

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

ASPEN SOCIAL FORUM 2012

AMERICAN WARS AND FOREIGN POLICY - IRAQ

McNulty Room
Doerr-Hosier Center
Aspen Meadows Campus
Colorado, 81612

Friday, July 27, 2012

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CLARK ERVIN
Aspen Institute Homeland Security Program Director

KIM DOZIER
Intelligence and Counterterrorism Correspondent
The Associated Press

STEPHEN CAMBONE
Former Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence

JOHN NEGROPONTE
Former Director of National Intelligence; Former
Deputy Secretary of State; Former U.S. Ambassador to
the United Nations; Former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq

CHRIS HILL
Former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq

JAMES JEFFREY
U.S. Ambassador to Iraq

* * * * *

1 PROCEEDINGS

2 (2:45 p.m.)

3 MR. ERVIN: The long war in Iraq has ended at an
4 enormous cost in terms of lives and treasure. And to take
5 a look back at the Iraq war, we've assembled a superb
6 panel to reflect back on it and to consider the
7 implications of the Iraq war for American foreign policy
8 and national security going forward. I can't think of a
9 better moderator for this panel than the one we've
10 selected, Kim Dozier.

11 Kim Dozier is an Associated Press correspondent
12 who covers intelligence and special operations and she
13 tracks the war on violent extremism. She covered national
14 security for CBS News in Washington from 2007 to 2010. In
15 a 14-year career overseas, she covered the Middle East and
16 Europe for CBS News as well as the *Washington Post*, the
17 *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the BBC. Kim was wounded
18 famously in a car bombing in Iraq in 2006.

19 MS. DOZIER: Infamously.

20 MR. ERVIN: Her memoir called "Breathing the
21 Fire, Fighting to Survive and Get Back to the Fight,"
22 recounts her attack and her recovery. And she's very

1 graciously donated the proceeds to charities like Fisher
2 House. Please join me in welcoming this panel and in
3 thanking Kim Dozier for moderating it.

4 MS. DOZIER: Thank you, Clark. It's an honor to
5 be here and it's also -- I really appreciate the fact that
6 everyone has caffeinated and so many people have come back
7 and sat down for this panel in the middle of the
8 afternoon. We have a great group of people here, three of
9 whom were last-minute additions -- Ambassadors Bremer,
10 Wolfowitz, and Khalilzad and also the Iraqi ambassador to
11 the U.S. all had to drop out with last-minute engagements.

12 So I will introduce the panel essentially in
13 chronological order of involvement they've just pointed
14 out. We have Dr. Stephen Cambone at the far end. He
15 served from 2001 to 2006 in the Department of Defense.
16 During that time he was twice nominated by President Bush
17 and confirmed by the Senate for senior positions -- I used
18 to do this for a living -- oh, everyone can still hear me
19 -- including the -- as the first undersecretary of Defense
20 for Intelligence.

21 Second, we have Ambassador John Negroponte.
22 He's been ambassador to Honduras, Mexico, the Philippines,

1 the United Nations, and he was the first ambassador to
2 Iraq. He was also the first director of National
3 Intelligence under President Bush as you've seen him
4 talking about on another panel. So thank you for a second
5 appearance.

6 Number three, we have Ambassador Chris Hill. He
7 was ambassador to Iraq from 2009 to 2010 and earlier
8 served as ambassador to Korea and Macedonia, and was
9 special envoy to Kosovo. He is now dean at the University
10 of Denver's Josef Korbel School of International Studies.

11 And finally, we have Ambassador James Jeffrey.
12 He was ambassador in Iraq until about 3 weeks ago, 2010
13 till then. He also had multiple tours there serving as
14 senior advisor for Iraq from '05 to '06 with a brief stint
15 as charge d'affaires during that time, and then came back
16 again as deputy chief of mission from 2004 to 2005.

17 So now that I've got everyone's bona fides
18 established, I would like to set out the purpose of this
19 panel as a chance to look back, ask some tough questions,
20 get some things on the record that you might not have
21 heard before. In our conversations over the past couple
22 of days, I've heard some things that I have not heard

1 before. It's also a chance to look ahead and ask how
2 post-war Iraq is playing a role from serving as a possible
3 al-Qaida safe haven that never existed before, to setting
4 a more positive example as a working democracy in a sea of
5 conflicted areas.

6 I'm going to kickoff with about 15 minutes we're
7 going to talk about the history, how we got into the war.
8 And I want to start with some bullet points, things that
9 we pretty much all agree we got wrong. The intelligence
10 which was cited as one of the major reasons for invading;
11 bringing in so few troops, which resulted in a great deal
12 of unrest directly after the invasion; the post-war plan
13 which seemed to change every 3 to 6 months; the de-
14 Baathification program, and the dismantling of the Iraqi
15 army which produced a readymade batch of trained officers
16 who knew how to build bombs and had nothing else to do
17 with their time since they couldn't get jobs except go out
18 and attack U.S. troops. And also why was the CIA and U.S.
19 military's analysis that an insurgency had started ignored
20 for so long back in Washington?

21 So tough questions; I'm going to start with Dr.
22 Cambone. We were talking about the intelligence. Was

1 Curveball the main reason we got into Iraq and tell us
2 what you think in retrospect about how we acted on that.

3 MR. CAMBONE: Well, I'm not sure everybody here
4 knows who or what Curveball may have been.

5 MS. DOZIER: Which is exactly why I'm leaving it
6 to you to explain.

7 MR. CAMBONE: But he was a source that had, as I
8 recall, come out of Iraq who had been debriefed some time
9 prior to the outbreak of the war. And he claimed to have
10 firsthand knowledge of the -- some WMD programs in Iraq.
11 There's a great deal of discussion about his debriefing.
12 There are other people here in the audience who probably
13 are more knowledgeable about the specific details of his
14 debrief. But a short answer to your question is, no, I
15 don't think it was the decision or the intelligence turned
16 on Curveball who subsequently, by the way, was found to be
17 a fabricator and whose information was subsequently proven
18 to be false.

19 I don't think it turned on that. I think it
20 turned primarily on the preponderance of the evidence. It
21 turned on the circumstances in which we found ourselves at
22 the time, the extent to which proliferation was an ongoing

1 concern, the behavior of Saddam Hussein's regime at the
2 time. It's forgotten that there was a active military
3 operation in both northern and southern Iraq where there
4 were constant provocations, the no-fly zones as a result
5 of the first Iraq war.

6 The fact that since that war and its immediate
7 aftermath, that is the first one he used, Hussein did,
8 weapons of mass destruction on his own people. There was
9 a preponderance of evidence that led one to believe that
10 it was reasonable to suppose that there was in fact
11 weapons of mass destruction in that country. So I think
12 Curveball turns out to be sort of the eyes on that sort of
13 leads everybody to conclude that the -- what we thought we
14 knew was probably right.

15 MS. DOZIER: A mistake to draw that conclusion?

16 MR. CAMBONE: Was it a mistake to draw that
17 conclusion? Well, that's a more difficult thing to say.
18 The conclusion was mistaken. To draw the conclusion might
19 not have been a mistake because in the end -- and again, I
20 mean, you know, there are enough friends here in the
21 intelligence community who understand us, I mean, you only
22 know what you know at the time and you have to fill in the

1 rest.

2 So was it reasonable to draw that judgment at
3 the time? I think the answer is based on what people --
4 the judgment they did draw that, yeah, probably it was.
5 In retrospect was it accurate? No.

6 MS. DOZIER: You know, I have heard from some
7 special operations teams that came in ahead of the
8 invasion force, dropped in on some of the sites. They
9 thought they were dropping in on to a nuclear weapons
10 site. And they found a sort of Potemkin village
11 situation, air ducts that weren't really air ducts, but it
12 looked like a facility from the air. Was this a Sy-Op
13 (phonetic) campaign by Saddam that meant to scare the
14 regional countries that went wrong, blew up in his face?

15 MR. CAMBONE: Yeah, I don't know. I mean, if
16 you -- I mean, Charlie Duelfer who did the second look at
17 the program inside Iraq, I think Charlie drew the
18 conclusion that it could have been a real program had he
19 intended it to be a real program. He had the means of
20 doing it, but they weren't there. Now, as a point of
21 fact, some of you may remember the Iraq survey group. I
22 was instrumental in having that group put together in the

1 belief that we would find in that country weapons of mass
2 destruction, scientists who engage in those programs, and
3 the like.

4 So we took it quite seriously. We sent people
5 across the berm in their full moth gear expecting to
6 engage in chemical or biological weapons attacks. So this
7 wasn't the kind of trumped-up notion that there were
8 capabilities there. There was a belief that there was,
9 and we conducted ourselves accordingly.

10 MS. DOZIER: Ambassador Hill, you were part of
11 some of the discussions in the run-up to the war. Do you
12 care to share any of those with us?

13 MR. HILL: You know, I'd like to take a wider
14 aperture of it. I don't think it was about -- just about
15 intelligence. I think that was part of the issue, the
16 interpretation of the intelligence, the fact that we had
17 sensors really turned up in the wake of 9/11. We were
18 listening to a lot of different things and so the question
19 was how you interpreted the things you were listening to.

20 But I think it was a -- the decision was a much
21 -- was based on a broader concept of we have this guy
22 Saddam Hussein in this critical country. He had a

1 reputation for, you know, for murdering people en masse.
2 I mean, anyone who's been to Iraq for 5 minutes and can
3 see what this person did, I mean, I went up to Halalbjja
4 where he had used gas against the Kurds. So I mean there
5 was a real compelling reason why you'd want to go after
6 this guy. And so -- and also in the wake of 9/11, I mean,
7 the mood was we can't let people like that stay out there.

8 So the real issue I think ultimately is, you
9 know, I saw a number that it cost us \$1.8 trillion, and I
10 think you can ask the question from that perspective is --
11 was it the right thing to do? But I -- you know, when
12 you're there, when you look at some of these just heinous
13 operations that Saddam had, you do have a sense that,
14 okay, we're doing the right thing and maybe some things
15 went awry, but it was kind of the right thing.

16 And I -- and you know, in this current mood in
17 our country where we look at these kinds of things now, we
18 say, my God, what was -- what possessed us to do this?
19 You know, we have to be careful about presentism. We have
20 to think about what the mood was at the time. And he was
21 a -- Saddam Hussein was a person who, you know, I think
22 arguably in the wake -- in the mood after 9/11 was someone

1 we wanted to take off the board.

2 MS. DOZIER: Yet arguably it also took our
3 attention away from Afghanistan, a still hot war, and took
4 a number of troops and resources from it.

5 MR. HILL: Yeah, and I certainly understand that
6 argument. I think people who are involved in those
7 decisions can talk about that, but I really think, you
8 know, whether Iraq has ever -- is always going to be
9 called the Iraq war as opposed to the republic of Iraq is
10 going to depend on the future, what happens in Iraq, how
11 it -- how our policy goes forth with Iraq. You know,
12 right now we have a very dicey situation there. I mean,
13 it is the object of a great game among Sunni Arab states
14 who want to restore Sunni rule, and the Iranians who want
15 to keep it as the only Shia Arab state.

16 I mean this is really the issue, and we jumped
17 into it, and so I think we have a responsibility to kind
18 of stay engaged. And I don't think that involves asking
19 second lieutenants with rucksacks to be negotiating with
20 sheiks. I think it's kind of up to diplomats to start
21 doing that.

22 MS. DOZIER: Okay, well, before we get to that -

1 -

2 MR. HILL: Okay.

3 MS. DOZIER: -- let's get back to we decided to
4 invade. The number of troops we chose, the plan, does the
5 U.S. just not understand how to occupy a place? Is it
6 something -- knowledge we've lost?

7 MR. NEGROPONTE: What I would say to that, well,
8 first of all, on the question of Curveball and
9 intelligence failures, I mean, it was a -- it turned out
10 to be a notorious enough mistake to cause the revamping,
11 the reform of the intelligence community. We talked a bit
12 about that yesterday. So I don't think anybody, you know,
13 questions that that was a serious mistake.

14 On the question of you take the invasion as a
15 given, then you have the issue of whether there were
16 enough forces, and I think this is fairly characteristic
17 of the way we get involved in some of these conflicts. I
18 -- two of us here are veterans of the Vietnam conflict in
19 one form or another and there we made a huge error of
20 judgment in terms of how long it would take.

21 I can remember a sector advisor in Vietnam.
22 Before we sent combat troops there, he was answering a

1 question from my deputy ambassador there, how many troops
2 would you need to clean up your province, and he said, oh,
3 one battalion could clean this place up in about 3 weeks.
4 Well, you know, 9 years and two Korean divisions later in
5 that very same province gives you some sense of how
6 sometimes we subject ourselves to wishful thinking. I
7 think that's exactly what happened in Iraq.

8 There may have been some errors in terms of the
9 way we handled de-Baathification and so forth, but when I
10 got there in June of 2004, it was clear to me that the
11 term reconstruction, and we had a \$17 billion
12 reconstruction fund, was a misnomer. And it was all for
13 water, electricity, irrigation, and what have you. And I
14 had to recommend to Washington that we reprogram several
15 billion dollars for building the Iraqi police and military
16 forces. So one last point, and again, I see this pattern
17 from Vietnam through to Iraq and Afghanistan.

18 We never in each of those cases early enough got
19 committed to the idea of building local capacity. It
20 always came too late, and I think as a result, we -- it
21 cost us casualties, it cost us lives, and it prolonged the
22 time when it -- the day when we would be able to exit our

1 own forces.

2 MR. CAMBONE: So Kim, a thought on that. I
3 don't disagree with the ambassador at all, but on the
4 issue of how many troops were committed and when they were
5 committed, there's a part of the story that is not --
6 either not well-known, or not well commented on, which is
7 the plan did call for another division to come in through
8 Turkey into the north and to come down toward Baghdad.
9 That division did not come in until much later. Had it
10 come in earlier, the 173rd wouldn't have been moved from
11 Albiano in Italy to in essence buffer between the Kurds
12 and the Sunnis.

13 And Ray Odierno was the man who had the division
14 at the time. He would have come in with the rest of the
15 force. And it's my belief that the political situation as
16 a result would have been profoundly different, because we
17 would not have had then the fourth ID conducting the
18 operations it would have conducted prior to May in the
19 aftermath in '03 and thereby change the political
20 attitudes and circumstances at the time.

21 MS. DOZIER: What drove that decision?

22 MR. CAMBONE: We failed to get the approval of

1 the Turks to move the forces through. That was a
2 diplomatic issue, not a DOD issue. DOD asked -- we
3 couldn't get there. For whatever reason, the Turks
4 weren't willing to do that and the others here may know
5 more about the specifics of it. But it's an important
6 strategic shortcoming, right, that happened prior to the
7 outbreak of hostilities.

8 And so as we go through and sort of think about
9 lessons, right, it is important that all of the parts be
10 aligned, right, and understand that you're taking risks if
11 you go forward without having done it properly.

12 MS. DOZIER: But General Shinseki had also
13 called for far more troops than just one extra division
14 and that --

15 MR. CAMBONE: No, that's fair enough, but again,
16 you know, the combat operations and then the aftermath,
17 right, you know, were two different sets of circumstances.
18 And so, you know, you really want a poke on the plan and
19 whether there was a plan for reconstruction and all the
20 rest. You know, there was. So where was the
21 miscalculation?

22 The miscalculation in my view was on just this

1 line -- coming back to the troops coming in from the
2 north. What the political circumstances were going to be
3 and how long it was going to take to take Saddam out of
4 the picture and what the reaction of the local populations
5 were going to be, right, and they didn't in the end mesh.
6 But that doesn't mean it wasn't a plan, and there wasn't
7 people who were intending to do it.

8 MS. DOZIER: Now let's talk about reaction times
9 on the ground, to -- you find out things on the ground
10 like, okay, the Iraqi people are not reacting as we
11 expected. The infrastructure is not what we expected to
12 find from the satellite images from the air. You all,
13 especially the three ambassadors in here, sent reports
14 back to D.C. various times, especially Ambassador
15 Negroponte, Ambassador Jeffrey. What was the response
16 when you told folks in the Pentagon we're seeing an
17 insurgency, we're seeing signs that this is running away
18 from us?

19 MR. JEFFREY: For you John. I was working for
20 John, so we very early saw that we not only were faced
21 with a considerable amount of violence, but that we didn't
22 even have control of the famous road between the airport

1 and the embassy and the Green Zone, and that we were not
2 focused on what we later came to focus on, and frankly
3 what we focused on earlier in Vietnam which is protecting
4 the population that was not part of the mission.

5 So the answer was to stand up the Iraqi army. I
6 won't get into the painful details that led to John very
7 quickly deciding that billions of dollars had to be
8 shifted from long-range projects and to supporting Dave
9 Petraeus directly and funding the police and the armed
10 forces, or indirectly through CERP programs, short term,
11 in the field kind of development assistance to get people
12 back to work and such because we realized we had a
13 tremendous problem.

14 We were passing that information on to
15 Washington. The solution was basically stand up the Iraqi
16 army and they will be able to take over the job. The
17 problem was the Iraqi army was not easy to stand up. It
18 took a good many years and a lot of fighting to do that.

19 MS. DOZIER: And in the meantime the insurgency
20 established itself?

21 MR. JEFFREY: Established itself, and then of
22 course in 2006 it really blew up.

1 MR. HILL: I think it's important also to
2 understand that the insurgency wasn't a matter of
3 Baathists or just Iraqi army unhappy with de-
4 Baathification or the decommissioning of the army. It was
5 a Sunni insurgency. So why was it a Sunni insurgency?
6 And the reason was de-Baathification was considered on the
7 ground to be a kind of de-Sunnification.

8 It was sort of we were accepting the notion that
9 with democracy would come Shia majority rule, and yes,
10 there'd be Sunnis invited to participate, but the
11 institutions that kept Sunni rule in place, namely the
12 Baathist Party, we went after. And no one saw it as de-
13 Baathification, they saw it as de-Sunnification. Hence,
14 the Sunni insurgency.

15 MR. JEFFREY: I would have -- I agree totally
16 with Chris, but I would have said -- taken it one step
17 further. The very focus of what we were doing in there,
18 which was to not only take down Saddam, but to leave the
19 country in the hands of its population, which is 80
20 percent non-Sunni -- Shia, Arab and the Kurd -- meant
21 that these guys were going to be out of power, out of the
22 position that they'd had since the Ottoman Period. And so

1 to one or another extent it was likely that they were
2 going to react violently.

3 MR. NEGROPONTE: Could I just say, I mean, this
4 is a sort of an agonizing discussion. Let me try to put
5 it in about three sentences. Instead of a successful
6 invasion with a quick result and installing painlessly a
7 new Iraqi government, we found that instead we had to go
8 through a 1-year occupation, billions and billions of
9 dollars in building up their police and armed forces, a
10 secular war, and several elections. But finally, I think
11 we're at where ideally we would have liked to have been in
12 the spring or summer of 2003. And so just by way of
13 illustration of how things can take 8 or 9 years longer
14 than you think they might when you plan them.

15 MS. DOZIER: Which is -- the common U.S.
16 military wisdom is that a counterinsurgency takes about a
17 decade, but it's -- the painful part is some of the steps
18 that we missed along the way. I still have to ask the
19 counter -- I at the time talked to generals, I've spoken
20 to CIA officers whose careers were scuppered because they
21 stood up and said before it was acceptable to say, hey,
22 there's an insurgency building here. So I have to ask Dr.

1 Cambone, what was happening when some of these reports
2 came back to the Pentagon?

3 MR. CAMBONE: They were taken with a great deal
4 of seriousness. I mean, I don't know about people whose
5 careers who stood up and said they were scuppered because
6 of having said so. There was a -- as I recall the
7 circumstances we had at the time, we're talking now --
8 this is March through September of '03, there was a good
9 deal of uncertainty as to how all of this was going to
10 shake itself out. I was there in June of '03. I
11 was there with a congressional delegation, Chuck also,
12 who's here, he was there with me, Senator Warner, Senator
13 Levin, Senator Collins, a number of others. And the
14 circumstances at the time did not lend themselves to the
15 conclusion we were headed rapidly in that direction. So
16 you get to the fall and there are reports now coming back
17 about insurgencies.

18 So the question then becomes what is -- what was
19 the implication of its being an insurgency, right? And as
20 you just went through John's sort of description, this
21 thing moved from being one kind of thing to another thing
22 to -- it morphed overtime. So that -- there was

1 opposition in the population is true, that there was a
2 center of gravity that was the insurgency in the fall of
3 '03 is a little harder.

4 By the time you get to the turn of the year in
5 '04 it's becoming clearer. By the time you move into the
6 '04 time-frame it's -- that's where we are. So these
7 things don't turn around on the dime. And the conversion
8 of the force, and I remember this vividly, starts in
9 August of '03 when the secretary said why are our people
10 still inside their armored vehicles, why aren't they on
11 the ground patrolling the streets and taking care of the
12 violence? And with that began the evolution of military
13 side of the reaction to what was taking place. I mean it
14 was a vivid conversation.

15 MS. DOZIER: So are you saying that Secretary
16 Rumsfeld was saying we need a counterinsurgency program on
17 the ground?

18 MR. CAMBONE: By '03 -- by August of '03, it was
19 clear that this thing was turning in a direction that was
20 not anticipated and was not planned for in the detail that
21 it eventually was by the time we got into '04.

22 MS. DOZIER: Let's get to the next pivot which

1 will then bring us to some of the big issues that I know
2 you all want to talk about, about Iraq today. The next
3 big pivot was 2006. You had underground fight between --
4 you had al-Qaida of Iraq trying to trigger Shiite-Sunni
5 dispute. You had -- the political backdrop to that was
6 the two were fighting over government. We were trying to
7 arbitrate, not very well. And you had the bombing of the
8 Golden Mosque of Samarra, a Shiite shrine, and the
9 decision by General Casey at the time to keep you as
10 troops on base and let the nascent Iraqi army try to
11 handle the unrest.

12 Now, I remember what happened over the next
13 month. The Shiite death squads started going out seeking
14 revenge and literally a 100 bodies a day started showing
15 up in the streets, many of them with, you know, people
16 killed by the Shiite tool of choice at the time which was
17 the power drill. So this was really horrific stuff. Is
18 that something we could have -- should have prevented? I
19 will let anyone jump in.

20 MR. JEFFREY: I would say yes. And we could
21 have.

22 MS. DOZIER: How so?

1 MR. JEFFREY: We did have a lot of troops there.
2 At various points by keeping on troops because of the
3 Najaf fighting in the summer of 2004, we were up -- well
4 over 150,000 troops and that isn't too far down from where
5 we were at the point of the surge. The question was did
6 the troops have the mission of going out and securing the
7 population. During my time there and during my time
8 working from -- in Washington on Iraq from 2005 through
9 2006, and then less intensively to 2007 until the surge
10 began, I didn't see that clear mission to protect the
11 population.

12 MS. DOZIER: And yet there was also the argument
13 being made by General Casey at the time, by the Iraqis
14 that I spoke to, you know, get out of our face, get off
15 our streets. You're more of an irritant. So I know that
16 that was driving their decision-making. I mean, at what
17 point does having a U.S. patrol in your street all the
18 time trigger more violence? I mean, what do you all think
19 of that -- did you think of that argument at the time?

20 MR. NEGROPONTE: And you're looking at us. I
21 was not -- I was back in Washington at the time and I
22 recall not so much what the marching orders of our

1 military was as much as the despair, the sense of despair
2 that was felt in Washington from the President on down in
3 terms of this sectarian violence. I think he saw the
4 whole project, the whole effort going down the drain,
5 really.

6 And that's when he commissioned a group, a very
7 small group of people led by his deputy national security
8 advisor to come up and spend several months -- as some
9 people in this room who were involved in various parts of
10 that effort -- to think about what it was we could do next
11 to try to salvage this situation. And that is when the
12 idea of the surge was conjured up. And even then I don't
13 think it had much support because the analysts, many of
14 the Iraq analysts were extremely pessimistic and I think
15 felt that there was hardly anything we could do about the
16 situation at that point.

17 MR. HILL: I'd just like to say I agree with Jim
18 that we should or then we could have done more on the
19 street, but I would also make the point that it was a
20 political issue that we did not understand. The American
21 public was treated to a lot of statements like these are
22 just like Nazi dead-enders in Bavaria. This was not about

1 party dead-enders.

2 This was a sectarian problem and I think we're a
3 little slow to catch on to that and slow to try to forge
4 a, you know, a government that involved everybody -- that
5 involved all the entities. That said, I mean, I think the
6 Shia were in a mood to -- for revenge against the Sunnis.
7 And I think it's a very, very difficult undertaking to ask
8 Americans to do that. And finally, I was in Iraq when the
9 U.S. military pulled out of the towns, the cities and
10 towns as part of the SOFA agreement when they pulled out
11 June 30th --

12 MS. DOZIER: The status of forces agreement.

13 MR. HILL: Status of forces agreement when they
14 pulled out in 2009. And I remember Maliki gets up and
15 says something that to me was really kind of hard to take.
16 He was saying this is a great victory for the Iraqi
17 people. And I thought, you know, how can he say something
18 like that? And then he continued and he said, but with
19 all great victories it will come with costs.

20 And basically, as he completed the speech I came
21 to understand what he was talking about which is everyone
22 wants to see the streets return to Iraqi sovereignty, but

1 everyone knew that the Iraqi army is not exactly the
2 world's greatest fighting force and there are going to be
3 many problems in terms of, you know, civilian casualties
4 and he's just -- he was simply getting the population
5 ready for those problems understanding that they have to
6 endure that if they're going to regain sovereignty.

7 And I remember that moment and thinking, you
8 know, this issue of sovereignty is huge for Iraqis. It's
9 really been the glue to keep that very fractious country
10 together. And I think the fact that we tried this 1-year
11 occupation as John suggests, probably as we look back, and
12 you know, we were looking at it somehow in the optic of,
13 you know, Nazi Germany in 1945, it's probably the wrong
14 way to think of the place.

15 MR. JEFFREY: To pick up on Chris, there was
16 actually two insurgencies and they were quite different.
17 The Sunni one with the dollop of al-Qaida coming in on top
18 of it, and the Shia one led by Muqtada al-Sadr, although
19 at various times other groups were involved too; some of
20 that was supported at various times by Iran which is a
21 whole separate subject, but much of it was basically
22 bubbling up from below.

1 Essentially, whenever you go into a country,
2 regardless of how good your motives, regardless of how
3 important and necessary, you are going to generate very
4 violent reactions. Yeah, these reactions are going to be
5 stronger if you're out on the street throwing water
6 bottles at people, but they're going to be there even if
7 you're ensconced in bases around the country.

8 This is the history of Iraq, it's the history of
9 Turkey, it's the history of any other country. And
10 Muqtada al-Sadr exploited that clearly, very selfishly
11 because he saw that this was a way to build up his own
12 political capital because that had resonance among the
13 population. So at various times we were fighting both on
14 the Sunni areas and we were fighting down in Najaf and
15 Sadr City.

16 MS. DOZIER: Let's talk about the surge. Now,
17 prior to the surge, there was a year of concentrated
18 intelligence-led special operations actions against al-
19 Qaida, against Sadrists and a whole lot of actors got
20 taken off the stage and then the surge came in. Do you
21 think the surge worked or do you think it was the year of
22 special operations actions before that? What do you think

1 turned things around? Do you think it turned around?

2 MR. CAMBONE: Yes.

3 MS. DOZIER: Sure.

4 MR. CAMBONE: Yes. No military operation
5 succeeds without there having been some amount of
6 preparation going forward. So the work that was done by
7 General Casey and others during that course of that year
8 was significant. You know, the Sons of Iraq -- the Arab
9 Awakening what was it, out in Anbar, it was terribly
10 important, and that had been underway for some time.

11 Those folks finally figured out that this al-
12 Qaida thing was not working for them and that they would
13 be better off coming to terms at least with the U.S.
14 military, there remained the political reconciliation but
15 at least with the U.S. military. And the strikes that
16 you're talking about certainly did have a way of -- in
17 military terms setting the conditions on which the surge
18 forces fell in late -- was it '06 and in '07?

19 My view is that they gave the final muscle, the
20 final push, the final cement to allow the things that --
21 the exhaustion that had begun to overtake the parties, it
22 allowed them to kind of backup, reconvene, and find a way

1 now to come to terms with one another in the face of what
2 was a significant strategic and political decision by the
3 President at no small risk to say we are going to do the
4 surge. He was the principal supporter of the surge.
5 There's no question about it, and he drove that, right?

6 So that was a -- in my view, a courageous, but
7 absolutely essential strategic decision which then played
8 itself out. I mean, the gentlemen here had a lot to do
9 with that, but the President took that decision and pushed
10 it forward. But I do believe that that prior year meant
11 an awful lot.

12 MS. DOZIER: Well, Ambassador Hill, you were
13 also -- you saw the end of the surge, saw the benefits of
14 it. Did it work when you were there?

15 MR. HILL: Oh, I think it clearly worked, but I
16 would just be careful how you define surge. I think you
17 really have to disaggregate it. And the reason I say that
18 is I think we need to be careful that whenever we're in
19 some messy situation, we say, oh, we need a surge here
20 like it's something that will fix every problem. It
21 doesn't. And in the case of Iraq, the surge -- and I'm
22 very pleased that you have talked about General Casey's

1 role before this all was known as the surge, there was an
2 awful lot of work, and especially work within the Sunni
3 community, we could see that the al-Qaida and others who
4 were really overplaying their hands. We -- our troops
5 went in, worked with local sheiks, I mean, used money as a
6 weapon of war.

7 This isn't very elegant at times, but you --
8 somebody is a sheik, I will give you this money if your
9 people stop shooting at us. If they don't stop shooting
10 at us, I will not give you this money. This kind of stuff
11 was going on and these were initiatives done by 22-year
12 old Americans, truly impressive. So I think one has to be
13 a little careful about talking about these sort of
14 cosmically big issues about surge, when really what we
15 were finding is our well-trained, extremely well-trained
16 troops were learning lessons on the ground and how to
17 apply them.

18 And finally, Jim has very correctly talked about
19 the Shia issue. But it was Maliki who said I've had
20 enough of these Shia groups in Basra. Our people were
21 telling Maliki don't do that. And in fact, Maliki went in
22 there, he got in trouble, he was over his head. And so we

1 had to bring in troops and the next thing you know you
2 hear backgrounders going to the U.S. press, actually
3 Maliki was in trouble, but fortunately, you know, good
4 thing we were there. Maliki took a tough decision,
5 created all kinds of problems within the Shia, so much so
6 that he had real troubles putting together a Shia
7 coalition because he participated in a very key way in the
8 surge.

9 And so I would just be careful looking at surge
10 simply in terms of seize, hold, build, transfer. There's
11 a lot more going on. And I'd be especially careful about
12 using it as a solution for other problems in other
13 countries.

14 MR. NEGROPONTE: Just by way of addition to
15 that, it seems to me that it's the surge plus the fact
16 that you do then have an Iraqi government that is starting
17 to evolve into a credible political entity, both through
18 building up its security forces and having gone through a
19 process of a couple of elections, and apropos of Mr.
20 Maliki, a prime minister who ends up demonstrating that he
21 has quite impressive political durability.

22 MS. DOZIER: Such durability that -- and such

1 confidence in his rule that he says no to another status
2 of forces agreement with the U.S. So --

3 MR. NEGROPONTE: Well, let me jump in on that
4 one.

5 MS. DOZIER: Okay.

6 MR. NEGROPONTE: Because I think we've been a
7 little bit unfair on that issue. And it's a subject I
8 discussed with President Bush several times when I was
9 deputy secretary of State. Ideally, in Vietnam, in
10 Afghanistan, in Iraq, we would want to have a residual
11 force in the country. You can leave them behind for
12 support, intelligence, what have you, the kind of obvious
13 things you can do that are sort of force multipliers for
14 the local forces. That's what we wanted in Iraq.

15 Mr. Maliki said, no, he didn't want any single
16 U.S. troop left behind. George Bush had a difficult
17 decision, do I insist on what I really want or do I run
18 the risk of a democrat winning the next election who is an
19 inveterate opponent of the war and just deciding that
20 we're going to withdraw from Iraq immediately.

21 So what he decided, he chose what I think he
22 considered to be the lesser of two evils, a status of

1 forces agreement that provided for our complete
2 withdrawal, but by a date that was far enough along so
3 that at least our withdrawal would be orderly. But I
4 think it is not right to suggest that it's this
5 administration that did not succeed in leaving or
6 arranging for a residual force to stay behind. We did
7 make rearguard efforts to accomplish that. But let's be
8 honest, George Bush is the man who agreed to that.

9 MS. DOZIER: And yet we did plan to have up to
10 5,000 troops, mostly special operations forces on the
11 ground continuing to work with Iraqi forces, hunting al-
12 Qaida, keeping Iraq stable. Ambassador Jeffrey, you --

13 MR. JEFFREY: Sure.

14 MS. DOZIER: -- you were there trying to
15 negotiate this.

16 MR. JEFFREY: Sure. But let me give some
17 background, and first of all, I not only agree with, but
18 pick up on where John left of. It was very clear that
19 part of the deal was we would withdraw all of our troops.
20 Again, in the context of 2008, they were a big issue when
21 Iraqis wanted to see their sovereignty manifest on the
22 streets and in the bases.

1 What changed between 2008 and 2011 is first of
2 all the Iraqis could see that we were going to live up to
3 our commitments. After we pulled out of the cities and
4 then after, in 2010, it was one tweak that the Obama
5 administration made on the 2008 troop presence/SOFA
6 agreement was to end the combat mission, because by and
7 large all the fighting to the extent there was any
8 fighting was being done by the Iraqis. The Iraqis could
9 see that we were on a path to pull essentially all of our
10 combat troops out.

11 So then the question was, it's not such a big
12 thing if we still have some American troops left because
13 there was no doubt they had already purchased soon over
14 \$10 billion of FMS. They were engaging us in many
15 military and intelligence operations and activities. And
16 it was obviously of interest to them to keep on some kind
17 of American security presence because of the residual
18 threat from al-Qaida, the possibility of the Shia militias
19 again. And Maliki was interested in this as was the Obama
20 administration.

21 The idea was -- there were various numbers
22 bandied about, but 5,000 including both trainers, special

1 forces, intelligence, and a lot of administrative staff
2 was the figure that we were basically focused on. The
3 problem is not in the troop presence. Maliki said I need
4 political cover because a status of forces agreement under
5 the Iraqi scheme of things had to go to the parliament, so
6 I'm going to need all of the other political parties or at
7 least most of them to support me.

8 Between the time that we actually laid out the
9 plan in detail to him in June and October there were three
10 major meetings of all of the parties including the
11 Sadrists. In the end, all but the Sadrists agreed to have
12 a U.S. military presence. What they disagreed on was to
13 give the Americans legal immunities, which is the key
14 ingredient of any SOFA. For very good reasons that are
15 global and longstanding for the United States, we can't
16 put troops overseas without those kind of legal
17 immunities.

18 On the other hand, the Iraqis, while they wanted
19 the troops, and they wanted what the troops would do, said
20 we're happy to have the troops, but we can't give you the
21 immunities to stay on the bases and stay out of trouble
22 and everything will be okay. And so we could not square

1 that, so at the end of the day we decided that we would go
2 with a more traditional approach as we have done in Saudi
3 Arabia and other countries without combat troop, basically
4 a combatant commander's forces on the ground, but rather
5 allied security assistance office, very allied to
6 diplomatic and intelligence sharing and other things to
7 try to do most of the training, equipping counterterrorism
8 operations without the troop presence. So that's how that
9 rolled out.

10 MS. DOZIER: But it has been posited by many in
11 the GOP that the Obama administration planned this, that
12 they didn't really want the SOFA to work, that they
13 sabotaged it.

14 MR. JEFFREY: I talked to President Obama twice
15 and Vice President Biden innumerable times and they very
16 much wanted to have a residual force -- we shouldn't say
17 force -- residual presence of American troops doing
18 training, counterterrorism, and other such activities.
19 And the reason is, and we can get to this in a second,
20 they could see that this was a success.

21 This was something that kind of unexpectedly
22 came out of the blue, was something that made America,

1 made their administration and made the last administration
2 all look good. They didn't want to risk anything if it
3 was doable.

4 MS. DOZIER: Do you mean --

5 MR. HILL: I had the same conversations with
6 Vice President Biden and President Obama. They did want
7 to make it a success and they did want to see an extension
8 of the SOFA.

9 MS. DOZIER: So the war is over. Let's get to
10 some of the aftermath questions, starting with al-Qaida.
11 There wasn't an al-Qaida presence in Iraq prior to the
12 U.S. invasion. Right now, the most recent U.S.
13 intelligence estimates that I had is that the al-Qaida
14 presence is around 1,000 fighters. It's one of the
15 largest al-Qaida branches, possibly Yemen's ahead now, but
16 it's large, it's dangerous.

17 The al-Qaida spokesman over the weekend talked
18 about reviving the organization to full strength in Iraq.
19 And we've seen a rash of calculated, coordinated,
20 sophisticated bombings. Have we produced something that's
21 going to be with us for some time?

22 MR. JEFFREY: Let me take that. The al-Qaida

1 threat was huge back in 2005, 2006, 2007. It subsequently
2 dropped and dropped and dropped to a pattern that was
3 manifest when I arrived in August of 2010. In fact, right
4 after I arrived there was a horrible series of attacks
5 around the country, bigger than the ones last week that
6 were all al-Qaida's. Since that time, again, they were
7 under a continuing pressure both from our special
8 operations, our intelligence, our multipliers, and the
9 Iraqi forces who were quite good in counterterrorism. And
10 the attacks dropped further.

11 But still about once a month you would get this
12 series of attacks throughout the country, and people
13 thought that they saw a spike back in early 2012. We
14 looked at it carefully. I don't really think it was much
15 of a spike. Now, what happened last week is somewhat
16 different. That is a somewhat larger set of attacks with
17 somewhat more causalities. Again nothing very surprising
18 compared to even 2010, let alone 2008 or 2006, but it's
19 something you have to watch.

20 Politically, however, the polls we've seen, you
21 know, the political branch such as it is of al-Qaida has
22 zero -- literally zero support in polling among the Sunnis

1 of Iraq, so that they have basically through criminal
2 activities a base of sorts in Mosul which is the only
3 place where they actually operate with any -- with limited
4 impunity. And apart from that they have a very skilled
5 capability of infiltrating suicide bombers and explosives
6 throughout the country. And they're going to continue to
7 have that.

8 The political impact of that however right now
9 is not very high. It has to be watched however, because
10 once before it was able to expand and have a considerable
11 political as well as military impact.

12 MR. HILL: They are not holding territory. I
13 mean, they are not holding territories. We're not seeing
14 sort of Fallujah go under al-Qaida command. So it is a
15 kind of different situation. But I think it does reflect
16 what is going on in the region. And probably some
17 countries that were more helpful in terms of combating
18 flows, either foreign fighter flows or financial flows
19 probably have other priorities right now.

20 And so I think it is to some extent one of those
21 externalities of the Arab Spring or the Arab thing,
22 whatever we're calling it. But I think it's pretty clear

1 -- sorry about that.

2 (Laughter)

3 MR. HILL: We're -- it's pretty clear that with
4 America gone or the perception that somehow with our
5 troops gone that there is a sense among some peoples
6 including this extreme radical Sunni that somehow the
7 country is once again up for grabs.

8 MS. DOZIER: Dr. Cambone, when you look back at
9 that and the invasion was about making the U.S. safer and
10 yet you've got this large al-Qaida presence that while it
11 might not be holding territory could present a
12 transnational threat?

13 MR. CAMBONE: Yes.

14 MS. DOZIER: So does it -- is it one of those
15 things that I guess -- okay, we'll get to -- we'll get to
16 the next question about the positives and the negatives.

17 MR. CAMBONE: Yeah, look, sure, I mean, and I
18 think Chris gave you a fairly reasonable answer as to why
19 those things occurred. And they were not eradicated in
20 the intervening period, but there were people who
21 survived. There are others who have infiltrated back in.
22 Is it possible now for recruits to be drawn from that

1 population to other places? Yes. So is there a
2 continuing underlying turmoil in the region? Yes.

3 So what does that point to? It really points to
4 the need for the United States to make plain -- plainer
5 its intention with respect to the security of the region;
6 its determination to stay a critical member of sustaining
7 security in the region, to do it visibly, right? And --
8 but not in a way necessarily that is going to result then
9 in the reactions that one gets when one overplays the
10 hand, okay? So a lesson learned, right, is one of those.

11 And the administration for its part has done a
12 number of those kinds of things. So the talk about the
13 deployment of Patriot missiles, the reorganization of the
14 Fifth Fleet, visits into various ports, all right, I mean,
15 there's a number of those things that have taken place is
16 they've been trying to send the message, that yes, while
17 there is not a large U.S. military presence inside of
18 Iraq, the United States has not lost its interests in the
19 region. And it is going to continue to play a leading
20 role in the security of that part of the world.

21 MS. DOZIER: Let me bring it back to the final
22 question that I had for all of you that we talked about

1 earlier, before we open it up to the floor. We lost 4,500
2 American troops. New federal studies say we lost about
3 719 contractors, half of them Americans. Estimates of
4 Iraqi war dead range up to 100,000 people. What did we
5 learn? Who wants to start? They were much more talkative
6 earlier today.

7 MR. JEFFREY: Okay, I'll start. First of all,
8 we learned that we can succeed. Iraq is a success today
9 for American foreign policy, and particularly American
10 military might. It was a very difficult success. It's
11 very precarious. I say this all the time, but every
12 morning the first thing I do is click on the Iraq news to
13 see if I have to modify what I say, because this is still
14 very precarious. It faces the underlying fissures that we
15 all know about between Kurds, Sunni Arabs, and Shia Arabs.

16 As Chris said, you've got interference by the
17 Sunni Arab states, by Iran, and a great deal of activity
18 by the Turks, particularly in the north, but not just
19 there. So that requires a lot of exactly what Steve
20 Cambone said, American engagement in the region. But
21 sitting on top of an embassy of 16,000 people and \$6
22 billion I certainly didn't feel lonely or felt that

1 America had abandoned me out there. So it's a success,
2 but it's a very limited success.

3 What we learned is these things are very, very
4 hard. Wars of choice are very, very difficult. They have
5 a huge typically negative impact on the population. Some
6 at least of what we see in Libya and today in Syria on the
7 part of the administration has to be a reaction to -- a
8 very negative reaction to the American people at various
9 points to what we were doing and not doing in Iraq.

10 Secondly, and this is a big theme but I'll just
11 touch on it because it's come up on almost every one on
12 the panels, this idea whether it's counterterrorism or
13 drones or whatever, right, but in the long run it's got to
14 be the political, the economic, the reconciliation, the
15 nation building and all of that. We tried that, we put
16 huge amounts of money into it. As John said, he had a \$17
17 billion budget and we doubled down on that at various
18 points.

19 It's very, very hard even without a roaring war,
20 even without a big counterinsurgency to do development
21 assistance, to do long-term nation building, to do
22 reconciliation of bitterly opposed political forces. If

1 that's the exit strategy for American troops, we're going
2 to have a lot of trouble. I'll leave it at that.

3 MS. DOZIER: Ambassador Hill.

4 MR. HILL: I think in invading Iraq, we took on
5 probably the toughest problem there is in the region.
6 It's after all where the Persian world meets the Arab
7 world, where the Shia world meets the Sunni world, where
8 the Turkic world meets the Arab world. Yeah, I cannot
9 think of a tougher place. And so if you kind of go into
10 the toughest place, don't just do it on adrenaline. Do it
11 by maybe doing a little homework.

12 And I feel that we should have done an awful lot
13 more homework about -- you know, when you look at a
14 dictator, the first question should not be how do we get
15 rid of him? The first question should be how did he get
16 there? And once you figure out how a person like Saddam
17 got there, that will help inform the answer to how do you
18 get rid of him.

19 Clearly Iraq has to be ruled by some combination
20 of those three communities, Sunni, Shia, and the Kurds.
21 That has to be how it works. But I mean, to go in and to
22 think the de-Baathification was akin to de-Nazification in

1 1945 as opposed to getting Sunnis out and replacing them
2 by Shia, I don't think we really understood where the
3 fault lines of that society really were. The fault line
4 of dictatorship and democracy was something we understood.
5 And it was -- we were right to rectify that.

6 But the Sunni-Shia fault line has been there
7 about a 1,000 years. And usually when you have a fault
8 line that's been there for a 1,000 years, you might want
9 to pay a little more attention to how you're going to deal
10 with that. So I must say it was a very hard thing. I
11 agree with Jim that it is going in the right direction.
12 And I would put myself on the, you know, the glass half-
13 full side.

14 And you know, I know President Bush will take a
15 lot of grief for the rest of history about the invasion of
16 Iraq. But I don't think anyone can say that he didn't
17 have the guts to take on the toughest problem in the
18 Middle East.

19 So I'm -- I hope we can stay with it. I hope
20 the Obama administration will stay with it. I mean, we do
21 have the world's largest embassy, don't we, Jim? I mean,
22 there's still -- we've got our Peruvian guards there

1 still, and our --

2 MR. JEFFREY: They're there.

3 MR. HILL: -- Ugandans and --

4 MR. JEFFREY: They're there.

5 MR. HILL: -- our Albanian gardeners --

6 MR. JEFFREY: They're there.

7 MR. HILL: -- and Bulgarian -- it was a regular
8 tower of Babel. You know, I'd go in there --

9 (Laughter)

10 MR. HILL: I use some of my Albanian, my
11 Bulgarian, my Macedonian, you know, it was great.

12 (Laughter)

13 MR. HILL: It's a very unusual situation. But I
14 don't -- you know, at this point I think we have to kind
15 of stay engaged on it.

16 MS. DOZIER: Ambassador Negroponte.

17 MR. NEGROPONTE: Well, I certainly agree with
18 everything that's been said. I agree particularly with
19 the idea of staying involved. I think we need to also
20 encourage the other -- our other Arab friends to be
21 supportive of Iraq. I know we've been doing that, but
22 it's really a critical -- I mean, if you talk about

1 diplomacy it's one of the most critical diplomatic
2 elements in this whole situation because when we went in
3 and began this project Iraq was really isolated from its
4 Arab neighborhood and that has started to get better.

5 The last point I would make is as we watch this
6 situation politically going forward and provided we stay
7 involved, I think we can influence their internal
8 politics, not to the same degree as if you had a 100,000
9 troops there, but we can still through our interest and
10 levels of support influence political moderation inside of
11 Iraq.

12 And the really key thing to watch, apart from
13 the evolution of their electoral process and the political
14 parties and so forth is whether their armed forces and
15 their police can become truly national institutions.
16 That's the real metric, can they become national
17 institutions or is it going to become -- is the army going
18 to become some kind of a Shia militia, which is what we
19 want to avoid at all costs.

20 MS. DOZIER: Dr. Cambone, you'd shared a pretty
21 grim lesson this morning that you took away from this.

22 MR. CAMBONE: Well, there's some grim ones. But

1 let me give you what I think is actually a bright light of
2 this. I think the decision to invade Iraq will prove to
3 be historically one of the great strategic decisions of
4 the first half of the 21st century, if it proves not to be
5 the greatest. And it will prove to be the greatest if as
6 has been said here we see this through.

7 And it will be one of the greatest strategic
8 victories of the United States, because if we can take and
9 make it a success in Iraq, if we take what I consider to
10 be some of the aftershocks that you see flowing through
11 the region, whether it be in Libya or in Egypt or now in
12 Syria, and after Syria comes Lebanon, and after Lebanon
13 comes Jordan, even after those comes Saudi Arabia, this
14 place is in motion in a way that it hasn't been for a
15 century. And we have an opportunity to shape that. And
16 it comes directly as a result of having invaded Iraq.

17 Now, whether you thought that was a good idea or
18 bad idea, the decision was taken. And now the opportunity
19 in front of us is enormous to reshape that region if we
20 stick with it and see it through all the way to the end.

21 MS. DOZIER: Do you think it was a good thing or
22 a bad thing, the decision?

1 MR. CAMBONE: I think history is going to prove
2 that it was a success.

3 MS. DOZIER: I didn't ask about history.

4 MR. CAMBONE: I think it's going to prove to
5 have been a success.

6 MS. DOZIER: Provocative way to open it to
7 questions. Questions from the audience, just a few.
8 Okay, and I'll get to you, front and center, because I was
9 giving you the challenge to get the microphone there.

10 MR. FULLER: Well, until I asked this question
11 Steve Cambone was a friend and a colleague in prior
12 incarnations.

13 MS. DOZIER: Please introduce yourself.

14 MR. FULLER: No, no. So if each of you would be
15 willing to answer this question, so if Saddam and his sons
16 were still in power and we had not invaded, so we had not
17 gone into Iraq and they were still in power, what would --
18 how would that have affected us for the last decade and
19 the Arab world?

20 MS. DOZIER: Don't know if we have time for all
21 of you to answer that, but --

22 MR. CAMBONE: Counterfactual history, Aaron.

1 That's Aaron Fuller (phonetic) by the way, former
2 colleague, friend. Counterfactual history is --

3 (Laughter)

4 MR. CAMBONE: Still a friend, he's always tough.
5 You know, I think my answer is -- comes from what I just
6 said a moment ago. I think we would have seen the place
7 still locked in a stasis that would have been relieved
8 only by the natural passing, right, of the various
9 dictators in the region. What's happened is there's been
10 an enormous acceleration in my view of change as a result.
11 So I think we would have seen the place still locked down
12 and it wouldn't have been good for us. That was not a
13 good situation for the United States.

14 MR. JEFFREY: I'll take a stab. It's too big a
15 question to answer in any detail, but I would say one
16 thing which we haven't focused a lot on. For most of the
17 Iraqi people that would have been a far worse scenario
18 than us going in despite the 100,000 killed and despite
19 the lousy infrastructure and all the problems, because
20 before 2003 the Kurds and the Shia didn't get very much
21 electricity in any case or any of the other services. So
22 I think from the standpoint of the Iraqi people, and I

1 think most Iraqis would be of the opinion that it's a damn
2 good thing that Saddam and his ilk went.

3 MS. DOZIER: And now, that's why we wish we had
4 the Iraqi ambassador here. Chris?

5 MR. HILL: I think we would have a bloody civil
6 war there by 2012. I think the Kurds would probably be
7 out of there by now. And you know, when you look at the
8 development of Kurdistan, it really started with a no-fly
9 zone. I mean, it didn't just start in 2003. It started,
10 you know, a decade before.

11 So I think Kurdistan -- some people argue it
12 already has one foot out the door. I think if Saddam had
13 been left in charge they would have had two feet out the
14 door. Saddam was in no shape to invade Kurdistan anymore,
15 he just couldn't do it. And so I think that would be one
16 big difference. And I think the Shia just wouldn't have
17 put up with it much longer. And that's where I think
18 there'd be a bloody civil war.

19 MS. DOZIER: Ambassador Negroponte, do you pass?

20 MR. NEGROPONTE: I think everything has been
21 said.

22 MS. DOZIER: Okay. Another question?

1 MR. GELLMAN: Hi, I'm Bart Gellman from *Time* and
2 Princeton. For purposes of provocation, I sharpen the
3 question and ask it in a way that I think only so far Dr.
4 Cambone has answered, which is let's stipulate that Saddam
5 was a bad guy, that he was hostile to U.S. interests, that
6 the present government is better both for Iraqis and for
7 American interests in the region.

8 With the full benefit of hindsight, if you
9 walked into the souk and someone offered to sell you that
10 change for the, you know, closer to \$2 billion than \$1
11 billion and the 5,000 and the 100,000, the strains on the
12 military forces, the destruction of Iran's principle
13 region military ally, the propaganda value for al-Qaida
14 and so on, would you lay your credit card down? Would you
15 now do it again?

16 MR. HILL: I'm sorry, who pays the credit card?

17 (Laughter)

18 MR. HILL: I mean, are you asking if it was
19 worth it?

20 MS. DOZIER: Yeah.

21 MR. HILL: I -- my view is it was definitely
22 worth it to the Iraqis. And I think from the point of

1 view of the U.S., it's a very different question for some
2 of the reasons you enumerate.

3 MS. DOZIER: Do you think it was worth it?

4 MR. HILL: You know, I have opinions about that,
5 and I've kept them to myself through the whole time I was
6 there, and I think I'll keep that up. I'm not interested
7 in sharing my opinion --

8 MS. DOZIER: Just asking --

9 MR. HILL: -- on whether it was worth it.

10 MR. NEGROPONTE: But I think it's an important
11 point. I mean, we haven't talked much about what the
12 Iraqis think, but I didn't meet many Iraqis who told me,
13 oh, we wish you hadn't overthrown the guy. And I think
14 Steve points to some of the huge opportunities ahead.

15 And we haven't talked about the economic
16 opportunities. I mean, if this country starts producing 6
17 million, 7 million, 8 million barrels of oil a day it has
18 a more western orientation than it used to have. I mean,
19 before it was in this stasis that Steve was describing,
20 but its big friend at the time from -- of the outside
21 powers was Russia if I remember it correctly. And where's
22 that going to get you? So in that sense I think a lot has

1 been on blocks that might not have been otherwise. I
2 mean, the last -- before the invasion, we were
3 administering at the UN the Oil-for-Food Programme. That
4 was our relationship with Iraq.

5 MR. CAMBONE: And not well. You know, Churchill
6 was asked that question, would you live your life over
7 again knowing what you know now? And he said if I didn't,
8 it wouldn't have been my life. So you don't really get a
9 chance to know the outcome before you start. So when you
10 say knowing what you know now, would you do now what you
11 did then, you know, begins to sound like a country song.

12 (Laughter)

13 MR. CAMBONE: So you know, you can't. All you
14 can --

15 SPEAKER: That might be a lesson that you
16 learned from this --

17 MR. CAMBONE: No. No, that's a different point.
18 And so I -- yes, I'd accept that as a question. But given
19 what we knew at the time, and what we thought we knew at
20 the time, and the circumstances under which the decisions
21 were taken, I think they are justifiable and defensible,
22 and as I said earlier will turn out to have been one of

1 the great strategic decisions of the 21st century, the
2 first half of the century. And if we follow through it
3 will be a great strategic victory for the United States,
4 not just for the people of Iraq.

5 MR. JEFFREY: I'll take a stab at that. Having
6 spent 3 years there trying to help push it in the right
7 direction, we should be very, very, very careful about
8 going into a country and deciding we are going to get rid
9 of one political system and introduce a new one, bearing
10 in mind I don't think we had a very good idea of what that
11 new one was. We were inventing that as we went along.
12 Wouldn't you say that's fair, John? (Inaudible).

13 And we kept trying and then we tried something
14 different, and it did work out. Steve is right. But as I
15 said it's very, very contingent. It may not in the end
16 work out, and we have very little -- despite all of the
17 effort we are continuing to put into it and it's
18 worthwhile and important effort, we have very little
19 control compared to all of the other actors there, whether
20 in the end it will work out all right.

21 So I would say this is a cautionary lesson about
22 that, even if it works out well. And if it doesn't work

1 out well, you know the answer to the question.

2 MR. NEGROPONTE: But at a lower level let's say,
3 -- now, you're asking the cosmic question. But I think at
4 the level one below that as to how to do these kinds of
5 things, if you find yourself again in these kinds of
6 situations, I think we've maybe relearned a number of
7 lessons of history; patience, be careful before -- look
8 before you leap. Nation building is not that easy to do.
9 And I -- for me the biggest lesson in that category really
10 is right from the beginning you've got to work on building
11 up local capacity.

12 And we've very -- I mean I remember in Vietnam,
13 General Westmoreland wanted to us to do all the fighting
14 and he avoided the whole issue of Vietnamization for 4
15 years. And it wasn't until Creighton Abrams took over
16 that we began the Vietnamization process. And of course
17 by then we had sapped the political will of the American
18 people for an enthusiasm for the enterprise. So think
19 about local capacity when you contemplate these kinds of
20 adventures.

21 MR. CAMBONE: You know, one of the great ironies
22 of the way the war unfolded and now speaking from the

1 perspective of having listened to the secretary of Defense
2 and the arguments that he, and Doug, and Paul (phonetic)
3 and others made, the desire was to in fact rely more on
4 local capacity, to indeed build up the force sooner, not
5 to engage in an occupation because some of you heard the
6 secretary's speech about the bone, and you know, you break
7 a bone and you rely on the splint and it doesn't heal and
8 all the rest.

9 So you know, he was desirous of not so much
10 trying to do this on the cheap which is frequently the
11 criticism. He was looking to do it in a way that would
12 have aligned the peace parts such that the amount of time
13 that the United States remained deeply engaged was
14 foreshortened by the speed with which local capacity could
15 be brought up.

16 Now it is fair to say that the training that was
17 supposed to have taken place, the electric grid being
18 stood back up, the water being restored, I mean, many of
19 those things went badly. There's no question about that.
20 But to the point did we -- had we thought about those
21 things, the answer is yes.

22 Did they go well, the answer is no. Is there

1 culpability to be found for the reasons why it didn't go
2 well? Probably; we can go in and dive in there and sort
3 of begin to separate why some of these things didn't work,
4 but I don't think it's fair to say that the thought hadn't
5 been given to it and what the possible consequences might
6 be.

7 MS. DOZIER: And you just thought it would be
8 easier.

9 MR. CAMBONE: Not easier. It wasn't so much
10 that it was going to be easy. I don't think sitting in
11 the secretary's office anybody ever thought it was going
12 to be easy. Everybody in fact I think thought it was
13 going to be hard and most of you remember the secretary
14 had that memo where he went through all the things that
15 were going to go wrong, most of which by the way did.

16 So it wasn't a case of thinking it was going to
17 be easy, it's just that in the doing of it, it didn't get
18 done in the way that people had intended for it to be done
19 which goes then to the point which things in war don't
20 usually go according to plan.

21 MS. DOZIER: Now I could have some follow-ups,
22 but I really want to get a couple of more questions from

1 the audience. Sir.

2 MR. FRIEDMAN: Richard Friedman, National
3 Strategy Forum. Lesson learned for the future to be
4 applied before we consider invading Liechtenstein or
5 Luxembourg, red team pushback. And there's a formula of
6 at least 10 issues that could be applied before you make
7 the decision to go or no go.

8 And they're pretty much the obvious ones, and I
9 wonder whether they had been applied water over the dam in
10 Iraq. But at least for the future, consider at least 10
11 of these things which is a one-size-fits-all matrix. Good
12 manners applied to the neighbors; that would be the Turks
13 and whether they would allow us to bring the armored
14 division in.

15 Time, blood, money, preserving institutions,
16 political vacuum, U.S. domestic political reaction, and
17 finally the regional powership if we get into a country.
18 And it just seems to be that those might be the elementary
19 things, and I wonder whether or not there is any
20 institutional red team pushback that can be applied to
21 future activities maybe to avoid what we've had in Iraq?

22 MS. DOZIER: Of course the CIA reformed how it

1 looked at intelligence after this and established the red
2 teaming process that helped with the Osama bin Laden raid
3 to interrogate what intelligence they had before they
4 decided to go with that. So was there a similar process
5 at the DOD that you took away a lesson learned and --

6 MR. CAMBONE: Well, not only away took away
7 lessons learned, I mean, that list of things was reviewed
8 and thought about. And as I say, I mean, you know, the --
9 it's usually said there was no plan for after the combat
10 operations. My sense is that it's not so much there
11 wasn't a plan, I'm not sure the plan is consolidated in
12 the way that they might have, first.

13 Second, I do think that list of -- the
14 secretary's list I made mention to you just a moment ago
15 has that in about 27 more things, right, of issues that
16 one needs to think about in undertaking those things. So
17 yes, should there be some institutional basis for doing
18 it, yes, the joint staff, like guys here and others who've
19 been on the joint staff we -- you know, exercises were
20 done, rehearsals were gone through. I mean people thought
21 about those things.

22 You know, war starts its own dynamic, and once

1 that dynamic begins it's all about managing it. And that
2 falls to the three gentlemen here with the ambassadors on
3 the ground and the country, and the head of the military
4 operation in the country. And they have to manage that
5 dynamic once it's let loose.

6 MS. DOZIER: I kind of want to get one more
7 question from the audience. Let's see, sir. Why don't we
8 do that lightning round thing? I want to get like two
9 questions.

10 MR. MYERS: I'll be very brief.

11 MS. DOZIER: Okay.

12 MR. MYERS: Ambassador Hill, my name is Bob
13 Myers (phonetic), and I have a question as to whether
14 those powers that decided to invade Iraq knew this fact
15 that 80 percent to 90 percent of Sunni and Shia marry
16 their first cousins. Was that a known fact because if you
17 invade a country where you're killing cousins you create a
18 lot of antagonism.

19 MS. DOZIER: That's an interesting question.
20 And one from over here, gentleman in the blue shirt.

21 MR. BARON: Tom Baron (phonetic). I'm very
22 interested in Dr. Hill's comments about learning and how

1 you take experience and whether we could have done more of
2 it here and I'm thinking -- I'll use a small example. The
3 leadership of the army leading into this had just spent
4 years in the former Yugoslavia in what amounted to
5 occupation operations.

6 And like, Ambassador, I spent several years in
7 Vietnam and there are relevant lessons there, but Shinseki
8 and others had just spent years. And he got fired for --
9 by Rumsfeld for suggesting it would take a much more
10 significant force to do it. I use that small example to
11 ask how -- why, how, at the top level can't we look more
12 accurately at the recent past lessons learned and carry
13 them forward before going these kinds of directions?

14 MS. DOZIER: Gentlemen. So had we thought about
15 the Sunni family structure and --

16 MR. HILL: Well, I can't say, I mean maybe other
17 people can comment on whether we knew about intermarriage
18 of first cousin, but I will say, you know, at the end of
19 the Gulf War, it's often understood in the United States
20 that we didn't march on Baghdad because the coalition
21 would have broken up.

22 And we always understood that without going too

1 deeply into the analysis that the reason the coalition
2 would have broken up is that our Arab allies would not
3 accept the idea of us going into still another country.
4 It's one thing to liberate Kuwait, it's another thing to
5 march into Iraq, and some of the analysis stopped there.

6 It might have been worthwhile to have a deeper
7 look at why the Saudis would not have wanted us to
8 overthrow a Sunni regime in Baghdad. And if we'd thought
9 about why they wouldn't want us to overthrow a Sunni
10 regime in Baghdad, i.e., it would become a Shia regime in
11 Baghdad, and mind you the Saudis wouldn't have believed us
12 if we said, oh no, it will be a coalition. There will be
13 some Shia and some Sunnis, and you know, everyone will
14 live together. I don't think they'd buy that argument.
15 So that's what was going on.

16 It was one thing to kick this guy out of Kuwait,
17 it was another thing to flip Iraq to being a Shia country.
18 And that's something we should have given a little more
19 thought to rather than just consider the Gulf War as some
20 kind of unfinished business, that by golly now that we've
21 been attacked in 9/11 we're going to finish it. So I
22 think that was a serious failure of concept on our part.

1 MS. DOZIER: Jim.

2 MR. JEFFREY: Yeah, if I could answer this and
3 to some degree get back to the question posed here, most
4 important thing I think despite all the things I said
5 today that we've heard was Steve Cambone saying this is
6 going to be a game-changer. The impression I got when I
7 got there and following on this before was that the
8 decision in the Bush administration was largely if we
9 succeed in Iraq, taking this guy down and creating a
10 democratic, friendly government, this is going to be a
11 game-changer and we've got to try this.

12 History has not had its final decision. It's
13 still quite possible and it really would be a very
14 important step, but it's also quite possible that it won't
15 after a tremendous cost. Had we gone to the American
16 people and say, hey, do you feel lucky today, let's roll
17 the dice, this may involve a decade, this may involve
18 tying up much of our diplomatic bandwidth, this may
19 involve a trillion dollars. And maybe it will work and it
20 will be a game-changer, maybe it won't, what do you think?

21 And that was what all of these red teams and all
22 of these other stuff would have produced was a lot of

1 worries and such. This was not like going into Kuwait in
2 1991. That wasn't easy, required lot of effort, but the
3 outcome was pretty clear to see. There was nothing clear
4 to see about this outcome that all of the problems that
5 people identified emerged and we've dealt more or less
6 with most of them.

7 So I would just leave it at if you decide that
8 this is going to be a game-changer then you basically have
9 to roll the dice. The question is how do you bring the
10 American people in on that.

11 MS. DOZIER: And yet we still have the Sunni-
12 Shiite divide there and the al-Qaida presence that kicked
13 off the civil war once before. So --

14 MR. CAMBONE: But you've got a government that's
15 functioning.

16 MR. HILL: Yeah.

17 MR. CAMBONE: And you have -- in its own way --

18 MR. HILL: Yeah.

19 MR. CAMBONE: Right? I mean, I remember being
20 there in '04 and all the parties being around the table
21 and this was a collection of folks who if they were on the
22 street and running around would have been picked up and

1 arrested and put in detention, right? So they were all
2 sitting there at the table talking to one another. They
3 know about one another and what they're doing.

4 So the question is do we give them the kind of
5 support and help that is going to take to get there which
6 leads me to responding to the question about additional
7 forces and back to my point about the approach at least
8 that was in the secretary's mind. And let me, despite my
9 point about counterfactuals, ask this question.

10 A short period of time in which the United
11 States is the occupying power by -- it's a period of say 3
12 to 4 years during which the United States is the occupying
13 power, which of those would one want to choose? So one of
14 the things that one wants to think about as you're
15 planning your campaign is how do you want to manage that
16 outcome.

17 And from the point of view of the department a
18 4-year, 3, 4-year occupation was not the choice that one
19 wanted to plan against that we ended up over a longer
20 period of time in combat operations and we intended is
21 true. And I've said that and we can go look and see why
22 that must be the case, but as a strategic planning factor,

1 do you want to plan for a 4-year occupation going in, or
2 you want to try to plan the thing in a way that you can
3 minimize the time of occupation, speed the period in time
4 in which the local people are able to take over the
5 functions that are necessary to run the country, and then
6 move into the kind of position we talked about earlier
7 which is lending the support and security and doing all
8 those other kinds of things. That's an interesting
9 question to take away from our experience.

10 MS. DOZIER: Ambassador Negroponte, any final
11 thoughts?

12 MR. NEGROPONTE: TBD, I mean I just don't think
13 we can make the historical judgment at this point. It's -
14 - our views are going to be influenced by the developments
15 over the next decade or so, that's my belief.

16 MS. DOZIER: I want to thank you for all --
17 taking part in this panel. You answered some tough
18 questions.

19 (Applause)

20 MS. DOZIER: And we've all lost friends in Iraq,
21 and I think one of the important things is to try to take
22 some of the emotion out of the debate and just really

1 answer the questions seriously and I appreciate you all
2 doing that today. Thank you very much.

3 SPEAKER: Thank you.

4 SPEAKER: Thank you.

5 * * * * *