

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE DISCUSSION TOPIC: THE REPORT "WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION IN IRAQ: EVIDENCE AND IMPLICATIONS" PARTICIPANTS: JOSEPH CIRINCIONE, SENIOR ASSOCIATE AND NONPROLIFERATION PROJECT DIRECTOR; JESSICA MATHEWS, PRESIDENT; GEORGE PERKOVICH, VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDIES LOCATION: THE CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, WASHINGTON, D.C. DATE: THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2004

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(Note: This event was fed in progress.)

MS. MATHEWS: (In progress) -- sharing with you our reasons for undertaking this study, which has been the work of many months for a great -- and for a fairly large number of us, it looks back in close detail at what happened regarding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, for two reasons.

First of all, it looks back to allow Americans to reach judgments about how our key players and institutions performed on the most important call that any government, any country, any people can make: whether to go to war. These key players include importantly, of course -- most importantly, the president and his advisors, but also the Congress, the intelligence agencies, the independent think tanks, like ourselves, and not least, the public itself. Did it understand the key questions, and did it demand and get straight answers?

Going to war is always momentous, but there is an added importance to that right now, because with no country or combination of countries on the planet able to oppose us, there is nothing, therefore, to hold us back. There is an historically unusual risk that we would be tempted to use our power unwisely. It has never been more important that as a nation we know when to go to war and when to strive to achieve our ends by other means.

We also looked back so that we can look ahead. We have sifted through masses of information and put broad arguments and assertions under the microscope of close analysis for the purpose of asking what worked and what didn't work, what was right, what was wrong, and what recommendations can we offer to make the future better.

The study has two very different parts to it. The first is the first comprehensive review of all the publicly available information regarding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq that has been undertaken. And I'm talking here of the unclassified information, declassified information, corroborated press reporting, the results from the international inspections, administration statements, particularly in official documents and fact sheets and major speeches, and post-war result -- so both U.S. and international sources -- and an effort to put that mass of information into a single, coherent framework.

This factual summary stands on its own. It is intended to be mined by readers with very different points of view, and to serve them in that way. To allow this, it is very heavily footnoted. And it is supported with extensive primary sources in the appendices, in the report itself, and additional ones on our website.

The second part of the report takes this material and analyzes it. From it we draw a number of findings that we will share with you today, and based on that material and our own broader understanding, makes a number of recommendations. We have made every effort to vigorously separate the factual review, the analysis, and the recommendations.

Because even our distillation of the factual record, this 30 pages in part two of the report, is a lot to read, we provided four summary tables. For those of you who have the reports in front of you, they are on pages 27, 32, 37 and 41. But for those of you who don't, I will try to describe them, because they capture the essence of what is most important on this factual record. From those four summary tables -- one on nuclear weapons, one on chemical, one on biological, and one on missiles -- one can see very clearly four key patterns.

The first is that up to -- up through the year 2001 U.S. intelligence was generally correct on nuclear and missile weapons issues, but appears to have been incorrect -- incorrectly overestimate Iraq's chemical and biological weapons capabilities. And we will talk a bit -- we will come back and go into this a bit more in detail.

The second pattern is evidence throughout these four -- all four of the weapons systems, of a dramatic shift between the intelligence views up through 2001 and intelligence views as they emerged in the National Intelligence Estimate, the NIE, that was released shortly before the congressional vote in October of 2002.

And that shift occurred without any new evidence, as we now can see.

The third pattern is that to a degree, to a rather surprising degree -- it surprised us as we went through this -- the international inspections effort generally had it right. They were finding what was there, and their assessments, both at the end of the UNSCOM effort in 1998 and the UNMOVIC work in 2003 was quite close to what the postwar investigations have found.

And finally, the representations by senior administration officials show a very systematic misrepresentation of the facts over and above the intelligence failings, with respect to chemical and biological weapons. These misrepresentations fall into four categories.

The first is a conflation of the three types of weapons of mass destruction and treatment of them regularly as a single -- under the single rubric of weapons of mass destruction. This was, of course, not by any means limited to the administration; it was almost a universal phenomenon. But the treatment of chemical weapons -- the highly likelihood that Iraq had some chemical weapons, with the virtually zero likelihood that it had nuclear weapons, but treating them in that same category of WMD distorted the discussion and the cost-benefit discussions before the war.

The second form of misrepresentation was treating as a given that Saddam Hussein would give whatever weapons of mass destruction or WMD

capabilities he had to anti-American terrorist networks. This linkage, this automatic linkage, of Iraq's capabilities to Al Qaeda's formed an absolute core of the administration's case for war, since it was the only way that Iraq posed a direct threat to the U.S. homeland, and because it also meant, if this linkage existed, that deterrence could not be used, because while we can deter states, it's highly questionable, if not impossible, that we could deter terrorists willing to commit suicide.

The third form of misrepresentation was the routine dropping of all elements of uncertainty in the intelligence reports. The uses of words like "maybe," "we judge," "we assess," "we cannot exclude" -- there are literally too many instances to count of where all those expressions, careful expressions of uncertainty, disappeared.

This reached its nadir with Secretary Powell's speech at the United Nations, in which he went out of his way to emphasize our certainty, saying, "Every statement I make today is backed up by solid sources. These are not assertions. We are giving you facts and conclusions based on solid evidence." "This is evidence, not conjecture. This is true." And yet we know that a great many of the major assertions made in that speech turned out not to be true, with respect to unmanned aerial vehicles, Scud missiles, Scud warheads filled with biological and chemical agents, mobile biological weapons labs, and huge stockpiles of chemical agent.

And finally, there was a misrepresentation of the inspectors' findings, and I'd like to just take a minute to describe one of those that I think is particularly both important in and of itself and descriptive of the kinds of ways in which small changes that may be seemingly technical can turn minor threats into dire ones.

This example has to do with a report by the inspectors that, with the amount of biological growth medium that Iraq had, it could have produced three times as much anthrax as it in fact declared if it had used all that growth medium to produce anthrax.

In his October 7th speech in Ohio, which was the president's first major case on WMD, his comprehensive argument on WMD before the war, the president described this as follows: "The inspectors, however, concluded that Iraq had likely produced two to four times that amount. This is a massive stockpile of biological weapons that has never been accounted for and is capable of killing millions."

In those 35 words, possibility -- the inspectors' "if it had been used" -- first becomes likelihood, and likelihood then suddenly becomes fact: "This is a stockpile." And finally, biological agent is transformed into weapons. And not just any weapons, but highly sophisticated delivery systems, because only such systems could possibly kill millions with biological agent.

Those 35 words are far more significant, far more meaningful, are far more serious than the 16 words in the State of the Union address on uranium shopping, on which so much ink has been spilled.

I'm going to turn the microphone now over to Joe Cirincione. He's going to spend a little time taking you into more detail on the factual summary and on our recommendations with respect to intelligence. And then I will take you through just a few other of the highlights of recommendations on what we

think are the most important findings of the report. And then we will be open to your questions.

Joe?

MR. CIRINCIONE: Thank you very much, Jessica.

We have here a presentation, a slide presentation, of what we looked at

--

Q Your microphone's not on.

MR. CIRINCIONE: Thank you very much. There you go.

Q Thank you.

MR. CIRINCIONE: Thank you.

We have here a slide presentation of what we looked at when we were trying to assemble the record on the threat assessment process that not just this administration underwent, but all of us underwent, and tracking how our assessment of the threat from Iraq's weapons of mass destruction evolved over time, and what we now know about those weapons and those capabilities.

For those who are listening to this, either on the Internet or viewing it on C-SPAN, we've put this presentation up on the Carnegie website so you can follow this along as I go. You can get to it by going to www.ceip.org/live, or www.ceip.org/intel. And on that intel site is also many of the source documents that we used in this report, including all the CIA, NIEs, et cetera, that make up the intelligence assessment process.

Let's start by first pointing out the very first finding that we have in this report, which is that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs represented a threat. We all believe that. But they did not represent an immediate threat to the United States, to the region, or to global security. There was a danger here; the argument was always over the extent and immediacy of the danger, and about our knowledge about that danger. Here at Carnegie we track weapons of mass destruction programs. And in our signature book, "Deadly Arsenals," we list Iraq as a state of concern. We were worried about Iraq's programs. We list them as a country suspected of having chemical and biological weapons programs; suspected of having an interest in nuclear programs. We were worried about them. The difference, I think, for many of us was that while we believed they were capable of these, we weren't sure exactly what they had.

And that was the case in Washington in 2001, in the beginning of 2002, where most experts assessed that given Saddam's past record and past behavior, he most likely was working on chemical and biological programs in particular, and most likely retained an interest in nuclear programs. And, in fact, that's reflected in the intelligence reports. The first slide we have is just what did the intelligence reports to Congress say pre-2002, pre- -- in this case, 1997 and 1999? These are the reports that are delivered to Congress every six months that track the weapons activity of suspect states. And declassified versions of those reports are then posted on the CIA site. We have collected all of those and put them on the CIEP.org/intel site so you can see for yourselves what was said at the time. And in 1997 and in 1999 there was no mention of the nuclear program.

We want to zero in on just one aspect here: what did we know about the nuclear program, and how did we represent that information to the public at large? In many ways this is a very narrow view that makes up one small part of this report.

In '97 and '99 the nuclear program isn't even mentioned in the reports to Congress. You have to go to the report from the first half of 2000, where you get the first mention of the nuclear report to Congress, so this is now two years after the inspectors have been kicked out of the country, and the intelligence agencies assessed that we believed that Iraq has PROBABLY continued low level theoretical R&D associated with its nuclear program. This is one of their last findings, is at the end of their very short two paragraphs on Iraq.

You then leap forward a year and go to the first half of 2001. And there's been a subtle change in the language, but still on the level of concern. And the intelligence agencies now feel that we believe that Iraq has probably continued AT LEAST low level theoretical R&D. And we start to see other warning flags pop up. They -- the intelligence agencies were concerned that Baghdad MAY BE attempting to acquire materials that could aid in reconstituting its nuclear program. The first appearance of that phrase, "reconstituting its nuclear program", the intelligence agencies were worried that Iraq -- that Baghdad MAY BE doing this.

By the second half of that year, that language changes. They are now concerned that Baghdad IS attempting to acquire materials, an active process underway. They believe that this is, in fact, going on, and that probably has dropped, and now it says that Iraq HAS continued its R&D associated with nuclear programs. Finally, by January and June, the first half of 2002, we get somewhat more definitive statements: Iraq is seeking nuclear weapons. Most analysts assess that Iraq is working to reconstitute its nuclear program. The first mention of aluminum tubes is cited as part of the concern here -- that they could be used in a centrifuge program, although it is noted, even then, that some disagree on this intended use.

I should note that these reports talk about analysts -- most analysts assess, some analysts disagree. In fact, we now know it was entire agencies that disagreed, but we could not know that at the time.

What happens in the threat assessment process is that there is a quantum leap forward in the alarm expressed about the programs and in the certainty of these programs in the NIE; that is, the National Intelligence Estimate that was produced in a three-week period in September and October 2002, and was presented to Congress some 10 days before Congress was asked to vote authorizing the use of force in Iraq. Many, many congressional figures have said that this NIE was a decisive factor in their decision to support that vote.

And here now we have the statement that most agencies assessed that Baghdad started reconstituting its nuclear program in December 1998. So now the program has been under way for some time. It is reconstituted. Most agencies believe Saddam's personal interest and efforts to acquire tubes and magnets are compelling evidence of this reconstitution. So a very strong case is put forward that this program is in fact up and running.

What happens now is that the second part of the assessment problem comes in. While we see in the NIE a very strong statement on the nuclear program, there still are some caveats in it. There's dissent.

The public is not made aware of this dissent, but it is in the classified version that's given to Congress. The public becomes aware of this dissent only in July 2003, when the declassified excerpts of the NIE are released. And there we see that the key agencies that knew the most about the nuclear program -- the Department of Energy, the Department of State -- disagreed with the assessment that there, in fact, the tubes were being used for centrifuge, or in the case of the Department of State, they disagreed that the program had been reconstituted. They dissent from the view that Iraq could have a nuclear weapon in as little as a year, because they see no evidence that there's any activity whatsoever under way. But we don't know that at that point.

What we do know is that officials come forward, and here they drop many of the caveats. They drop many of the conditionality. Typical is the statement of Vice President Cheney in August of 2002, who says, "We now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. Many of us are convinced that Saddam will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon."

So we have these two elements now: certainty of the threat and immediacy of the threat. This is something we know, and it is going to happen soon.

In that view, it would become almost irresponsible not to act on this. Vice President Cheney says it even stronger a few months -- another month later, in September 2002: "We know with absolute certainty that he is using his procurement system to acquire the equipment he needs in order to enrich uranium to build a nuclear weapon." One of the highest officials in the land is saying that we know this for certain. It implies a very high degree of knowledge and apparently new evidence to support this. But that's an assumption most of us make when we hear officials talk like this. They must know what they're saying.

The inspections start in Iraq, and the IAEA is tasked with investigating Iraq's activities in nuclear programs. They make a number of assessments to the Security Council, and in March of 2003, they present one of their last assessments before military action is undertaken.

The IAEA says that they have found no indication of resumed nuclear activity. They have visited the sites where satellite surveillance has detected what we believed was renewed construction activity, renewed activity at these sites, and they found that none of that was associated with actual nuclear weapons work or nuclear activity.

They found that there's no indication of attempts to import uranium. In fact, they say that the documents that are cited to support this claim were forged. They found no indication that Iraq attempted to import aluminum tubes or magnets for centrifuges.

So the central pieces of evidence cited by the administration to support the claim and the belief that this program had been reconstituted are directly rebutted by the IAEA. In fact, they go even further and they say, "In general, the industrial capability in Iraq has deteriorated substantially as a result of the sanctions imposed on Iraq."

The administration dismisses the IAEA finding. Vice President Cheney cites the fact that the IAEA got it wrong in 1991 -- which is true. In their

original assessment of Iraq's nuclear capability, they underestimated what they had in their first visits after that 1991 Gulf War, and only corrected it two months later upon further investigation. Vice President Cheney says, "They have consistently underestimated or missed what Saddam Hussein was doing. I don't have any reason to believe they're any more valid this time."

What we now know is that in fact there was no nuclear weapons program operating. There were no nuclear weapons. Saddam was not close to having nuclear weapons. David Kay's testimony in October 2003 says, "To date, we have not uncovered evidence that Iraq undertook significant post-1998 steps to actually build nuclear weapons or produce nuclear materials." That is consistent with all the other evidence. Extensive interviews and statements by former Iraqi officials and scientists underscore that there does not appear to have been any significant nuclear weapons capability in Iraq.

Just quickly, another quick look at this from the chemical weapons point of view, where in fact the intelligence community had long believed that there was activity under way in the chemical weapons field. In January to June of 2001, they say, "We assess that Baghdad had had the capability to restate (sic) its chemical weapons programs within a few weeks to months." So they're talking about capability there in January to June 2001. (Laughs.) That slide's out of place.

By the NIE in October 2002, we conclude that -- NIE concludes that Baghdad in fact has begun renewed production of mustard, sarin, GF and VX; Saddam probably has stocked at least 100 metric tons and possibly as much as 500 metric tons of CW agent, much of it added in the last year.

So this is activity that has presumably taken place in 2002, ongoing weapons production in Iraq.

When Secretary Powell comes to the U.N. in March 2003, he goes further. He says "There is no doubt that he has chemical weapons stocks." So we go from "probably" to "no doubt". And he says, "Our conservative estimate is that Iraq today has a stockpile of between 100 and 500 tons. Saddam Hussein has chemical weapons." That was very powerful testimony, very convincing beyond what even the NIE was saying at the time.

We all -- many of us assumed that there must be new evidence, some new information that the officials had to state their claims with such certainty. But Secretary Rumsfeld corrects that impression in July of 2003 when he tells the U.S. Congress that "the coalition did not act in Iraq because we had discovered dramatic new evidence of Iraq's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, we acted because we saw the existing evidence in a new light: through the prism of our experience of September 11th." And this is completely consistent with what we have found in our study, that there was no new significant evidence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program in 2002 or in 2001. Bits and pieces, anecdotes and defector statements that turns out were completely unreliable, but nothing really to underlie the -- either the NIE or the official statements at the time. And here's what we now know. As David Kay pointed out in his testimony in October, Iraq did not have a large, ongoing, centrally-controlled CW program after 1991. Everything he had gathered at that point indicated that. "Information found to date suggests that Iraq's large-scale capability to develop, produce and fill new CW missions was reduced, if not entirely destroyed, during Operation Desert Storm and Desert Fox, 13 years of U.N. sanctions, and U.N. inspections," close quote. So it turns out, according to Kay, that the inspection process was working much more effectively

than we thought, and that the U.N. sanctions were working much more effectively than anyone thought.

A summary, a brief summary of what we thought on chemical weapons is presented in this chart, that the pre-war concern was large stockpiles. In the pre-2000, intelligence assessments said maybe. The October NIE said yes. The U.N., in their inspection, said we weren't sure, they didn't find any, but they weren't ruling out. Official statements said no doubt, yes, he has them.

All the evidence since March says no, he did not.

A similar chain is followed in the claim or belief that he had covert production facilities hidden; no evidence that either those stockpiles or production facilities exist.

We think this points to a threat assessment process that is deeply troubled, particularly -- and the part we're looking at is the threat assessment process on Iraq. One of our key recommendations is that either the Congress or the president should immediately appoint a blue ribbon, non-partisan, independent commission to assess the Iraq intelligence assessments. We understand that there are investigations under way in Congress and an internal review in the CIA, but we think something this serious has to be undertaken by a completely apolitical body to look at all the evidence to try to understand what went wrong here.

If they find what we have found, we suggest that they consider, as one suggestion, professionalizing the post of the director of Central Intelligence as one way of trying to immunize the intelligence community from political pressure. In other words, to make the appointment of the head of Central Intelligence equivalent to the way we appoint the head of the Federal Reserve Board; make it a six-year appointment that cannot -- post that cannot be removed at the president's discretion.

The public has to learn how to recognize red flags when the intelligence is going wrong, such as the creation of independent units to create intelligence that's independent of the existing intelligence agencies, or requests by officials to have access to raw intelligence, which they then use directly.

In that independent commission, I should mention that one of our key recommendations there is that that commission include at least one person who has intimate knowledge of the extensive information and archives accumulated over the past 10 years by UNMOVIC, UNSCOM and IAEA -- the U.N. inspection agencies. They have some 30 million pages of documents they have now digitalized. They have years of experience in interviews and in direct investigation of these sites. The commission should have at its disposal these kinds of resources to reach the judgments on what went wrong.

Incidentally, we are also recommending that as soon as possible, UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors be brought back into Iraq to help construct an accurate history of Iraq's WMD programs to help us all understand what actually happened here.

Finally, one of our recommendations -- and I'll end here -- is that this should be a warning to all of us that while worst-case planning is a necessary part of any policy operation, acting on worst-case scenarios is not a wise course of action.

Just because we fear that something terrible might occur is no reason to believe that it is in fact likely to occur, or likely to be the case, particularly when it involves such important matters as war and peace.

Thank you, Jessica.

MS. MATHEWS: Thanks, Joe.

I wanted to spend just a few more minutes on a couple of the other highlights of this report, key findings of this report. And then we will turn to questions.

I mentioned earlier that the assertion of the close link to terrorists formed a core part of the administration's case for war and of its sense of the threat that faced us. This was, as I said, the only way -- the linkage through terrorists was the only way that Iraq's WMD posed a direct threat to the U.S. homeland. And it was the only reason that might invalidate or raise our capacity to deter Iraq. And that in those two elements lay the importance of that linkage.

We find here that not only was there not positive evidence of that connection between Saddam and al Qaeda, but much evidence to suggest that he would not make such transfers. There was the well-known, deeply antagonistic relationship between Saddam and Osama bin Laden -- the one having called the other an apostate and an infidel; the other having persecuted Islamists viciously in Iraq.

There was also Saddam's past behavior with respect to other terrorists -- those who were active against Israel, Kuwait and Iran. Over many, many years he had provided active support for these terrorists but never transferred the CW munitions, which he had in abundance in the early '90s, or WMD capability. And there is also the logic of the risk of gaining very little and losing perhaps everything through such a transfer.

We make a number of recommendations on this point because we will be living in the war on terror for many decades, and this therefore is an issue of enormous importance to U.S. national security policy.

First, we call for a reexamination of this assertion in a broad public policy debate on the question of whether states are likely to transfer WMD -- and how likely they are -- to terrorists. Secondly, we recommend that the United States attempt to deter such transfers by making it an explicit element of U.S. policy to use overwhelming force in response to such a transfer.

Third, we broaden that recommendation, internationalize it, by recommending that the Security Council make a transfer either to terrorists or to another state territory of any weapons of mass destruction a violation of international law and a threat to peace and security, and therefore calling for Security Council and Chapter 7 response, regardless of whether the recipients are parties to the relevant nonproliferation treaties.

Fourth, in our judgment, the link to terrorists that is of enormous concern and of the greatest concern is that -- is the linkage through theft or purchase, probably through either individual or criminal, as opposed to state, action, from poorly guarded, poorly secured stockpiles of weapons and of plutonium and highly enriched uranium in Russia and other post-Soviet states,

particularly Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and for different reasons, in Pakistan and North Korea.

We recommend that the -- that U.S. efforts to secure those -- to reduce the size of those stockpiles and to drastically improve their security be made a much higher element of U.S. national security priority than it has been -- than it is now and it has been to date. These are both the existing Nunn-Lugar programs and expanded ones in new states.

Access -- direct access to fissile material is the easiest step for terrorists to take and the -- sorry -- the hardest step for terrorists to take and the easiest one for us to prevent. All the other ones become harder.

And then, finally, on this point, with respect to deterrence, we believe that most of what the national security strategy finds on this point is incorrect. We begin with -- the reasoning begins with views by national security advisor Condoleezza Rice, who before 9/11 wrote the following:

"The first line of defense, should Iraq acquire WMD, should be a clear and classical statement of deterrence. If they do acquire WMD, their weapons will be unusable, because any attempt to use them will bring national obliteration." That only becomes invalid because of the terrorism link. And in our view, because that is not either automatic or likely, the dismissal of deterrence is incorrect.

The argument in the national security strategy that we are currently, in the post-9/11 world, unable to deter a potential attacker can mean only the terrorism link, or that a state -- head of state is a madman unable to appreciate any degree of national or person self-interest. And in fact, we find that the record with Saddam Hussein in particular, all through the 1990s, is that he was quite deterrable. When the international community was strong and united, he backed down; when they were divided and weak, he pressed forward.

Next, on the question of the international inspections, we believe that the record suggests the need for a wholesale reevaluation of the inspections process and of the package of other international actions that were taken during the 1990s. These include the economic sanctions, the investigations of procurement by Iraq of covert procurement, the export-import control mechanisms that were put in place, and the ongoing monitoring phase of inspections beyond discovery and disarmament.

We, therefore, recommend, both as Joe described, that the UNMOVIC and IAEA teams be sent back into Iraq and work in tandem with the ISG to reconstruct the whole record of Iraq's WMD programs, starting from the 1980s, to produce a story that will be both definitive and internationally legitimate.

We also call on the secretary-general to create two further studies. First, to evaluate which among this package of international actions worked, and to what varying degrees. And secondly, an after- action report on the inspections themselves, looking at access to technology, to the necessary human resources, to the both positive and negative interactions with national intelligence agencies, and a number of other key aspects.

And finally, based on the result of these studies, and of what is openly fully discovered as to the record in Iraq, we recommend that the United Nations consider creating a permanent international nonproliferation inspection

capability, and particularly one that has the capacity to be backed by effective threats of force.

Third, on the question of the broader aspects of U.S. national security policy in the world that we live in post-9-11, we focus, as Joe mentioned briefly, on the question of the validity of acting on worst-case reasoning, we believe, for the reasons he described, and others, that that is both unsound, methodologically, and unwise. And we also addressed, particularly, the crucial question of the doctrine of unilateral military actions in the -- action in the absence of imminent threat, attack that forms a key element of the president's national security strategy.

In that strategy, it is called preemptive war. It is not preemptive war in the absence of imminent threat. This is not semantics but has to do with legitimacy under international -- widely understood legitimacy under international law. It also has to do with the burden on intelligence agencies to support -- as the strategy recognizes, to support such action in the absence of imminent threat. In this case, the world's three best intelligence agencies -- the United States, Great Britain, and Israel -- were unable to provide that level of certainty, and that is a suggestive warning.

We make two complementary recommendations in this respect. First, that that element of the national security strategy be dropped as U.S. policy; that is, the element of calling for unilateral preemptive war in the absence of imminent threat. We believe that does not serve U.S. interests. But we also recommend that the U.S. call for and convene negotiations to define agreed international principles to guide both preemption and prevention as was recommended last summer by Secretary Kissinger.

There is much more in the report, but we have talked long enough, and I'd like to open this now to questions and George Perkovich, our co-author, is going to moderate.

MR. PERKOVICH: Please raise your hands, and then wait until the microphone arrives and then identify yourself. The gentleman with the very long arm right there in the middle, yes, right in front of the cameras -- yes, sir.

Q Thank you very much, hello, that's great. Mike Prite (sp) from the BBC. Can I just get this clear -- are you saying that the administration lied to the American people and to Congress and why?

MS. MATHEWS: We're saying just what we've said, which is that we have found and gone to some lengths to define and lay out serious misrepresentation of the facts over and above what was in the intelligence findings.

Q And a phrase that is familiar to us in Britain -- are you saying that they sexed up the evidence?

MS. MATHEWS: I have no comment on sex either way.

Q One more -- from what you know, is it your assessment that British intelligence, which stood full square behind American intelligence and, of course, the British government, could have known something that this government and this intelligence here did not know?

MS. MATHEWS: Could have known something, did you say?

Q I mean -- is there anything that the British intelligence community or the British government could have known that the intelligence community and the administration here did not know when they were making their case for war?

MR. PERKOVICH: We did not do a detailed review of the British intelligence process but nothing that we came across would indicate that somehow the United Kingdom knew more than the United States did.

MS. MATHEWS: In fact, I would say, sort of, the opposite, which is that two of the key aspects of the most important arguments of that, that have turned out not to be true; that is to say, the shopping trips in Africa and the assertion of 45-minute deployment time for use of chemical weapons have turned out to be incorrect, and we make reference to that here.

MR. PERKOVICH: And both of those claims came from British sources.

MS. MATHEWS: Yeah, right.

Q But just to get it straight again, you are saying that Congress and the American people were misled by this administration?

MS. MATHEWS: I think we've answered that.

Q How about a yes or a no?

MS. MATHEWS: I --

Q We need clarity here, don't we?

MS. MATHEWS: I've think we've been very clear.

MR. PERKOVICH: The gentleman right here in the front. Alexis, were you the closest mike? Thanks, great. And then, Jeff, you've got somebody over here, I think, too. Yes? Q John Diamond (sp), "USA Today," and I'll address this to Joe, perhaps. Joe, looking at your summary charts, as I read it, in every instance, the administration statements track with the statements in the October NIC -- at least, broadly speaking. There may be some phrase differences, but from your chart here. So the charge that the administration went well beyond what intelligence was saying, at least in calendar 2002, does not appear to hold up.

MR. CIRINCIONE: No. As we indicate in the report and in the charts, there was basic agreement between the NIE and administration statements, but the administration statements went far beyond the intelligence by dropping all caveats or, in most instances, dropping the conditions that the NIE itself would put on it. So, for example, the NIE would make a statement that said, "We assess that Baghdad has renewed production of chemical weapons." In the administration statements, they would say, "Baghdad has renewed production of chemical weapons." And in that process they changed something that is an opinion into a fact, and they consistently did this. You can understand why speechmakers want to do this -- or reporters, for that matter. You want greater certainty; you want to be more persuasive. The problem is it gives a misleading impression to the public, to the Congress, about what you know and how certain you are about that knowledge.

Q One follow-up -- one of the things that you hear intelligence officials say when some of the criticisms come up is that, from time to time, they are called upon to make a definitive call when the evidence may not be definitive, and that if they are just giving, on the one hand, on the other hand, their intelligence becomes useless, and that may not always be the case over a decade and, therefore, the older reports may be more vague. But at a certain point, they are asked to make a call, they have to make a call, and they do, and they end up -- perhaps maybe they're wrong, but that's one of the defenses that we are hearing now after the Kay reports have been coming out.

MR. CIRINCIONE: Do you want to start, George?

MR. PERKOVICH: Yeah, I mean, I think that's a very good point, and it's true and, in particular, I would say, to their credit, senior officials in this administration have put out that message -- that they didn't want, kind of, hedged intelligence, and they wanted clarity and to be able to make stronger, more definitive statements. The second part of what they said was, "And if it's wrong, that's a policy judgment for which we are accountable. We will protect the intelligence community if it's wrong, if it turns out the hedges should have been in there, that becomes, then, our burden as senior policymakers, for having pushed the envelope." And so, in that way, they ask that they be held accountable but, in return, they get the intelligence community to make more definitive statements. MR. CIRINCIONE: But do you think that they are taking responsibility? Because we now have, you know, Congress investigating the intelligence community but not looking at the administration statements for their accuracy. So I want -- do you think that the administration is, in fact, standing up and taking responsibility for the inaccuracies as opposed to just schlepping it off onto the intelligence community?

MR. PERKOVICH: I think that's a judgment that every individual who watches and looks will have to make -- are they standing up and taking responsibility for that? My evaluation of that is not any better than anybody else's, as an individual.

MS. MATHEWS: Let's go on.

MR. PERKOVICH: Yes, sir?

Q Al Milliken affiliated with Washington Independent Writers. How significant or important do you consider your acknowledgement of Saddam's financial aid to terrorists and their surviving families? Why do you think Osama bin Laden brought this appeal up in his most recent videotape? Am I wrong to think that -- I got the impression you were downplaying the importance of not only the financial rewarding of terrorism but the publicity achieved when Saddam Hussein did this.

MR. CIRINCIONE: You are referring to Saddam's monetary remuneration to the Palestinians, some of whom committed terrorist acts. Yeah, well, the issue -- and this is part of the conflation of the threat, and we've talked about how we've been -- the problem that we all encountered by conflating the threat that might be posed by mustard gas shells and equating that with nuclear weapons by talking about WMD all the time, and Saddam had WMD. There is a similar conflation of the threat that exists in the terrorism world, where terrorists who do truck bombs are terrible -- are a terrible regional problem -- are conflated with al Qaeda, who has directly struck at the United States. And we have found no evidence whatsoever to support the contention that there were operational links between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda. That's what we are

looking at. That's what was one of the central points that senior administration officials made throughout the run-up to the war, and we can find no evidence to support that and quite a lot of evidence to contradict it.

MR. PERKOVICH: In addition, the logic of deterrence is precisely to deter actors from taking especially egregious steps, because the stakes have gone up so much higher that the punishment to them would be higher. So paying the families of young Palestinian men and women who may commit acts against Israel may be one thing that a leader and a number of leaders, including some of our allies who are major oil producers, have done over the years. But they make a calibration that that isn't the kind of action which they are being deterred from doing by the threat of major U.S. force. Whereas, transferring weapons of mass destruction terrorists actually brings in what our deterrence force is supposed to prevent and deter, and there is no evidence that that failed with Saddam.

Yes, ma'am?

Q Toby Zakari (sp) with Reuter's. One of the things that U.S. officials always say when people bring up the point that no WMD has been found is that chemical and biological weapons or stockpiles can be hidden in relatively small areas. How do you respond to that? I mean, do you -- are you saying outright that you do not believe there are any chemical/biological stockpiles there that -- I mean -- that will never be found?

MR. CIRINCIONE: Let me start -- we don't discount the possibility that we can still find some mustard gas shells as the U.N. inspectors, for example, found before the war or some amount of biological agent. There may, indeed, be some hidden SCUD parts, for example. But we think it's highly unlikely that Saddam could have hidden, destroyed, or moved the hundreds of tons of chemical agents, thousands of liters of biological agents, dozens of SCUD missiles, or the capability to manufacture the chemical/biological/nuclear weapons without the United States detect -- and its coalition partners -- detecting some evidence of this before, during, or after the war.

We have been searching very hard for this over the past nine months. We've had a number of offers out on the table with financial and remuneration for anyone who would come forward indicating that they, in fact, had helped bury these weapons or move these weapons. We had excellent surveillance before and during the war. We were tracking every major convoy that hit the roads; in some cases, tracking the movements of individuals in Baghdad. We think it's highly unlikely that we will find any significant storage of these capabilities at this point.

Finally, there has been no evidence from any of the interviews or statements of former Iraqi officials or scientists that such stockpiles, in fact, exist, and many statements to the contrary; that, in fact, it appears that these stockpiles were destroyed during the U.N. inspections in the mid-1990s and that these programs were, in fact, shut down and reduced to a latent state. That is, it appears that Saddam was preserving the potential capability of restarting these programs sometime in the future, but all the evidence indicates that these programs were not up and running at any significant level.

MS. MATHEWS: There was a good deal of important material on this in yesterday's "Washington Post" piece by Bart Gellman. One of the quotes in there from Abdul Noor, whom we also refer to in our report, one of the senior people in the nuclear program, that I found particularly striking. He says in

the "Post" piece -- "We would have had to start from less than zero," and, by zero, he's talking about 1987, "the country was cornered. We were boycotted, we were embargoed; the truth is we disintegrated." Now, he's speaking there specifically of the nuclear program, but it gives a sense of the, I think, really unappreciated affect of this combination of international packages that - during the 1990s.

Q What do you think would be the implication if David Kay decides not to go back to Baghdad, as there are some rumors to that effect?

MR. CIRINCIONE: I think there are number of indications, and that's one of them -- that most people do not expect to make any significant finds from here on in. Another sign of that is the reduction in the Iraq survey group that have taken place over the last two months and, most dramatically, this week with the reduction of some 400 experts being cut from that group.

It appears that our organized search efforts are, in fact, winding down, and the only question is whether there will be an official end to that and a final report issued next February or if there will be an effort to sort of continue it indefinitely in the hopes that something turns up.

Q Tony Capacio (sp) with "Bloomberg News." I want to sharpen the point about the weapons, the hidden stockpiles. Stan Cohen (sp), the CIA NIE director you footnote, he makes the point here that the 100 to 500 metric tons could be hidden pretty easily -- 100 could be hidden in a small swimming pool; 500 could be hidden in a small warehouse. Those are the significant stockpiles you were alluding to. Isn't it possible it could be there and that -- (inaudible)?

MS. MATHEWS: Yes.

MR. CIRINCIONE: There just isn't any evidence that it's there. You know, lots of things are possible, but as David Kay himself pointed out in his report, all the evidence is that there was, in fact, no ongoing production. Remember, the NIE says that out of that 100 to 500 tons, most of it was produced in the last year. Well, there is no evidence of that at all, and David Kay concludes that, in fact, there was no CW production on the way.

MS. MATHEWS: Let me -- and just also try to sharpen this point somewhat differently. Rolf Ekeus, who, as you know, chaired UNSCOM from '91 to '97, made the point that, even at that stage, and especially now, people tend to be wildly misled by how much of what is discovered is learned through the process of physically going and looking versus analyzing documents, interviewing people, expert analysis work as opposed to the kind of running around in convoys. We are to the point where, as the process continues, more and more and more and more of what is left to do is left to do analytically, rather than this kind of physical opening up, and that's the kind of feeling that one hears over and over again, both from the military and the ISG people, who have been around and then who are now closing in on evidence that they're getting from interrogations of a lot of people and from analysis of paper.

Q I have a follow-up question -- in your conclusion here that they had a long-standing -- there was a long-standing threat from Iraq in the future that could not be allowed to fester unaddressed. What should the U.S. and the world community have done, short of war, to address what you lay out something serious -- latent but serious. The war seemed pretty definitive in destroying

whatever capability there was, or stockpile. So what should the world community and the U.S. had done in light of what you laid out?

MR. PERKOVICH: Well, I think, from the beginning, and this was the beginning of our work on this over a year ago -- we have always taken -- this is what we do -- is take seriously the threats of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and what we called for and what was occurring prior to the early part of last year was the inspections process. So you allude to the possibility that there is still this stock of weapons. That's what the inspectors -- and we had called for a much more coercive model of inspection so it would be -- you know -- no negotiation inspections anytime, anyplace; backed by force, if necessary; was to go precisely to ensure that, in fact, Iraq was disarmed of its WMD. So we share that objective. That process was cut short. We don't know what would have happened had that process been continued. We do know it was cut short, and it was cut short on the basis of argumentation and evidence that we now scrutinize and found to have been lacking. So the point would have been to continue and already agreed process of either verifying that Iraq had no possession of these weapons or forcibly removing those weapons.

MS. MATHEWS: I mean -- very specifically, in the report itself, we say that there were two options which, on the basis of all our cost-benefit analysis, were preferable. One was to continue the inspection -- the UNMOVIC inspection process that was in place in March and underway in March of 2003 until it was either obstructed or completed. With the presence of reduced number of possibly of -- with the possibly reduced number of American troops in the region.

The second option would have been to adopt the method of coercive inspections with a specially designed international force that we had recommended somewhat earlier with the imposition of no-fly land no-drive zones over all of Iraq to facilitate the inspections. Those, in our view, were -- there were, at least, those two alternatives preferable.

Q Mohammad Stofi (sp) Nile News (sp), Egyptian Television. Secretary Powell was talking yesterday about stockpiles, which were not accounted for. As many Iraqi scientists refer -- say that we have many things which were undocumented, and we didn't have enough documentation for all of this, and Hans Blix, for example, was talking about having this sign, "Beware of the Dog," even if you don't have a dog. What was wrong with their -- with this stockpiling and documentation of all of this?

MS. MATHEWS: Well, the -- as Hans Blix has said, there is a difference between something that cannot be proven to have been destroyed and something that is there. And he has frequently warned about the importance of making that distinction. This was a country, we know, that operated under enormous amounts of both corruption and fear. Dictators -- ruthless dictators are frequently lied to -- we know that. It was a major problem for the United States with its ally, Chang Kai Shek in World War II. People tend to frequently lie to people they worry might shoot them.

So in a country where people were under enormous pressure to produce weapons of mass destruction capabilities and operating under international boycotts and sanctions and inspections that made it impossible, there was a lot of confusion, and it is not at all surprising that things could not be documented -- not everything.

MR. PERKOVICH: If you could just pass the microphone right across the table, and we'll work our way back this way.

Q Spencer Ackerman (sp) with "The New Republic." One of the previous questions referenced Stuart Cohen of the National Intelligence Council, his recent op ed in "The Washington Post." In that op ed, with respect to chemical weapons, he raised the possibility that Iraq had retained what I believe he termed, "just in time" breakout capacities for production, and I was wondering if you assessed the evidence to be strong enough to support that conclusion or if it's a premature conclusion to draw?

MR. CIRINCIONE: I would suggest that David Kay himself, in the testimony that he gave to Congress, indicates that it was very unlikely that there was "just in time" breakout capability. He said that Iraq's large-scale capability to develop, produce, and fill new chemical weapons munitions was reduced, if not entirely destroyed, during Operation Desert Storm, Desert Fox, 13 years of U.N. inspections and sanctions. It does not appear to have been a "just in time" capability. Our best estimate at this point is that in this field, Saddam retained some capability that could be considered dual-use; that is to say, was involved in legitimate chemical production for civilian usage that might have been able to be turned into this. But that assumed that he would also have a large stock of the ingredients for making these weapons; that is, the precursors for chemical weapons or the growth media for biological weapons.

There is no evidence of those stockpiles, and -- or the munitions to then put them in. There were reasonable suspicions about all this before the war based on unanswered questions left over from the U.N. inspections. We all had those questions. But, as it turns out -- and most of the U.N. inspectors seem to have concluded this -- the capabilities that we, that were unaccounted for, did not in fact exist but seem to have been either destroyed or never to have existed in the first place.

MR. PERKOVICH: But the strategic -- I mean if I can just follow up -- I mean the strategic question is, would the process that is under way of inspections or enhanced inspections process, as Jessica alluded to, have gotten the answers to that very question. And there's no reason to think a priori that it wouldn't have gotten the answers to the question. And so, strategically, that's, it seems to me, what you have to focus on.

To put it another way: If that was the only capability that was there, that was alluded to being there, would that have been a cause of suspending the inspections process, going to war, taking over a country and doing all the things that ensued? I think the question answers itself, really.

MR. CIRINCIONE: By the way, Spencer, excellent work in the articles at The New Republic. We learned a lot from them. Thank you.

MR. PERKOVICH: Working our way back to this way. The gentleman right by you, Jacob, and the middle table, and the guy in the pink shirt and then right here.

Q Thank you. MBC (ph) television of South Korea. My name is Choy (ph). You will recommend the founding a new non-proliferation inspection sort of regime, as a the capability, and North Korea kicked out the inspectors last year, and what kind of enforce, what kind of function of a new inspection regime

is needed? And the new inspections could be set up under U.N. mandate or within U.N. mandate. That is my question. Thank you.

MS. MATHEWS: This is a very important question, and goes to the heart of why we undertook a study like this. There was almost no chance that an international effort could have been -- inspection effort could have been undertaken at that time because of the sense that inspections had been an egregious failure in Iraq. In fact, I think the irony of this story, as you look back, is that the Achilles heel of inspections in Iraq in the 1990s was not their vulnerability to Saddam's actions in Iraq, but their vulnerability in New York.

What destroyed the inspections process was the dissolution of the political unity that existed in 1991 and that Saddam Hussein slowly tore apart by playing the key five, the major powers, against each other in New York. And when that political unity that underlaid the inspection process disappeared, Saddam was able to kick the inspectors out of the country.

That political unity was recreated in the aftermath of 9/11 by a new appreciation for the importance of the weapons of -- of WMD proliferation and by the administration's determination to act alone if necessary and its leadership.

The second irony was that that process, the reconstituted one, which was infinitely stronger and fundamentally different than the earlier one, was halted before it had a chance either to fail or to succeed. It had just begun. Literally, inspectors had been there at full strength -- that is to day with helicopters and surveillance flights for only a few weeks when the inspections were halted at the beginning of March.

And so that is the reason why we think it is so important to go back and reevaluate what happened here; and with respect to inspection, what worked and what failed.

The other point though, and as I mentioned earlier, is that when the inspections worked best at the beginning of '91 and then again in, at the end of 2002, early 2003, it was with an explicit threat of force in the background.

And for many countries, I believe and I think we all believe, that that threat would be a necessary component of an effective international inspections capability.

MR. PERKOVICH: Yes? The two in the middle that I called upon earlier. Yes. Sylvia, go ahead. Right there. There you go. And then Jeff, give it to the gentleman in the pink shirt so we can do this.

Q Michael Ralston (sp) from Ransack (sp). David Kay acknowledged in October when he had testified that there had been a number of Iraqi weapons scientists who have already turned up in places like Syria, the United Arab Emirates, and some countries in the region. And I'm wondering if you think the expertise that existed in Iraq with regard to weapons of mass destruction, exists as much of a weapons of mass destruction threat? And, if so, do you believe that the administration has done and intends to do take care of that problem? MR. PERKOVICH: My sense is that this is something that the, that the U.S. belatedly has recognized as very important and had started to design

programs intended at least to ensure not only that people know where these are but that they're gainfully employed. And there's a model, as you know, from your organization, in the former Soviet Union and in Ukraine of programs to keep nuclear weapons scientists, in this case, gainfully employed. One, you know, can always monitor this and do more. It will never be perfect, but my sense is that the administration is paying attention to this problem and takes it seriously.

Q Malcolm Brown from Feature Story News: We've talked on this, but I'm wondering if I could invite you to talk more about the North Korean circumstance and what we, what the implications of your report are for the world as it tries to address that, that nuclear problem.

MR. CIRINCIONE: There's two quick implications, and one we're seeing come up. The Chinese government's indicated that they do not believe the U.S. intelligence assessment that North Korea has, in fact, the capability of enriching uranium. We didn't discuss this in the report. This is my personal opinion, that we, that that is one of the repercussions of having the threat assessments in Iraq proven to be so dramatically mistaken.

They, the second is more positive because the U.N. inspections and sanctions were working much better than anyone thought in Iraq. That gives us hope that inspections and sanctions can work equally well in North Korea. So we have both a negative and a positive lesson to bring to this experience.

MR. PERKOVICH: I would just add another lesson that seems to have been learned or is being learned, is the fact that in North Korea's case the U.S. is working with China, Russia, South Korea and Japan in concert to deal with North Korea, both to pressure it, but also any positive inducements will be done in close concert, and that is a much more multilateral approach than they stuck with in dealing with Iraq. And so that, too, I think, is an implication that you can draw from Iraq it's is a positive one.

This gentleman and then you.

Q Colonel (ph) -- (inaudible) -- Foreign Policy Association: This is referring back to the warning being given to the American intelligence by the British intelligence. It came out unequivocally, in post death inquiry of Dr. Kelly, that American intelligence was warned there was not the question of any 45-minute strike; there was no immediate threat at all. I'm sorry that my also other question has also been answered because of delayed notice of my hand.

Q Thank you. My name is -- (inaudible) -- Korea. I think this paper is very important domestically and nationally. As you know, this year the presidential election will be had in November, and North Korea is one of the main issue in politics and Republican and Democrat. My question is what do you think of the political implication of this report under the U.S. politics? And my second question is, if my understanding is right, the Iraq war has no (legitimacy ?) under the current international role. So, what is the implication of the report of the international implication?

MS. MATHEWS: Well, as you can see from the recommendations we believe there are a large number of steps that the international community together as manifest in the United Nations should take.

As regards the political implications, I believe the important effect of the war in Iraq on the election will be determined by events on the ground. Our report really goes to long term U.S. policy.

MR. PERKOVICH: Can I add to that? What documented here so carefully are a number of mistakes in governing that go way beyond any party or even any branch, any one branch, of the U.S. government. You can argue in looking at it that Congress -- both parties -- didn't raise adequate questions, didn't stick with the questioning. You can talk about the intelligence community, which after all is supposed to be separated from the policy-making process, and therefore independent of partisan or electoral issues. We can talk about the media. We can talk about think tanks. There are a number of things that are documented here which once you uncover, you realize there was a lot less scrutiny paid at the time. The warning flags that should have engendered tougher questioning and debate. So whatever happened here was a much larger problem than you get if you focus on, well, did it help the Democrats or Republicans in the presidential election

I think we can take one more.

Q Thank you. Frederick Barron (sp) with Senator Mikulski's office. Thank you very much for the public service that you provided in preparing this information. You documented with regard to a number of the claims with regard to Iraq, the change in the intelligence assessments and then in administration statements. And I'm wondering if you could share what knowledge you have or speculate if necessary on why that changed? Whether it was new sources of information? Whether it was reinterpretation? Rather than just saying that there was a progression of a change, if you could address why that would have changed?

MS. MATHEWS: Well, I think we did address that. And that is that there were for reasons that were not related to new evidence, there was a strong -- we believe -- and there are reasons to believe there are, that we have mentioned. Pressure from individuals who had a particular policy outcome in their own minds to get a threat assessment that justified that course of action. I mean, I'm not sure that we have much we can add beyond that. We have taken what is on the record and tried to make it organized and transparent to the extent that it can be in a declassified sense. And that's I think what it shows. MR. CIRINCIONE: If I might just add, we don't think we've answered all the questions here. We don't think we've gotten to the bottom of the matter. This is simply our contribution. We are publishing the report today. We're putting it up on the web. There's already been over a thousand downloads of this report since we posted it this morning. We hope people will use the material that we have to conduct their own investigations. We think a lot more has to be done in this area, both to get at the correct understanding of what happened, and to build a political consensus for how to correct it in the future.

MR. PERKOVICH: And with that, and also inviting you all, we welcome feedback on the report and our other work also because we're always trying to improve. This is not an issue that's going away today.

But I want to thank you all for coming very very nmuch.

END.