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Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: Reassessing the Prewar Assessments

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Arms Control Association Press Briefing

National Press Club, Murrow Room
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1:00 - 2:30 P.M.

Panelists

[Greg Thielmann](#), former director, Strategic, Proliferation, and Military Affairs Office, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. State Department

[Gregory V. Treverton](#), senior analyst, RAND; former vice chair, National Intelligence Council

[Joseph Cirincione](#), director, Non-Proliferation Project, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Moderator: [Daryl Kimball](#), Executive Director, Arms Control Association

[Questions and Answers](#)

Transcript by:
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.

KIMBALL: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Daryl Kimball. I'm the executive director of the Arms Control Association. We're an independent, non-partisan organization dedicated to effective arms control strategies and education about those issues. I want to welcome you to this afternoon's press conference on the subject of "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: Reassessing the Prewar Assessments." I'm going to make a few opening remarks, introduce the panelists. They will speak each for about 10 minutes or so and then we're going to take your questions. So let me begin by framing this subject, which has gained a good deal of attention. And if you could all keep your cell phones and other things off while we're going here, that would be helpful.

So to frame this, as we know, the stated rationale for President Bush's decision to invade Iraq was based on what he said -- the administration said were intelligence assessments that made it clear that Iraq continued to possess chemical and biological weapons and that it had renewed its nuclear weapons programs. Now, to be sure, Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons, it used chemical weapons, and it pursued nuclear weapons in the past. This is not a matter of dispute. We're not here to take issue with that matter, but other issues.

During the 1990s, we should recall, the first group of U.N. inspectors destroyed the bulk of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons and dismantled its nuclear bomb program, but the Iraqi government failed to cooperate fully, leading to the departure of U.N. weapons inspectors in 1998. And for this very reason, the Arms Control Association, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and other pro-arms control, nonproliferation organizations pressed hard for the prompt return of U.N. inspectors to Iraq with expanded capabilities and authority.

Now, clearly, after this latest round of inspections we saw that more time and more cooperation from Iraq was needed to resolve the serious questions about unaccounted for nerve and mustard agents as well as chemical and biological munitions. Nevertheless, as chief weapons inspector Hans Blix warned, one should not equate not-accounted-for with existing. However, numerous administration officials did exactly that. The president and his top advisors told the American people, the Congress, and the international community that the failure of Iraq to account for the destruction of the suspected weapons meant that they must have them. And despite the October 2002 CIA assessment that Saddam Hussein was unlikely to initiate a WMD attack unless provoked, the president insisted that the Iraqi threat was imminent and that a preemptive military invasion was the only way to deal with it. But now, after three months, as we all have seen, the United States and the Pentagon have searched Iraq, have interviewed former weapons scientists in Iraq, but the Pentagon has failed to uncover clear evidence proving the administration's dire prewar claims.

In our view, and in the view of my colleagues here, it is now clear that Iraq was not an immediate threat to the United States that the Bush administration portrayed. We, along with an increasing number of others, believe that the administration made its case for going to war by misrepresenting intelligence findings as well as citing discredited intelligence information. Despite the growing evidence to the contrary, Bush administration officials continue to assert that their prewar intelligence supported their dire assessments and claims and that more time is still needed to find Saddam's chemical and biological weapons, that U.N. inspectors do not have any further role to play in Iraq in dismantling its suspected programs, and that there were other reasons for the United States to go to war in Iraq.

The White House and its allies in Congress are still resisting suggestions for an independent investigation of this matter. They are dismissing skeptics like ourselves as revisionist historians. And now we hear this morning from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that the United States did not invade Iraq because it had new evidence about Iraq's weapons programs, but because the administration saw the existing evidence in a new light because of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This approach in our view is, in the very least, disingenuous, irresponsible, and unsustainable. If telling the truth and sticking to the facts is revisionism in the mind's eye of this administration, then we accept that label.

We're here today as experts on intelligence gathering, in analysis and on weapons of mass destruction to help set the record straight, to respond to the administration's failure to take responsibility for its exaggerated claims, and to underscore what we see as the core issues in this debate about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction with respect to the responsible use of intelligence, with respect to the limits of national intelligence in combating weapons of mass destruction threats, and to take another look at the much-overlooked success of the U.N. weapons inspectors in Iraq over the course of the last decade and over the course of the last few months leading up to the war.

We have with us three people, experts with substantial direct experience on these subjects. First we'll hear from [Greg Thielmann](#), who's sitting here, who was, until September of last year, the director of the Strategic, Proliferation, and Military Affairs Office in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, more often referred to as INR. He will discuss the Bush administration's misuse of intelligence about Iraq's weapons capabilities from his perspective.

Next we'll hear from [Gregory V. Treverton](#), who is now a senior analyst at RAND and former vice chair of the National Intelligence Council, on why U.S. intelligence alone cannot support the administration's policy of preventive or pre-emptive military action to deal with WMD threats.

And finally we'll hear from [Joseph Cirincione](#), director of the Non-Proliferation Project at the Carnegie Endowment, who will set the record straight, or will try to, on the performance of U.N. arms inspectors in Iraq compared to that of U.S. forces following the fall of Baghdad a couple of months ago.

And as I said, following their opening remarks we'll take your questions. Thank you. And, Greg, the podium is all yours.

Thielmann: Thank you, Daryl. I come before you today as a recently retired U.S. Foreign Service officer with firsthand managerial experience in the use of intelligence on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. I always use that expression in quotation marks.

In the latter part of my 25-year career I served two tours in the State Department's intelligence bureau, INR, the last two years as director of the Office of Strategic, Proliferation and Military Affairs. This office was responsible for monitoring, reporting on and analyzing all source intelligence on a wide range of political and military subjects for the senior leadership of the State Department.

Now, from my perspective as a former mid-level official in the U.S. intelligence community and the Department of State, I believe the Bush administration did not provide an accurate picture to the American people of the military threat posed by Iraq. Some of the fault lies with the performance of the intelligence community, but most of it lies with the way senior officials misused the information they were provided.

After three months of intensive searches on the ground, no weapons of mass destruction have yet been found. But while the search is not yet over, I am confident in concluding that as of March 2003, when we began military operations, Iraq posed no imminent threat to either its neighbors or to the United States. Its military, exhausted by the long war with Iran, severely depleted by Desert Storm, and hobbled by continuing sanctions, was significantly less capable than it was when Iraq invaded first Iran and then Kuwait.

Its nuclear weapons program, largely dismantled by U.N. inspectors in the 1990s, was dormant. Its chemical and biological weapons programs, while illegal and potentially dangerous, were apparently directed at contingent rapid production capabilities rather than maintaining ready stockpiles. Iraq probably [did not have] ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons payloads to population centers in Israel, Saudi Arabia, or Iran. There was no significant pattern of cooperation between Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist operation, which had attacked the United States on 9/11. So the question arises: were these realities understood by the intelligence community? My answer would be, some were. Iraqi conventional military weakness, the status of ongoing missile developments there, the lack of a meaningful connection with al Qaeda, these areas were understood by the intelligence community, and the community's assessments were accurately conveyed to the executive and legislative branches.

There were other issues that were subjects of controversy inside the intelligence community, reflecting inadequate information and the difficulty of uncovering closely-held secrets: whether or not the nuclear weapons program was being reconstituted, for example; whether or not Saddam had retained a small number of extended-range SCUD missiles; whether or not he had chemical or biological weapons available for immediate use. Now, the ambiguity in these assessments was not faithfully conveyed in intelligence community reporting, so how did we in the intelligence community fail to understand the full reality, because some of the characteristics we describe today we would have described a little bit differently before the war.

Sometimes we made honest errors, basing our conclusions on reasonable logic, prudent worst-case assumptions, information from otherwise reliable sources. Sometimes our tradecraft was wanting. Occasionally malfeasance occurred. But I want to be very careful to separate error from wrongdoing, just reminding you that intelligence analysis is a very tricky business. You never have all the information that you want; information is often contradictory. Trying as an analyst to reduce the information to a

form that can be digested by non-specialists, or even knowledgeable specialists who have a limited amount of time to absorb it, is a serious challenge. And of course you have to expect occasional mistakes. An organization that is not willing to risk making mistakes is not providing good intelligence analysis and is not doing its job.

And just to give you a little bit of an example of what I mean here, the National Intelligence Estimate in October 2002 contained what I think we would assess today as an error. It said, quote, "Saddam probably has stocked a few hundred metric tons of chemical weapons agents." Well, we may have been wrong, but this was still, I would argue, not an irresponsible call based on Saddam's past behavior. The gaps in Iraqi accounting, the efforts of Iraq to hide elements of his program, and/or knowledge of current production capabilities based on industrial capacity and capabilities all make this not an unreasonable judgment at all.

There were notable deficiencies in the producing and packaging of intelligence community products. I would argue the intelligence community continues to be fixated on the warning function. Warning is part of the job of the intelligence community, but so is prediction and analysis. And to put it in other words, the intelligence community works very hard, sometimes too hard, to warn what could happen. It doesn't really work as hard as I think it should on what is likely to happen or what it would mean if it did happen. This is not a new problem or a new phenomenon in the intelligence community, the tendency, the temptation to stress the improbable and the implausible over the likely. And if you want a case study of this, I would cite my article in Arms Control Today, looking at the Rumsfeld Commission Report on the ballistic missile threat which was issued five years ago today, to this month, a threat with has not at all materialized in the way the Rumsfeld Commission said that it would.

There also have been some misleading public summaries of classified material. One would notice in the October National Intelligence Estimate that there is a fairly equal treatment of the nuclear, biological, chemical and missile categories. I would argue this is really a bureaucratic requirement, which tends to give the reader the wrong impression. If you look again at that nuclear section, there's not much meat there. It's mostly about what Iraq did prior to 1990, very little discussion and detail about what evidence we have, and we'll get into some of the evidence we had later. But there was a misleading impression given, but how can you, when you're making a case-and I'm afraid this was partly a document making a case-you can't just have a couple of sentences saying, and the nuclear program, which was largely dismantled in the 1990s, is still pretty much quiescent.

There is also a problem of cloaking areas of controversy in ambiguity. And to me the classic example of this is the aluminum tubes issue. The 27-page classified summary of the October National Intelligence Estimate, reported to the Congress and to the nation, if anyone was listening, that most analysts said that the intercepted aluminum tubes that Iraq was trying to acquire was for Iraq's nuclear weapons program to make centrifuges that would enrich uranium. And then almost parenthetically it noted that some analysts thought it was not; it was for other purposes. What the estimate meant to say, or to give you some sensitive information so you can break the code in the future, was that the larger agencies, CIA and DIA, supported this interpretation. Smaller agencies, like INR and the Department of Energy (DOE), did not. Well, there is no poll of intelligence analysts on these issues. We can't say "most analysts" and "some analysts." The relevant questions are, which analysts knew the subject, what was their opinion? And on issues like this there is a long and comprehensive and thorough vetting of the cases to be made, the evidence available, and it was somewhat disingenuous not to let the public know that the agencies like DOE, that knew the most about using aluminum for centrifuge enrichments, happened to be in that "some analysts" category.

There were also some inaccurate formulations. The Director of Central Intelligence, in prepared, considered statements to Congress in February of 2003 said, "Iraq retains, in violation of U.N. resolutions, a small number of SCUD missiles that were produced before the Gulf War. This information is based on a solid foundation of intelligence," unquote. This was not what the intelligence community said; the intelligence community said, it probably retains. What it said actually was, "We cannot confirm that all of those over 800 missiles that Iraq obtained have all been destroyed. The vast majority we can confirm that they are destroyed, but there are a few that we cannot yet account for." I would argue that's an important difference, and I cannot, for the life of me, understand how, in a prepared segment to Congress, that very important precision would have become so imprecise.

Now, the principal reason that Americans did not understand the nature of the Iraqi threat, in my view, was the failure of senior administration officials to speak honestly about what the intelligence showed. This administration has had a faith-based intelligence attitude, its top-down use of intelligence: we know the answers, give us the intelligence to support those answers. When you sense this kind of attitude, I would say, do you squash the spirit of intellectual inquiry and integrity that is absolutely necessary in order for the intelligence community to be well used? You have to suspend your judgments, at least for a little while, to hear what the experts on the subject who are closest to the intelligence think is going on, and that so often was not done. But I would make an important exclusion here because it would be very unfortunate if this were interpreted as a statement that we had this impression in the Department of State. I would say we never had this impression in the Department of State with regard to the secretary and the deputy secretary. We had a very good atmosphere, I think, within the State Department and INR bureaucracy in that we had the impression that what the secretary wanted to hear was our best assessment of what was happening. And I really say that without exception. That was the atmosphere that we worked under in INR, and I'm very grateful for that, especially when I draw some conclusions about how it may have been in other agencies.

Going down the list of administration deficiencies, or distortions, one has to talk about, first and foremost, the nuclear threat being hyped. I've already said I don't think there was a reconstitution or active rejuvenation of the nuclear weapons program. Most of the stories here are familiar to you: the uranium from Niger story, the aluminum tube story. But I would just remind you that much of the critical assessment of this occurred months before it became known to the public. And on both of these things, in the case of Niger, at least from the State Department's perspective, INR's perspective, this was a bad report; it wasn't worth wasting any more time on. In the case of the aluminum tubes, there was a genuine controversy, and yet that genuine controversy was not honestly described when you had senior administration officials talking about it. Condoleezza Rice said the aluminum could only really be used for centrifuges. No one party to the debates would have ever made a statement like that. U.S. news quoted an administration official saying, "What turnip truck do you think we fell off of? There's no doubt about whether the aluminum tubes could be used for gas centrifuges" - an unnamed administration official. Well, there were doubts about it. There were doubts that increased over time and there were doubts by serious people who had serious knowledge of the issue.

I won't elaborate on the inflation of the al Qaeda/Saddam connection except to say it's extremely unfortunate, I think it's obvious, that it occurred.

I would mention just briefly that there was another kind of distortion, and that is the absence of honest intellectual discussion about the other threats existing in the world concurrently with the Iraqi threat. Where was the discussion of comparison with the threat posed by either Iran or North Korea? I mean, they were, after all, all part of the "axis of evil," but in those days leading up to the October National Intelligence Estimate and a vote on the war resolution, we didn't know that North Korea had just told us they were proceeding with their nuclear weapons program. We did of course know that Iran had a very active missile development program and was not constrained, unlike Iraq. We knew about the terrorist threat in Afghanistan, the continuing threat there and the much greater ease of al Qaeda operating there than in Iraq, but you heard very little comparison being made about one threat against another threat at a critical decision point for the Congress.

I had earlier tried to differentiate error from malfeasance, but I should also differentiate inconsequential malfeasance from consequential distortion. And I'm afraid I would have to cite some of the examples of the president in looking at some of the most striking examples of distortions that have weighty consequences. When President Bush spoke to the nation on March 17th, he said, "Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised" - "leaves no doubt." Obviously what he was probably referring to was the continued Iraqi interest in chemical and biological weapons. He assumed that there was a possession of these weapons. It was not a known fact within the intelligence community. The most lethal weapons ever devised? Well, ladies and gentlemen, nuclear weapons are the most lethal weapons ever devised. Iraq had no nuclear weapons and it had a program that was not being actively rejuvenated. I think you could even argue that a B-29 with an incendiary bomb, or a fleet of them, is a much more lethal weapon than the biological and chemical weapons programs of Iraq.

Then there's the connection to al Qaeda, and just to give you a flavor - remind you of what President Bush said, "Terror cells and outlaw regimes building weapons of mass destruction are different faces of the same evil." The president said, "Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of al Qaeda. Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans, this time armed by Saddam Hussein." And then, in his end-of-combat-operations speech on the carrier, Abraham Lincoln, he said, "The liberation of Iraq is a crucial advance in the campaign against terror. We have removed an ally of al Qaeda." Saddam and Osama allies; different faces of the same evil. This is not according to most of the experts on terrorism and the Middle East that I talked to. I didn't take a poll, I admit, but since I couldn't find any experts who had this point of view, I feel confident in saying this.

I'll just conclude by noting that Congressman Tom DeLay was quoted in today's paper defending the president's approach, noting it's very easy to pick one little flaw here and one little flaw there. Well, my response is, a little flaw in presentation here and a little flaw there and pretty soon you have fostered a fundamentally flawed view of reality, seriously eroding the credibility of the U.S. government in the process.

Kimball: Thank you, Greg. (Applause.) We'll now hear from another Greg, Gregory Treverton.

Treverton: Thanks, Daryl. It's a pleasure to be here, particularly on a panel in which Gregs are appropriately represented. I should make the ritual disclaimer that anything I say should not be attributed to RAND. RAND, as you know, doesn't take stands, and more to the point, anything I said would be disagreed with by at least someone else at RAND. Most of what I'll say in my brief opening remarks really will complement rather than continue what Greg Thielmann said. I can't, however, resist just two quick comments. They're very supportive of what Greg said.

It takes me all to the bureaucraties and theology of doing national intelligence estimates. That's a subject that would keep us here until tomorrow. We won't do that, but I think point one would be if you look at the public documents, the public release of the NIE, the National Intelligence Estimate, and its companion piece by the British, the Joint Intelligence Committee, last fall, those stand pretty well on their merits as solid, careful pieces of intelligence in an area that is politically loaded, as we know, and where there's too little evidence.

Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence [Stephen] Cambone recently said-he got it exactly right-"Intelligence is not evidence. It's a piece of a mosaic on which you base policy." The difficulty is, at least from my perspective, that the administration, for understandable reasons, mostly of public presentation, did turn intelligence into evidence, or seek to, in making the best bumper-sticker, quickly apprehendable case for moving into Iraq that it could.

Let me then turn to what is my complementary subject. It's the subject of my remarks, and as well my piece in Arms Control Today. There the central argument is that Mr. Bush has begun to articulate a quite stunning doctrine. It's not yet codified as a doctrine, and it's always dangerous to do so in Washington, but one that is anticipatory, preemptive and unilateral if need be. There's a lot to be said for that doctrine, but the point is-from my perspective-for all its technical wizardry, the U.S. intelligence community still lacks the ability to locate, target and take out some opponents' weapons of mass destruction capability with any precision. Still, and for the foreseeable future, taking out a foe's WMD means, as it did in Iraq, taking out the foe.

Let me embellish that with just a couple quick points. First, the record of intelligence in the war against Iraq I think is a quite impressive one, and it ought not to be lost in the controversy we're having now. It was in the context of absolute air supremacy. The United States had layers of sensors, from satellites all the way down to Special Forces and troops on the ground. It managed what is now called multi-int. This is bright, young, computer-savvy analysts, mostly working around the edges of existing organizations rather than through them, working together to try and put signals from different sources, from signals from imagery, from interviews or espionage reports together very quickly to provide support for the war fighters. It was very impressive at making the battlefield transparent for American forces, at reducing American casualties and making it easier to target opponents. The kinds of communications problems both organizational and in terms of civil bandwidth that we had in Desert Storm were much

less in evidence. We're very good at getting information together and back to the war fighters.

Second point, though, would be that no matter how impressive that was, it's plain that before the war we weren't anywhere near the capacity to even know about the exact state of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, much less destroy them, much less destroy them preemptively without a major war. As you know, the U.N. weapons inspectors were expelled in 1998, but at least their years provided some baseline of work. And if you ask about the other instant case, North Korea, there too it shows even more graphically how difficult it is to know about, still less locate, still less hit weapons of mass destruction in any selective, surgical or preemptive way.

As you know, since my time in the National Intelligence Council, we've judged that North Korea, probably the best one can do, has one or two nuclear weapons but no idea where they might be; no idea where they might be in the myriad of tunnels that the North Koreans dig. There is also the unhappiness of geography that puts Seoul within easy artillery range of North Korea, so selective preemption is not an option. We look at the history of 1994, the last nuclear crisis. The Clinton administration also talked about, thought about, looked at military options against WMD, including selective ones, and realized that they just didn't exist.

More generally, while what's called ISR in the intelligence community-intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance-has gotten very much better. We're in a class by ourselves in the world. It still isn't good enough and won't be good enough to locate a few weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, the things that are difficult read like a catalogue of things that would-be proliferators will do to make it hard for us to find them. It's very difficult to locate things that are buried or that are concealed. Those are exactly what you do with your weapons programs of mass destruction. We're making progress at identifying signatures from chemicals or other emanations from facilities, but we're only getting better at that. We're getting a lot better at detecting things that are moving, though that's still difficult when there's lots of clutter on the ground. But typically adversaries would hide not-convenient-enough-to-move weapons of mass destruction. So the point is that as we think about trying to hit others before they hit us, perfectly understandable, we're a long ways from having the intelligence capability to find things with that kind of precision, still less hit them.

Let me make just one concluding point, and that is it seems to me this state of affairs suggests the continuing value of multilateral inspections through the U.N. or other bodies. Are they a panacea? Of course not. Could we verify certain kinds of bans on North Korean programs, even with lots of onsite inspection? Probably not. But if you look, interestingly, at the contrast between Iraq and North Korea, it is instructive. Well, as I said, the inspectors, as you know, were kicked out of Iraq in 1998. They did roam around for seven years and found a lot, destroyed a lot, built at least some baseline for further analysis. In the case of North Korea, by contrast, there was only one inspection by the IAEA, and that's 10 years ago. So we lack the kind of baseline that might permit multilateral efforts to work as closely with national intelligence as circumstances permit, to do much better, not at pinpointing locations for preemption of weapons of mass destruction, but at giving ourselves some sense for what's there and what's not.

Thanks.

(Applause.)

Kimball: Thank you, Greg. Now we'll hear from Joe Cirincione.

Cirincione: Thank you very much, Daryl, and I'd like to thank the Arms Control Association for sponsoring this press conference today. It's an honor to be in the panel with both these fine experts, and I must say Greg Thielmann in particular. I admire your courage and your forthrightness in coming forth and sharing the information that you have accumulated through so many years of dedicated service to our nation.

I'm going to just make a few brief remarks. I'd like to focus my remarks on three essential points, and the first follows from what Greg Treverton had to say, and that's a subject that has been little discussed in the past few months, and it's part of our necessary reassessment, reassessing the effectiveness of

the U.N. inspection process and of inspections in general as a tool for preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In light of the past three months of fruitless searches by U.S., British, and Australian experts, the UNMOVIC inspection process in Iraq now looks much better than critics at the time claimed. It appears that the inspection process was working, and if it had been given enough time and enough resources, could have continued to work and effectively stymied and prevented any new Iraqi efforts on weapons of mass destruction. Never have so few been criticized by so many with so little justification.

Second, the three months of U.N. inspections and the three months of U.S. searches now make it increasingly clear that the nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs and the missile programs did not exist on the scale that the administration claimed before the war. We can now conclude with a fair degree of confidence that a large number of the claims made by senior officials before the war was simply not true. We can judge that others are unlikely to be proven true, and reserve judgment on others pending developments over the next few months.

Three, it appears that Iraq may have continued programs of research on some weapons, trying to keep intact elements for restarting weapons programs after international inspections or sanctions had ended, but there were not programs involving the large-scale production of ready-to-use chemical or biological weapons or missile systems, nor the prospect that Iraq would soon have a nuclear weapon.

Let me fill in some more details on the inspection process. Before the war, U.N. inspectors from UNMOVIC and from the IAEA visited over 600 suspect sites in Iraq, including 44 sites never previously inspected. They discovered several items in violation of the prohibitions imposed by the U.N. resolutions and supervised the destruction of 72 al Samoud missiles, which exceeded the allowed 150-kilometer flight-range by some 30 kilometers, as well as related prohibited missile launchers, missile engines, and casting chambers for missile parts. They also discovered and destroyed fuel spray tanks and 122-millimeter rocket warheads that could have been used to deliver chemical or biological warfare agents. These were all violations of U.N. resolutions, but they were in the process of being discovered and corrected.

At the time, their work was heavily criticized and even mocked by administration officials and pro-war advocates in the media and many research institutes. Now, with the benefit of these three months of searches by thousands of U.S., British and Australian troops and imported experts, we can conclude that in fact the U.N. inspections were working remarkably well. As the Foreign Affairs Committee of the British House of Commons reported this week, these U.S., British and Australian troops have now visited over 230 suspected sites but have uncovered, quote, "little evidence of proscribed weapons and materials." This is just an official finding of the obvious. They have scoured all the sites specifically mentioned in pre-war claims as having expanded their production facilities or believed by the administration to be engaged in large-scale production of chemical or biological warfare agents.

They have not found any evidence of any prohibited activities at any of these sites, nor have the troops found any evidence of unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, which formed a central and very dramatic part of Secretary of State Colin Powell's testimony before the United Nations in February. Nor have they found any evidence of the dozens or more Scud missiles, which were said to exist. In his U.N. testimony, Secretary Powell cited very specific intelligence of Iraqi movements of Scud and Scud warheads filled with biological and chemical warfare agents from Baghdad into western Iraq. It made the U.N. inspectors look like fools. But they were not fools; they had not missed these Scuds. These Scuds did not and do not exist. No sign of these missiles or warheads have been found.

It is now fair to say that the U.N. inspection process was working, and if given the time and resources necessary, could have had a good chance of both preventing any ongoing programs, discovering any activities that were underway, and ending a good deal of this low-level activity, such as the hiding of critical blueprints and parts recently unearthed in the backyard of an Iraqi scientist who came forward, and preventing the restart of any of these programs as long as the UNMOVIC plan had been allowed to continue. Remember, the inspectors were never going to leave Iraq. This was an onsite monitoring and verification regime. There would never be a time when Saddam would be allowed to roam free to restart these programs without inspectors looking over his shoulders and being able to discover it.

Let me just say a word on the threat assessments. I've only got four more minutes. It's clear by now, as you go and you look back at what happened with the threat assessment process, that the assessments and warnings from the administration followed a bell curve. From 1998 to 2001 they followed a fairly low-level of concern about Iraqi programs. It then rose dramatically in 2002, peaking in warnings about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program in 2003 at the start of the war, and then declined in the weeks and months after the war to lowered expectations about the size of the arsenals and apparently little concern about the use or transfer of these weapons or capabilities. How little concern the administration now has about these programs is how little planning went into guarding and seizing the nuclear facilities and how little concern there apparently is about the transfer or sale of any weapons of mass destruction that they apparently still believe may exist in Iraq.

In many cases during this period, as Greg has pointed out, the public statements went beyond the consensus intelligence estimates at the time. At the Carnegie Endowment we have spent a lot of time over the last few weeks scrubbing these assessments, and two things are clear. One is that the public statements went far beyond the now-unclassified and publicly available intelligence assessments. All the "could-be" and "may-have" and "possibly" were dropped from the public statements, and they became "is," "has" and "definitely." So the administration officials repeatedly went beyond the existing intelligence assessments, and in some of these cases this included the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, who should have known better.

But a second process was underway, and that's the transformation of the assessments themselves. When we went back and looked at the intelligence assessments on Iraqi programs-and you can all do this; you can just go to the CIA website, cia.gov, and look at reports and look on the unclassified portions of the biannual intelligence assessments provided by the intelligence agencies to the Congress, reporting on the "Activities of Foreign Governments in Regards to Weapons of Mass Destruction;" long title, short reports. You can go there or just go to our website, proliferationnews.org, and click on "[threat assessments](#)" and we'll give them there for you.

We've done an assessment of this, which we posted on proliferationnews.org called "Follow the Assessments." And what it details is this: from 1998 to 2001, the consensus of the intelligence agency was that most of Iraq's chemical, biological, nuclear and long-range missile capability had been destroyed by and during the 1991 Gulf War and that U.N. inspections and subsequent military actions destroyed the rest. Two, there was not hard evidence-not hard evidence-that any chemical or biological weapons remained in Iraq, but there were some concerns about renewed production. Three, as Iraq rebuilt some of the equipment for civilian use, it could also be used to manufacture chemical or biological weapons. And, four, an inspections regime was necessary to determine the status of these programs.

What happened in 2002 was that these assessments dramatically changed, but not because of new evidence. As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said today in testimony before the Congress, quote, "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 evidence in a dramatic new light, through the prism of our experience of 9/11." Well, this is a shocking statement. If Secretary Rumsfeld had made this statement a year ago or six month ago, there would have been a very different debate about the war. The administration officials repeatedly gave the impression, and in fact said, that they had new evidence. They repeatedly cited very specific instances where there were weapons: we know without a doubt, we know with great certainty. Donald Rumsfeld himself said, we know they're here, here, and here. Well; that has got to be new evidence because it sure wasn't in the CIA reports. There was no hard evidence, the intelligence agency said, of any of these weapons existing. We had to have an inspection regime to find out if these weapons were actually there. That reference to the inspection regime was also dropped in 2002.

Here's how I think you can best understand this, and I'll conclude with this. Lacking any hard evidence on Iraqi programs, government officials seem to have developed an outline of a threat picture and then accumulated bits and pieces of information that filled in that picture. As National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice explained to George Stephanopoulos on June 8th, the White House did not have one single assessment but rather formed a, quote, "judgment." The judgment was, quote, "not about a data

point here or a data point there, but about what Saddam Hussein was doing, that he had weapons of mass destruction. That was the judgment." Close quote. This, she said, was a picture that they developed when they, quote, "connected a lot of dots from multiple sources."

Former British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said of a similar methodology in the United Kingdom, quote, "I think it would be fair to say that there was a selection of evidence to support a conclusion. I fear we got into a position in which the intelligence was not being used to shape and inform policy but to shape policy that was already settled." I agree with Secretary Cook. I believe (audio break, tape change). How can we depend on the intelligence assessments unless we know and have confidence that the intelligence assessment process is not being politicized by whichever party happens to hold the White House at any given time. Thank you very much.

Kimball: Thank you very much, Joe and Greg and Greg. We will now move to questions. If you could please state your name, I'm going to briefly restate your question so that it can be recorded. We will start with reporters. Barry Schweid, please.

Q: (Off mike.)

KIMBALL: Thanks, Barry. Why didn't people walk out over this? Greg?

THIELMANN: Well, it's no secret the U.S. has a different culture than Britain does. I mean, in Britain, people resign in protest; in America, people don't resign in protest. So it's partly a cultural issue. There are whole books written on this, "Resignation in Protest" is one that comes to mind; I have read it. (Chuckles.)

I would remind you that three Foreign Service officers resigned over the handling of the Iraq war. I don't think it got very much press attention. I have told people that the metaphor that comes to mind for me is canaries in a cage-the way that miners used to take canaries in a cage to find out whether there was poisonous gas in the air because the canaries would die first. And my rule of thumb is whenever you see a cluster of U.S. Foreign Service officers resigning, you better take a deep breath and check and see what kind of policy you have. It happened in Kosovo, it happened again in Iraq, but no one paid much attention.

It's not career enhancing to resign. That's the easiest answer. Loyalty is so valued. Resigning in protest is so valued that you're basically burning a bridge you will never re-cross. There are a few exceptions. So that's mainly my answer. The culture of the foreign service is that you try to serve honorably one president after another, you try to do the best job you can, you try to minimize the times when you're put in a situation when your conscience finds it intolerable-and there are ways to do that-and then you try to limit damage.

And I would argue that you could even find examples in the testimony of Colin Powell to the U.N. Security Council in February of him limiting damage to his own integrity and to the credibility of the U.S. He did not mention the Niger story; little-noticed at the time, I don't know why not. It was only eight days earlier the president had cited that as one of the only two pieces of evidence he wanted to talk about on the reconstitution. No one pointed out this non-barking dog at the time. Colin Powell -

[NOTE: ALL QUESTIONS WERE OFF MIKE. THE TEXT OF QUESTIONS THROUGH OUT THE REMAINDER OF THE TRANSCRIPT ARE PARAPHRASED BASED ON ARMS CONTROL ASSOCIATION NOTES OF THE CONFERENCE.]

Q: What about Secretary's Powell's inclusion of the disputed aluminum tubes in his UN presentation?

THIELMANN: Well, he certainly knew what we thought of it. The IAEA had come out with a tentative conclusion that it was used for artillery rockets and not for a nuclear weapons program. So that was one example, but also in the way that he talked about the aluminum tubes. I noted how the administration previously said they can only be used for centrifuges. He said: "they can be adapted for." Well, that's a big difference; and so it's less of a distortion, less of a deception than others have used. That's what people do, trying to serve the president and serve the truth.

Q: Was the intelligence put to the president in simpler terms so it could be more easily understood?

THIELMANN: I'm not the best source on that because I didn't do the presenting. The CIA has to talk to that. They're the ones that met the president every day. They presented him information that was not even cleared with the heads of other U.S. intelligence agencies, so we were operating in the dark about what the president was being told on a lot of these issues. They would have to describe that. I think part of the answer is obvious.

KIMBALL: Other questions? John?

Q: Were intelligence analysts worried about how worst-case estimations might be used to justify going to war?

KIMBALL: That's to Greg Thielmann.

THIELMANN: And I think that Greg Treverton would be able to address that also because the different functions of the intelligence community assessments are what you're alluding to there. There are some different functions, and we really have to do it all, really. But you are identifying a very important point, and whenever a nation is getting ready to go to war, one of the things you want to make sure that you do-and this is especially the case of the Defense Intelligence Agency-is to use prudent worst-case analysis. You do not want to be surprised by underestimating an enemy, and you're much less concerned in those circumstances and our military should be less concerned than the dangers of overestimating, in terms of having too many horses on the ground.

Other intelligence entities like INR have a somewhat different perspective on it. I mean, the people we serve in the State Department have to use finite diplomatic resources to apply to crises and national security threats; and so, that puts a premium on identifying what is likely to happen, not what could happen in the worst circumstances. And so we do have different institutional perspectives here, but ideally I would say that the National Intelligence Council that produces NIEs has to try to serve everyone.

So it's both legitimate and probably a good idea to say: this is what we think is going to happen, but we could be wrong, and if we're wrong it is for the following reasons; and if we're wrong, this could happen, it could be as bad as this. I think both of those things belong there, and it's partly a question of how you package them and present them. And one of my complaints in the past has been that NIEs sometimes, in order to make political points, they frontload implausible theoretical developments and kind of bury in the details. Oh, by the way, we actually think this not going to happen and this is what is really going to happen. That is not doing a service to the Congress, to the other people who use these things, and to the American people.

KIMBALL: Greg Treverton, you want to take a cut at that?

TREVERTON: Just add two quick points. One is that, in a funny sense, we're now having a debate about intelligence when, in fact, it seems to me that it's mostly not about intelligence. As I said earlier, it looks to me, if you read the intelligence out there, Joe may be right; but there was some evolution, perhaps under pressure, over time. But on the whole, it seems the intelligence stands on its own. So the discussion is really not about that, but about whether the administration improperly characterized that intelligence in making a public case for war in Iraq, and maybe whether or not the director of Central Intelligence is included in that set of people that may have improperly characterized the intelligence.

The second point I want to make is that-I know none of us will hold this view-but there is a sort of view out there that policymakers are clean slates and they listen attentively to what intelligence says and act accordingly. There are at least two things wrong with that. One is that the most interesting issues, the difficult questions, begin where the evidence ends, and so you do get lots of probablys/may-haves that are susceptible to very different interpretations.

The more important problem with that is that policymakers aren't blank slates; they come into office with very strong preconceptions, at least on some issues. And this is an administration that, as Paul

Wolfowitz was honest to say some months ago, had a lot of reasons for a lot of years to want to take down Saddam Hussein's regime, and in that sense, for it, maybe the weapons of mass destruction issue was only the easiest part of the public presentation. So then if we're saying what's the issue, the issue is did they not make an entirely fair argument with the American people about why it was necessary in their view to take out Saddam.

KIMBALL: We have got lots of hands. Yes, sir? If you could identify yourself, please?

Q: (Off mike.)

KIMBALL: Joe, do you want to reply? I mean, I think there is one thing that might be worth saying with respect to the issue you're bringing up, which is should any of us be surprised that there have been no dramatic weapons finds since the end of the war. I would say, and there are others, including Hans Blix, who are not so surprised. In part, that is because of our view that the weapons inspectors were effectively constraining militarily significant Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programs.

Would we be surprised if there is dramatic evidence that shows up or at least even some relatively small direct finds? I personally would not be surprised about that either because, after all, Iraq did have chemical and biological programs and munitions. These could be debris left over from those programs. They could be materials that were, indeed, secreted away before the war. So, I mean, I think those observations are important as we evaluate this, these questions. Joe, do you want to try to take a whack at that?

CIRINCIONE: Well, the first one is easy. No, we have got Iraq and we're not giving it back. I don't think there's any prospect in the near future of withdrawal of U.S. troops. Whatever we thought about the war beforehand, we are in Iraq and we are going to be there for a quite a long time, and it's in everybody's interest to make sure that this occupation goes as smoothly as possible with as few lives lost on all sides as possible. We cannot afford to have Iraq devolve into the kind of chaos that is happening in Afghanistan, that's number one.

Number two, most people in this field believed that there were weapons or weapons program activity going on inside Iraq after inspectors left in 1998. And so, when you hear people citing the fact that many people-Carnegie Endowment, Clinton administration officials-have said there were chemical or probably were chemical or biological weapons or weapons activity in Iraq, that's true. This was never a debate about weapons; it was a debate about war. Did we need to go to war to solve this problem? What we're finding now is, I think, is a surprise to most of us, that there appears to be far less activity going on. There appears now to have been far less activity going on in Iraq than we thought.

I fully still expect to find some chemical weapons, to find some anthrax samples, but it appears that what Saddam did with the chemical and biological and missile programs was pretty much what he did with the nuclear program; contracted it back to core elements, a cadre of scientists and technicians perhaps doing low-level research work; the core elements of it, perhaps some precursors, perhaps some actual chemicals, perhaps some anthrax, but waiting for the time when he could rebuild. In part, this is because he was having significant problems with the pre-1991 programs. So they were waiting to reconstruct these efforts. That is a threat, that is a problem, that is a violation, but it was not an imminent and clear danger to the national security of the United States.

KIMBALL: Yes, sir?

Q: Why are concerns about the war and the lack of WMD findings playing out so much different politically in the United States and Britain?

KIMBALL: Greg Treverton?

TREVERTON: This will be a California perspective, not a Washington perspective. My impression is that it's mostly that the American people have been convinced that the Saddam regime was a very bad thing for lots of reasons for a long, long time, and that why they were focused on mass destruction, because that's where the administration pointed them. On the whole, there was, particularly after 9/11, a general support that says let's take care of bad guys, maybe they're connected to terrorism. You see the polls;

lots of Americans believe that there was a link between Iraq and al Qaeda despite the lack of intelligence evidence on that score.

So I think it is that the general climate here after 9/11 and the long experience with Iraq and the perceived unhappy inspections process. Although I much agree with Joe, it was a lot more effective than it looked. But most Americans do, at least so far, give the administration the benefit of the doubt. Getting rid of Saddam was good for lots of reasons, and if there aren't weapons of mass destruction, that's a concern but not the same kind of concern as there is in a parliamentary system like Britain.

It's interesting, as a reader, that the best arguments for the war in Iraq were made by Tony Blair, not by George Bush, because Blair was willing to admit that there were arguments to the contrary, that it was a close call, and that you could have a debate. That makes it, in some sense, interesting, maybe surprising, that he's now being roasted worse for being, in some ways, more open about his argument beforehand.

KIMBALL: If I might just try to address part of that. To me, and it's an interesting question, it's difficult for us to try to understand fully British politics or culture, but I think we can say a few things about the American system. One of which I think is important is that those parties in the United States government who are responsible for keeping the executive branch accountable, for asking the tough questions, are themselves, some of the people who were pushing for this war, who were making some of these dire assessments based on the administration's interpretation of the intelligence information.

And we see, right now, the key congressional committees who would investigate-whose role it is to investigate these types of matters-refusing to pursue the issues. I think that that is highly unfortunate. I think that that is an abdication of responsibility. I won't question or try to address their motivations. I think that might be obvious to some. But I think that this problem points to the need for a new type of independent investigation, perhaps in the form of a commission that does investigate the issues related to this episode, that is not tied to, as many members of Congress are, their votes on the resolution for the war.

So I think the lack of inquiry points, in Congress, points to the need for this kind of independent investigation so that we can understand the truth behind these issues and hold the administration accountable for what it should and what it shouldn't be held accountable for in this case.

KIMBALL: Yes, I'm sorry. Okay.

Q: Are you aware of any intelligence analysts feeling pressure to change their assessments?

THIELMANN: During my time in INR, I'm proud to say that I can't remember any specific examples of an INR intelligence analyst that changed his or her views because of intelligence pressure. That's partly because of the culture that the bureau maintains of being absolutely independent of the other part of the State Department. One of the benefits was that people in the policy bureaus knew that INR would do its analysis independent of whether it was embarrassing or inconvenient for State Department policy.

That we were under pressure sometimes from parts of the State Department policy side is also indisputable. I had already said that I didn't feel that we had any signals from the secretary himself that he wanted anything other than our best shot, but there were others in the Department who we did feel pressure from on a variety of issues.

Q: So you are not aware of any analysts who felt pressure?

THIELMANN: I'm saying you should ask the CIA and DIA; I can only speak for INR.

KIMBALL: Questions from other reporters, please. Yes, sir?

Q: Senator Kennedy has said that North Korea was a bigger threat than Iraq. What is your assessment of where Iraq fell in the threat spectrum?

CIRINCIONE: I have always considered North Korea a much more serious proliferation threat than Iraq

was. In fact, well, just quickly, in my view of the world, the most serious proliferation threat we face is from Russia because, like Willie Sutton said about why he robbed banks, that's where the weapons are. You have got 20,000 to 40,000 nuclear weapons in Russia, some of them in very insecure conditions. We have got to lock those up before terrorists get their hands on them. The second-greatest proliferation threat, in my view, is Pakistan. We have a serious problem with Pakistan because what is going on now with transfers of technology and what could happen should that government destabilize.

The third most serious threat is North Korea. These people are building nuclear weapons; they have what Saddam only wanted. Could the president make a case for military action against North Korea? No, there is no good military option with North Korea. Any military strike, including a strike on the Yongbyon reprocessing facility, would likely trigger a peninsula-wide war. This is why the president of South Korea calls any military action very, very dangerous. He is right. This is why the president is trying to pursue a diplomatic strategy; he is right. The problem is the diplomatic strategy has been fairly incoherent at this point because the policy process has broken down between the State Department and the Defense Department. That's a short answer to a very complicated question.

KIMBALL: That's well said, and I think also in North Korea we have to be conscious of the fact that intelligence plays a role in U.S. policy. There have been reports recently about implosion devices that have been faithfully reported by some reporters without much question. This is reminiscent of some of the coverage of Iraq. I think we, again, need to be careful about taking some of these could be and maybe intelligence assessments at face value. Yes, sir?

Q: Were U.S. officials lying to President Bush about Iraq attempts to buy uranium from Africa?

KIMBALL: I think that's a question for Greg Thielmann.

THIELMANN: I agree with the thrust of your question. It certainly requires scrutiny and answers. I have enough experience in how senior officials use information related to intelligence to know that this is not done casually or off-the-cuff. And whatever pressures there are for State Department people speaking publicly on an issue, there is even greater pressure when the president of the United States, in essence, reveals specially-compartmented information, top-secret information, to the world. When he attributes it to a foreign government, this kind of information is the kind of thing that the president's staff would want to be very careful that they were protecting him; that they are not putting him out on a limb. The obvious thing to do is to check and check twice with the intelligence people and say: are you sure about this information, can we really say thing, does this jeopardize voices and methods?

So all of my experience leads me to the conclusion that something was seriously amiss here. There was not only our assessment in INR that this was bad information, but I have the impression-not personal knowledge, but the impression from the press-that this was widely discredited throughout the U.S. government. So it's a very important question, it seems to me, how this got into the president's speech, particularly when the category of weapons that this addresses is the most important issues regarding Iraqi weapons of mass destruction developments, and this was one of only two specific pieces of information cited to justify it.

KIMBALL: Yes, sir?

Q: Was the case for war with Iraq an intelligence failure or misrepresentation?

THIELMANN: isrepresentation on the part of the administration.

KIMBALL: Okay. Yes, sir?

Q: Two questions. You said the Secretary of State was careful about how he presented intelligence, but what about his assertions about Iraq moving Scuds and Scud warheads around in western Iraq? And, Mr. Treverton, you said your remarks were complementary to Mr. Thielmann's but I read them differently, could you explain?

THIELMANN: On the Scud issue, I'm afraid I'm going to have to defer because I would have to review what the secretary said, when he said it. I think this happened after the time that I was there and I

don't know to what he was referring. I just can't answer that question.

KIMBALL: Greg Treverton?

TREVERTON: I'm not sure if Greg and I disagree. What I said was that I thought that the public presentations, the estimate, the JIC paper in the fall were pretty responsible, frank, honest intelligence assessments that said what they were confident of and what they weren't. Greg had mentioned one area in which he thought they had made a kind of honest error, about chemical and biological weapons, but on the whole I thought that they were pretty good and clear about what they knew and what they didn't know with respect to the terrorist connection, the nuclear angle; and the chem/bio was harder, and maybe there they did make what, in retrospect, Greg would characterize as an error. But they looked to me like pretty responsible pieces of intelligence, done in the context of an awful lot of pressure, as we know, implicit or explicit. I thought, in that sense, they held up pretty well.

THIELMANN: One qualification of my own on evaluating this is that one of the flaws in the process I have noticed in the past on National Intelligence Estimates is there is a great deal of scrutiny and long coordination sessions on the classified part of estimates. Oftentimes, the public summary of those estimates is seen as an afterthought; and I can cite instances in my own personal experience where INR has been told don't worry about it by the person in the National Intelligence Council doing it, saying we will take care of it.

Well, it's enormously important how you summarize something, in terms of staying faithful even without the details, faithful to what is included in the classified portion of the estimate. My guess is, in this October estimate-and I can't swear to it because I don't have access, now having retired, to the classified part of the estimate-but I bet the classified part of the estimate looks better than the unclassified part, in terms of explaining what we knew, what we did not know, and that I think there was some damage done to the truth in the way it was packaged.

KIMBALL: All right, we will just take a couple more questions, please. Yes, sir?

Q: Rumsfeld said the United States knew where WMD was and was sharing that information with the inspectors. The inspectors never found much. Was this a plan to make the inspectors look bad?

KIMBALL: Joe, do you want to take a shot at that?

CIRINCIONE: I think I follow the question. There is no doubt that in the month or two before the war, administration officials were increasingly specific about their allegations of large weapons stockpiles, citing 100 (tons) to 500 tons of chemical agents, enough biological agent to kill millions, a dozen or more Scud missiles; and Secretary Rumsfeld in particular kept naming sites. And the reference you are referring to was in a Sunday news show, he says: we know where they are, they are in the area between Baghdad and Tikrit, a little north northwest of that; we know exactly where they are.

Well, we have now been to all the specific sites that were mentioned by officials. Just in the last couple of days at the Carnegie Endowment, we have gone over all the specific references and just checked and double-checked and UN inspectors had been there and now allied troops have been there and there's nothing there. I mean, in many cases, the alleged expansion of production facilities didn't even happen; a shed was built rather than any ongoing new production capability.

And I believe that this was a conscious effort to discredit the inspectors. In order to build their case for war, the administration had to discredit the inspection process. That was the viable alternative to going to war. If the American public came to believe that the inspection process could work, then why needlessly risk hundreds of American lives? Why needlessly risk the potential chaos that we're now seeing in Iraq? Why risk the possibility that terrorism would actually increase by going to war? You wouldn't have to.

So they had to eliminate the viable alternative, and they did that through escalating their specific claims about this imminent danger posed by Saddam's large stockpiles of chemical/biological weapons, kept hammering away on the idea that he could soon have a nuclear weapon, or in some cases went so far as to say that he might actually have one already, and then hammered away at the al Qaeda threat.

And that was the key connection: the nuclear threat and the possible operational ties to al Qaeda. As Condoleezza Rice and several other officials all said together on the same Sunday, we don't want the first evidence of a smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud. A very effective sound bite; you all picked it up, it played, it clearly implied that Saddam had or soon could have a nuclear weapon and could slip it to a terrorist group, and the inspectors could not possibly stop that.

As we now know, that is not true. He did not have a nuclear weapon. He was not close to having a nuclear weapon. There is no evidence of al Qaeda ties. The inspection process should have been allowed to continue. This war, for all the benefits that it may be bringing to the Iraqi people, was unnecessary from a national security standpoint.

KIMBALL: Yes, sir?

Q: Do you think the American people will support an investigation into these issues?

CIRINCIONE: American public opinion is clearly shifting on this issue, turning against the administration and in favor of congressional investigations. I don't believe it's going to be possible to stop a congressional investigation at this point, and here's the reason why. If everything was going well in Iraq, the American public would continue with their feeling that they had a month ago, two months ago, that it didn't really matter if we found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

But the euphoria over the quick military victory is fading, both in the public and on Capitol Hill. American soldiers are dying at the rate of one every other day. As the newspaper reports today, there are serious attacks on U.S. forces every day. We have not set up an alternative government. We have not been able to guarantee basic infrastructure for the Iraqi people. They do not yet see any evidence of democracy.

If the chaos in Iraq continues to grow, it is inevitable that the American public will link this to questions of why we got there in the first place. And if the American public begins to conclude that soldiers have died because administration officials have lied, this is going to be an extremely serious problem for this administration. And I believe Republicans and Democrats are recognizing the seriousness of this. The efforts to contain this to just oversight hearings are failing. Investigations, I believe full-fledged investigations, open hearings, subpoenaed witnesses are inevitable in this case. And I expect to see them start off if not by the summer recess then shortly thereafter.

KIMBALL: I would agree with Joe's remarks and also just note another reason why I think the public and other policymakers are going to continue to be interested in looking into this; which is going back to some of our original remarks and the importance of dealing with weapons of mass destruction as a threat to the United States—the fact that the Bush administration has, in our view, exaggerated the threat assessments of Iraq's weapons capabilities. It is going to become harder and harder for the United States to mobilize international action to deal with other threats in other countries in the future, and the integrity of the United States' effort in that regard, which is paramount, is going to be undermined unless there is some clarity about how this episode played out and how it can be fixed in the future, so that the mistakes that we have outlined are not repeated.

We will take a couple more questions. We're going to conclude. Let me just note, before we take those questions, we do have information in your packets from ACA on several topics. I want to note that the extensive [interview with Hans Blix](#) from June 16, published in this month's Arms Control Today, which I think also speaks to many of the issues that are being raised here. And in addition, the Carnegie Endowment has put together an excellent report on kind of a broader post-conflict issues relating to Iraq, and Joe has an excellent article about whether this is going to be a good or a bad precedent for dealing with future proliferation problems. Ma'am, in the front?

Q: (Off mike.)

THIELMANN: Well, I have shared this with other members of the press before. There was really a double reaction. The first reaction I had was I wondered what new intelligence has come in since I left government. And then I realized, particularly after the secretary didn't mention anything about this eight days later, that he must have been talking about that same non-credible report that we dismissed

months earlier. And so, it was a combination of surprise and disgust at realizing the gravity of what had happened with it.

KIMBALL: Thank you. Yes, sir?

Q: Does INR have a way of communicating with other intelligence agencies?

KIMBALL: So, in a sound bite, Greg, how does the intelligence community work? (Laughter.)

THIELMANN: Very well. It is exactly as you describe it. We work upwards, supporting the senior leadership of the State Department. But we're also a constituent part of the intelligence community. So INR is on the phone frequently and attending interagency intelligence community meetings frequently on many of these subjects. At the managerial level, it's a little bit less frequently. It's mostly the action officers in the office who maintain daily contacts on all these issues. And unfortunately, on some of the issues we have been talking about, much of my information is secondhand. I would hear from my action officers what the buzz was elsewhere in the intelligence community and arguments they had had with others.

But because we have extensive horizontal interaction with others, I can say with some confidence that anytime there was an issue that we were very skeptical about, other intelligence agencies would know about our skepticism. For one thing, many of the products we produced were available to them, and then the officials that we serve would of course meet with the head of the CIA or other cabinet officers who would be reflecting what their agencies said. So there was quite a bit of intermingling.

It's not stove-piped to the extent that we kept secret from other intelligence community colleagues our assessments on issues. In fact, the way we work, we often wanted to make sure that we understood what all the arguments were that were being advanced by the other agencies before we arrived at our argument. And, doing memoranda for the secretary of state, we wanted to make sure that we can explain to him if our assessment is divergent from that of another agency; we want to be able to describe that.

KIMBALL: Yes, sir?

Q: Some say the real reason behind the war was to scare terrorists or other rogue states. Did it achieve that objective? Are we safer now?

KIMBALL: You're talking about the war on terror? Either of the Gregs, would you like to take a crack at that, please?

TREVERTON: I will tell you the answer with the famous Chinese line about the French Revolution: "too early to tell." I suppose that is the best quick answer. It doesn't seem to ask what didn't happen. One of the things that the intelligence community and others worried about during the war was an upsurge in terrorist activity; on the whole, that didn't happen, so that was a happy circumstance.

My guess is it will take some time for this to play out. It depends on whether the demonstration effect of this kind of American power applied so effectively -- that has got to be a big effect on lots of countries and lots of groups. On the other side, there is the how well the aftermath works. And I think at this point those are the two kind of competing images out there, and it is, in essence, a bit early to tell. Surely, the deterrent effect of this demonstration of American power, that will remain. But if the aftermath makes it look like, boy, they ain't going to do that again, then even that effect will be short-lived.

KIMBALL: Joe, you might want to talk about this, too. I just wanted to comment on the weapons of mass destruction/nonproliferation side. I mean, there is also a point that needs to be made, which is that one of the purposes here the administration articulated was that this action in Iraq might deter/dissuade North Korea and Iran from pursuing chemical/biological/nuclear weapons. The jury is still out on that, but there is some very disturbing evidence that is emerging about the take-home lessons that the leaders in Tehran and Pyongyang are taking from this.

We have seen the North Koreans accelerating their program, not scaling it back. In their public statements, they are citing the aggressive U.S. policies and their fears about invasion. People in Tehran are still trying to decide which direction their nuclear weapons program is going to go in. So I think that we have to consider the effect in these other areas. In my view, the effect so far has been negative, and the Iraq model is a very poor, terrible blueprint for dealing with proliferation in other states that we described before, particularly North Korea and Iran.

(Audio break, tape change.)

CIRINCIONE: Apart from everything we've discussed today, the Iraq War was the first application of this theory that preventive war could be an effective tool against proliferation. As Greg points out, it is still a bit early to tell, but in order to be effective, a preventive war has to both remove the direct threat and dissuade would-be proliferators. Clearly we removed the threat, but I believe that other would-be proliferators have so far drawn the opposite conclusions. Instead of what the administration officials said—that they would increasingly decide that they would not pursue program—Iran and North Korea appear to have decided to speed up their weapons-related efforts. It's unclear what conclusions other countries have drawn yet. We don't know enough about some of the activity in some of these other countries.

On terrorism, the president argued that the day Baghdad fell, terrorism would decline. That clearly hasn't happened. I believe that while there wasn't a large upsurge during the war, there has been major terrorist incidents since the war. It does not appear to have had any effect on al Qaeda operations, and depending on how you judge what the military operations are inside Iraq now, you could argue that these are terrorist operations, and therefore, American soldiers are now the targets in Iraq of increased terrorist activity in a way that U.S. troops were not before the war. So far, I would agree with Daryl it had a negative effect on major U.S. national security concerns on both proliferation and terrorism.

KIMBALL: With that, we're going to conclude. I want to thank you all for being here with the Arms Control Association and our speakers. More information is available through our website and our speakers, I think, will take your questions.

(END)

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