

Center for American Progress



**A PANEL DISCUSSION ON:**

**“STRATEGIC REDEPLOYMENT:  
THE WAY FORWARD IN IRAQ”**

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CAROLINE WADHAMS: Welcome, everybody, to the Center for American Progress. My name is Caroline Wadhams and I'm with the Center. Thanks for coming to our discussion about the Center's new report, "Strategic Redeployment." Just as a first note, if you could turn off your cell phones that would be great.

We have three terrific panelists here today. Ambassador Jim Dobbins from RAND, who we're honored to have with us; and Larry Korb and Brian Katulis from the Center for American Progress, and who are co-authors of "Strategic Redeployment."

Before I introduce the panelists, I wanted to quickly talk about the current situation in Iraq. U.S. troops have been in Iraq for more than two-and-a-half years now. More than 2,050 U.S. troops have been killed and over 15,000 U.S. troops have been wounded. At least 25,000 Iraqi civilians have also been killed. And approximately \$250 billion in U.S. taxpayer dollars have been spent in Iraq alone and our all-volunteer army is stretched as never before. Yet despite these enormous losses, the news out of Iraq remains deeply troubling. Foreign terrorists have gained a foothold in Iraq. It's no exaggeration to say that there is a civil war going on there, and antagonism against a U.S. presence has increased. Furthermore, reconstruction projects have faltered.

And what's more, the United States does not appear to be making any headway in the broader struggle against violent extremists. Global terrorist attacks classified as significant by the State Department have actually tripled under President Bush's watch, and Iraq is being used as a training ground for our worst enemies. Meanwhile, here in the United States, the American people want answers about the strategy, about when U.S. troops are coming home, and the administration has not leveled with the American people, and it set up a false choice between cut-and-run and stay-the-course. This is where the Center for American Progress has stepped in.

The Center for American Progress wants to present an alternative to the current U.S. strategy, one that is forward-looking and that answers the question, how do we make Americans safer from terrorist networks with a global reach?

This report, which you all should have, "Strategic Redeployment," comes out of months of debate within the Center and with experts around Washington, D.C., and around the country. And it comes from a conviction by our president, John Podesta, that we have an obligation to put an alternative on the table. It proceeds from the assumption that the Bush administration has left us with no good choices, but that nevertheless we must make a change.

So let me give very brief introductions of our panelists. You also have their bios in your folders, so if you want more information on them just refer to those in the folders. We have Ambassador Jim Dobbins. He directs RAND's International Security and

Defense Policy Center and works on post-conflict reconstruction. Jim's record includes handling crises from Somalia to Haiti to Kosovo to Afghanistan, and he's held numerous positions in the State Department and the White House.

Brian Katulis is the director of democracy and public diplomacy at the Center for American Progress. He also serves as a senior analyst and consultant to Freedom House and has written two reports on political transition in Iraq. Brian, who has lived in several countries in the Middle East and speaks Arabic, co-directed the first nationwide opinion research project of Iraqis for the National Democratic Institute.

Finally, we have Dr. Lawrence Korb, who is a senior fellow here at the Center and is senior advisor to the Center for Defense Information. Larry was assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan administration and is an expert on the all-volunteer army.

Larry and Brian are first going to briefly outline the strategic redeployment plan and then Ambassador Dobbins will comment on the report. We'll have a little back-and-forth and then we'll open it up to you.

LAWRENCE KORB: Thank you very much, Caroline, and let me join with her and welcome you all here to the Center to this very, I think, important issue. And let me pick up on Caroline's point about not any great alternatives. Thinking about that, I'm reminded of a story I once was told by Brent Scowcroft. Of course, if you read the *New Yorker* you know he's been much in the news lately. But he talked about this elderly gentleman, very religious, who went out to the Grand Canyon and hired a donkey to take him down, and on the way down the donkey lost its footing and this poor gentleman began to fall head-over-heels toward the bottom. Fortunately, at some point he was able to reach out and grab a branch and hold on. Now, as you might expect, given what happened and his background, he started to pray, and eventually a voice came down and it said, "Do you have faith?" And he said, "Oh, yes," he said, "I have faith." And the voice said, "Well, let go of the branch." And he thought for a second and he said, "Is there anybody else up there I can talk to?" (Laughter.)

And that of course is the problem: there are no good or great alternatives here. But let me outline where I'm coming from in terms of our saving you've got to get out in two years. After the election, we ought to tell the new Iraqi government we're getting out; we're going to take at least 80,000 troops out in 2006. The remainder will be out by 2007. We will leave a residual presence in Kuwait and probably Marines over the horizon. But let me tell you why we've come to this conclusion. First of all, our troops there are part of the problem. Many of the insurgents, though not all, are fighting because they simply don't believe that we're going to leave. And therefore, if you announce that you're getting out and you don't want any permanent bases, that should dampen some of the insurgency and also some of the foreigners coming in because they're coming in basically to fight us.

Second, and all of our generals have said this, there's no military solution to this problem, okay. As one general was quoted as saying, "Every time we kill one, we create

six more.” And if you take a look at the number of insurgents and compare the number to the ones we have killed, the number still has not gone down.

Number three, and Caroline talked about this, it’s undermining our overall security, our continued presence in Iraq. As Brian and I point out in that paper, whenever you deploy military force it should enhance your national security. I would argue it’s undermining it because it’s keeping us from having troops in other places. I think we could use more troops in Afghanistan. But it’s also eroding the quality of your all-volunteer army. The army, despite the fact that it has lowered its standards for both recruiting and retention, is still short of its goals. And if you continue these deployments based upon the analysis we did when I was in the Pentagon, by the third deployment even your career force starts to break, and if you keep up this number you’re going to be talking about third and fourth deployments.

Next, fourth, and this is important, if you give the Iraqis a deadline this will give them an incentive to get their act together. We know that after the government is elected the government is supposed to sit down and renegotiate parts of the constitution that were seen as objectionable by the Sunnis. This will give them an incentive to do that, as well as their armed forces – their security forces – to get their act together.

Let me leave you with this before I turn it over to Brian. We hear an awful lot about the readiness of the Iraqi forces and how long it’s going to take to train them. Nonsense. It is not training; it is motivation. We take young men and young women, we send them to three months of training, and we send them to places like Iraq and Afghanistan. So it’s not a question of training; it’s really motivation. And if we give them a deadline, that should be the motivation they need, and if it’s not they’ll never get it. Thank you.

BRIAN KATULIS: Great. Thanks, Larry. Thanks to the Center for American Progress and John Podesta for supporting us in this Iraq plan. We’ve deliberated over this over months and had many interesting discussions, and it’s a difficult issue with not very good options. And what we I think propose here, I’m looking forward to debating this afternoon and hearing your questions and providing some answers to it.

In addition to trying to move beyond the tired debate that our country has had in the stay-the-course versus cut-and-run debate that’s dominated this country, what we tried to do in this paper is to apply some of the principles of integrated power, which is a progressive national security strategy we put out earlier this year that I think you have in your packets. And part of the critique in integrated power is that a major flaw in the Bush administration’s approach to Iraq, and to the world for that matter, has been President Bush’s overreliance on military power and the threat of military force. And our critique says that the Bush administration has not fully utilized key aspects of American power, including its political, economic, and diplomatic power.

So what we’re arguing in the “Strategic Redeployment” piece is essentially a recalibration of how we use American power in Iraq in probably, you know, one of the

most important national security issues we're facing. We're arguing a shift away from the current approach, which is heavily focused on using the military to address problems that don't have military solutions, as Larry mentioned and as our commanders in the field mentioned.

So in addition to the military redeployment that Larry briefly outlined, our plan has three other pillars. One, smarter support of Iraq's political transition and reconstruction. Second, new diplomatic initiatives in the region directed at Iraq's neighbors. And third, a global communications campaign to counter the conspiracy theories and the destructive ideologies that our extremist enemies are using against us in Iraq in beyond.

In the few minutes I have here this afternoon, I want to focus on the first two of those components: the smarter support for the political transitional and regional diplomacy.

First on the political transition, anybody who's been to Iraq, and I worked in Iraq in 2003 and 2004 on some of the democracy support and democracy activities, anybody who's been there can see how complex the situation is. It's a story of several steps forward and several steps backwards. I think you'd be foolish to deny that there's been progress compared to 2002, where Iraq is at in 2005 and the fact there is a political debate, there is an election process. There's something there. But a lot of mistakes have been made to date, as cataloged by Larry Diamond in his *Squandered Victory* book and many others, and we need to make sure that we learn from those mistakes moving forward. The fact that the United States has made numerous mistakes in the political transition doesn't mean that we should just wash our hands and leave. And the fact that we're proposing a military redeployment of our forces doesn't mean that we think we should just wash our hands of supporting the Iraqi democratic political process.

So just – one of the main criticisms that we have about what has happened over the last two and a half years and what we think and suggest needs to happen over the next few years is that we need to make sure that the Iraqi leaders, Iraqi political leaders, take the lead in their political transition. As we argue on the security front that Iraqi troops need to stand up and take lead, the Iraqi political leaders must drive the political process, set their own timelines, set their own schedule for their political transition. Iraq's democratic transition will fail if it's seen to have a stamp of "Made in America" on it.

So if there's a main message here, a take-away point, I think we need to encourage Iraqi leaders to step up to the plate. And that's why I think part of it includes a reduced troop presence. Our open-ended commitment of a large number of troops in country has contributed to make the political transition much more dysfunctional than it might have been. And as long as Iraqi leaders feel that we will remain in Iraq in such large numbers, our presence will serve as a disincentive for the political leaders to make the compromises necessary to build their country.

Yesterday I was talking to a couple of lawyers who advised the Iraqi

constitutional committee. And they pointed out that several of the Sunni leaders actually pointed to our large troop presence as a disincentive, as an impediment to the credibility of the process. When they went back to their communities they were saying that this is – essentially these negotiations are taking place in a situation under U.S. occupation, and this was entering into the negotiations over the constitution.

The second thing – and I have a lot more I could say on the political transition, and I hope we can get into it, but the second component I'd like to focus on is the need for a regional diplomatic approach. Put simply, Iraq will not become more stable without support from its neighbors. Ambassador Dobbins can and probably will speak about this from his experiences in Afghanistan and the former Yugoslavia. And in many ways the Bush administration has taken itself unilaterally out of the diplomatic game in the region and has not done enough to work with Iraq and its neighbors to forge a regional cooperation. Iraq's neighbors have an interest in seeing a stable and unified Iraq, and that's why in our plan we call on President Bush to convene a meeting of the heads of state in the region to discuss measures to secure Iraq's borders and enhance military and security cooperation to eradicate terrorist networks.

Later this week there's a conference in Bahrain called "Forum for the Future," and it's a regional conference which I think is terribly important aimed at promoting regional democracy, and it's bringing together the members of the G-8 and leaders from the Middle East region and non-governmental leaders. And I think this is the type of forum I think it's important to do, but we need a similar type of regional conference on where do we go forward on Iraq: to talk about border security, to talk about the very real terrorist threat that exists, and to date the Bush administration has not done enough on diplomacy.

So I'll stop there and pass it over to Jim.

JAMES DOBBINS: Well, thank you very much, Brian. A year ago I wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* that the Bush administration faced the invidious choice of either staying in Iraq and making things worse slowly or leaving Iraq and making things worse quickly. We made things worse slowly by staying because our presence in an incitement and a recruiting tool for the insurgency. We'd make things worse quickly by leaving because in our absence it's quite likely that the state would fragment, that you would have a large-scale ethnic cleansing, population transfers, an increasingly conventional civil conflict and the possibility of eventually embroiling neighboring states.

I'm not sure that the Bush administration any longer has even this invidious choice. That is to say, I think it's quite possible even if we stay things could begin to get worse more quickly. And that's because we've set in train a democratic dynamic in the country that we don't fully control and over which we have diminishing influence, and that dynamic itself may lead to the kind of fragmentation that our premature departure would likely encourage.

Let me try to approach the debate on this from the standpoint of an analyst rather

than an advocate of any particular political viewpoint. I think we see different voices. We see what the president is saying. We see what the American military is saying, which is not the same as what the president is saying. We're seeing what critics of the administration are saying, including those here today and other voices, and clearly the voices are very different, the messages are very different, but I'm not sure that the underlying policy that's being promoted is very different. I think, in fact, that the president, the U.S. military, and the administration's critics are all advocating the same policy. They're simply expressing it very differently because they're speaking to different audiences.

In Larry and Brian's paper here, the bottom line is the paragraph that says, "The redeployment of U.S. forces should take place in two phases. Phase 1 would take place in 2006 with a drawdown of 80,000 troops by the end of the year, leaving 60,000 troops in Iraq by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2006. Phase 2 would take place in 2007 with most – not all, but most – of U.S. forces departing by the end of 2007." I think that's exactly what the U.S. military plan is, and I think it's exactly what the administration and the president hopes can take place by then. The problem is that each of these constituencies, if you will, is speaking to a different audience. The U.S. military are speaking to Congress, to those that are writing their budget. They're speaking to each other in terms of what their planning is, and their planning clearly is that they're going to have less troops in Iraq a year from now than they have now, with the hope that that diminution can continue. They're not locked into such an eventuality but it does appear to be the one that they think most likely and the one that they would like to be able to achieve. And so their message has been one of sort of professionals who are trying to assess the situation and guide it in a given direction.

The president, on the other hand, is speaking to his own base in the country, and his advisors are telling him, quite responsibly, that the American people are going to support the war only as long as they think we're going to win. I mean, that's what any responsible media advisor would tell them, because that appears to be a consensus among media advisors that it's not whether it's worth it or not, it's the expectation of prevailing that is the key variable in whether you can sustain support or lose it. And so this president is projecting a very simple message. He's not talking about withdrawals, drawdowns. He's talking about prevailing, even though he intends to do exactly what the military intends to do and exactly what his critics are urging him to do, in my judgment.

The problem with all these different voices of course is that nobody is speaking to the Iraqis. The administration's rhetoric is and has been, unfortunately from the beginning, designed almost exclusively for a domestic audience. I mean the basic argument for the war in Iraq today is we're fighting them there so we don't have to fight them here. Well, how does that play in Iraq? (Laughter.) You've turned our country into a free-fire zone so you don't have to deal with it in the United States? That's great. I really like the policy. (Laughter.) Okay.

That line was not written by the president's foreign affairs advisors One of the most important decisions I think this administration took was in its early days when it took the

foreign and security speechwriting out of the NSC and put it in the domestic part of the White House. In the Clinton administration, everything that Bill Clinton said, to the extent he read his script rather than spoke extemporaneously, that was on security or foreign affairs was written in the National Security Council staff. It was written for a foreign audience. Now, they weren't oblivious to the domestic audience and they cleared it with the domestic part of the White House, but the control over those kinds of statements was with the people who are responsible for foreign and security policy rather than the people who are responsible for getting the president reelected. And I think this has skewed the message to a point where it has had either a negative or no impact on the Iraqi people.

Now, the administration is having a real dilemma. Two years ago they had the luxury of crafting a message which took account of Iraqi concerns and paying less attention to American concerns because they had overwhelming support. Today, of course, that support is eroded to the point where they really can't afford to project a message that isn't directed exclusively towards sustaining what element of support they have left. And therefore, embracing a message which is one of a phased withdrawal, transfer of the battle to the Iraqis, and giving them a fighting chance of prevailing without absolutely guaranteeing it, is not a message that's likely to sustain their domestic support for the conflict, sensible as it is and accurate as it is as a description of policy. And they have the Vietnam experience to prove that the bottom will drop out of your public support in the context of a phased and lengthy withdrawal in a difficult and controversial war a lot faster than you can actually undertake the phased withdrawal. And by the time you reach the residual level which you think you need to sustain, you no longer have the public support to sustain that level of commitment. And so I think it puts them in a real dilemma and it's creating a substantial and widening gap between what their actual policy is and what their declared policy is, which makes it difficult and which ultimately will further erode their support.

There have been evolutions in the administration's articulation of its goals and objectives. In the first term, the organizing principle of national security policy was antiterrorism. It was a national security strategy based on fear. In the second administration the organizing principle is democratization. It's a national security strategy based on hope. Now, I think most of us would prefer to have a strategy based on hope rather than fear, but personally I don't think either emotion is an adequate basis for a national security strategy, which ought to be based on a more realistic assessment of national interest and attainable objectives. And that's what's lacking in the debate for a lot of the reasons that I've suggested.

I think Brian was certainly right and their paper goes at some length about the need to build a regional strategy in support of a stabilized Iraq. And I think this is the one element in which the policy that the authors of this paper are proposing diverges from that of the administration. I think the administration's emphasis on "Iraqization," desire to reduce the U.S. target, reduce the U.S. presence, progressively transfer responsibility for the fight to the Iraqis, encourage them to come together, is very similar. Where I think the paper does diverge from that is more explicit support for a regional strategy



which engages the neighbors more constructively in helping to stabilize Iraq.

Now, the administration's problem is that it's trying to do too much in the greater Middle East. It's trying to stabilize Iraq, destabilize Syria, and denuclearize Iran all at the same time. Now, you can do any one of those and maybe eventually over a very extended period of time you can do all three of them, but you can't possibly do all three of them at once. And to the extent we don't prioritize, we don't make the tradeoffs that allow us to achieve our most urgent objective, I think we undermine our ability to achieve any of these. Now, of these objectives I would argue that stabilizing Iraq is the most urgent. Denuclearizing Iran may be the most important over the longer term, but the latest analyst says it's five to ten years away, and so it's not as urgent a problem/. Stabilizing Iraq is an urgent problem. If it's not done in the next year it could well become a much less manageable problem and one with profound impact on the region as a whole. And, therefore, I would argue for a prioritization that places that first, subordinates our other interests in the region to that, and crafts a regional strategy which is designed to engage the neighbors in achieving that.

We went into Afghanistan not with the objective of making Afghanistan a model for Central Asia and then democratizing every other country in central Asia as soon as we finished. And as a result, we were able – because our objective was to make sure Afghanistan didn't become a launch point for global terrorism, we were able to engage all of its neighbors constructively in its stabilization. And all of the neighbors have in fact continued to support Karzai because we're not saying, "As soon as we succeed here, you're next." We went into Iraq with exactly the opposite. We went in saying we're going to make Iraq a model for the region and we were going to make it a launch pad for the democratization of neighboring states and a base from which American forces could practice coercive diplomacy. These were our expressed, acknowledged, publicly defined objectives and, needless to say, they were not objectives which most of the neighboring states were likely to embrace.

So I think the only chance of stabilizing Iraq is to go to a much more sophisticated articulation of our policy, one which acknowledges our real objectives and limitations, one which engages the neighbors, assigns priority to stabilizing Iraq, and conveys a message that is directed at the Iraqi people as well as at the American people. And that's no easy task. I mean, I'm not sure, given the level of public support for the engagement in the United States, whether this is any longer a feasible task.

MS. WADHAMS: Thank you very much. I want to give Larry and Brian a chance to respond to Jim's comments and then – maybe, Larry, you could go first. Brian, also, in your response, maybe touching on the communication strategy as part in response to Jim.

MR. KORB: Yeah. Jim has obviously framed the issue, I think, very well. Let me give a couple of things that I think are important. If you don't announce that you don't have any permanent intentions and you're going to be out by a date certain, even if you're doing it that way you don't get the benefits in both Iraq and in the Muslim world,

because quite frankly they don't believe us. They do not believe that we're liberators. They believe that we're occupiers, particularly when our officials use the same language, almost the same words, as the British did when they came in 1920.

I think in terms of the – with the American people, I understand and I know the White House has brought in Peter Feaver from Duke, who basically has argued that the American people turned against Lebanon and Somalia not because of the casualties – the 240 Marines, and then of course the Black Hawk Down – but when they felt that their leaders did not want to see it through. And I understand that, but I don't think this is the case here. I think basically the American people have concluded that the costs outweigh whatever benefits you might get. And so therefore, what I'm worried about is if you don't give them a date certain that they can see an end to this, the support will drop even more quickly, but this is one of those things that you're going to have to sort of think about ahead of time.

Now, let's assume we're out by the end of 2007, and we tell people, that's four and three-quarter years after we invaded. That's longer than World War II. And so the idea that somehow or another that's not enough time for the Iraqis, I just simply don't believe. And then if you take our regional strategy, and we recognize that things could deteriorate, it could become unstable, but none of the countries in the region, whether they're Shi'a or Sunni, want an unstable Iraq that becomes a haven for terrorists because it threatens them all. And so therefore, I think once it's clear that we're leaving they then will do things to prevent foreign fighters from coming in or whatever aid might be, because if we're out of there they're going to have to live with the problem. But this is one of those things like the man hanging on the branch here where you're trying to figure out exactly what to say.

And let me conclude with this. When we talk about the message to the Iraqis, we were saying that early on. In November, 2003, the Defense Department sponsored a trip to Iraq that I went on, and when I walked into Jerry Bremer's office there, there was a sign saying, "Today you're fighting in Baghdad so you won't have to fight in Brooklyn," because he had looked up where I came from. (Laughter.)

And I said, you know, this reminds me when I was a kid in Vietnam. Today you're fighting in Saigon so you won't have to fight in San Francisco. And so this is not the first time we've used this, and I don't even think it's recent. I think even though they may not have said that, certainly that was in there right from the beginning.

MR. KATULIS: I think it's a good jumping-off point. And just to further amplify Larry's point, in the project that I did in 2003 for the National Democratic Institute we actually went around from Mosul all the way up to Telefar and built an Iraqi team to do some research on what ordinary Iraqis were thinking about the coalition, about democracy, about the future government, and what they wanted and their hopes.

And at that time, and this was June of 2003, fairly early in our occupation, we had already passed the point of being liberators and had become occupiers only uniformly in

the eyes of the Shi'a and Sunni, to a lesser extent Kurds. I think we still have a favorable image with the Kurds. Also at the time what we were heard in a lot of that research was the sense that what Washington was debating as a lack of planning on the postwar reconstruction front Iraqis interpreted as perfect planning. They did not understand or could not comprehend why we could not get the electricity on or to provide security when we were such a great global power, and they had just witnessed some aspects of that military power in the war. And there was bit of dissonance, I think, in the minds of ordinary Iraqis. So you never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

And early on, and I even attended some of Ambassador Bremer's press conferences and then later on we would do research, and it was clear in the research that what they were trying to articulate was not penetrating. I think part of it was they just did not have a very sophisticated understanding of the media transformation that was going on inside Iraq and inside the broader Middle East, and I would say that still applies. If you look at Karen Hughes' most recent listening tour of the Middle East, to me and in my view, this is not an effective counterargument against a lot of the conspiracy theories and the myths and the ideologies that you hear out there, and we need a more focused and dedicated approach to counter a lot of this because it does impact our security, it does impact how people view the United States, impacts how secure we are and whether or not people are motivated to undertake attacks against us.

MS. WADHAMS: Jim do you have any follow-up comments?

MR. DOBBINS: No. No.

MS. WADHAMS: I guess I have one final question and then I want to open it up to the audience. And the question is to Jim. Jim, I understand that you're saying that the Bush administration is probably following a similar timeline to what Brian and Larry are proposing for military redeployment. Do you actually agree with that timeline, or would you advocate a quicker drawdown or something slower?

MR. DOBBINS: No. I think that the timeline itself is a reasonable one. It depends largely on two variables. One is the speed with which Iraqi security forces can be organized, trained, deployed, sustained. And I do think that while it's possible to train the privates in three months, the captains, majors and colonels take a lot longer, and the master sergeants, and only so many of those are available from the old Iraqi armed forces, which in any case, as we well know, wasn't very good. So I do think that there is some time required. On the other hand, I do think that the American program for training them has finally gotten itself organized and is turning out more capable forces in larger numbers.

The other variable which we have less control over is the political one as to whether these armed forces are going to have a national government which will inspire them, which will motivate them, which will pay them, and which will direct them. And if they don't, then the armed forces that we are raising are themselves likely to fragment and become elements in a civil conflict. So the second of these factorss less predictable –

the first of them you can quantify and say, yeah, by next year you can take out 80,000 and then a year after that you take out another 50,000, and you'll need to keep 20 or 30,000 there because there are certain functions that the Iraqis simply aren't going to be able to do within two or three years. They're not going to have an air force. Their sustainment capabilities are going to be limited. Their intelligence, at least their electronic intelligence capabilities will be limited. So there's going to be some things that the United States is probably going to have to do for a longer period. But in terms of actually – you know, the urban battle can be largely turned over or even entirely turned over to Iraqi forces.

The political criteria is an uncertainty. I don't think that any responsible administration would either articulate or allow itself to be held to a deadline or a schedule, which doesn't mean that its opposition can't propose it, as long as they recognize that if they were to come in office they would immediately jettison it in terms of any actual commitment because I don't believe any administration would allow itself to be in effect precluded from responding to unforeseen developments.

MS. WADHAMS: Great. Thank you. Do either of you want to respond? Okay. Let's open up to the audience then. If we could have questions from the press first, and if you could wait for the mike to get to you, stand up, identify yourself, and if you could have the question just be one question and very brief that would be terrific. Thank you. Okay, no press? We'll open it up to other members.

Q: Thank you. I'm Sister Simone Campbell. I'm the national coordinator of NETWORK, a Catholic social justice lobby. I was in Iraq in 2002 in December and was overwhelmed at the economic dislocation and the nonexistent private economy that exists – that was at that time, and I understand continues in a similar state. I'm wondering, could you comment on the economic pillar of what I understand is your integrated approach to power? Because our information is from the ground that there's sporadic interruption in food distribution to very poor sectors, including all the way up to Mosul, as well as around Baghdad and the Sunni Triangle, and that the private contractors are not – U.S.-funded contractors are not hiring Iraqis, and that seems to be a great source for recruits for insurgents. Do you have an economic pillar to your approach?

MR. KATULIS: Right. We had a bid in there about the economic reconstruction. And certainly one component of it is to get more money to the Iraqis in local-based projects and less money to private contractors who come in and take a good bit of the money. I mean, the economic situation I think is varied. When you go to Kurdistan and you see a lot of the building, and, you know, they're secure, they've got a lot of investment coming in, they actually probably don't need as much assistance up there, but when you get down into the Sunni Triangle and even parts of southern Iraq and the Shi'a territories, it's awful. And it's awful not only because of the impact of the sanctions and more than a dozen years of sanctions, but also after two and a half years of spending more than \$20 billion, much of it more recently being eaten up by security costs – security for these private contractors – there's not much to speak of in terms of development.

A lot of people in the Bush administration pinned their hope on oil, for instance, and we're still at I think 1.7 million barrels a day, which is below the 2.5 before the war. So that's not borne out because of the security situation. And what we argue in the plan, and we're looking at it and looking at it to delve in more deeply about these issues and may issue another report on what can be done on the economic reconstruction front. It's difficult because a lot of it, as you know, and I don't know if you've been to Iraq since our invasion, depends on security. And having worked out there for some of the democracy promotion groups, early on you didn't have the security that people have now, and that's a substantial cost. And I think there are lot of open questions with Stuart Bowen's, the special instructor general, on Iraq about the waste and the mismanagement of funds.

And this all I think, to conclude, goes back to an issue related to the political transition which is governance. And a lot of people talk about democracy and freedom when they talk about Iraq, but there are more mundane issues related to governance, and I know USAID is dealing with this at the local level. But certainly the ministries and the national ministries are not fully capable yet to respond to a lot of these things. And that's why I think some of our recommendations in the latest version of the plan, one, include reconvening the donor conference that met in Brussels in June of this year. I think less than 10 percent of the money that was pledged at that conference has been offered up. And this is a problem because I think some people just assume there's nothing that can be done given the security situation or there's nothing that need be done because of the oil. And you're right, you're correct, it's not as large as it should be in the plan, but I think it's part of the integrated power solution to the problems in Iraq.

MR. KORB: Let me mention something. I'm not going to get into we didn't send enough troops and all that. One of the things that amazed me when I went to Iraq was the situation you described, how bad the infrastructure was, but that was not what we're talking about before the war. The idea was that our military would go in and be very careful about what they destroyed, if you will, on the way to Baghdad, and then we would start pumping oil and, you know, things would go well. How we missed how bad it was there I don't know, because we have people like yourself, we had journalists. I mean this to me – I mean all you had to do is once you flew over there to see the lights weren't on. I mean that should have told you. And now I hear people saying, well, gee, we had no idea how bad the – you should have some idea. I mean that to me – and I don't know the answer to it. I mean as I say, given the fact that there were people going in and out of Iraq ever since the end of the first Persian Gulf War.

MR. DOBBINS: I think we probably made a mistake in going into Iraq with the promise of improving the material life of its citizens. I think we should have gone in with a much more limited set of promises. We should have said: we're going to liberate you; we're going to protect you; we're going to let you choose your own government, and if that government makes wise decisions and you work hard one day your material life will improve. Those are the promises we should have made and should have kept.

I think that the emphasis on economic reconstruction derived from a fundamental misunderstanding of what happened after the Second World War in America's reconstruction of Germany and Japan. There's a feeling that generous Marshall Plan assistance led to the democratization of those countries – completely wrong. The Marshall Plan didn't start till 1948 and not a penny of it went to Japan. Japan never got any assistance. Japan's economic prosperity derived from the Korean War and American procurement in the region. But by 1948, when the Marshall Plan started, the political reforms in both of those countries had been largely completed.

Now, it's true that economic prosperity then consolidated that democracy and that the populations equate democratization with the subsequent prosperity, but the idea that you go in and make somebody prosperous and then you make them democratic I think is an inversion of the more appropriate sequencing. And after all, we didn't invade the country to make it prosperous. We invaded it to make it democratic, if anything. So that we should have focused on establishing security and promoting a rapid political transformation and allow the economic transformation to follow based on their own actions and their own efforts.

The Iraqi economy is better now than it was under Saddam, but only marginally and largely because of high oil prices. But employment is better. The per capita GDP is modestly better, but high oil prices are the main reason for that.

MS. WADHAMS: This gentleman.

Q: My name is Ed Powers. I have no current affiliation, but I do come from Brooklyn. (Laughter.)

MR. KORB: That's good enough. (Laughter.)

Q: My question is really based on the facts that there was really no real planning as to what would happen after we achieved our very quick victory three years ago, two years ago, two and a half years ago. And the criticism has mounted, and I think it's very credible. In your study, I'm just wondering whether you have looked at the same kind of what-ifs. You're talking about phasing down over the next couple of years. And what if it really doesn't work? What if the insurgency is much worse? What if civil war is horrible? How do you respond to that? What should we take away from this, since I'm sure you had to have looked at those kinds of questions?

MR. KORB: We certainly did. And if you could tell me that if the United States stays X amount of time things were turn out the way you would, I might go along. But you're going to have to leave at some point, I mean, and I think that's the key issue. There is a limit to what we can do to bring about the situation that you talk about. And the reason we leave the residual force in Kuwait and the Marines over the horizon is if the place goes to hell in a handbasket. I mean, if Iran should invade or Osama bin Laden should raise a conventional army or whatever it might be, that we can provide – you know, keep the situation from completely spiraling out of control.

But when you're taking a look at it and you say two things, one, what's the best hope for them and for us – see, here's another thing. I mean we're talking about it, as long as we're there, okay, in these numbers. Now, if the administration decides to pull them out, well, that obviously will relieve the strain, but if you stay in those numbers what you're talking about is destroying your all-volunteer army. Now, if you said to me, well, if it really is bad would we have a draft? You see what I mean? Those are questions you'd have to answer. Are you willing to have a draft sort of to guarantee the outcome that you're talking about?

Not to mention the bill. Brian mentioned how much we've spent now, somewhere over \$250 billion. But the hidden cost of this war, when we get out at some point, we're going to be paying for generations. Just the veterans' costs, for example, that we'll be paying. I mean the good news is because of the tremendous advances of military medicine, less people who are wounded die, okay, in terms of the ration. In Vietnam, out of every four people wounded you had one death. Here it's like ten or 12 to one, which is a terrific thing. But you're going to be paying for this cost.

And the other is what you're doing in the wear and tear on your equipment. I mean we focus on procurement, are we going to buy a new fighter plan or a new ship or something. When you buy a tank or an armored personnel carrier, whatever it is, you assume a certain amount of lifetime for that. Well, you're using it up much more rapidly. When you leave and there are no more supplementals, who pays the bill for that? And, I mean, we've seen estimates from folks on the hill up to somewhere between \$12 and \$50 billion for that bill.

And that's what happened after Vietnam because when we – because of the American people turning against that war, they turned against spending for defense. And in the '70s you came out of there having to reset your force, let alone buy new equipment and stuff. And so that's another thing you want to consider as you balance their needs as well as ours.

MS. WADHAMS: The woman over here.

Q: Hi. I'm Bay Fang from *U.S. News and World Report*. I've been covering both Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001, and I'm interested in Ambassador Dobbins' argument about how Iraq's neighbors would immediately move in to ensure stability in the country just as Afghanistan's neighbors did after the Taliban. I just came back from spending some time on the Pakistani border in Afghanistan, and I would argue that Pakistan's interests aren't necessarily fully in line with our interests in Afghanistan. There's a lot of cross-border traffic and a lot of people would say that that's being tacitly condoned by the Pakistani government. So I'm wondering in Iraq would the same sort of self-interest of some these neighboring countries be a little more nuance than simply just sort of acting for the stability of Iraq itself?

MR. DOBBINS: Well, first of all, I think that in Afghanistan the civil war had

been fed for 20-some years by neighboring states supporting contending factions. And in the aftermath of 9/11 the United States was successful in persuading all of them to stop doing that. Now, the degree to which they stopped probably varied to some degree, and in particular Pakistan, while it has supported Karzai and hasn't supported a contender for power, has probably been less successful in closing its border than the others. And it has good and bad reasons for that. I mean, the good reasons are, first of all, that the border is one Afghanistan doesn't recognize. I mean the Afghans are urging the Pakistanis to patrol a border that Afghanistan doesn't recognize. The Afghans don't regard the Durand line as a legitimate border between the two countries. So there's a certain contradiction there.

That aside, there is a Pashtun population is more or less evenly split between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and most of them don't regard the border as a legitimate dividing line. So it makes the task difficult. And there are other less acceptable reasons why the Pakistanis have been less successful than we would like. But that said, I don't think it would be fair to say that the Pakistanis are actively trying to support a contender for power in Kabul or actively trying to undermine the government there, as they or others had been doing for 20 years. And I think that's a key factor in the stability of the Karzai government has been that none of the challengers has had substantial external support.

In Iraq, I don't think any of the neighbors actually would favor Iraq's fragmentation, although clearly beyond that point of convergence their interests probably do diverge significantly. But I believe that if we were talking less about democracy and more about territorial integrity, stability, power sharing – those themes – we would find a readier audience among neighboring states and even among many Iraqis. And on the basis of those kinds of themes, rather than democracy per se, we'd be more likely to achieve a consensus inside and outside Iraq. After all, for the Sunnis, democratization means permanent Shi'a hegemony. For all of the neighboring states except Turkey, democratization means regime change. So it's not a theme that they're likely to embrace wholeheartedly, and yet it's the only theme that the U.S. has been offering as an organizing principle for the region. Whereas, there are other themes that are perfectly legitimate that are consistent with our interests that aren't incompatible with democracy but which are likely to have a lot more resonance, and I think to the extent we emphasize the more we would secure more buy-in.

MS. WADHAMS: The gentleman over here.

Q: Hello. My name is Warren Marik and I am from Information for Democracy, and I was a former and retired case officer for the Iraqi opposition. And I was in Iraq for the last elections, and since then I've heard Iraqi officials, including Deputy Prime Minister Chalabi and UN Ambassador Sumaidaie, say that a status of forces agreement would help our problems – our mutual problems – a lot. Do you agree with that statement?

MR. KORB: Very definitely, I think because it would have two benefits.



Number one, it would show that the Iraqi government is really sovereign and it's not a puppet of the United States. And number two, I think it would be a signal to the Muslim world that we will abide by the same restrictions in their part of the world that we do, for example, with our troops in Europe and Japan.

MS. WADHAMS: The gentleman over here.

Q: Tom Mattsey (sp) with MoveOn.org. So I thought this was a fantastic step forward and I think it's a very important contribution to have sort of a Hawk's framing for getting out of Iraq, which is what strategic redeployment would be. I'm wondering about the speed of the exit though. Why 80,000 in 2006? I was reading the pull out of the urban areas first, kind of stop poking people in the eye sort of approach to it, and is that what it is? Why 80,000 in 2006?

MR. KATULIS: It's largely based on briefings that we've had from General Petraeus, who was in charge of the Iraqi security forces. And he gave a public briefing on Monday which gave us a general sense of where the Iraqi forces might be at. They're currently at 210,000 trained at varying levels of capacity and capability, and that's aimed to go up by next summer I think to 270,000, and then the year after that to 325.

In addition to those numbers there were numbers that he provided in terms of transition teams. There is a plan by the U.S. military to leave ten-person teams with each of the Iraqi battalions for a certain period of time to mentor the leadership, for instance. I mean, as Ambassador Dobbins was saying, it takes a while for the leaders to emerge. And there is a rationale. It's a question that we receive from folks on the Hill and things like this: did you pull these numbers out of thin air? No, these were what we thought were a reasonable assessment given what we know about the status of the Iraqi troop training and where things might go. I don't know if Larry has anything to add.

MR. KORB: I think so. And I think if Jim is correct, and I hope he is, I bet you the administration is pretty close to that number by the end of 2006, assuming that they go ahead in that plan and the place doesn't completely fall apart. If you saw the next troop rotation that they talked about, they're talking about 92,000 people to go next year down from 155, and that's at the beginning of 2006. And if they don't follow it up again, they won't be much different. I mean, that's almost 60,000 right there.

MS. WADHAMS: Yes, the gentleman there.

Q: I'm John Chan (sp) from HRI. Mr. Dobbins, I appreciate your willingness to talk about the interests of the surrounding countries to have Iraq maintain itself as a single stable state, but don't we need a more robust discussion of this and why it's in our interest and exactly how it's in our interest? It seems it's been demonstrated in Eastern Europe, if not the Soviet Union and Western Europe, that it's in all of our interests to have natural boundaries determined by the natural cohesiveness of the people on the ground. Can't we develop programs and initiatives to realize that and make it in our national interest?

MR. DOBBINS: I'm not sure that's the conclusion I would draw from the experience of the last 15 years or so. In fact, the United States has opposed every single non-peaceful separation, and the United States has insisted that such separations as take place should take place within existing boundaries. That is, if you're breaking up a federal state it should take place within the federal boundaries. And the United States has in fact gone to war to prevent the opposite happening in Bosnia, or almost gone to war.

So the argument has been – first of all, obviously to the extent it's agreed among all the parties, fine, nobody has an objection. To the extent it isn't agreed among the parties, it's either a bad thing, or if it has to take place it should take place within existing boundaries rather than try to construct new boundaries. And the problem with constructing new boundaries is that it inevitably leads to population transfers and ethnic cleansing, as we saw in Yugoslavia when it broke up. Breaking up Yugoslavia cost tens of thousands of lives. Now, eventually a new equilibrium was achieved, but it was achieved over a lot of dead bodies and a process of genocide, so it wasn't a good idea. And if it could have been avoided, it probably would have been a good idea to avoid it. But once it took place we then insisted that it take place within existing boundaries and that there not be any changes in those boundaries.

Well, there aren't any boundaries in Iraq. It doesn't have a federal system. It never has had a federal system. Baghdad is a mixed population of 5 million people, half of whom would probably have to leave or get killed if you tried to go to ethnic separation in that society. So I don't see any way in which Iraq is likely to break up into three different states without large population transfers, ethnic cleansing, and high levels of violence. Now, maybe it's unavoidable. Maybe it's going to happen. Maybe we can't prevent it, in which case we have to ameliorate the consequences. But I don't think it's something that we should be acquiescing in, in this stage.

I think that the main strategic problem, humanitarian problem aside, is that just as communism grew out of the chaos of World War I and World War II, the growth of radical jihadism in that region would get a real boost if that region into a number of civil and even international conflicts as the result of the breakup of Iraq. And I'm not predicting that bin Laden would take over any particular state. It's kind of ridiculous to suggest, as the president did, that he would take over Iraq, given the fact that it's 70 percent Shi'a, but there's no doubt that the kind of movement he represents would get a huge boost if that region descended into large-scale civil and international conflict.

MS. WADHAMS: Do you want to comment?

MR. KORB: Yeah. I think that Jim is right that people who talk facetiously about, well, you got the Kurds, the Sunnis and the Shi'as as if it were defined boundaries, particularly in Baghdad, when you go to Baghdad it's a very cosmopolitan city. I mean no historical analogy is perfect, but I think if you did that you might go back and see what happened between India and Pakistan when the British got tired or they broke it up and the incredible population transfers that occurred. And remember that Pakistan was

on both sides of India to begin with. I mean, I think that's what you would end up with and it would not be a happy outcome. I know Peter Galbraith disagrees if you read what he said yesterday in the *Post*, but I agree with Ambassador Dobbins.

MR. KATULIS: Yeah. I largely agree. I think it's really complicated, having been in Iraq and in Baghdad in particular, the folks we worked with, the team that we built, I remember trying to – just getting to know them and get a sense of are you a Shi'a or a Sunni, and some people actually took offense to that because there was a lot, at least in Baghdad, a lot of inter-marriage and things like this, so it's not clean as or Les Gelb or Peter Galbraith's proposal. I think Baghdad is the big question and what you do there.

I think Ambassador Dobbins is right that Iraq has not had a federal system of government, but in the current constitution that was recently passed it really is a federal – a decentralized system of government. And some people have argued that this political process is putting the country on a glide path towards what I think you're suggesting, but there's a lot of questions in terms of population transfers and whether people really will want to self-identify as a Kurd versus a Shi'a versus a Sunni Arab.

MS. WADHAMS: Well, let's go to someone else in the audience first. Yes.

Q: Thank you. I'd like to address my question to Ambassador Dobbins and Mr. Korb. Please pardon my naïveté about this, because I'm just here for me, but I'm concerned about getting of Iraq, pulling out of this war, and some kind of benchmark and timeline. Could you address how you think the political implications of today and in the future, if you think we're looking at the United States pulling out in – some by 2006, 2007, and worldwide or over in Iraq, will there be pressure on this administration because of politics – elections coming up here and in other countries, the result of elections yesterday in Virginia, New Jersey, California, wherever you want – will there be pressure in this administration from Republicans and in other countries, say, look, we need to be moving on this because we've got to win, we have a presidential election coming down here in this country, as well as the political implications for other countries? And I think what I believe didn't happen here is like Israel and Palestine: they didn't look at the cultural differences of the folks we're fighting. So, but just the political implications. Thank you.

MR. KORB: Well, since I'm one of the hosts here I'll step into this hornets nest. Look, there's no doubt, in my own personal view, the pressure will come more from Republicans to do what Ambassador Dobbins was saying and what we would hope, we're not looking at this in terms of what's good for the party, but because of the points that you made.

Now, remember in the Republican Party you do have the two different strains. You have the traditional conservatives who are very leery about saving the world, and then the so-called neoconservatives, and you've got people like Senator Hagel who have been more critical than many Democrats. So I think that is a problem because since we don't vote in the next presidential election, we don't vote for members of Congress.

Again, there's no perfect history, but go back to 1964, Lyndon Johnson is elected overwhelmingly; and 1966 the Republicans win, I think, 50, 60 seats. I don't know if they can win that many this time because we've gerrymandered. We used to laugh when I was over in Vietnam because most of the military even back then, like today, would go for the conservative, and we all laughed and said we voted for – remember Goldwater said, if you get elected we're going to go into Vietnam big time. The guy says, yeah, I voted for Goldwater and look what happened. But Johnson was saying he wouldn't do it. So I mean I think that that's going to have an impact on the decisions that the administration makes.

And one of the things you've got to keep in mind, this whole readiness system of rating Iraqi troops – I can tell you from personal experience both being in the Navy and then they used to call my job the readiness czar. There's a lot of judgment you can make, and people are susceptible to the message that comes down from on high: do we mark hard or do we mark low this time in terms of this readiness system? So I could see where people are saying, "Hey, look, they're all level one and level two," okay, whereas someone else could come in and say, "No, they're really not." And then it's pretty hard for us to judge and say well, look, they're level one and level two. That's what we wanted so we can draw down. And I think the American people would be so relieved. They're not going to send an investigative reporter or anything like that to find out.

MS. WADHAMS: Jim, do you want to respond?

MR. DOBBINS: Well, as I said, I think the administration's withdrawal plan is not all that different from the one that Larry and Brian have set out in their paper, and I don't think the administration is planning those reductions primarily as the result of domestic pressure. I think they're planning them primarily because they believe that a reduced American presence and greater responsibility for the Iraqis is actually the best way of successfully addressing the insurgency. But I think they also probably are quite worried as to whether they can sustain public support for that graduated process of disengagement.

MS. WADHAMS: Yes?

Q: I'm Tom Andrews. I'm a former member of the House Armed Services Committee and currently the national director of the Win Without War Coalition. Following up on this question of politics, first of all, in terms of domestic Iraqi politics, how important is it for the credibility of the United States to establish a date certain for when we're going to withdraw? How important is that? And I know there's differences expressed here; Ambassador Dobbins is rather dubious about someone actually in office having a firm deadline as opposed to a contingent one.

And the second one, again with respect to our country's politics, you mentioned the Republican response, what about the Democrat response? Why is it, in your view, that so few Democrats, including virtually all the Democratic leaders, have been willing to come out and talk about an exist strategy with a date certain? I know that the Center

had a position once that was shared by some members of Congress that we should be increasing our deployments in Iraq as opposed to decreasing. What is your analysis of the Democratic side and what was your reaction – what has been your reaction to this analysis up on the Hill from Democratic leaders?

MR. KATULIS: First on the Iraqis and what they're looking for. There are a couple of indications on this. In the transitional parliament a third of the elected members of the transitional parliament in June presented a resolution asking for a timetable for Iraqi troop withdrawal. And this is a parliament, I remind you, that's largely dominated by Shi'a and Kurds and underrepresents Sunnis. That's one indicator. The Defense Department has been doing public-opinion polling over the last two and a half years through an Iraq firm of what Iraqis want, and a poll in June found that close to I think it was 60 percent of Iraqi citizens said they felt less safe when coalition forces were in their neighborhood rather than more safe, and there was a substantial amount of support for some sort of withdrawal.

And then most recently in the last week or two there have been reports in the Arabic Press and I think confirmed in an AP report that there's a chance at least that Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the main Shi'a religious leader, who in fact led to a lot of the major shifts in our political transitions schedule – if you recall, Ambassador Bremer set out a schedule that involved caucuses, and I don't think there's a word in Arabic actually for caucuses and they were having a hard time trying to describe the whole system and what was going on, so – and Sistani basically said you need direct elections if in fact this report that Sistani on December 16<sup>th</sup> – and the report says – several reports saying that he will ask for a timetable for withdrawal and if none is provided he will support a massive non-violent civil disobedience campaign. So there are rumblings at least among some of those folks who have actually welcomed us over the last two years. So that's on the Iraqi side as some indicators.

MR. KORB: Since I'm older than Brian and I don't have to worry as much about a job as he does, let me answer the second part of your question here in terms of, look, we've been hit on the left and the right here in terms of this proposal. Some on the far left say, why are you waiting two years? Some on the far right say it's cut and run.

Now, in terms of specific to the Democratic Party, let me tell you as an Eisenhower Republican what my impressions of them are. Number one, their feeling is if they propose something then that becomes the issue rather than all of the mistakes that Bush has made. So from a political point of view – I mean, it's sort of like Nixon running in '68. He said, I have a plan to get of Vietnam. People said, well, what is it? It's secret; I'm not going to tell you. But people were so fed up they voted for him despite all of the other things because they said something has got to be better than what we're doing now.

And then the other issue is I think many – though, not all – are still repenting for their votes for the first Persian Gulf War and all the way back to Senator McGovern, that they're the weak party and all that. And you saw that speech that Karl Rove gave, said

the conservatives after September 11<sup>th</sup> wanted to wage war and the liberals basically wanted to convene a grand jury, you know, I mean, and I think – and it's easy for us in the think-tank world to criticize politicians, but let me tell you, I really admire people who run for office. It's not easy. And they have different needs than we have. And I know that when I was in government one of the things that I was able to grasp is you need politicians to get things done and you need to do it right, because you could have the greatest plans in the world but if you can't sell it to the American people, which is their job. So I mean I don't – you asked the question so I'm telling you my personal piece. I think there's a lot of Republicans who are upset but they don't want to criticize Bush because they're worried about their party keeping control of the White House. And so those are motivations that I think you have to understand.

MS. WADHAMS: Jim, do you have any comments?

MR. DOBBINS: I think it would probably be useful to the United States to have an agreement with the Iraqi government after December that established in principle an end point which would be a complete withdrawal with no residual forces, and a process of consultation leading to progressive tranches of withdrawals and transfers of responsibility. I don't think the Iraqis would themselves want fixed deadlines because I think they, like we, would fear that their adversaries would be able to use those deadlines against them. And so I suspect that neither a post-December Iraqi government nor a post-December U.S. government, or indeed even a post-2008 U.S. administration are going to be attracted to the idea of fixed deadlines.

MS. WADHAMS: And over here.

Q: Miriam Pemberton, Institute for Policy Studies. I'm wondering why you chose to recommend having the Bush administration as the convener of regional talks as opposed to an international institution such as the UN. I mean, aren't we going to have problems with having the perceived occupying force as the convener?

MR. KORB: Well, I think basically our feeling was that this operation in Iraq basically is an American operation, I mean in 90 percent of the troops and of the casualties, and therefore, we need to take the lead. We have no problem with the UN taking it over, but I think right now even the UN and a lot of other countries are saying, hey, you guys created this mess, so I think we have to take the first step. But I mean if the UN was willing to do it and wanted to step forward, I don't think we'd have any problem with it.

MR. KATULIS: Yeah, I agree with that. I think the United States has the power potentially to convene all of these actors. The Arab League currently is trying to have some sort of reconciliation conference in Cairo and they're having a hard time just getting the Iraqi leaders to sign on to it and things like this. And I think even despite the feelings toward this president and the Bush administration, the sense that this debacle in Iraq is in part his doing, this could be one way to bring people together to say this is how we can move forward and solve it. Will they do it? I doubt it. Is it even practical? I

think there are some complicated issues with Iran and Syria, which is why we suggest that perhaps if a grand multilateral type of conference is not practical, we might be able to look to engage bilaterally. I don't know if Ambassador Dobbins has anything on that.

MS. WADHAMS: Okay. Yes.

Q: Hi. I'm Lauren Dunn from NETWORK. And I just wanted to ask with regard to the acknowledged negative impact of the U.S. presence on the future of stability in Iraq, can we safely assume the withdrawal of private military companies when we talk about the withdrawal of official U.S. troops?

MR. KORB: Well, I think if the – I assume you're talking about like the contract employees that we have, and not just Halliburton and Dyncorp and Black Water – I mean, a lot of those are under contract to the U.S. military to do the theoretically support jobs for the military, so I would assume that they would go as well. I mean, one of the reasons we have so many of them is because we didn't send enough troops, and we don't have enough – your ground forces are not large enough to maintain that rotation. So yeah, I would assume that that would be part of it.

Now, the reconstruction is a different thing, okay? I mean, the people who are doing the reconstruction, that's – our feeling would be that what you'd want to do with the reconstruction is put it out for international bids, use more Iraqis, so it would not be seen as an American operation.

MS. WADHAMS: Okay, we've got a question back here.

Q: John Isaacs, Council for a Livable World. You see this plan as an incentive for the Iraqi government to get its act together. It's certainly at least plausible the Iraqi government won't get its act together. What do you do at this point, or as you go on through this process up to your withdrawal where things are more and more disaster? You used the word irreversible in terms of withdrawal. Is it indeed irreversible or is there some point that we're going to have to go back in?

MR. KORB: Well, we were talking about – and I think Ambassador Dobbins just made the point about neither the Iraqis nor us would want a time table. Well, the Iraqis don't want a time table because then they do not have the incentive to do what they need to do, because as long as we're there to keep different Shi'a factions from fighting each other, the Sunnis fighting the Shi'as, they're not going to have to make the compromises that they need.

As I pointed out earlier, I can't guarantee you anything, but I do think this is the leverage that we have with this government. We don't have any other leverage. I mean, they can just kind of keep on doing what they're doing and kind of doing their own thing because they know we'll be there to bail them out. Look, if you think that they want to see their country disintegrate, I don't believe that. And remember now, we've got – and Brian gave you the numbers. We're going from 200 to close to 300,000 security forces.

Well, you've got 300,000 security forces, you've got a constitution, you've got an elected government. If they can't handle it, I don't know what will. And I do think that our putting a date will dampen some of the insurgency as well as the foreign fighters coming in, and then as you get the regional group there, none of those countries around there want to see that that happen either. But, I mean, that's basically – I think if you hedge on it, then you lose your leverage to get them to do what they need to do.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. KORB: Well, okay. Now, when you say no matter what, that's why I'm going to leave the – first of all, it's over two years, so we're still going to have troops there for the next two years helping their security forces to do the job. And then at the end of this you're not out of the region altogether, okay. You've still got at least the division in Kuwait and Marines over the horizon, as well as naval air power, so you're not completely helpless in terms of dealing with something that you threaten the existence of the Iraqi state.

MS. WADHAMS: Okay, let's take one more question. Yeah.

Q: Chuck Williams in OSD. Part of your plan calls for a global communication campaign to combat extremist ideology. For the panel, in your opinions, since we haven't really had one of these since 9/11, how likely is it we're going to have one now?

MR. KATULIS: I'm not sure I understand you. We haven't had one of which? The global communications?

Q: The global communications strategy to combat extremist ideology.

MR. KATULIS: Well, there are people working on this. And I think in the Defense Department and in other places they're trying, I think in a frustrated way. And there is a sense that Karen Hughes, when she came on board at the State Department, would marshal some sort of plan to actually counteract some of these ideologies and conspiracies, and there's work being done.

I would submit that we haven't thought yet about how to do this most effectively. Our enemies are actually a lot more adept at using new media, at using DVDs, at using the internet, than we are. Our plan is largely in the Middle East rested on Al Hurra television station and Radio Sawa, which there's a big debate and there's a hearing on Capitol Hill tomorrow related to some of these ventures. And there are a lot of big questions about whether or not the approach that we're using, particularly to engage in this debate, is modeled off of a Cold War model in a media environment and that at least that it's substantially transformed. Anyone who's been in the Middle East, and when I first went about 15 years ago, you see the difference in places like Egypt and other places where your ordinary Egyptians, and Iraqis – I think Iraq is an amazing case of this – where the landscape is transformed. It used to be in Egypt All Mubarak, all the time. And now with Al-Jazeera, Al Arabiya, there's a multitude of media options. And what



we've chosen to do is add to that. In places like Kuwait, most ordinary Kuwaitis have close to 150 television channels. And our approach, again, is to rely on something that may have worked in Eastern and Central Europe and closed societies, but I don't think we've caught up with the times in terms of our strategies to counter the ideologies that are out there.

MR. DOBBINS: I think the problem is less the medium than the message. And it goes back to what I said earlier, that our message has primarily been directed since 9/11 to an American audience. And I don't think a more sophisticated projection of the message that we're going to fight over there so we don't have to fight over here is going to endear us or win converts in the region. And I don't think that you can have different messages. I mean, I don't think you can have the president of the United States saying something designed for an American audience and then have other American officials projecting a different message with any degree of credibility. So it means you have to have an integrated message which incorporates the foreign audience in the message at the highest levels, and then that sifts down.

Now, Karen Hughes, a close associate of the president, is in a position to do that. I don't know whether she will, but if she comes back from her trip around and says, "We've got to project a different message and it starts with the next presidential speech on the subject and I want to see it and clear it before it goes out," she may be in a position to do that. I thought the president's speech on October 5<sup>th</sup>, in which he dealt with the war on terrorism in a new and rather more sophisticated way, showed an effort by the administration to go to a more carefully modulated articulation.

As you've seen in the press, the president's advisors were basically urging that we should drop the whole terminology "war on terror" because it doesn't sell well in foreign audiences who don't regard this as a war, one, and don't regard the enemy as "terror," but something rather more precise, and the president, again, according to news reports, rejected that. And I assume he rejected it for the quite obvious reason that the war on terror still plays well domestically even if it's completely counterproductive as a theme anywhere else other than in the United States, so we're not going to abandon it.

The speech did define our enemy rather more carefully than in previous articulations. No longer was it every terrorist in the world, no longer was it just al Qaeda; it was rather radical jihadists who were seeking to build a Sunni Muslim empire from Spain to Indonesia, in the president's words; essentially a network of al Qaeda-like organizations. And I think this is an improvement in terms of explaining what it is we are combating. The problem is that when this got to the White House speechwriters, they then added back in all of the other themes like the axis of evil in Iran and that sort of thing. Now, Iran may have its own ambitions, but one of them is not a Sunni Muslim empire from Spain to Indonesia. (Laughter.) And yet we had to touch all the bases, and so we took a rather sophisticated message and turned it into a reiteration of a number of themes which tend to contradict each other and which don't appeal to the kind of audiences we need to reach.

So I think that you have to start by articulating a message at the highest levels that's likely to reach the audiences and accept that it may not be the message that's optimized for a domestic audience. And under current circumstances with the administration's popularity at its current levels, I don't know that they can afford to do that.

MR. KORB: Let me get into the tactics, give you two examples. One occurred today. About 15 minutes before this panel started I got a call from Al-Jazeera. Evidently there was this thing on Italian television last night that said that the Marines used chemical weapons in Fallujah and they were phosphorous shells. So I explained to the person what happened and I said, "Well, get somebody from the central command or something to explain." She said, "Well, we're getting someone, but he's just reading a prepared statement, not taking any questions." And I thought, well, that's dumb. I mean, I would have done it if I weren't here. And I explained the Persian Gulf War syndrome and all of that. And I'm thinking, why isn't the administration doing that?

A couple weeks Al-Arabiya called and they said they wanted me to go and debate somebody from the Muslim world who was saying all these horrible things about the Bush administration. I said, "Well, get somebody from the Bush administration." She said, "I tried; they won't go." And I'm thinking, you people think nothing – you line up to go on *Meet the Press* and all. That's where you ought to be going. And, again, and I'll leave it to you, you're there, to try and figure out why they don't do it.

MS. WADHAMS: Well, thank you so much to our panelists and thanks to everyone for coming.

(Applause.)

(END)