

# Center for American Progress



## **PANEL II: THE IMPACT OF THE IRAQ WAR ON THE U.S. MILITARY**

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MR. ROBERT O. BOORSTIN: Good morning again, everyone. I'm Bob Boorstin, I run the national security programs here at the Center. I want to welcome those of you who have just joined us and thank those of you who came to our first session this morning.

We're now going to shift gears in this discussion of what's happening in Iraq on the third anniversary of the invasion. Our first panel talked about the political challenges and U.S. options in Iraq, and now we're going to discuss the impact of the war in Iraq on the U.S. military and particularly on our ground forces.

Let me begin with some simple facts – or actually, let me begin with a small apology. We actually should have had this panel last night. It would have been a lot more lively, I think, because both Secretary Rumsfeld and General Pace were actually in this room last night. I have to say that they weren't here for a Center-sponsored event, they were here to say goodbye to the Reuters Pentagon correspondent, but next time we'll try to get our timing a little better and give you a real debate back and forth.

Let me begin with some simple facts about the impact on the military. As of today, more than 2,300 American troops have been killed in Iraq. And more than 17,000 have come home wounded. In many, many ways our men and women in uniform and their families have sacrificed for our country and for this war. And we at the Center believe that our government owes these men and women the very best that we can give them in return for their sacrifice. One of the major things that we've been saying since the inception of the Center is that personnel in the military must be given top priority. Larry Korb, to my left, has argued that since the first report that we put out on national security, and we emphasize that again in our recently released quadrennial defense review, which you should have a copy of in your folders. We also believe that as a country we have to be realistic about the limits of what we can ask from our military. And that's one of the things that we'll be discussing today.

Opinions on the state of U.S. ground forces today are, to say the least, divided. One the one hand you have critics in both political parties and from all ideological perspectives who have said that the continuing operations in Iraq have stretched the military, and the ground forces in particular, as never before. And that that ground forces – and that the Army in particular – are close to the breaking point. On the other hand, you have Secretary Rumsfeld, who has said the force is not broken and that he does not see a distinct problem here because of the operation in Iraq.

Today I hope we can shed some light on this debate. We're going to talk about three different aspects of the impact on the military. First, we're going to talk about the general impact on force structure and military personnel. Next, we'll turn to a discussion of the impact of the war on the mental health of the U.S. armed forces, and finally, we will have a discussion about a topic that's not often discussed, and that is what has the impact of the war in Iraq been on the equipment used by the Army? This is a hidden

topic, something that's going to turn up over and over again in budget discussions in the future and one that we think deserves some attention.

So I'm going to ask our panelists to talk about these issues in light of what the U.S. should be doing now on the anniversary and moving forward. So let me introduce the panelists. To my direct left is Larry Korb, a senior fellow here at the Center, well known to most of you in this audience. Larry has been a driving force in all of our work here. He's a coauthor both of *Strategic Redeployment*, our paper on Iraq, and of our quadrennial defense review. He did the lead writing on that and thinking on that.

Next to Larry we have Dr. Stephen Xenakis, and God hopes I pronounced that correctly (laughter), a retired Army brigadier general, and he will speak about mental health issues. Dr. Xenakis is currently the director of child and adolescence psychiatry at the Psychiatric Institute of Washington, and during his career in the military, he held high level positions, including the commanding general of the Southeast Regional Army Medical Command. And he's looked at the impact of the war on the troops' mental health very closely.

And finally, we have Loren Thompson, also a familiar face here at the Center. Loren is the CEO of the Lexington Institute and he oversees their biggest project on security studies there. For 20 years he's taught graduate level courses at Georgetown in military strategy, technology, and the media. And Loren has been writing with us a paper on the impact of the war on equipment – on the U.S. Army's equipment, a paper that we plan to release in a week or two. He will speak, obviously, about that paper in his conclusions.

So we're going to turn to the panelists, and in keeping with our usual way of doing things here, I'm going to ask them each a question and we hope to mix it up a little bit up here and then we'll turn to your questions. So let me start with Larry. I guess the biggest question that I would bring and that people are asking is how much longer can the U.S. military perform – and particularly the Army, obviously, perform under these circumstances, given the deployments, given the problems with recruiting and retention and so forth, and has this stretching of the forces affected our ability to respond elsewhere and to fulfill the Army's other missions?

**MR. LAWRENCE KORB:** You mentioned Secretary Rumsfeld, when he gets asked that question, he'll say, "Well, of course we can keep 138,000 people in Iraq indefinitely. We've got 2.4 million people in the Armed Forces when you count active and reserve. Well, that counts all of the services, and as Bob talked about, we're really talking about ground forces, who have borne the brunt of this operation ever since the fall of Saddam Hussein. And the question is you can keep it up indefinitely providing you're prepared to pay the cost both in terms of money, your ability to respond to other crises, and the effectiveness of your ground forces.

Now, when you take a look at the military, one of the things – lessons we've learned since the creation of the all-volunteer military 30 years ago, is that you want to

bring into the service people who have, first of all, a high school diploma. Now, you might say, well, why do you want that? A man or woman who finishes high school is much less likely to bail out when things get tough in the military. And if you've been into the service, you know, boot camp, recruit training and all that is a pretty difficult transition for a young person. And what we find out is if you stay through high school, you're much more likely to stay and also complete your first-term enlistment.

The next thing, you want people who score average or above average on your Armed Forces Qualification Test. Why? Because the military is a very sophisticated operation. We talk about transforming the military and getting to use very sophisticated techniques, so you want people who can master that. Then also you don't have to spend as much money on training. So that's what you do and try and do when you bring people in.

Now, since the war in Iraq, the Army particularly – and the real focus is the Army, as Bob mentioned. It is the ground forces, and in particular the Army has basically lowered its standards to meet its recruiting goals. Last year, fiscal year 2005, which ended on 30 September, all three components of the total Army – the active Army, the guard, and reserve – missed their quantitative goals. And they did this even though they dropped their standards. Now, for example, the Army has been trying to keep no more than 2 percent of the people coming into the service score below average on the Armed Forces Qualification Test. That means you score between 16 and 30 out of 99, and they've been trying to do that. In 2005, it went up to 4 percent. And in 2006 in December, it actually went up to 12 percent.

Now, the Army did that even though if the Army has cut down the number of people they're taking in each month. If you read the paper, they say, well, we're meeting – the active is meeting all its goals. Sure, because they basically cut them far below what they had in 2005, and they're waiting for the high school graduation class to come out and think literally everybody is going to join the service. Similarly, the number of high school – non-high school graduates has gone from about 7 percent to close to 14 percent, so what you've done is you've tripled the number of people scoring below average and doubled the number of people that don't have a high school diploma.

Now the other thing that the Army has done, and it was really hard to get this data, and thanks to some very enterprising reporters, who I had talked to were finally able to get this out. They've increased the number of waivers that people will get coming into the military. Last year, even though they missed their recruiting goals, lowered the standards; one out of every six recruits coming in got a waiver – some for very serious criminal offenses. So what you've seen is a decline in the quality of the people you bring in. You've got a higher risk in terms of people being able to stay in and perform well.

Now the Army has talked quite a bit about the fact, well, yeah, we're – recruiting may not be too good, but retention is great. This goes to show that the services aren't – you know, the ground forces are enthused by what's going on. Well, if you take again a closer look at the statistics, you find out that overall retention numbers are good, but

you're not getting them in the right skills, nor are you getting them at the right point in their career. For example, the number of first people who complete their first term staying on is much lower than you want. To give you an amazing statistic, that – and this happens for enlisted as well as officers, 97 percent of the captains are making major. Now, normally you're talking about maybe only 60 percent. So what does this mean? You're promoting people to be officers and non-commissioned officers who ordinarily you would not have promoted and these men or women are going to be out there and leading your force. You're also spending a lot more money. It costs to get someone in the service in the last – since we've got into Iraq, from \$10 to \$15,000. Recruiting bonuses in the Army have – I mean, retention bonuses have tripled, so it's become more expensive.

And then finally, to get to Bob's point, you don't have any strategic reserve. If the Army wanted to have a strategic reserve; that is, the ability to send people other places, it should have no more than 13 brigades in Iraq. It's got 19. So basically that means that you're putting all your eggs in this basket, and if something else should happen, you simply would not have the forces.

Thank you.

MR. BOORSTIN: Okay. We'll have a number of other questions for Larry along the way, but I'm going to turn now to Dr. Xenakis. A recent study that was in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that one in five veterans in Iraq show evidence of what they call mental health problems and that more than one-third of U.S. soldiers and Marines fighting in Iraq visited a mental health specialist/counselor after their combat tour. I'm wondering about these figures, this study, and more generally, about whether or not this war has had a different impact than previous conflicts on the mental health of our men and women in uniform. Why don't we start there, Dr. Xenakis?

DR. STEPHEN XENAKIS: Well, thank you, and thank you for the invitation to speak. The study you're referring to –

MR. BOORSTIN: You might pull that microphone over.

DR. XENAKIS: – was published here – you all hear me? Thank you. The March 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the *Journal of American Medical Association*, there's a very nice painting by Matisse on it, and it's – it actually is a – it's a landmark study as this kind of research goes because what it is a compilation of a survey of over 400,000 individuals who have deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, as well as to other areas in 2003-2004. And that is new and certainly shows the kind of attention and effort that the military is putting to keeping track of the impact of the operation on its soldiers.

Now, there are several important points about the study that Brian has alluded to. I think the context is to appreciate that the lens of pathology, as this survey data is able to ascertain, is just one way of looking at what is the general effect on the morale and the performance of the soldiers in this particular area and for this kind of mission. And if

you think back to what was discussed in the first panel and try and envision what the life is like for a soldier day to day on the ground, in this arena, facing this incredible complex and different society with the harsh circumstances that the soldier faces, not only just the activities of daily living but also in carrying out their mission, we can begin to imagine what the impact of this has on their ability to do their job as well as on their psychological and mental state.

Now the data is as Brian said, and it's again – it's survey data, so that there's all sorts of ways of slicing and dicing it, but 12 percent of the soldiers on a survey of what were four critical questions recognized in the field of mental health, said that they had some sort of significant symptom that correlates with post-traumatic stress disorder. Twenty percent – I'm sorry, Bob, right. Well, you know, I'll get it right. It starts with a B. (Laughter.)

MR. BOORSTIN: It's okay.

DR. XENAKIS: I apologize. I am – I had mistaken our moderator. I'd better –

MR. BOORSTIN: We had a moderator named Brian in the first panel. (Laughter.) I'm Bob.

DR. XENAKIS: And that was – all my emails were Brian.

MR. BOORSTIN: All these "B" names, you know. Anyway, go ahead. It's all right.

DR. XENAKIS: All right, my apologies.

MR. BOORSTIN: No problem.

DR. XENAKIS: I hope I'm a better doctor than a panelist. (Laughter.) But, so you've got 12 percent on the four-item questionnaire endorse at least two items. Then on additional items that have to do with post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, you have 20 percent of the soldiers coming back and endorsing those items. That is very high and is about – that is about twice what you get in a survey from either Afghanistan or what you – or what the survey was from Bosnia and Kosovo.

So as a particular indicator, this is significant because it shows us that these soldiers are telling us who – that they are experiencing some real effects of the operation; and moreover, soldiers are not generally disposed to confide that and to disclose that sort of – to disclose that they're having trouble because it may in fact affect all sorts of all other assignments that they get in their careers. So this ends up being very important.

Now, within the period of time of redeployment, we have that approximately a third of them went and had at least one visit, but a number of them had in the course of a year, when able to be followed, three to four visits. That's also a very significant finding

here. What we don't know, which is all the implications for us to talk about, is how many other ways did they go to get help. How many other ways that were not – could not be captured in a survey that they went to go see their primary care provider, their physician assistants, their chaplain, all the other resources that soldiers in their particular inventive way will find to get assistance for the kinds of symptoms and problems they're discovering – experiencing.

We also don't know what the impact is on their families and how many of their spouses have either during the course of the operation and a very long deployment of a year or immediately when returning found themselves having kind – the troubles that you would – you can just imagine. There are anecdotal reports of higher divorce rates and of higher – of much greater marital conflict. We don't know what the effect was on these children and how symptomatic they are, the problems they're having in schools and the families.

So the implication of this kind of study, again, is just an indicator of what the impact is on the force – on just the daily lives of soldiers and their families is very, very significant and it tells us that it's at least probably statistically twice what it has been in other operations.

MR. BOORSTIN: And what do they kind of attribute this to?

DR. XENAKIS: It is most clearly related – there are good – again, this is a very good study to exposure to either having fired a weapon, seeing someone killed, or having someone killed or injured that was in your immediate unit. So it does correlate to the level of trauma that you've been directly exposed to, which is also a very big finding here.

MR. BOORSTIN: Okay, thanks very much. We'll come back to some of these questions.

Let me now turn to Loren, and I'm going to ask Loren to briefly outline the study that we have coming out on the impact that the war in Iraq has had on the Army's equipment and to comment in particular on any lessons that we may have learned already from the war in Iraq. Take it away.

MR. LOREN THOMPSON: Thanks, Bob. You know, an army basically consists of three things: equipment, people, and ideas about how to use them. Most of our public discussion today about U.S. precedence in Iraq has focused on the latter two items: the impact of the war on people, and the adequacy of our ideas for achieving military success.

Because our military equipment has generally performed pretty well, you don't usually hear about it unless there's some specific problem like deficient body armor, vulnerable vehicles, and so on. Now, the Army and the other services actually have a

pretty good system for identifying those deficiencies and correcting them as quickly as possible. At least the system works a lot better today than it has in past wars.

But behind the scenes, there is a bigger, more longer-term problem for which the solutions are at best, only tentative. That problem is the gradual wearing out of an arsenal that hasn't seen sustained renewal since the end of the Cold War. The war in Iraq is being waged with equipment that was built during the Reagan administration and upgraded, improved during the Clinton and the Bush administrations.

Because the rate of repairs and replacements slowed markedly after the collapse of communism, today's arsenal is fairly old. And as you might expect, being in Iraq is accelerating the aging process. For example, during his tenure as defense secretary, Dick Cheney terminated production of the Army's only heavy tank, its only heavy-attack helicopter, and its principal armored personnel carrier. Since no new programs materialized to take the place of those signature systems on the battlefield, we find ourselves waging a war in Iraq with equipment that, for the most part, predates the information age.

The Army has worked hard to refurbish the oldest equipment, upgrade it with new armor and with new electronics, but there's little question that the force is gradually wearing out. And you can easily see why if you look at the conditions in Iraq. First of all, the equipment is being operated much more intensely than in peacetime. Five to six times normal rate in the case of armored vehicles, 10 times the normal rate in the case of medium and heavy trucks.

Second, the operating environment is quite harsh: extreme heat, frequent sandstorms, decrepit infrastructure. And then there is the insurgencies who have selected roadside bombs as their principal method for trying to impede our progress. Aside from the direct toll that those improvised explosive devices take on our equipment, there's an indirect toll because in order to protect ourselves, we have to load them up with tons of armor for which they were not originally designed to carry.

When you combine all those various stresses with the advanced age of many of the systems that have been sent to Iraq, it's not hard to understand why a recent Army study found that one year of service in Iraq puts as much age on a major weapons systems as five years of peacetime training would.

Despite those stresses, the Army has managed to maintain a pretty high state of readiness for the equipment that is actually in the Iraqi theater of operations. The mission availability rate – the mission readiness rate of ground vehicles is pretty much in the 90 percent range. If it's below that, it's not below that by much. It depends on the category. In the case of helicopters, it's in the 70 to 80 percent range. That's accomplished through intensive battlefield maintenance much higher than you'd find in peacetime and also through periodical refurbishing of the equipment as forces rotate in and out of the theater.

Now there is some equipment – it's called stay-behind equipment – that is left there for follow-on forces – you know, things that have been up-armored that you want them to have access to. That equipment never gets the full repair treatment and as a consequence a lot of it will eventually be lost to the force. It will simply wear out. The Army estimates that about one out of eight of its trucks are never going to come back from Iraq, at least not in a useable form.

For most of the equipment, though, the Army has put in place a tiered system of repair, restoration, and replacement that's supposed to keep the force in a high state of readiness. It's informally referred to as "reset," but it involves a lot more than simply returning equipment to its prewar state. During the course of overhauling, a lot of it will be modernized with new sensors, with new communications links, with improved protection such as armor and electronic countermeasures.

For example, the Abrams tank – the main battle tank – is going to receive a second-generation, forward-looking infrared system that allows you to see threats from much further away than the existing equipment. And virtually all the service's ground vehicles will receive a new communications and locational device called Blue Force Tracker. Blue Force Tracker is a system that allows you to communicate via satellite and therefore get around the line of sight problems you have because of terrain or obstacles. It's also a very good way of quickly finding your friends in the heat of battle. Beyond those various technology insertions, the Army is trying to modularize and network its force so it's more fluid, it's more agile in the future.

That all sounds pretty good, right? But if you step back a few paces from the reset process, you begin to see that the Army is trying to do four major things all at the same time. First of all, it's trying to keep an aging fleet of combat systems in a high state of readiness. Second, it's trying to adapt that fleet to a type of warfare for which it actually was not designed. Thirdly, it's trying to selectively introduce new technologies and (unintelligible) the fruits of the information revolution. And then finally, it's trying to reorganize that fleet for modular network operations in the future. It would be hard to do all of those things simultaneously even if we weren't at war, but in the midst of a major military campaign it is ambitious indeed – and it's expensive.

In 2003, the service requested \$1.2 billion for reset. That went up threefold in 2004 and then it doubled again in 2005. This year, the Army's going to request about \$9 billion in supplemental appropriations for reset and it's warning that in subsequent years – for at least two years after we're fully out of Iraq, it's going to need a similar level of expenditure if the force is to be restored back to the standard of readiness that prevailed prior to the campaign. Unfortunately, we know from past experience that what tends to happen is that once we start pulling out, the political enthusiasm for keeping the force in a high state of readiness wanes pretty quickly.

But let's assume for the sake of argument that the political system this time does the right thing and keeps reset on track. What are the other problems – as Bob asked, what are the other problems or lessons we see coming out of this conflict that might have

implications for future Army equipment – I think the most pressing problem that we've identified is that the Army has not thought through all of the force protection implications that come out of what we've seen in Iraq.

You know, the perverse thing about our engagement in Iraq is that it has given every stripe of terrorist in the world a game plan for how to tie down U.S. forces. A relatively small and poor-equipped group of insurgents is tying down a very substantial portion of American military power. And although people in the building are now – in the Pentagon, I'm sorry, are now saying that we'll never do another war like this again in their lifetimes, I don't think you can plan on that assumption. I think we've sort of shown our enemies a way of dealing with us is pretty cheap and effective. So we have to plan on the assumption that it will be more irregular warfare campaign, and that has implications for the type of force protection equipment that we incorporate into our future combat systems.

A second equipment concern is that intelligence gathering assets that we've deployed to Iraq don't seem very well suited for the types of unconventional enemies that we're facing. Now, we all know that the biggest intelligence problem is that most of our soldiers don't speak the language and they don't have locals who speak the language that are reliable sources. That's the core of the intelligence problem. But beyond that, there are defects in the equipment. For example, the lessons learned that the Army's Third Mechanized Division produced said all of our combat units need their own unmanned aerial vehicles so that they can surveil the surrounding area rather than having to call somebody in Langley, Virginia, in order to do it for them.

Also, there's some problems that don't often get reported about equipment deficiencies. For example, despite all of our talk about network operations and new technology, the software that we have and the field of equipment for trying to correlate information – intelligence from various sources is very poor. In fact, the deployed units are actually having to write their own software in Iraq in order to work around all the barriers to integrating information in their newest intelligence equipment.

A third equipment problem is that the Army's antiquated line-of-sight communication systems really are not up to the tactics and timing of modern warfare. They're old-fashioned, and they're vulnerable. Now, Blue Force Tracker is a nice start of making that equipment more flexible and resilient, but we really need to start deploying systems like Winte (ph) which will provide the architecture for a future force and allow forces that are in the move to be in continuous contact with command and with other elements.

A fourth equipment issue is, much to the surprise of the Army and just about everybody else, it turns out tanks are still useful in things like counterinsurgency and urban warfare. Before the Iraq War, we all kind of had this idea that maybe helicopters were the wave of the future and tanks were a sunset system. The Army certainly had that perception. But pitched battles in places like Fallujah have shown us that we really don't have a viable alternative to the survivability and the lethality of a tank. It's hard to get a

70-ton vehicle into the theater, but if you don't, your forces are very vulnerable. So we need to keep upgrading that equipment for the foreseeable future.

And then finally, the Army's plans for equipping the force need to reflect the fact that the reserve component – the Army Reserve, the Army National Guard – is a central player in both stability operations and in homeland security. Not only have deploying reserve units arrived in theater with equipment that is markedly inferior to active duty units, but non-deploying units in the United States have been stripped of equipment that's needed for homeland security. I have a GAO report here that says that among the National Guard units that have not deployed, they have 0 percent of their chemical detection equipment on hand. They have only 1 percent of their individual night vision goggles. It's all gone to Iraq. So if you have a major national disaster; a Homeland Security challenge, there's a problem there.

Now, there's sound reasons why the National Guard and the Army Reserve received inferior equipment in the past, but given what's happened since 9/11, we think the Army needs to reexamine this notion of a tiered-readiness approach and ask whether it still makes sense to have the Guard and the Reserve so poorly equipped. The bottom line on all of the equipment lessons coming out of Iraq is that the Army has done a good job of adapting old equipment to new missions, but it needs to have sustained funding for at least the next several years in order to stay in a high state of readiness with the types of demands that are going to be put fairly continuously on its active and its reserve components.

Thank you.

MR. BOORSTIN: Thanks very much, Loren. I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm extremely hopeful that Dr. Xenakis has brought an extra supply of antidepressants after hearing some of those presentations. (Laughter.)

Let me move on with a couple more questions. Let me ask the magic-wand question, Larry, first to you. If you could wave your magic wand and do one or two things to help out the U.S. Army right now or ground forces, what would those be?

MR. KORB: Well, I think you need a larger active Army. Now, I'll put aside how are you going to get it? But you need a larger active Army because if you have a larger active Army, then you can obviously deploy people and give them the required rest. The Army is aiming to – for every one year you spend in a hostile environment, to keep your two years at home for, among other things, not only getting your training ready, but some of the problems that Steve was talking about.

The other is that you would not have to deploy as much of your National Guard. Loren just talked about the equipment problems. Well, you also have people problems. And if we're concerned about homeland security, homeland defense, you need your National Guard home here, and as we saw with Hurricane Katrina, you had the crack units from the Mississippi and Louisiana Guard over in Iraq and not here. And again, the

Pentagon tried to cover it up and they said, oh, we got enough troops. But one of the units that they sent down to New Orleans was the band, and that was not the unit that you really wanted to be in there. So I think that's what you do.

Now, in terms of widening the pool from which you can draw, I – two things I would do. One is I would drop the ban on gay people coming into the military. I think “don't ask, don't tell” is a policy that's outlived its usefulness and I think that that should be repealed and we should enforce the Uniform Code of Military Justice. That would widen the pool. And the other is to drop the ban on women in combat positions. I think you ought to have a criteria for every job in the military and people who can meet that should be able to do it. And in fact, if you take a look at what's going on in Iraq, it's a distinction without a difference.

MR. BOORSTIN: I should say that in the QDR that we put out, Larry spells out a number of these suggestions at greater length, and we also some offer some budgetary numbers in there that would explain how we get from how we would fund the additional personnel that we're talking about.

Let me turn to Steve for a second and ask you the same question. Wave your magic wand. What would you do that would most help this situation, aside from stopping the war in Iraq? I assume that would be the best way to deal with it.

DR. XENAKIS: It would cut down on your patients. But I think that I would actually – and I'm speaking to you as a medical corps officer looking across the Army after many years of a career and say that we perhaps would go back and pull a playbook from the Army leadership at the time that Larry was our assistant secretary of defense and rethink broadly how we train – recruit, train and staff our respective forces for the kind of mission that, as Loren says, may be inevitable.

It strikes me, again, as an Army doctor, that the fact that we would be involved in this irregular war operations could not ever be avoided. Yet I found as a general rather contradictory, perhaps something treatable, that the leadership would say all the Army is about is fighting the nation's wars and winning them and that we're never going to get involved in these kinds of situations. Well, if you take a soldier and deploy them into something that they have not been told from the beginning that they're going to face and not really train them as fully as you've trained them for other things, then it is no surprise that that soldier is going to have problems when they get into theater and afterwards.

So I think this is a time from a – and I say this as a psychiatrist who goes out and does as much sort of preventive medicine and consultation, it's time for us to think back and put as much time and attention to looking in a comprehensive view of our personnel management, readiness, recruitment, training, and a legitimacy of this kind of operation that's going to be with us for many years.

MR. BOORSTIN: Okay. Loren, aside from the \$9 billion a year, what's your magic wand on this?

MR. THOMPSON: Well, the – let me answer that question, Bob, in a somewhat odd way because it kind of goes back to what Larry was talking about in terms of increasing the size of the Army. It's very easy, particularly in Republican administrations to throw money at defense problems. And clearly, the Army is going to need a fair amount of money in order to restore its equipment, to implement things like force protection upgrades. But while Secretary Rumsfeld and Chairman Pace were here last night, I was having dinner with their two subordinates, the deputy secretary and the vice chairman. And what I was struck by is how concerned they are with how their ability to modernize equipment is already being eaten up by personnel costs. I believe the number that Gordon England at dinner last night was that their health care costs from all sources, including dependents and retirees, is headed for \$90 billion this year – \$90 billion for healthcare costs. It's an unbelievable amount of money.

And I don't have the exact documentation for that number, but at the rate at which healthcare costs, benefits, personnel expenditures are increasing in the existing force, we're going to gradually crowd out the money for new technology or even for repair of old technology. I don't know precisely what to do about that.

But if Larry is right that we need to increase the size of the Army, then at the very least we're going to have to do two other things: (a), we're going to have to reduce the size of the Navy and the Air Force. We're going to have to get rid of tens of thousands of personnel because frankly, those personnel are just not as relevant in the current environment as they would have been in the Cold War. And secondly, as the Center has suggested in its study on restoring American military power, we might have to be a little more selective on some of the big-ticket weapon systems that we've been planning to buy. I personally think that the amount of money we're investing in weapons systems is not that great relative to the economy, but that doesn't mean we're buying the right things. In this particular environment, the case for buying more stuff for the Army, having more personnel for the Army than the other services is pretty compelling.

MR. BOORSTIN: Larry?

MR. KORB: Yeah. I think what Secretary England was talking about – within a decade they could get up that high. I mean, not \$90 billion this year in terms of healthcare because the military overall personnel accounts is about 25 percent of the budget and the baseline budget is about \$440 billion.

But I think Loren is onto something very important here: personnel costs have escalated as a result of many factors, not just – the war has been part of it. To give you an example, when we talked about adding 10,000 people to the Army a couple years ago, the Army said we could do it for \$1 billion, and now it's \$1.5 billion in terms of the extra costs. You can get a 40,000 dollar bonus, for example, to come in and you've had a number of other personnel increases. But two things happened in the late '90s and early part of this decade that – actually three things happened for which we didn't put money aside.

One is that the retirement system basically was changed from 40 percent after 20 years for those who came in after 1986 to 50 percent. That was a change that I worked on because we saw the escalating cost of retirement and we had no fund. But what happened was they went back and said okay, everybody goes 50 percent, but they had not been putting any money aside for 15 years. And of course the accountants are then going to come in and make you make that up.

The second thing is for military retired people, when they turn 65, they went into Medicare. Well, they decided there was a pressure to change that and so now they can have basically TRICARE, which is the military's healthcare system for life. Again, there was no money put aside for that so that – and then finally, you had concurrent receipt. Basically, people who were retired and who had a disability from the Veterans Administration, they would deduct what you got in the disability from your retirement check. And a lot of people, I thought, with good reason, said that wasn't fair. What was happening was the VA was subsidizing part of the military's pension system, so that has been phased out. So you add that in, plus the extra cost of the war in terms of recruiting, retention bonuses, special pays, combat pays and all of that, and you do have a – you're going to have a – personnel costs are going to be crowding out other things unless of course you raise the top line.

MR. BOORSTIN: And unlike, GM, they can't exactly declare bankruptcy, can they? (Laughter.) Okay, why don't we open it up for questions from the audience? I would ask journalists in the audience to take a first crack at these. I would also ask that you ask a question rather than make a statement, if you're given to such things.

And before we start, I will tell you that I was just handed a news report from Reuters, our downstairs neighbor, that says that the U.S. has launched the biggest air assault in Iraq since the 2003 invasion to root out insurgents near Samara. The statement says that – a military statement said the operation (brought?) more than 50 aircraft and 1,500 Iraqi and U.S. troops, as well as 200 tactical vehicles targeting these insurgents. So clearly the war is going on in an enormous fashion today.

Questions? In the back, please? Of course, I send you to the back first. Sorry. (Laughter.) If you could identify yourself as well, thank you.

Q: Sure. Hi, I'm Jerry Zremski from the *Buffalo News*. I've talked to a couple of you in the past on the phone. I wanted to ask the three of you – the four of you to address the topic that was part of the first discussion this morning. If you had to deliver advice to the president on what our policy ought to be in Iraq over the next six months to a year, what would it be?

MR. BOORSTIN: Well, there's a nice simple, short question. (Laughter.) Larry, you want to start on this one?

MR. KORB: Well, I think we've already said that in the Center here, as Bob talked about it, we put out our strategic redeployment plan. I think the president has to set a timetable because if he doesn't, we don't have any control over events. Right now we're a victim of whatever the Iraqis do or do not do. You set a timetable over the next two years. That would give them an incentive to make the compromises that are necessary and also to send a signal that we have no intention of remaining there permanently. If you've been to Iraq, the – many of the Iraqis simply don't believe us that we're leaving. So if you announce a timetable, I think that would have those advantages, and not the least of which you would take the pressure off your own Army. I mean, one of the things that you have to take a look at when you send military forces into a situation, you have to ask yourself, is it increasing or decreasing our security? And I think given the – what we talked about in terms of a quality of the Army as well as no strategic reserve, by staying there indefinitely you are basically making the United States less secure.

MR. BOORSTIN: Steve, do you want to take a crack?

DR. XENAKIS: Well, I would just endorse what Larry said. I think that from the standpoint of the soldiers at this – and what they're experiencing, that to have a plan with the marks that have been proposed is in their best of interest and makes a whole lot of sense.

MR. BOORSTIN: Loren?

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, Jerry, let me first of all congratulate you on surviving for writing during the BRAC that maybe the Air National Guard doesn't need every single thing it has today. I'm surprised to see you alive. (Laughter.) But the – you kind of designated yourself as a high-value target during the BRAC.

You know, the unfortunate thing about our presence in Iraq is that so much of the way the war has unfolded has led to the opposite result from what was originally intended. We thought that what we were doing was advancing U.S. interests in Mesopotamia. And who knows? Maybe in retrospect it will still look that way. But at the moment, almost anything that we want to do in the future, the Iraqis get a veto on. That wasn't what we had in mind when we went in there. But for example, there is a plan in the Pentagon today to begin drawing down the force. And the only problem is if the Iraqis don't cooperate by being reasonably peaceful and showing some discipline in their security forces. We can't do it because the place would descend into chaos.

And so when at the dinner I was at last night, I polled people as to what our steps should be over the next six to 12 months. What everybody says is, well, it all depends on what the Iraqis do. I think – although I'm not real enamored of the notion of the timetable, I think in effect the Bush administration is gradually backing into a timetable for drawing down the force.

I certainly agree with Larry that there's no good case for increasing our presence there. I think the case for gradually scaling down almost regardless of what the Iraqis do is becoming stronger and stronger.

MR. BOORSTIN: Now, I think one thing that's quite interesting here is that an administration that prides itself on conviction and action is actually being reactive in most situations here. They haven't really taken control of the situation in a way that might have been possible a couple of years ago. Now, whether you can actually do that at this point in the conflict is hard to judge.

I would also say, as we argue in *Strategic Redeployment*, that one of the biggest problems with the debate in this country over what we should be doing in Iraq is that people have managed to characterize it as extremes. You're either for cut and run or you're for staying the course, when in fact there is a middle course here. We happen to think that the middle course we put forward – big surprise – is the right way to go. But I do believe that there is a – there is room among moderates, people in the middle – if there are any moderates left on the right, that would make for a solution to this conflict that would involve a timetable. Without that timetable, I think the real problem is that there is no assumption of responsibility by Iraq political leaders or the Iraq military ultimately. Sorry, next question. Over here? That would be you.

Q: Kalina Habdule (ph), I'm actually a student. There was a *Frontline* report entitled "The Soldier's Heart," which was a look at exactly what you, Dr. Xenakis, were talking about: the mental strain on these soldiers out there. I was hoping you could comment though on what they brought up and what you spoke about just briefly, this culture of silence that's being propagated out there in respect that you mentioned they do comment that there are certain mental strains, but a lot of people don't in fear that it may hinder their further career. So I was hoping you could kind of extrapolate on that in a way that we might look to change that current culture.

DR. XENAKIS: Well, thanks. There are some actions being taken. I mean, the culture of the command climate of what you can say or can't say and do you show what are your particular weaknesses or problems is not uniform. I mean, it really varies by small unit to unit and it varies by commanders and it varies by how various leaders are able to attend to their soldiers or not. And one of the things that can be done has to do with more training and consideration by commanders of the proactive measures that they can take.

There are initiatives now, in fact, being supported – is actually designed and supported by the author of this article, Dr. Charles Hogue (sp), looking at going into units, having teams of people, and just offline talking with soldiers who have redeployed and just have more informal discussions about what their experiences have been. What I was always so trying to point to, which was some of the lessons after Vietnam, is that there is a way of sort of reorienting our leadership in a very positive way of how we should, as senior leaders, think about of allowing – giving our soldiers the freedom and the opportunities to reintegrate after they have been in an operation.

I want to point though to a couple things. One is this one-out-of-three-year cycle of deployment. That really needs to be looked at very, very carefully. And it is – it differs amongst the services. We don't – the Army sends its soldiers actually sometimes for more than a year, and that really may be much too long for someone to be in that environment and then to come back and decompress and do all the things that we would want them to do so they can continue to perform and have a decent life.

Secondly, before you deploy for the year, there's about six months, if not longer, of getting ready for the deployment. And that in terms of time away from family and other stresses on you is almost as demanding as the deployment itself. So out of a three-year cycle, in fact, you can spend half of that time getting ready for deployment, being deployed, and then doing your recovery. That's not a lot to allow you to decompress, and that really needs to be looked at carefully.

MR. THOMPSON: Doctor, could I ask you a question about that? My mother is now 88 – was an Army officer in World War II. And like a lot of the other veterans from that war, she's not very sympathetic to arguments that the tours of duty are stressful. (Laughter.) She thinks her tours were a lot longer. Has something changed about human makeup or the nature of war that would make it more stressful to do a long tour today than it was during World War II?

DR. XENAKIS: Well, I mean, there you get into all the problems of where are the facts? And having surveyed World War II veterans and who had – were in theater for many, many years and would certainly experience a kind of combat that was different than the kind of combat here in that there were clear lines and there were areas that people had that they felt that they were relatively safer. The – and did they when they came back, in fact, in that particular era, disclose and share amongst themselves how the problems they were having and then that maybe it's why all the baby-boomers that they parented subsequent – I'm just joking – had some of their difficulties.

But I think you can't – it's hard to do a good statistical comparison and say, yeah, that generation was harder and tougher and they really withstood what this generation is having.

The problems with this group of soldiers as they tell their stories is they don't have a place that's safe. They don't have a circumstance that they can decompress. It's not as clear what their mission is. I mean, it was – and so they don't feel that they were as well trained, and soldiers need a real specific idea about what they're – is expected of them and what they're supposed to do. So –

MR. BOORSTIN: Right here. Please.

Q: My question is for Dr. Xenakis. I am amazed to find that nobody is addressing the problem of the psychological effect that this war is having on the Iraqis and the Iraqi children and about the impact short-term and long-term on us. Again, I say

I have lived through the civil war in Lebanon, and recently I have visited the hospital. The kids who have lost limbs and who are – and I can feel when I talk to my friends there the impact that this war had on them. It has broken the back of the collective Lebanon that I knew before. So my question is, what – how would you characterize this feeling of powerlessness, of having been wronged for something that they have not done, for – after having suffered under the sanctions and et cetera, having all these things imposed upon them?

I want to also to talk about another psychological impact.

MR. BOORSTIN: If we could just stick to that one thing because there a lot of people who want to ask questions. Okay?

Q: Okay.

MR. BOORSTIN: Doctor?

DR. XENAKIS: Well, that is a very astute question and observation, and I think one that's a great challenge for us in healthcare and perhaps a challenge for us strategically as a nation. What do we do with all these young people that now feel that there's a no one that they can't turn to safely, no one that they can trust, no person that can anchor them psychologically? And how vulnerable are these young people as they grow older? I mean, we've all seen historically what that meant for Germany and these sort of – the roaming youths and what – how they were perhaps exploited. We've perhaps seen what happened with Hamas in terms of being able to go in and do something. Is there just from the strategic standpoint for us as an American military a requirement of thought that we need to extend ourselves and reach out and do something for these young people, if not for the nation, and maybe partner with other agencies?

I agree with you, I don't see – I certainly don't see that that's going to happen within the military because of the way that medical research is funded and what it means politically for what the Army is going to do. Doing that has not been legitimized within our various missions. And the money that's available to go out to the various health organizations who might do that research is very limited, including the UN. But I think it's a great question.

MR. BOORSTIN: And another one over here?

Q: Hello, my name is Dan Sermon (sp) with EIR News Service. Last week, Vice President Cheney at an AIPAC event said, "the Iranian regime needs to know that if they stay on the present course, the international community is prepared to impose meaningful consequences." As I'm sure all of you know, Foreign Minister Lavrov had stated that he would prefer a diplomatic approach. In fact, he said, "it looks though as déjà vu," and he's convinced that there's no military solution to the crises. If there were a military strike on Iran by the U.S., whether it be air or troop, what would the effects in Iraq be?

MR. BOORSTIN: Good luck, Larry.

MR. KORB: Well, I think – let me say in terms of what we're talking about here on the panel, if the United States decided that they wanted to pursue regime change in Iran and do something, you simply don't have the troops to do it. Obviously – and Loren pointed this out earlier – by us going into Iraq, we've strengthened the hand of Iran in that part of the world, okay? I mean, whether we get – understood it or not is another issue.

And obviously if we had – and there are people who talk about a military option says you'd have to do a Desert Fox type of thing, which is when we – President Clinton bombed in the end of 1998. He bombed Iraq after Ambassador Butler and his team of inspectors left, that basically then they could cause all kinds of problems for our forces in Iraq. And not only there, but they obviously, I think, would take action in other parts of that region and with their short range missiles, not – they're not nuclear weapons, but they'd be conventional weapons. So, yes, I think you would, if you did decide that you had to attack the consequences could be very, very, very severe and it would be – create a lot more problems than we have right now in Iraq.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. KORB: My personal view, yes, it would do two things. One it would unite the Iranians, I mean –

MR. BOORSTIN: The – sorry, the question is would it destabilize the entire region?

MR. KORB: It would unite the Iranians and, yes, it would destabilize the entire region.

MR. THOMPSON: You know, I'm sure you'll be reassured to know that this morning the White House is saying the president has no second thoughts about a strategy of preemption. (Laughter.) It seems to me – you know, there's this old line about if I'm fooled once, shame on him; if I'm fooled twice, shame on me. It does seem to me that after making a mistake this way once, you should maybe reevaluate what the assumptions going in were so you don't repeat it.

In this particular case, I know a lot of the planners and senior military officials at the Pentagon: the plans to bomb the nuclear facilities exist. They're updated on a nearly daily basis. Our intelligence is not perfect, but it's adequate to destroy the capabilities. The thing is, though, they are far, far from having a nuclear weapon. There's just no rush here and I don't see any particular reason why we need to be banging the war drum again, given how well it went the last time.

DR. XENAKIS: They may be right, they may be wrong, but they're never in doubt. (Laughter.)

MR. THOMPSON: Right. Exactly.

MR. BOORSTIN: Yeah, and having skimmed the new national security strategy, which is being released in about 15 minutes by Dr. Hadley, I would say that the – they have not changed course or at least changed the words in what they propose to do.

Over there against the wall.

Q: Hi, my name is Derek Lambert (sp) and I'm with the Yomiuri Shimbun. My question is, do you think – following up on the Lebanese woman's remarks, do you think that the American people realize the long-term psychological effect this war is having in Iraq and elsewhere, and how it affects our national security in the future? And what do you think it will take for American people to realize the long-term effects of American troops going abroad into situations like Iraq or Iran or North Korea or what have you?

MR. BOORSTIN: Sorry, this is you. I always give you the easy ones.

DR. XENAXIS: Thank you. I – you know, the American people are sort of funny about their appreciation of mental health and – perhaps funny is not the right word, but there are very mixed feelings about what – how they react to appreciation and discussions about mental health and what services need to be done in a personal effects of a particular, let's say in this case, a soldier's life overseas. And I can't say.

I'm in fact married to a journalist and it – the article she's asked to write for either *U.S. News* or the *LA Times*, this is not one that is – comes up on their screen. So it does not seem to me that there's much attention paid day to day about really what the effect is on the soldiers and their families. Certainly, the reaction – it's – the reaction to this article that appeared in *JAMA* was, you know, it's really not as bad, many of us had more difficult circumstances, this is really a bit of an exaggeration and there are – there was a psychologist from Harvard who said this is an exaggeration, these people really – you should expect this, it's not going to have the impact that we think it's going to have. So I personally think that by and large it's – it doesn't get much attention.

MR. KORB: Yeah, can I make a comment on it? Remember, this is a volunteer military, and because of that people who don't want to get involved do not have to. You do not have to get involved, so it becomes something where you can – you're able to say if you have no relative or close personal friend, that – gee, that's too bad, but it doesn't impact me because myself or my family really doesn't have to do this. So they can take a psychological distance. They can put their yellow bumper sticker on and say we would support our troops and then kind of get on with life.

DR. XENAKIS: That is very good.

MR. BOORSTIN: At the very back.

Q: Hi, Jack Ferrell (sp) from the *Denver Post*. A lot of the conversation leads me to the conclusion – the question anyway, as to whether or not a reinstatement of the draft might be a better alternative in the (years to come?).

DR. XENAKIS: Let me just make – I'd like to just say one thing about that because there's so many contradictions about what a soldier needs to be and what the requirements are for soldiers. I – even in what Larry and Bob published in terms of a need for more special forces, I think it was – I think you all identified 50,000. Of all our soldiers, the Special Forces are the most carefully recruited and trained. So this is where you've got a contradiction in terms of lowering recruitment standards, and then saying, but what we need soldiers who in fact are more expert and are able to learn and operate in a more complex environment. And everything that we're talking about, and particularly if there's going to be any sort of programmatic commitment to an irregular war or peace building, whatever the euphemism is, means that in fact there will need to be higher recruitment standards. There needs to be more training. And that again takes you back to all the principles of the all-volunteer army.

DR. KORB: I think the question – you know it's – in the last presidential campaign, President Bush said, "I'll never have a draft." You can't say that, you should say, I would prefer not to have a draft. I would prefer to do it on a volunteer basis. But I can't see – I think the question the American people have to decide if this is continued deterioration of the Army, how low a quality are you willing to accept before you decide you're going to have to do something different? I mean, people say, "Well, how can you get more people – you know, improve the quality of people coming in?" Well, as long as you're in Iraq, you're not going to – you're not going to be able to do that. You're going to have to spend more and more for the people that you want, and I think that's the real question before the American people.

Now, there was nobody a stronger supporter of the volunteer military than President Reagan. He had this very strong libertarian streak. But I remember him telling me in the early days of the administration, "Look, let's see if you can make it work on a volunteer basis" because the military he inherited was – went through the same thing in the 70s where we kept lowering the standards and creating problems for ourselves. But if it doesn't work, I'm willing to go back to a draft. He said "See if you can make it work, but if it doesn't, you need to let me know." And I don't see that, but I think it's something we really ought to think seriously about it if the present trends continue.

MR. BOORSTIN: Jack, I mean, I think one way we may inch towards it is through a national service program that would allow the military as one of those options, perhaps something that would gather more support politically than the thought of a draft – just a straight old military draft.

Q: Have you guys heard anything at the Pentagon, like, they were contemplating (this?).

MR. THOMPSON: Oh, I –

MR. BOORSTIN: The question was if we've heard anything that – in – from the Pentagon that people are contemplating the draft.

MR. THOMPSON: No, I haven't.

MR. : No.

MR. THOMPSON: In fact, I hear the opposite from all the senior military officers. They don't want a draft.

MR. BOORSTIN: Over here. The microphone's coming.

Q: Bill Neal (sp). I'm an author. My question is, with all the restructuring that's been talked about and the need to find more money to do different things inside the military, Chalmers Johnson, *Sorrow of Empire*, dwells upon the extraordinary number of bases. And I don't agree with everything he says, but do you think we have too many bases in too many places and are there any savings available for closing some of them down overseas? I think they've increased dramatically in the past 10 years.

MR. THOMPSON: Oh, we have just completed an overseas basing commission study of – and the administration is in the process of implementing a realignment of U.S. forces that brings several – well, two divisions anyway, home. I would suspect that we're going to see fewer and fewer bases overseas independent of American wishes because we're just not as popular as we used to be. But beyond that there is a certain kind of paradox at work here, which is that the administration contends, I think probably to some degree correctly, that we're facing more military challenges overseas, yet its strategy is to move more and more of the entire force posture to the continental United States. At the same time, it's cutting all of our airlift for getting back there quickly. So there's a certain contradiction here. If you want to have your force in the United States and have expeditionary warfare, as they apparently do, then you're going to need a lot of lift. They're not funding that, so the alternative is to have the forces over there, but they're cutting the bases over there. Go figure.

MR. KORB: Let me make – it won't save you any money because in many cases like in Europe the bases are subsidized by the host countries. But let me give you a figure that I think is important. The Army, as of October 2005, said they have 251,000 soldiers serving in a 120 countries.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. BOORSTIN: Okay, and leave it there. Sir?

Q: I was wondering, in terms of force expansion and also force training, if the French have their national gendarmerie, or people that are trained for civil government work and working with the civilians, and wouldn't it be better to have a separate force

like that that was trained for police work rather than trying to retrain the Army and Marines as policemen?

MR. THOMPSON: So that –

Q: That's one, and the second thing is right after the Korean War, we had a large number of units – or it was the Korean War, a large number of units that were U.S. Army units, but they had an officer and a sergeant that were Americans and the rest of them were Koreans. And it got quite a large expansion, and in the course it became a very effective a force, as I understand. And that type of expansion (therefore?), those are two things sort of outside the box where everybody is thinking.

MR. THOMPSON: If I could speak to the first part of that, there have been periodic proposals for – frequent proposals in fact for creating a sort of a different style, a different category of capability, but in the ground forces that would be more involved in civil affairs, regional security as opposed to actual high intensity war fighting.

The way that Secretary Rumsfeld has sought to deal with this, though, is to do two things: first of all, to put more emphasis on special operations forces for particular types of skills, mainly war fighting, but at the low intensity part of the range; but then secondly, with regard to stability operations, reconstruction, peacekeeping and so on, he conducted a summer study two years ago that has now turned into a directive inside the building from him that we need to have better language skills, better cultural awareness, and that sort of thing. The problem is he wants those things to occur within the existing military forces. In other words, he wants them to be more versatile, sort of like Renaissance warriors. And the problem is they are already overstretched in terms of what's being expected of them, so this is met with, as you might expect, a lot of resistance in the ranks.

MR. KORB: You know, the – Admiral Cebrowski – the late Admiral Cebrowski who Rumsfeld brought in as to help transformation, recommended three years ago now that you need peacekeeping and stabilization divisions, and you should add those on top of the Army structure. And if you had a chance to read the article by Brigadier General Foster from the British military – served with us in Iraq and it was published in the *Military Review*, he basically says what Steve has been saying: these people were not trained to do what you're asking them to do, so you shouldn't be surprised that they didn't do it well.

Q: Michael Backfisch, Germany's business daily, *Handelsblatt*. A question for Larry and Loren. Larry, you said we need a larger active army. What scale are you talking about? Are you talking about increasing the Army by reducing Navy and Air Force – a zero-sum game – or are you're talking about a much higher recruitment effort? And lastly, maybe you could give a short (glimpse?) on the situation in Iraq. Do we have enough troops and the right mix of troops over there?

MR. KORB: Well, we have been recommending here an increase of 86,000 troops and basically adding the peacekeeping and stabilization divisions, doubling the size of the Special Forces and also bringing some skills that you use a lot in the Guard and Reserve onto active duty so you wouldn't have to call them up so much. And we talk about 86,000. We recommend slight decreases in the Air Force and the Navy because of the increasing technological sophistication and in fact they did that in this year's budget. Between the Navy and the Air Force, they cut about 75,000 people. Now, it's easier said than done.

I agree with you. I mean, the problem is in this environment to add these people are very, very difficult when you have a war that's not supported by the American people and feel that the cost is way too much for the benefits we're getting. I mean, what I think the most trenchant comment I saw on this was Frank Fukuyama's comment. You know, he wrote "The End of History," and he's got a new book out about foreign policy. And basically Frank said, "If you had told the American people in early 2003 you're going to have over 2,300 deaths, 17-20,000 wounded, spend \$400 billions so Iraq can have an election, you'd have been laughed out of the ballpark."

MR. BOORSTIN: Loren?

MR. THOMPSON: Well, we certainly didn't have the right sort of force when we went in for what we're now doing. Increasingly, we have the right sort of force because we left them there to figure out how to do it. I think our force today is much better suited to doing the sorts of operations being expected of them, even though it went in with very few of the relevant skills because circumstances have imposed a learning process on them. I'm not sure we want to increase or even maintain the force we've got there now though because the way in which the situation is trending, we're probably going to get caught in the midst of activities that we don't want to take sides in.

MR. BOORSTIN: Okay. Are there any other journalists in the house with a question? Please.

Q: James Rosen, McClatchy Newspapers. I want to follow up on my question from my friend and colleague, Jerry Zremski of the *Buffalo News*. When I interview folks who still basically support the war and the administration's war policies, one of things I hear frequently is a comparison with World War II. And they say that the first couple of years we got our butts kicked, that General McArthur and Eisenhower made huge strategic blunders, and that if you'd had the sort of 24/7, cable/internet-hyped coverage then, we never would have won the war. What's – do you think that's a legitimate argument and how would you compare the World War II with Iraq – the mistakes that were made then? Is there still room to sort of pull this out a la World War II?

MR. KORB: Absolutely not. First, World War II was a war of necessity. It was not a war of choice. And I think that's the big, big difference. The United States was willing – to use Kennedy's words – you know, he talked later, "pay any price, bear any

burden” to win that. We had no choice. What you have here now is a war of choice, not a war of necessity and that’s the big, big difference.

Sure, there were mistakes made, but you know Senator Graham I thought put it very well one time. And he said, “Can you imagine a World War II after the attack on Pearl Harbor and Hitler declared war on us, the United States said, ‘No, we’re going after Mussolini?’” (Laughter.) Okay? We’re going to leave the other two alone, okay? I mean, what you’ve done here, in terms you’ve gone after someone that wasn’t an immanent threat, had not – you know, if anything, you’ve decreased your security because you’ve – as a British ambassador to Italy said, it’s been the best recruiting tool that al Qaeda has, us going into Iraq, particularly under the wrong circumstances because people are saying, see, we told you. They’re just here for the oil, to impose our way of life on them. So I think those comparisons are so misleading, they’re dangerous.

MR. THOMPSON: I think the part about the coverage is true. I think that the way in which the electronic media cover war tends to be demoralizing on the home front. I certainly hear that from all the soldiers that I talk to. They think that the coverage they see on television – on cable bears no resemblance to what they’re actually encountering over there. And I’ll leave it to you to decide whether that’s the case, but I think that the argument that is demoralizing is kind of inescapable.

Having said that, though, the big difference here is that, as Larry said, we had a concept of what we were trying to accomplish in this war. It was voluntary and step by step along the way, we’ve discovered all of our going-in assumptions were wrong. It’s not like being attacked by some external power unless you’re one of the few people left in America who still thinks there’s a connection between Saddam and al Qaeda, right? This is really about a war plan that went wrong based on a series of bad assumptions plugged into some really atrocious intelligence. And we’re just living with the consequences now. So although the coverage is demoralizing, even if you strip away all the subjectivities, the basic performance of the war has been abysmal and that’s what the public’s reacting to.

MR. BOORSTIN: Sir?

Q: How significant is the reluctance to arm the Iraqi forces, and what’s a realistic price tag to equip them for the mission that we say we want them to carry out?

MR. KORB: Well, I think it’s very significant because it shows that the Iraqi forces are not loyal to the Iraqi government or the Iraqi state, and there is a concern that they will turn them on each other or various segments of the population and that’s why – you know, the point we made in our *Strategic Redeployment* plan, basically you’re still at their mercy. You have no control over events. I mean, if – my nightmare would be is if somebody were to assassinate the Ayatollah Sistani, for example, and all hell breaks loose and our forces would be caught in between. And I think you would find the Iraqi security forces going back and defending their own peoples.

MR. THOMPSON: Well, there must be some resistance to equipping them because we've done such a lousy job of it. However, it – this goes back to some things we've said earlier; in particular, the thing I said about the longer we stick around, the more likely we are to get caught up in activities we don't want to take sides in. The problem we have is that particularly in the case of the police and the local security forces, these are increasingly penetrated by sectarian militias. I mean, all the revenge killings, the people who were disappearing, the torture and all of that – you know, there is a part of this where even though we feel we can't leave until the security forces are ready to shoulder the burden, some people think that we're basically training those security forces to go and kill other Iraqis. That's not a kind of a pleasant prospect.

Q: But if you –

MR. BOORSTIN: We're going to move to – there's a lot of people who still have questions.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. BOORSTIN: Sorry?

(Cross talk.)

MR. THOMPSON: The price tag on equipping the force – we don't really know what it is. It will probably be relatively low by comparison with the way we equip our force, and what it's going to cost to recover our forces. I don't think the issue is so much as a price tag as our reservations about how the weapons will be used.

MR. BOORSTIN: My mistake, sorry. Over here, on the aisle there.

Q: My name's Don Cordell (sp) and this is specifically for Dr. Thompson. Dr. Thompson, I was wondering – you talked a lot in your – the military equipment or you (unintelligible) Army equipment. I was wondering more do you have any data or any information about the other (sorts?) of equipment that's going through similar wear and tear that's just essential for the combat in places like Iraq, such as the airlift capabilities, the C-130 is wearing down. It's an old airframe, yet it's absolutely essential. What – and similarly for Navy sealift capability: what sort of things are going on there that we need to be concerned about as well?

MR. THOMPSON: I don't know a great deal about the sealift. In the case of the airlift, you're completely right. We are using up the C-17 force very quickly. The C-17 is our newest jet, intercontinental transport, and we have another propeller aircraft that we use for intratheater transport called the C-130, which is also wearing out very rapidly.

You know, the Army often complains that it doesn't get enough of a budget share, but to a large degree the reason the Air Force buys those planes is to support the Army. And the problem is that because it knows that, it sometimes doesn't provide as much

money as it should to the airlift mission. I know that that's going to change, though, because while flying to Iraq a couple of months ago, Congressman Jack Murtha's aging C-130 caught fire which is – this apparently has made an impression on the congressman so we're going to be getting some more of those. (Laughter.)

There is this odd thing that about the administration that on the one hand it says we need more mobility and the other hand it has eliminated both of the airlift programs for the Army. And I wish I could explain the underlying logic to you, but I just don't know what it is.

MR. BOORSTIN: Larry?

MR. KORB: Very briefly, a quote from our own study here about our own QDR. The Air Force – the CBO has estimated that the depreciation of the Air Force could cost between \$1.5 and \$2.1 billion in 2005 and each year, and the Navy is about \$150 million dollars in a year in terms of what they need for their equipment that they're wearing out. And of course the Marines have a very similar situation to the Army in terms of their equipment.

MR. BOORSTIN: One last question here.

Q: Hello, I'm Timothy with the EIR. From my understanding, we're importing bullets from Canada, and that would point to larger economic issues, so I was wondering if you could speak to just the fact that you have such things as the looming bankruptcy of the auto sector, our former arsenal of democracy, and maybe any larger policies of globalization and free trade and this whole shift from a producer economy to a service economy which is somewhat absurd in fighting warfare because the last time I checked, you can't shoot text messages at the enemy. So –

MR. THOMPSON: Well, we do have a partial solution to the ammunition. And the company you're talking about – the Canadian company it's called SNC and I believe General Dynamics is buying that portion of the company, so it may be in Canada but we're going to own it just like most of the rest of the Canadian economy. (Laughter.)

The – you know, the decline of the auto industry in the United States I think is the major problem that bespeaks a broader issue in our manufacturing base. It gets no attention from either party, at least not enough. Having said that, what we see in Iraq is a type of conflict where no amount of production is going to solve the fundamental problems of our strategy. The basic problem here is we don't understand the country, our soldiers don't speak the language, and so a lot of the time we use this high technology just to more speedily distribute our misconceptions about what we are and – where we are and what we're doing. There's an issue there in terms of the decline of the U.S. manufacturing base, but it's not really germane to the problem we're facing in Iraq. In Iraq what we're facing is just bad intelligence, bad planning, and bad leadership.

MR. BOORSTIN: Okay. We're now going to – sorry, you can come up afterwards and talk to the panelists. We're now going to take about a half an hour break for lunch which is out here in the corridor. I ask everybody to try to be in their seats by about 12:45 because Dr. Brzezinski is going to address us then. And let me say thank you to this panel; to Larry, to Stephen and to Loren, very much.

(Applause.)