fred is done, we will move over to Mike.

Fred, the floor is yours.

MR. KAGAN: Ken, I really want to thank you for that fine introduction, especially for mentioning my Napoleon book which is the thing that is actually closest to my heart. If I could do anything, I would be writing about Napoleon. Among other things, the emotional tension there is much easier to handle since those wars are over and the good guys won. Of course, it doesn't endear me in that field to say the good guys won either, but you know.

I won't give you any of the banalities either about how important this is. I think we have all come to understand that we are at a critical point, and a decision has to be made. I think we are really facing a bifurcation. Depending on where the Bush Administration goes, it is really going to be a

bifurcation in world history, and I think it is not an overstatement to assert that. If we win in Iraq, that will open up one set of future scenarios. If we lose in Iraq in any of the definitions of lose, that will create another different set of scenarios. But I think it is a very fundamental turning point that we are at.

Let me just take a minute to talk to you about why we undertook this project and who did it, and then I will talk to you some about the conclusions we came to.

I have been frustrated for some time at the lack of military detail in a lot of proposals relating to what we should do in Iraq, and I include in that group, the Baker Report. A lot of people toss numbers around. It would take 500,000 troops to secure Iraq. It would take a million troops to secure Iraq. We don't have more than 50 troops to send over there. But very few people actually go through and say: Here is the basis for this estimate. This is why we think it is necessary to have this many troops, and this is why



we think we don't have this many troops in the Army in any kind of detail.

It was really to address that problem that we set up this group, and the aim was to put a proposal on the table that was concrete, not so much because we imagine that anyone would grab it and execute it because obviously any military plan has to be developed by a military staff with all of the resources available. And so, we don't think that this is something the President can just dust off and say okay, now do this, but so that we could have the discussion on the basis of a higher degree of military reality, and we were willing to show our work. So the plan that you will find on the AEI web site includes a lot of discussion about where we think the troops would come from, how long they would have to stay. We have considered in a lot of detail who the enemy are, what the nature of the different enemy groups are, what we think their likely responses would be, what we think our responses to that would be, all primarily as

an exercise to raise the general level of discourse about this topic in Washington.

So far, we are reasonably satisfied that is going on although there continues to be a lot of confusion about what surge means, and I just got into one of those terminological parsing sessions on NPR this morning where she kept saying: Well, surge, but what is surge and why are you saying surge?

At the end of the day, I had to say: Well, you are talking about increasing the number of troops in Iraq. What do you want to call it? We can call it increase in troops if you want. So we have gotten into a lot of that sort of nonsense.

The thing that I want to emphasize is that the crux of our plan is not the surge in forces. I fully agree with those who say that we could surge forces into Iraq and it could either have no impact or make the situation worse if we don't have something intelligent to do with them.

The crux of our plan is to propose a fundamental

plan in military strategy in Iraq. The U.S. Military in Iraq has never taken as its primary activity to be establishing security for the Iraqi population. I think this has been a mistake from the get-go. I think if you look at most successful counter-insurgency efforts, you will see that establishing security is an essential component, and we have consistently downplayed that.

Now, I don't want to stand up here and say that the commanders who have made this decision have been foolish or idiotic or anything like that. The concerns that they have raised in response are quite valid. It is certainly the case that an American presence in Iraq or anywhere else is an irritant; that is absolutely true. It is certainly the case that if we do everything for the Iraqis, they will not learn how to do things for themselves. Those are two points which General Abizaid and General Casey have repeated, and those are valid.

But it is not enough to stop there because what

is very clear is that the Iraqi security forces by themselves are not capable at this point of establishing security in their country, and it is very clear to me and to our group that they will not become capable of doing that anytime very soon. In fact, what we have seen is that as the capability of the Iraq Army has risen and it really has risen quite a lot and is very impressive, the level of violence has risen even faster. I fear that unless we find a way to get the security situation under control in Baghdad and in Iraq, we will be caught in this cycle where a rapidly and expanding Iraqi Army capability chases but never catches rising sectarian violence in the country. So what we are proposing is this change of strategy, and the troop increase that we are recommending is subordinate to that. It is not an end in itself.

But let me step back even further for a minute and say we don't see this proposal that we have laid on the table so far as being the solution to Iraq's problems. There is no military solution in Iraq. This

is a counter-insurgency. There will ultimately have to be a political solution. There will have to be economic development and so forth. All of that absolutely has to occur. There has to be national reconciliation. There is no doubt about that.

What we are basically saying is that we believe that the violence situation in Iraq has spiraled so, far that unless we bring it under control, none of those things are possible. We do not believe that a strategy that relies on finding political solutions first will then bring the violence under control. I don't think that is what will happen at all. I think we first have to bring this violence down to a more acceptable level and in the process begin working political solutions which can only really come to fruition when there is a much greater degree of peace and security in Baghdad than there is today.

People do pick up our plan and say: Well, this is just a military solution. There are no military solutions.

We agree. The crux of this plan really is: In case of emergency, break glass and execute this plan. That is what we are really saying. This is a critical moment. If we don't get this under control now, we think the American public's will to continue to support this war is in danger of breaking very quickly, and we think that Iraqi society is in danger of fracturing very fundamentally if we don't find a way to get this under control; so, two specifics.

Again, I do want to emphasize that we did have a military planning team put this together. We had a retired colonel, a retired major, both of whom had been involved in H.R. McMaster's operation in Tall Afar. General Jack Keene, the former Vice Chief of Staff of the Army has been with us, has been supporting this plan, and General David Barno, who is now the Director of the NESAC Center at NDU, spent quite a lot of time with us and gave us his input. We had a significant military input into this which helped us give it a certain amount of military

realism, and we also invited in a number of regional experts to provide us with political insight and so forth about these various issues.

We believe that Baghdad is the center of gravity of the problem in Iraq today. First of all, there obviously is a large population concentration there. It is the capital of the country. It is the largest city in the country by a significant margin. It is the largest mixed community therefore in Iraq. I do agree with CENTCOM in the identification of the mixed communities as being, in many respects, the most critical areas in this fight.

I do not agree with those who say that we should split Iraq up into three parts because I think it would lead to a bloody and almost interminable civil war and bloodbath. We are seeing the beginnings of that process going on in Baghdad right now with sectarian cleansing of mixed neighborhoods. I think we need to work very quickly to stop that because I do think that if Baghdad does go that way, the rest of

the country is likely to follow and I think that is a very bad scenario.

What we did was to look at Baghdad and say, okay, we have identified it as the center of gravity. The insurgents have repeatedly identified it as the center of gravity. It is very hard to imagine succeeding in Iraq without succeeding in Baghdad. This is where we need to focus our efforts.

It is a hard challenge, but we think that if you break it down in accord with a reasonable military approach, you can establish security there. To begin with, we adamantly oppose the notion of launching some sort of frontal assault on Sadr City and trying to clear out the Jaish al Mahdi. We recognize that a large percentage of the violence is coming from the Jaish al Mahdi, is coming from JAM fighters infiltrating into these mixed and Sunni neighborhoods and attacking the population, but on the other hand, we do not believe that either Muqtada as-Sadr or Hakim or the Jaish al Mahdi or the Badr Corps are eager to



engage in a full-up military confrontation with us as they did in Najaf and Karbala in 2004. It is not in their interest to do that. I think that they have come to the conclusion that Iraq is going to be a Shi'ah country at the end of all of this, and they are primarily concerned with which Shi'ah are going to run it. In that regard, expending their fighters on us is not a good use of their energies.

On the other hand, if we go into Sadr City and try to clear them out, they will certainly fight us and we will have something that looks like Karbala and Najaf, and I suspect the Iraqi political system will fracture. So that doesn't seem like a good idea.

If you are not going to do that, then how do you get the violence under control? Well, the answer is that you have to conduct clear and hold operations in the Sunni areas, in the mixed areas with the purpose of rooting out the Sunni insurgents, the al-Qaeda fighters, and preventing the Shi'ah militias from operating there. Now, we have done clear and hold

operations in the past, most recently Operation Together Forward which began in August which failed.

Why did it fail? Well, we cleared the neighborhoods pretty well, but we expected after we had cleared them to turn responsibility for maintaining security over to the Iraqi Police. I can't really understand why anyone thought that was going to be a good idea. It clearly wasn't.

What we are proposing is to clear the neighborhoods again which will be slightly easier because we have cleared them before although they have been re-infiltrated and then to maintain a significant American presence in those cleared areas, partnered with Iraqi units in a pretty traditional counter-insurgency techniques which has been used elsewhere in Iraq, most notably Tall Afar with considerable success. We see this as an 18 to 24-month process. We advocate continuing to train the Iraqi security forces as aggressively as possible in hoping to be able to turn over to them a much more secure center of Baghdad

which they, with their increased abilities, will then be able to hold.

The problem all along in our view has been not training the Iraqis. Training the Iraqis is a good thing, and we have been training them very rapidly, but we also need to bring the security situation down to a level where the trained Iraqis can handle it. We have only been focusing on one part of that. So this is not to take anything away from the training part; it is to say that as we are training, we also have to be securing and that is the root to being able to transition effectively.

In specifics, we identified 23 districts in Baghdad around the Green Zone, between the Green Zone and the International Airport and just to the east of the Green Zone in the Rusafa area that have been the targets of considerable violence that are mixed neighborhoods or Sunni neighborhoods primarily, and we calculated our force ratios based on those areas. We determined that this operation would need

approximately nine American brigade combat teams. There are currently five in Baghdad. We advocate sending therefore an additional four brigade combat teams which would come out to about 20,000 combat troops plus a certain number of support troops.

We don't think it is enough just to operate in Baghdad. This insurgency operates throughout Iraq. It operates up the Diyala. It operates out into Al-Anbar Province. And so, we also advocate sending an additional two Marine regimental combat teams into Al-Anbar. On the one hand, we hope thereby to interdict the flow of insurgents from Baghdad into Anbar. On the other hand, we hope to be able to hit the insurgent strongholds simultaneously in two places which is not something we have ever really done since we have been engaged in this struggle, and we think that would have a very positive effect.

In addition, these forces could serve as a reserve. If it turns out that they really are needed in Baghdad, they could be sent to Baghdad and we could

continue to accept the same level of risk in Anbar that we have now. If it turns out that Anbar is not the key but Diyala is what matters, we could send them to Diyala instead.

When you get into the specifics of our proposal, there is one more Army brigade combat team which could also serve as a reserve. Ideally, there is a unit in Anbar now that we would like to relieve and rotate out because it has been there for a while. If that turns out to be not feasible, then we could have an additional brigade.

The point is we are rejecting the Rumsfeldian notion of going in with absolute minimum military force, and we are instead trying to create a plan that gives the commanders the ability to react to unforeseen circumstances and to react to anything that the enemy might do because we understand that we are fighting a thinking enemy.

Oh, and I should also note that we believe the reconstruction piece of this is very important, and we

propose a two-tier reconstruction program to accompany this effort. Tier one would be a basic package of beginning to restore essential services in neighborhoods that are cleared which would go in automatically. Every time a neighborhood is cleared, we would immediately work with the local leadership to try to get basic services up and functioning again. We think that is essential to help, first of all, recompense a neighborhood for the violence that we have brought to it but also to show the Iraqi people that we are not just there to kill insurgents. Actually, we and the Iraqi Government are there to make their lives better.

But we have become frustrated also with the tenor of discussions about incentivizing the Iraqis which are almost always negative. Most people who talk about incentivizing the Iraqis today talk about getting them to do what we want by threatening them with limitless death and destruction by pulling out, turning over, and opening the gates of hell. That really doesn't

seem to me to be a very good idea. It has created a hostile relationship with the Iraqi Government, and it is not a good way to incentivize people.

We would like to propose a positive incentivization which would be a tier two reconstruction program for neighborhoods that have been cleared or that were good enough to begin with that they didn't need to be cleared, we would like to have in our hands the ability to take their quality of life to the next level, whatever that would mean in each neighborhood, on condition that they cooperate with us in continuing to maintain security. That is a positive thing. We are not going to threaten to take it away from anybody. We are going to say if you cooperate -- and we will define that -- then you can have this package. That also gets you away from a situation where you only seem to be rewarding the neighborhoods that were bad to begin with. It lets you reward neighborhoods that were good to begin with.

Lastly, and I will just go through this briefly,

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we have look very carefully down to the level of individual brigade combat teams at whether or not it is feasible to conduct this surge of seven brigades additional into Iraq. We believe that it is. We have looked at what the projected force flow of units into Iraq over the next year is. Basically, what would have to happen is a number of units would have to have their deployment accelerated by primarily a few weeks and units that have just gone in would have to have their deployments extended from 12 to 15 months for Army brigades and from 7 to 12 months for Marine regimental combat teams. We are, of course, unhappy about having to ask these additional sacrifices from our brave soldiers and Marines but we are very, very concerned about what defeat of the variety that we are currently looking at will do to the force.

I will simply close by saying it is very easy to dismiss this sort of plan by saying that it will break the Army because extended deployments will harm morale. That may be although that doesn't tend to be



the feedback that I am getting from soldiers in the field.

But I think to put against that, if we are going to have that discussion honestly, then we need to talk about what defeat will do to the Army because it is going to be an extremely ugly defeat. We do not have decent interval here. The situation is not stable and it will, in our view, crumble very rapidly if we start to withdraw our forces, which is going to mean that our soldiers and Marines are going to watch as the violence explodes behind them. They are going to watch Iraqi leaders that they have supported and Iraqi people that they have protected lined up, tortured, and killed precisely because we have taken care of them and because they have been working with us. We see that happen when we pull out of areas now. I am terribly concerned about what that experience will do to the Army. I think if we are going to talk about strain on the force, we have to factor that in.

With that, I will turn it over to Michael.

MR. POLLACK: Before you do that, Fred, there is one other issue out there that I would really like you to put on the table. You have concentrated principally on the military side of your report. I know that you have also given some thought to the civilian side, the political and economic elements that have to be part of any military operation. And so, why don't you take a few more minutes and lay some of those out?

Again, this is supposed to be an opportunity to everyone to really hear this in its fullest extent and be able to chew it over to a certain extent, and I want to get that on the table.

MR. KAGAN: Well, I will do my best.

Mostly what we have done is we have decided that we are not yet in a position in our group to make a series of concrete recommendations about dealing with the economic, political, and so on development. What we are going to do is turn this into a multi-phase project, and we are now working on phase two which is going to look at the training requirements, how we

should be doing training smarter, how we should be doing it better, what we can get out of it. Look at the problem of mobilizing the full resources of the American Government to do this which is quite a significant challenge and in subsequent phases, start to consider the problems of Iraqi politics.

In general terms from this perspective, we think that it is very important to look at the question of what sort of leverage everyone has on this process. We are very frustrated with Maliki because he won't shut down the Shi'ah militias. Of course, he won't shut down the Shi'ah militias. We are not providing security in the country; violence is rising; and he is not in a position to tell the militias anything at all because he does not have adequate forces to go after them right now. We believe that if we can actually bring security to the center of Maliki's capital and make it clear that he does have a force that he can call on to maintain order other than the militias, that he will in fact gain much greater leverage over

people like Sadr and potentially even Hakim to the extent that Hakim is a problem. Badr Corps really isn't in Sadr City anymore. So, in Baghdad, that is less of an operative issue.

We think it is really important to keep in mind that actually having a success in Baghdad, actually bringing security to Baghdad, actually starting to get the political process but also the economic process going will be very transformative in the equation. I am not saying that it is a panacea and that it will immediately resolve all of these issues, but it will change the game in a very fundamental way, and I think that is very important.

One of the other things that we wanted to emphasize is the idea of what does this reconstruction program actually look like and who is going to do it. It is very clear that if we are going to get anything done in the short term, American military commanders are going to have to have the authority to be spending the money, but it is also very clear that if this is

going to be effective, the Iraqi local government has to be seen to be the agency that is actually doing this. So American commanders in the individual districts are going to have to work with neighborhood councils, and they are going to have to work through organs of local government and make it clear that the Iraqis get the credit for this even as we are overseeing it. We think that will have a very positive effect because we think it is unfortunate that to this point the U.S. has focused very heavily on developing central institutions of power in Iraq and has not done enough to develop local organs of power or to connect the two.

We now have a central government in Iraq. It is functioning fitfully and with a great deal of difficulty, but we have the problem that we don't really have functioning local government especially in Baghdad and we are facing an additional challenge because it is known that the Jaish al Mahdi is trying to implement versions of the Hezbollah model in

Baghdad. It is providing services to people especially in Sadr City, but it is also trying to do that in neighborhoods that it is reaching out into. That is extremely problematic.

It is important to keep in mind and people talk about this. It is important to keep in mind that the Jaish al Mahdi isn't doing it terribly well. It is not as though they are providing a very good level of service to the population. But because the Iraqi Government is unable to provide any services to a lot of these people, people have to turn to the people who will do that.

Now, in contrast to a government which doesn't demand loyalty in return for its provision of services, Jaish al Mahdi does. That provides us and the local Iraqi Government with an advantage if we can find a way to help the local Iraqi Government begin to establish itself in the eyes of its people as the place to turn for these sorts of services. We have had a lot of reports from Iraqis on the ground that there

is a resentment that builds against Jaish al Mahdi for demanding the sort of loyalty that they do in return for these services.

If we can get serious reconstruction programs going and get Iraqis used to looking to their local government to provide services, then we can delegitimize that aspect of what Jaish al Mahdi does. If we can get the violence under control, then we will also delegitimize one of the principal recruiting tools that the Jaish al Mahdi uses and also that a lot of the Sunni neighborhood groups use, namely that we need to have these militias to defend ourselves. If you once remove that, you will continue to have Jaish al Mahdi. It will continue to exist, and its leaders will still have a program that will still be a problem for us. Obviously, al-Qaeda in Iraq will continue and will continue its attacks, and some of the Sunni groups particularly the Ba'thists may continue their attacks, but we will have taken away one of the most dangerous recruiting tools in my view.

It is a problem that there are groups like Jaish al Mahdi out there. It is a problem that there are groups like al-Qaeda in Iraq, of course. It is a problem that there are Ba'thists out there. That is more or less the traditional, if serious and complicated, counter-insurgency challenge that we face. Where this really becomes very, very dangerous is when you actually have spontaneous self-organization of vigilante groups in these neighborhoods attacking one another which is a phenomenon that we have seen in recent months. That is driven by insecurity. I do not believe that it is driven by more than that. I believe that if we establish security and took off the table the need for these people to organize to defend their neighborhoods, you would find these self-organizing groups starting to go home and put their weapons down.

That is what is essential here, and that is one of the things that we think has been missed by all of these discussions about the problems with a troop



surge. I think that would go a long way toward helping us keep this from turning into full-scale civil war.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Dr. Kagan?

Dr. O'Hanlon, the floor is yours.

MR. O'HANLON: Thanks, Ken and Fred and everybody for the chance to talk about this.

I am going to try to be fairly brief in my reactions. I basically want to make one broad argument which is that Fred makes me extremely nervous but having concluded that every other option on the table is probably worse and makes me even more nervous, I wind up being fairly sympathetic to this idea with the other broad theme being I think we have to view 2007 as the make or break year.

I don't think we can continue an indefinite 140,000, and there are many reasons for that. So I think we should view this year as the year on many fronts with many different aspects of our strategy to try to push for a different and more vigorous approach, and if it doesn't work, we are going to have

to go to a Plan B within roughly a year in my judgment, certainly within two, because the next President is going to be all about extricating ourselves from Iraq if we don't figure out some way to turn this thing around. Even if President Bush can't be persuaded or muscled by a Congress that has the power of the purse within the next 24 months, the next President will almost certainly be looking for ways out if we haven't seen some progress by then.

Let me walk through a little bit first of why Fred makes me nervous and then secondly, although what really makes me nervous, by the way, is the story he told me before about his nephew, Bob Kagan's son, who now apparently looks just like Bob Kagan and is tearing up the Belgian junior soccer leagues. That is the image that really makes me nervous.

(Laughter)

MR. O'HANLON: But in terms of what is going on in Iraq and with our military, let me say a couple of things, first of all, how this kind of a plan would

affect Iraq and Iraqi politics. A couple of years ago, I was fairly persuaded and Jim Steinberg and I wrote a couple of arguments to the effect that the American presence, while it was necessary at one level, was also in many ways the major irritant in Iraqi politics, that Iraqi insurgents were using it as an excuse to justify attacks and using it to create this image of the indefinite occupier that wanted to seize their land and their oil and their military bases, and therefore we had to be public about a schedule for gradually getting many of our forces out, even though Jim and I were not in the camp of getting out completely and we wanted flexibility in that schedule.

Well, there is some truth to that argument, but of course we all know that the big development in 2006 has been the beginning of a civil war in which the Sunni and Shi'ah fear each other more than us and they hate each other more than they hate the United States or the international community. I think, in broad terms, that is, a fair conclusion to reach. So the

idea of staying a little longer or staying a little bigger, I think is no longer a huge added irritant compared to what it might have seemed three years ago. Even though Fred makes me a little nervous with this aspect of his plan, I think on balance there are more things that are more serious in Iraq in terms of stoking hatred, stoking violence.

A second concern is, of course, reinforcing this culture of dependency which seems to be the argument from what we can tell in the papers and elsewhere that American military commanders are making to Secretary Gates now as he is getting his first set of briefings or as he has this week in Iraq and that somehow if we increase the forces, the Iraqis will think they can always just ask us for more help. It will put off their need to get serious about reining in militias, about making political compromises, and so forth. That is a serious concern. But I actually think, and this may be a slight difference in view from Fred. I think there is a way to actually do his plan and still

address that, and I will come to that in just a second.

In terms of those main Iraqi political realities, while his plan may be a little bit of an irritant, I don't think it is a fundamental change or worsening of the problem.

Then there is the issue of the U.S. Military, and here he really does make me nervous because I do think that it is very possible after four years of watching this incredible all-volunteer force hold up much better than I would have predicted, much better than most people predicted, there is a danger of assuming that we can just keep pushing and it will just keep withstanding the added push. I know Fred is cognizant of this as much as anybody with his time at West Point and his close ties to the U.S. Military and his concern for that institution. I also appreciate the point that defeat could be the number one morale buster in the U.S. Military. So let us not delude ourselves into thinking we have got a preferable

option that is so clearly apparently. Nonetheless, I do think sending people to Iraq when they are in Iraq longer than they are in the United States -- and this is your envisioned sustained strategy -- really starts to, even by the standards we have gotten used to, really starts to push the envelope.

This makes me again want to modify one aspect of his plan, rather than give a blanket endorsement, to say I think we have to view 2007 as the year of the surge with the surge being viewed as a short-term phenomenon. Now, Fred and I are writing a paper together on the need to increase the all-volunteer Army and Marine Corps and their standing size and that should have been done long ago, but given that it wasn't done long ago and that we are not going to get enough rapid progress, we are going to have to view that potential help from that kind of a policy as minimal in its potential to really make a difference in the short-term. So I am worried we are not going to be able to sustain this kind of a surge and it has to

be viewed primarily as a one-time thing.

But we need to get positive momentum in some way, and that is what brings me back to supporting his plan above all others, and let me go through very quickly what I would see as two or three other potential options and why I think they are worse.

First of all, immediate or near-term withdrawal, and Ken and others here have been much more eloquent about this problem than I can be, but let us never underestimate the implications of losing this war. I will just quickly say I would join those who say this would probably be worse than Vietnam in terms of its strategic implications given, first of all, how important the Persian Gulf region is and, secondly, what this would mean for emboldening al-Qaeda. For those two reasons alone, I think we have to view defeat as a horrible outcome, and I think most people in this room would probably agree, but it is still worth emphasizing.

Then there is the idea of essentially trying to

hunker down, keep this pot simmering as a four-star recently told Fred and myself in a meeting, and I will protect his identity even though we are off the record here I think. Or are we on the record, Ken?

MR. POLLACK: We are on the record actually.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay.

MR. POLLACK: Do you want to be off the record on something?

MR. O'HANLON: No; I am on the record, but I won't say his name. I will be twice as careful not to say his name. But in any event, he used the metaphor of maybe the best we can hope for is just to keep the pot simmering and then hope for a break in two years, five years, seven years, whatever.

Well, I would submit that is not a possibility for two reasons. First of all, the pot is not simmering. The pot is boiling over. The statistics that Nina Kamp and I have compiled, largely with the help of our colleagues in the IDP Project here at Brookings and some of these are known by CENTCOM and



some of them CENTCOM hasn't quite fully recognized the severity of -- 100,000 people per month are being displaced from their homes in Iraq. About half are winding up in other parts of Iraq, and the other half are becoming refugees. At that pace, this is becoming the Balkans if not already there. This is basically ethnic cleansing. The pot is not simmering; wrong metaphor. You can't think of this as a sustainable policy. That is in terms of realities on the ground in Iraq.

In terms of realities in the United States, and again somebody at this same meeting made the point from the right to this general, saying American politics aren't going to sustain this. Senator McCain probably can't get elected President with the idea that we are just going to keep this pot simmering at the current level and we can't do any better than that. It is just not sustainable here at home.

I would submit the reason it is not sustainable is because Americans have street smarts and they know

that we are losing right now. Let us just be blunt. We are losing. We are not neither winning nor losing; we are losing. Americans know it even if the President hasn't yet recognized as much.

You can ask: How long do you have to be losing before you have lost? Frankly, I don't think anybody has a good analytical handle on that, but another year's worth of things getting worse every month with a full-term government already in place is going to tend to be pretty suggestive of what the answer will be. So that option, keep it simmering, is not an option.

There are two more options. I am going to quickly put them on the table and then actually try to combine them with Fred's in a way he probably won't like, but I think there is a way to do it in a useful manner.

Then there is the option of saying the ultimatum strategy, the Baker-Hamilton concept, which Fred does not like because, as he points out, it risks worsening political relations with the Iraqi Government. I

recognize that reality, and I don't favor an immediate ultimatum to the Iraqis, but as a matter of practical American politics, whether you call it an ultimatum or not, it is a fact in my opinion: This country will not sustain 150,000 or 140,000 forces in a losing operation indefinitely, not because we are mad at the Iraqis but because we are sick of losing that many of our own men and women and we are going to stop it, and if they want to say they have the sovereign right to make their own decisions on how they share oil and handle their militias and handle de-Ba'thification and rehabilitation of Ba'thists, fine, we have the sovereign right to pull our forces out and bring them back home. I think that is going to be the American attitude.

It is not so much that the ultimatum viewpoint; it is more the reality of the fact that we are not going to keep losing a war forever without doing something about it. If our partner overseas won't help us, then we will have to make the logical conclusion

that the war is not winnable and at some point simply give up the effort. So I think we have to recognize that the ultimatum strategy actually has some benefit in the sense that it is nothing more than an articulation of reality.

But before we get to that point, let us tell the Iraqis: Listen, we don't think we can hold our country behind this effort for much more than a year or two, the way it is going, so let us try very hard to change the way it is going. I wouldn't want to use terms like ultimatum too much, but I would want to talk about having a conversation with the Iraqis. I think this is where a lot of us can be useful too. To the extent Iraqis have time to talk with us, they can get more of a flavor of American politics because the Bush Administration cannot speak in these terms. They have to win. Their place in history depends on winning. The United States, broadly defined, would love to win and we need to win, but we are also, I think at some point, prepared to recognize a losing effort for what

it is. By conveying that message at the same time that we convey a willingness to try even harder in the short term to win, I hope that we can again create this image of 2007 as a make or break year. I think our military probably can tough it out for that one big year of effort.

Now, what will happen in 2008, I don't know, but if we have begun to turn the corner towards a more positive situation in Iraq, I think a lot of things will look easier even if we still have to keep 120,000 troops in Iraq, even if we still have to keep suffering fatalities. If we have started to turn the corner on some of the key indicators of violence and of political compromise, then I think we can hope that this extra effort will have been worth it and we will be able to sustain the added burden of the future years just because we have a psychology of momentum on our side.

One last point and I will stop. I also think all this could easily fail. You could do all this stuff,

create a jobs program, push the Iraqis to share oil, to have a more moderate coalition, surge 20,000 troops, and it could still fail. In fact, I would predict that it will. If I had to be a betting man, I would say we can do all these things and we will probably still fail, which means we need a Plan B.

I think the Plan B, Ed Joseph and I have been throwing out this one idea of Senator Biden's Soft Partition combined with voluntary relocation for Iraqis, so they can move to neighborhoods where they feel safer, get new jobs and new homes, not lavish homes and not hugely paying jobs but nonetheless some minimal level of sustenance. That kind of a plan is the sort of thing I believe think tanks and others need to be developing right now, and in a year if Fred's plan hasn't worked, we need to be facing reality and go to this sort of a thing.

In other words, you don't have to assume that Fred's plan will necessarily work to give it a try, not because it is a kitchen sink approach or it a last

gasp effort, a Hail Mary; it is none of those things. It is much more serious, much promising than a Hail Mary, but it still probably less than a 50 percent chance of working in my judgment, given where we are. Even so I support it because I think before you go to these logical Plan Bs, you have to prove to the Iraqis who would have to ultimately execute any Plan B and to our country and the region that we tried every reasonable thing first.

So, sorry for the tepid endorsement, but it really is a completely convinced endorsement at the end of the day even if I have a million caveats and a million conditions and I am only with you for 12 months. But that is where I am, and I appreciate your pushing this debate because frankly it is the sort of topic I didn't even really want to think about. Ken tried to make me think about it last year. I didn't want to think about it then either. I think many of us don't like the idea of trying to increase forces in Iraq, but when you think of the alternatives, it may

be the best thing in conjunction with a few other policy initiatives in this last make or break effort in 2007.

Thanks.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Mike. Before I let you go, a quick comment and then I want to push you on a particular point.

We are hopefully as part of this series going to do one session on the plan that Mike and Ed Joseph are putting out there. This is news to Mike, I know, but I am hoping that he or Ed will agree to come and we can do another session like this to talk about their option because it is another one that is important and, especially because we are part of Brookings, we need to get it out there and get it on the table as well.

The point I want to push you on, Mike, is this issue of sustainability of the forces. Could we break the military? What would that mean? And your point about only being willing to try it for 12 months.



Maybe I could push you by putting it this way. If the President came to you and said: Okay, I buy what Kagan is saying about the importance of doing this, about the importance of the strategy, and I think he is right, that an increase of about 30,000 troops would be very beneficial to Iraq, and I am not willing to put a time limit on it. I think it is important. I am going to give it the commitment. If we can get it through 12 months and we can ratchet down the level of troops after that, that is great. But if not, I don't want to say at the end of 12 months, we are done because this is too important.

If he were to say that to you, Mike, and then say to you: All right, what do I do to make it so that we can do this in terms of our own forces?

What might you say to him about what we would need to do?

MR. O'HANLON: I just have two comments. One is to quote you back at you if you don't mind which is to say that I thought, and I will pivot off the Baker-

Hamilton wording which I thought was one of the weaker parts of that report where they basically said we have to start getting out of Iraq because the rest of our global interests are too important to leave so exposed, and I think you said in a public forum last week that there is nothing we really have on our global portfolio that is any more important than salvaging something here. I think that is a pretty convincing point to start with. That is not a direct answer to your question, but it is some broader context that if there is anything worth pushing the force on, it is probably this.

But having said that, recognizing none of us have the ability to predict when the all-volunteer force would crack, I am going to make another advertisement for something I co-wrote recently with another one of my favorite conservatives, Max Boot, about trying to increase the size of the Army by recruiting foreigners as a path towards citizenship because I don't see how else you can increase by the tens of thousands a year

that we should be increasing by. That is the answer to your question, Ken. You have got to start increasing as fast as you plausibly can right now. Of course, when I say as fast as you plausibly can, obviously, the fastest we plausibly could is through a draft and turning every military college in this country into basic training and telling all the majors in our military colleges they are not going to do their normal mid-career professional education. So there is a level of effort or two above what any of us are talking about in this regard.

In terms of practical things that are comfortable for the system to contemplate, the idea of opening up a whole new pool of potential recruits is about the only thing I can think of that would really answer your question because incremental increases of 5,000 or 10,000 a year in addition to taking too long to materialize are going to be too little, too late.

MR. POLLACK: Great; thank you, Mike.

I will be delighted to take questions. Please

just put up your finger, and I will call you. Those of you in the back of the room, please excuse me; my eyesight is no longer what it once was, so I may just point.

The first finger that I saw was Mark Parris'. So, Mark, why don't you kick things off?

QUESTIONER: Mark Parris, Baker Donelson.

With the exception of Mike's reference to an American foreign legion basically, neither of you commented on foreign troop components to these scenarios. Is that because it is just too late in the day to consider that as a meaningful contribution? Have we passed that point? What are your thoughts on that?

MR. KAGAN: I can't tell you how much I would love to be able to say that I think we could get foreign contingents into Iraq, but I think it is simply not going to happen. The biggest problem that we face in that regard, well, the problems are both political and practical.

The British have been very, very staunch allies, and they have stuck with us. I think they will stick with us, and I think they have made it clear that as long as we are in Iraq, there will be some British force in Iraq. But it is not at all clear to me that the British Army is actually even capable of sustaining the current force level, let alone adding anything. The British have commitments around the world. You know they still have troops in Northern Ireland; they have troops in Afghanistan; they have troops all over the place; and they have a very small military establishment. So I just don't really see how they could send more even if they want, even if Gordon Brown didn't seem to be heading in the other direction.

The French have a very fine army. It would be very nice to get them. One idea that was floated jokingly was apparently you can rent the French Foreign Legion, and I think they would be really good at this. I am not sure how Monsieur Chirac would feel

about that. But no, in reality, I think probably the French are not going to contribute.

After that, there really aren't very many allies that we have who have the military capability to send significant numbers of forces. Now, every little bit helps. If we could get more, that would be fine.

Some ideas have been floated about trying to get Muslim troops into Iraq. I am very, very uncomfortable about that. It is not that I don't think they are good fighters, but I think that we get into some very simplistic considerations of the problems of that. This is a sectarian war right now in Iraq. All Muslims belong to one sect or another, and many of them have political agendas even drawn from far away. I am very skeptical even if you could get them to sign up for it, that it would be a very bright idea to try to bring them in to replace.

So, much as I would really like to do that, I just don't see that the troops are available to do it with, although I think it is worth trying with our

European allies to do that.

MR. POLLACK: Carlos?

If I could ask people to please identify themselves before they speak.

QUESTIONER: I am Carlos Pascual from the Brookings Institution. I apologize for making this comment and then having to go. I am supposed to be on a television program to comment on some of these issues as well.

In some ways, Fred, I would have been with you like a year ago, but I can't get there right now unless this is really associated directly with some sort of political settlement of the civil war.

There is a piece that Ken and I wrote. Ken, I don't know if you had a chance to put some of these papers out before. One of the things that Ken and I stressed in that paper is that it is absolutely critical as a starting point to acknowledge that Iraq is in a civil war and Iraq is a failed state. But particularly on the civil war piece of this, one of

the things that we have learned over time is that you don't settle civil wars through military force, that in the end if there isn't some form of political understanding -- whether it has been in Northern Ireland or Bosnia or Kosovo or in Congo or in Mozambique or a whole host of other places -- force alone isn't the solution. Force isn't irrelevant. It can push the parties to be willing to negotiate. There is clearly a need to a force to be able to support a peace agreement and its viability. But as long as you have got one party who is willing to use guerilla tactics to continue to disrupt, kill, and cause mayhem and accept that as an interim outcome and accept that they will eventually wait it out, then you can't fix that with an external military presence.

So I personally think that increasing the size of U.S. troops, the U.S. force level without a political solution is, in fact, a recipe for just more U.S. troops getting killed. If there is a political agreement that Sunni and Shi'ah will abide by or that



they will at least reach, then I think that there is a reasonable case to be made, in fact, actually to increase the troop level to implement that agreement.

I just offer that because I am concerned with the one part. I would disagree with one thing that you said, Mike, that there is one thing that we have not tried as a country. We have not tried to, in fact, actually seek a political and diplomatic agreement that brings the sectarian violence to an close, and that is, I think, the critical reason why a lot of attention needs to be put on the Baker-Hamilton recommendation on some form of political solution. I agree with you that the prospects of that working are extremely low, but I think that it is absolutely a critical piece of any kind of plan to increase the force level.

If that then doesn't work, then I go back to a much more radical and more conservative option that you then need to start moving the troops back into the kind of containment strategy that Ken has started to

outline in a couple of other papers.

MR. KAGAN: I don't know how radical our disagreement is on this point. I certainly agree with you, and I have said and we have said repeatedly that there is no military solution to this problem. I think it is a question of phasing.

I am very skeptical that we are going to be able to get the Iraqis to reach a political accord before we have the violence more under control than it actually is right now. The reason I say that is because I do not believe that we have yet persuaded the warring sides that they cannot attain their objectives by force, and I think that we have to make that clear to them. I go back to the Bosnia and the Kosovo model in exactly that way and say the political solutions required the application of sufficient force to persuade all sides that there was no additional advantage to be gained by continuing the fight militarily. That is why I fully agree with you that there has to be a political settlement here. All

insurgencies end with political settlements, absolutely. But I think that we first have to take the option of military success off the table for the warring sides, and then we can force them to sit down and hammer things out.

The problem that we have had all along, I don't fully agree with you that we haven't tried this. We have worked very hard to get the Iraqis to come up with domestic political arrangements that would bring the insurgents into the fold. That has been the whole point of the U.S. strategy to this point, and that is why the President pushed the political process as rapidly as he did in the hopes that would draw the Sunni insurgents in and make them put down their arms. The whole problem is that we were not simultaneously taking the actions necessary to make it clear to them that their fighting was not going to be an effective lever in the political system.

And so, while I absolutely agree with you that there has to be a political resolution here, I would

also say that we have to begin by bringing the security situation under control and also simultaneously pressing them, as it is clear that is going to succeed, to work out the political compromises that are going to be necessary to maintain it.

QUESTIONER: Fred, just very quickly, do you think you can demonstrate that you cannot win by force as long as the Iraqi insurgents or let us just say the Iraqi insurgents know that there is no way that the United States will actually be there for longer than a year?

MR. KAGAN: I disagree that there is a circumstance in which there is no way the United States is not possibly going to be there for more than a year. I think the United States is going to be there for two years in all likelihood, and our proposal is an 18 to 24-month proposal. So, at a minimum, that has to be made clear.

But remember that we are also simultaneously

working to improve the quality and capability of the Iraqi Army and what we are trying to do is to bring the security problem down to a level that the Iraqi Army will then be able to maintain. In that context, I think that is how you show the insurgents that there is no long-term hope. They can't just wait us out because yes, we will leave but when we leave, there will be internal Iraqi forces that will be sufficient to keep them down as well.

MR. POLLACK: Bob?

QUESTIONER: Bob Lieber, Georgetown; a footnote and then a two-part question.

The footnote is that it is not true that civil wars can only be ended politically. Think of the U.S. Civil War. Think of the Spanish Civil War. Think of Biafra and Nigeria. That doesn't mean that political solutions aren't highly desirable and mostly the case.

I want to push on two questions. One is to ask Fred to elaborate. What happens after 18 to 24 months?

Let us say what you are talking about more or

less works and there is security in Baghdad in particular and perhaps some other places, but up until now, when we have cleared some place, we haven't held it very long or when we did hold it for a while and left, things went to hell again. In a context where the maxim Rule or Die is not just a metaphor but a reality, what would be the basis for assuming that even after 18 to 24 months, the situation would not revert to status quo ante?

The second related question is just as Fred has done an admirable service by insisting that we try to figure out what the option would involve, all of us I think refer to the idea that the consequences of failure, U.S. failure in Iraq would be disastrous, but I don't think I have ever heard a really sustained effort to unpack that and answer what disastrous means.

MR. POLLACK: Stay tuned; we are going to put a 140-page paper on that in January, Bob.

MR. KAGAN: I have gotten a preview of that on a

number of occasions, and I can't stress how valuable I think is the contribution. I can't stress enough how valuable I think the contribution that Ken and his team are making for precisely that reason because I really do think there have been a lot of parts of this debate where we have allowed assumptions to go untested and among them have been the question of feasibility, the military option which we have tried to address, and also the notion that there are various soft landings that we could fall on if this doesn't work. I think the terrific work that Ken has done on that is going to help us address that with the real rigor that it deserves. So I am looking forward very eagerly to that as well.

The first thing I want to emphasize is that we are proposing in this plan to do something that is very different from what we have done which is to stay. The idea is that this would be a year-long effort to get Baghdad under control; we would stay there for a year; and we would stay there into the

following year as well. All that while we would be continuing to root out the insurgents and we would be continuing to gain the trust of the population which then generates more intelligence, which allows you to root out more insurgents and really harm that organization. And it is an organization. I mean it is worthwhile keeping in mind that once you get the vigilante self-defense groups to go home, which I think we will, then you are dealing with a thinking, breathing enemy, but it is also an enemy that you can identify and go after. You can do that if you have gained the trust of the population by staying there which is what we are proposing to do.

What happens after that? Well, a number of things I think potentially happen after that. First, we have been training the Iraqi security forces. We want to be able to turn it over to them. When we are done with Baghdad, we are going to have to move on, I think, and the plan does discuss branches and sequels. The likeliest sequel is we go into Anbar and we clear out



Anbar. It may be that, by that time, Diyala is more important. Maybe we go into Diyala. Maybe we do one and then the other. Maybe we go up into Mosul. It depends on the circumstances, but we will have to continue to roll out from Baghdad once we have established that as basically White Zone.

One thing I didn't mention is do we go into Sadr City in 2008; maybe. The question is going to be: What is the political situation? What is the strength of the Jaish al Mahdi? What are the strengths of the Sunni fighters at that point? We will have to make our decisions accordingly.

It won't be different if we maintain our presence in the population. I am sorry. It will be different if we maintain our presence in the population. Again, it is remarkable that we haven't done this. There is a terrific counter-insurgency manual that has just come out from Fort Leavenworth and the Marines, and there is a wonderful chart -- I forget which page it is on, I think 1-29 -- that lists best practices of counter-

insurgency on the left and ineffective practices on the right. If you look at it, the rightmost column describes what we have been doing and the leftmost column describes what we haven't been doing. One of those things is embedding in the population to get partnered with the indigenous forces. We saw that work Tall Afar for a while. It has now become very precarious because we drew down even there very rapidly. I think we can make that work in Baghdad.

The short answer to the question is the security situation will improve. We will move forward on the political initiatives that Carlos Pascual rightly says that we need to undertake. We will be improving the quality and strength of the Iraqi Army, and we will have to be training up Iraqi Police which can only happen in the context of secure neighborhoods because police are locally recruited. With all of that going on, I think there is good reason to believe that after two years, we will be able to start handing over and drawing down dramatically and not have it go to heck.

MR. POLLACK: Jeremy?

QUESTIONER: I wanted to ask a question, I guess, about doctrine.

MR. POLLACK: Please identify yourself.

QUESTIONER: Oh, sorry; I am Jeremy Shapiro, also here at Brookings.

I wanted to ask a question, I guess, about doctrine. There is some reason to believe that the United States Military, especially the United States Army isn't particularly well set up as an institution as a culture to implement the plan that you are talking about especially the part about being embedded in the population because, as we have heard, they have very strong force protection doctrines. What that means is that in order to avoid taking casualties, they very often respond quite vigorously and with great force to threats or even conceivably early on to threats coming from the population. A car bomb or potential car bomb is coming; they blow it up; they kill a family. That makes the population not only feel

not secure but actually feel that the source of their insecurity is the U.S. Military. The convoys have done this as well.

So I am wondering if in part of your plan to embed troops more in the population, to allow the U.S. Army to contribute to a feeling of security rather than a feeling of insecurity among the population, you are advocating a change in these types of force protection doctrines, which ones, and are you willing to face up to the idea that this means taking more casualties, even as sort of a percentage of the force?

MR. KAGAN: In the first place, I don't think I can entirely agree with your characterization of the Army. I've seen very, very wide variation from commander to commander and unit to unit in the American military about emphasis on force protection versus mission accomplishment and willingness to take risks.

I think it's going to have to be made very clear from the level of the top leadership down

throughout the hierarchy that force protection cannot be the overriding concern here and that we have to be willing to accept a certain amount of increased risk to the soldiers to do this.

I think there are units that have been doing that already. We have units now. I have a former cadet of mine who's is now a captain who is embedded in Dora, which is a very tough neighborhood, and he is living out with the population, and he is overseeing his soldiers there.

So, I mean this is something that does happen in places and the American Army is perfectly capable of doing that if it's told to. We're very upfront in the proposal about the fact that this is almost certainly going to lead to higher US casualties. I mean, I think there's hardly any question about that.

We know what this enemy does. We know how they behave. They've been actually very consistent, even if they've been fairly creative. They will surge

against us when we try to do this. There will be car bombs going off. There will be suicide bombers. There's no question that it will be very unpleasant and we will be taking more casualties at least in the short run.

We believe that the overall - the net casualties will be lower, because the faster we work to do this, the faster we get the situation under control, the faster we get to a point where we're not really taking very many casualties. And I think it's a question of you need to look at what's the upfront cost versus what's the long term benefit here.

But no, I mean there's no question that in the initial phases of this, our troops will be more at risk and they will take more casualties. I think the Army is able to do that. I think the Marines are able to do that. I think it's a matter of strength from the command to make it clear that - what's important here. But I think we've seen commanders who, in the past,

have been willing to emphasize that and who will emphasize it in the future.

MR. MITCHELL: Fred, Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report. And I want to begin by saying that I sort of identify myself with the leaning in the direction of the O'Hanlon view. And I was thinking that when Mike was talking that we're in one of those places again where we're searching for a new metaphor. And as he said, it's not hail Mary, but it's arguably closer to that any other - I don't mean that it's been slapdash, but it does - it's not hail Mary, but I'm reminded of the famous John Elway story when the Broncos were playing the Browns with two minutes left to go and had the ball on the two yard line, and he said we've got them right where we want them. And they won. Right, 98 yards to go.

So, and I think that's important here. I keep wondering whether this is some version of Terri Schiavo , whether we're really on some version of life

support and we just can't quite politically deal with pulling the plug.

So my question is what - in your view, why does the - why does your plan or some modified version of soften the blow of - if you assume the worst, and I understand you don't, but if you assume the worst that we tried it, it didn't work, why does engaging in it soften the blow of the military morale question? Talk about that. How does it soften the blow on domestic American politics and also on the sort of US prestige factor, in other words, well, they did, you know, they went the last mile or whatever metaphor you want to use there?

It's probably another way of saying if you knew in advance that this wasn't going to work, would you still want to do it because you thought it might deal with at least those three issues of military morale, domestic politics, and sort of international (off mike)?



And then I want to just close by saying, and not as facetiously as it may sound, it occurred to me, and I understand it's not for today, I'd love to know what do you think Napoleon would say.

MR. KAGAN: We've watched - I've watched Napoleon screw this up on many occasions, and he would say we need to go and burn Bagdad to the ground because that is the only way to deal with insurgencies. Napoleon was a big fan of the Tamerlane solution to these kinds of problems. And you know, the weird thing is it never quite worked for him.

It's not a really effective way for doing this kind of thing. So, I don't really think - I can't offer any tips from Napoleon. I'll tell you what not to do. So Gary, that sounded like a tepid endorsement of a tepid endorsement.

Let me begin by saying I would not be advocating this plan if I did not think that it had a good probably of success. Let me start right there. I am not, of course, of the Vietnam generation, but I

remember Vietnam vividly as a historian might. And I remember early on in that war people in the Johnson administration saying to themselves well, whether we win or lose, it's important that we bleed for the cause. I don't think that's a good way of thinking about things, and I wouldn't advocate doing this simply for that reason.

If you press me on the question of what happens if despite my expectations this doesn't succeed, I would say I actually do think it leaves us in a better situation. There are various nightmare scenarios that you can develop that would make it worse if we did this, but I think they are unlikely, especially if we are reasonably competent, as I think we can be.

The likeliest outcome is that there is a significant reduction in violence in 2007. I think if we actually go in with a real serious clear and hold operation and we actually stay in the neighborhoods, it's very unlikely that you will not see a significant

reduction of violence in those neighborhoods in my view. And that's based on past experience of when we've done this in the past when we are present.

And this also goes to Jeremy's point, the Iraqis, you know, seeing us as being, you know, unsafe. The weird thing is, you know, we've seen and throughout the media in recent months all of these stories where Iraqis in Sunni neighborhoods tell each other, you know, or tell us or tell the Shi'ah, you know, if the police show up and they're alone, bar the door. If the Americans are with them, it's okay. We're not seen now as a force that is generating the violence in Iraq. We're seen as a force for order still. And I think that gives us an advantage when we do this.

So, the point would be right now if we begin to withdraw, it's very clear to me that the situation would go up in flames. I think the enemies on both sides are poised to launch the final assaults as we

leave. And so there will be no interval at all, and it will be a disaster.

It seems to me very, very likely that if we did something like this, the overall level of violence would be down and we will have harmed the ability of those organizations to carry that sort of thing out. If we then, for whatever reason, chose to leave, I think we would be leaving under much better circumstances, not because we've proven anything, but because we actually will have improved the situation on the ground even if the political process then falls apart or something else happens that makes us decide that we just can't do it anymore.

So, I think it's very unlikely - it's possible - I mean, you know, anything in war, anything you try to do in war can fail and you can lose, and I take that seriously and I understand it. But I think the likeliest outcomes if you look at the spread of probable results here, the likeliest outcomes all tend

to lead to a better situation for us even if we ultimately lose.

MR. POLLACK: Scott?

MR. HAROLD: Scott Harold, Brookings. Fred and Mike, I'd like to push you a little bit, and I know Ken said we're going to have another session on outcomes if things go bad, go south even if we try. But, a two part question is first, Mike, you kind of think we have about a year. I'm wondering - we haven't really talked about goals, Fred. What are the goals that we can expect and might a weight watchers approach get us more than 12 months?

In other words, that you come into weight watchers, they say you might want to lose 50 or 100 pounds, but you've got to start with about 10 percent first. You get that 10 percent, then you go for the next 10 percent, and eventually you get down to that last 5 pounds, whatever. That might take a quite a while, but you've (off mike) to pull out while we're winning. So, that's one question.

The second question is really what has to happen - I'm trying to complicate what could happen. What has to happen for the US to decide that no matter what we have to win this? This is World War II. This is worse than Vietnam in terms of, you know, the communists in Vietnam were really clashing with the Chinese communists. They were not a part of a grand Soviet plot for world domination.

But, the Iraqi Sunnis, the radical Islamic component of Iraq may be a component of a larger world battle. And so, what would really have to happen for us to say okay, you know what, it's uncomfortable to talk about the draft, but it's better than the alternative that we lose? Because if we lose, then we become the Soviets to them, then they strike us the home, then they overthrow our neighbors in the region, we lose credibility, oil goes through the roof. I can think of a million things and I'm sure Ken and Mike and others have thought of more. It just seems to me that this could be so catastrophic

that nobody is really addressing in realistic terms what that is. So those are the two questions I have.

MR. KAGAN: Let me start with the weight watchers metaphor and then I'll let Mike and Ken talk about that larger issue. We basically have given you the weight watchers approach. That's basically what we've done. We've tried to deconstruct the problem in Iraq in a way that breaks it into manageable pieces.

You know, if you look at the overall requirement for securing a population of 25 million all at once, yeah, we can't do that. On the other hand, there's no need to do that right now, because large areas of the country would not welcome our forces and don't need them.

Even in Bagdad, we've deconstructed the problem. You know, dealing with a city of six million, we could do it. It would be a much more significant challenge than we are talking about right here if we were to do it all at once. But we're not proposing to do that because we think it would be politically

disastrous to go into Sadr(?) City and be counterproductive.

Well, there's two and a half million people in Sadr City. That reduces your problem down to a much more manageable level. Now you're talking - I think the areas we're talking about are maybe two million mixed Sunni and Shi'ah neighborhood. Now you try to look at traditional counter insurgency numbers. You want, you know, one to twenty, one to twenty-five. We can generate those kinds of force levels.

We think that doing that, creating a white zone basically between Bagdad International Airport and the green zone and then over into Rusafa will be transformative and will provide a good base to move on. So we've tried to do, again, this is all in the aim of injecting military reality.

In military plans, you don't say, you know - Hitler did this in the Soviet Union. It didn't work out too good, you know. You say what we want to do is take the Soviet Union, so let's take the whole thing



all at once. You know, that's what - effective military planning doesn't do that.

So we've already tried to decompose this problem into phases and manageable tasks and I think that's basically what we're doing. And I think - I don't really think you can decompose it much more than this.

SPEAKER: (off mike)

MR. KAGAN: Yeah. By the end of 2007, what we are aiming is to have these 23 neighborhoods that we've identified secure enough that one could drive through them without significant, you know, without unacceptable risk. And I'm very uncomfortable with metrics.

In Vietnam we had body counts. The body count of this work has been acres transition to Iraqi control. That's what Casey has given us and that how we see all of these stupid slides with parts of Iraq colored green as though that mattered. He doesn't seem to have noticed that there is a direct relationship

between acres turned over and increase in violence, but he's still putting out those metrics.

So, I'm very uncomfortable identifying metrics here. I don't think you win wars by metrics. But I do think there should be a dramatic and visible improvement and security in the areas that we have targeted to safeguard the population by the end of 2007. We should pretty much have an end to force migrations. You should pretty much have an end to sectarian cleansing. The vigilante groups should be pretty much stood down.

You're never going to get to zero violence in this kind of environment. You're always going to have suicide bombers. Al-Qaeda is going to be attacking. I mean, that's going to happen. But if we've gotten it to the point where you're pretty much down to those hardcore groups trying to get in there and occasionally sneaking one in, then I think that's a success, and I think it will be seen as a success.

MS. MARCONE: Janice Marccone, Marccone Works International. One of things, Fred, I didn't - maybe I missed something, because I did come in a little later. Of course, you - I mean I think people have tossed around the term that we have to adapt and everything of that sort, so that adaptation has almost become a non-thinking term.

But what I don't hear in anything is looking at patterns of evolution, for example, Sistani had at least some partially - I'm talking about specifically a type of pattern evolution, convergence patterns. There was a partially converged Shiite group backing that he had. Those became multiple, poly whatever you want to call it, fractionated into different areas. Okay. So it's not just Shiite, Sunni. You can have homogeneous, heterogeneous, asymmetric, partially converged, you know. Each within those convergence shows an evolution. And within each evolution becomes resources that can be used for adaptation.

In fact, listening to what Carlos was saying, I would say that some of these partially converged groups in their evolution, which by the way, if we could only cause them to devolve, would be an interesting way of going about it.

But like I said, we don't do prediction in the evolution of the patterns very well if at all, that these groups in their evolution gain more resources and actually apply dime, diplomatic information, military economic, better within their groups, which causes even a further evolution.

You said something very interesting, Fred. I don't know if you meant it in this way, but you said when they surge against us, which means they have surge capability. And here, we're talking about can we surge. I'm offering that - here's a possibility - that this surge capability is in the way they evolve, in the way they, depending on whether they're homogeneous, heterogeneous, what asymmetries that they're able to converge, that the resources in the

revolution allows them to surge and to meaningfully adapt.

MR. KAGAN: I'm a fan of chaos theory and nonlinearity and autonomous groups and all of - you know, understand the importance of thinking about how enemies adapt. What we have done to deal with that - well, one of the things that that study tells me is that predicting what they're going to do is not a worthwhile activity because you don't know. They will adapt in some ways. We can think about ways in which they might adapt, but we can be pretty sure that we won't accurately predict that entirely.

That having been said, we did our very best in this study based on the intelligence that we could get to decompose the enemy and understand how those different - what those different groups were, how they were interacting with one another, how they have adapted over time and based on that and based on what we think their interests, aims, goals, and

capabilities are, how they will respond as individual groups to this.

And if you go through, our report actually contains, I think, you know, we showed our work in a lot of detail in the report on that. What I gave you with the surge is shorthand. Each group will react differently to our attempt to clear and hold. We anticipate - just going quickly over the horizon - we anticipate that both vigilante groups on neither side will be eager to confront us directly. Some of them will simply go home because we will be accomplishing their mission for them, namely establishing security. Some of them may bleed over into more hardcore groups depending on how much they've been radicalized. But those self-organizing groups will probably not stand up against us. There's simply no pattern of that, and it's hard to see how it would be in their interest or desires to do that.

The question of what Al-Qaeda will do, well, Al-Qaeda is adaptable in its methods, but it's pretty

predictable in its aims. They have a limited pipeline of suicide bombers. They have - you know, they don't have infinite resources. Their pattern is to surge quite heavily against the initial attack and then go to ground. They may not do that in this case. This is a pretty decisive fight. It's possible that they will surge everything they've got.

In many respects, that's a best case for us. We don't actually expect them to do that. We expect them to do what they usually have done and which is smarter for them, which is to go to ground and try to surge later. And we've built in responses for that, both in terms of information operations and in terms of military preparations.

So, I don't want to - I could spend all afternoon going through this, but we're very cognizant of the issue that you raise and we've done our best to prepare the ground for that.

MR. STEPHANI: Stephano Stephani, the Embassy of Italy. It's not up to a foreigner to endorse or not

endorse plans. By the way, we complete our withdrawal in December, so we'll have a - we still have a presence of various kinds in Iraq.

I have two straightforward questions. The first one is the number of military you envision for the surge is something between 20,000 and 30,000. Is it the ideal increase that you envision or simply is the maximum available given the current state of the US Forces?

And the second, which you possibly or - maybe I'd like to the previous question is have you wondered what the enemy is going to do, because you make quite clear what you're going to do. You're going to clear and hold 23 districts. It's a fairly limited part of - it's one third of Bagdad and one small part of Iraq itself. Is the enemy going to just watch and see and wait their turn, wait until it comes to the turn of such city or province? That sounds a bit self defeating and until now, you must acknowledge the enemy has been anything but certainly smart.



MR. KAGAN: To answer your first question very straightforwardly, we attempted to do an unconstrained evaluation of what would be necessary to do this in a reasonable way and that's how we came up with our number. We looked at what are the districts that we think are the critical districts, and we said how much force do we think would be necessary to clear them based on previous operations in Bagdad and elsewhere and ongoing operations in Bagdad.

And we then took a very conservative - that is to say, we recommend more force than we think is strictly necessary to do this, and then we built additional reserves into the plan. So we have tried to do this in a sort of a belt and suspenders kind of way. This is not a, you know, Rumsfeldian, you know, whatever you think the minimum is, go a little bit below that sort of thing. This has been the opposite.

It so happens that it worked out that it is within the capabilities of the US Military. If it had not been, we had come to the conclusion that it was

not within the capabilities of the US Military, we would have either redefined the plan in some way or we would not have issued a report. I mean, we were not - we did not allow ourselves to just put happy talk on this based on what we thought we could do.

I'm sure the enemy will attack us outside of Bagdad. They do have a pattern of doing that. Our response to that has been to build reserves into this plan. The commander has forces. We're trying - we're proposing to send more forces notionally into Anbar. The commander may want to retain those forces in a more central location so that he can send them elsewhere. He may find that Anbar doesn't get to be that bad when we start doing this but Diyala explodes. He can move two or more regimental combat teams from Anbar to Diyala pretty quickly and try to deal with that.

So, what we - the way that we have - the only way that you can deal in a military plan with the possibility that the enemy will do something you don't like is to give the commander the sources he would need to respond to that. You can try to shape it so that the enemy can't do that. And we have some operations that try to do that. But at the end of the day, reserves are the name of the game, and we've done our best to provide reserves to meet those cases.

MR. STEPHANI: Thank you.

MR. GOBASH: Gobash from the United Arab Embassy. Last week, Al Maliki, as part of the reconciliation asked the previous Iraqi army to rejoin the army. What is the advantage and disadvantage of this? And what are the numbers expected?

MR. KAGAN: Well, you'll have to ask Maliki what numbers he expects actually to draw in. It was his initiative, not mine, so I can't give you that estimate.

I think the advantages and disadvantages are pretty clear. On the one hand, reconciliation is going to have to involve bringing the Sunni community in

Iraq into a role in the government. And that is going to have to include probably more Baathists, more former Baathists than we would in principal be happy with.

There was a lot of pattern for this. When we got Germany going any in the forties, we ended up having to bring more Nazis into the administration, former Nazis than we would have liked. You know, what you'd like to do is exclude everybody who was involved in the old regime. The problem is that the people who were involved in the old regime are the technocrats who know how to do things. So if you exclude them all, you have a problem. And in this case, you also fuel the insurgency by driving them all out.

This is something that's going to have to be addressed on a case by case basis. You know, the Iraqi government, with our advice hopefully, is going to have to make a judgment about who is really okay to bring back in and who isn't. But it's certainly going to have to be part of national reconciliation that we get beyond the blanket exclusion of everybody who is in anyway involved in the former regime.

MR. POLLACK: Well, that concludes our session for this afternoon, and I hope you'll please join me in giving a very warm round of thanks both to Fred for enduring all this and for Mike for providing his wisdom as well. Thank you both very much.

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