



CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND COOPERATION

CISAC'S Annual Drell Lecture

“The Wars on Three Fronts:
Iraq, the Pentagon, and Main Street”

Transcript of Remarks as Delivered

By

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SCOTT SAGAN (CHAIR): Good afternoon. I'm Scott Sagan, the co-director of the Center for International Security and Cooperation, CISAC, at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies here at Stanford University. On behalf of all of us at CISAC, I welcome you to the annual Sidney Drell Lecture with Thom Shanker from *The New York Times* whom I will introduce in one moment. But first let me say a word or two about CISAC, because CISAC is a research center within Stanford that conducts research and development technology, engineering fields, science and social science on pressing international security issues. It then tries to bring that research and improved understanding to Washington debates and policy debates elsewhere around the world, and it tries, often I think with stunning success, to train the next generation of scientists and social scientists who go into the field of international security studies.

The Drell Lecture was established in 1994 by Albert "Bud" Wheelon and his wife Cecily, both Stanford graduates, and I'd like to welcome Dr. Wheelon who is here with us today. [APPLAUSE.] The lecture is named for CISAC founding co-director Sid Drell, and I am pleased that he and his wife Harriet are with us today. [APPLAUSE.] Bud Wheelon and Sid Drell, both physicists, made a tremendous contribution to national security during the Cold War, and indeed going into the post-Cold War era by providing technical innovations in the area of intelligence and arms control especially. Dr. Wheelon advanced early developments in ballistic missiles and satellite technology for U.S. intelligence agencies and defense industries and later joined Hughes Aircraft where he was CEO. Dr. Drell has served as a trusted advisor to the U.S. government on technology and arms control issues for more than 40 years. For those of you who want to know more about their seminal contributions to national security, I encourage you to read the book *Secret Empire: Eisenhower, the CIA and the Hidden Story of America's Space Espionage* by Philip Taubman of the *New York Times*, a colleague of today's speaker.

In every year since Bud Wheelon kindly gave us the money to endow this lectureship series, we have invited a distinguished speaker to come to Stanford, meet with students and faculty and give a public lecture on a current national or international security issue. Today's speaker is in a position that affords him extraordinary insight into the making of U.S. national security policy and the effect of those policies as they are carried out. Before joining the *New York Times* in 1997, Thom Shanker served as foreign editor and foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*. Based in Berlin in the 1990s, he covered the war in Bosnia, the departure of British, French and Russian and U.S. forces from Berlin, and the emerging cases of nuclear smuggling in Central Europe. He has been the *New York Times*' Washington bureau, Pentagon, and foreign policy correspondent since May 2001, four months before the September 11th attacks. All of us at CISAC are especially appreciative of the time that he takes out every September to meet with the Stanford-CISAC undergraduate honors students during their two-week honors college tour of the nation's capital, and indeed, I should note that my asking Thom to give this lecture came after he discussed his views on the three wars—Iraq, inside the Pentagon and on Main Street—during one of these informal sessions with Stanford students, and I said it would be wonderful for him to share these ideas with a much wider audience. Thom Shanker has covered the Iraq War as waged by the nation's top military and civilian leaders from Washington as well as from Iraq where he has made many trips. We are pleased to have him speak with us today on

“The Wars on Three Fronts: Iraq, the Pentagon and Main Street.” Please hold your questions until the end of the talk when we will conduct a formal question-and-answer session. Please let’s welcome Thom Shanker. APPLAUSE

THOM SHANKER: Good afternoon. Scott, thank you very much. And really thanks to all of you for this truly great honor of being invited here today. I’m a skeptic by genetics and a pessimist by choice, so there really were not many occupations open to me as I was growing up, but gatherings such as this one sponsored by CISAC which proves our nation has so many bright people participating in the public policy debate, well, it gives me reason to pause, and I spent the day meeting with the scholars here at CISAC all of whom are critical to any reporter’s rolodex, but even more I’ve met with the honors students. The questions the students asked, the quality of their research, well, I’m ashamed to say it actually gives me hope.

I want to thank in particular Sid Drell, and the Wheelon family for their hospitality, Secretary Perry, I’m very honored you took time out of your schedule to join us here. I also want to recognize a colleague and friend who’s here today, Eric Schmitt of the *New York Times*. Eric and I shared bylines on hundreds of stories in the five years after 9/11, where we sat in the front row of history at the Pentagon and some really awful places down range, but there’s proof today that Eric is a far better reporter than I am. I’m still a gumshoe reporter on the beat and Eric’s here for a year at Stanford as a Knight Fellow.

Speaking of my role as a beat reporter, the term beat reporter has always been one of great honor, even though some of my editors hear it more as an imperative, you know, beat the reporter. But in this role I am compelled, even liberated, to distance myself and disdain partisan politics, but as many in my field have said, this allows us to become even more fiercely partisan for a set of political ideals. This is an important caveat I want to say as I start off today’s lecture, I’m not here today as an editorial writer or a columnist or a talking head spouting views. What I am is sincerely humbled to be on the same platform as a past roster of so many highly esteemed Drell lecturers. I read all the past speeches with great interest, deep respect and even with no small amount of trepidation. I’m not a renowned physicist or weapons specialist like Freeman Dyson or Mohamed ElBaradei, although I know firsthand from painfully close proximity the dark fruits of that kind of labor. I’m also not an astronaut like Sally Ride or a theologian like Father Bryan Hehir although I routinely traveled to places more alien than the dark side of the moon. In fact southern Afghanistan looks a lot like Mars, and in these battlefields ethics unfortunately all too often float untethered in zero gravity, and moral gyroscopes, well, they start spinning wildly.

What can I offer you? I’ve been asked here today to answer an existential question posed as long ago as our first ancestor who picked up a club and a stone and did battle with a neighboring clan. That existential question? What news from the front? In this case, as posed elegantly by Scott Sagan, what news from three fronts? The Pentagon, Iraq and the home front. First, my dispatch from the Pentagon.

The biggest change of course is the change at the top. It’s old news that Bush threw Don Rumsfeld under the bus so he could launch a new Iraq policy. It was a dynamic period for all the E-ring bookies taking odds. Rumsfeld had already survived early wars with the brass. He went on to achieve rock star status, the stuff of TV puff pieces on *Saturday Night Live*. Many predicted, though, that he would quit or be fired after Abu Ghraib or because of the generals’

revolt. It was only late last year that I knew something had changed. I couldn't have predicted exactly what day but to quote that great strategic analyst Obi Wan Kenobi, "I felt a disturbance in the Force." A few days later, Rumsfeld was gone. I can share with you now--enough time has passed--that in my last conversation with Secretary Rumsfeld, I said to him, "Mr. Secretary, I don't think history is going to be kind to you." He sort of rocked back on his heels—Rumsfeld loves to spar with reporters—and he said, "Thom, history will be kind to me because I intend to write it." LAUGHTER.

Now, he stole that line from Winston Churchill, of course, and he also quoted Churchill in his Oval Office farewell with President Bush, so I think this is evidence that Rumsfeld already views himself as a Churchillian figure—great war-time leader, thrown out of office by his own when his popularity dropped, yet--he hopes-- decades later, revered by historians. How will history treat Rumsfeld? I can't predict now. I can predict, though, we have not heard the last from him.

There are others who have gone, left also long shadows. In recent weeks at the *Times* as we began assessing the more calibrated and calm intelligence reports that have come to light, especially on Iran and North Korea, it became clear that the nation's spy agencies were trying to show a new willingness to concede the limits of their knowledge. This caution, we are now told, even has a name. It's called the Powell Rule.

Now you all know the Powell Doctrine from the First Gulf War—apply overwhelming force to achieve specific ends. Well the new Powell Rule is intended to avoid a repetition of what happened to Secretary Powell at the U.N., when he presented what he thought was slam-dunk evidence of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, intelligence that turned out to be wrong. Now that we're already a couple of months into Secretary Gates' tenure, I have to report it's too early to assess what he's going to do at the substantive level, but I can tell you there's already been a dramatic shift in tenor and in style. The tension level at the Pentagon is way down. In late February in the same Munich conference hall, where Rumsfeld proved to be a divisive, unnerving voice, with talk of Old Europe versus New Europe, Secretary Gates gave a speech that elevated the conversation. When President Putin of Russia described America's foreign policy in the most caustic tones imaginable, it was Gates himself who rewrote his speech to give the administration's rebuttal. He chose words of velvet, not of steel, and said simply to Putin, "One cold war was quite enough, thank you very much."

The most significant and immediate change in the national security conversation inside that building that I cover, the one with five sides and a million angles, is the conversation between civilians and the uniformed military. Secretary Gates now meets with the chiefs in the tank, in *their* secure conference room. Rumsfeld boycotted the tank, summoned the chiefs up to his area, and already senior commanders talk about a more collaborative and consultative dialogue with Secretary Gates. The military has to be bold enough to offer its best, unvarnished advice without fear of reprisal, but the civilians must not hide behind the military, and the military must not let them. I think a great thesis for a smart graduate student here would be to track all of Rumsfeld's comments before the Iraq war about how *he* was forcing *change* on the military, transformation, the war in Iraq would be fought in a more leaner fashion, but after the Swift capture of Baghdad became a long, hard slog, suddenly the Rumsfeld lines at the podium was all about Tommy Frank's plan and John Abezaid's plan and the plan approved by the chiefs.

Now to be fair, we have to recall that General Franks was highly effective as a combat commander. Taliban and al-Qaeda were routed from Afghanistan with a very small commitment of American force. Baghdad fell in, what was it? Thirty days or so, with really a historic low level of coalition casualties and civilian loss of life. But when it came time to prepare for the all important post-war occupation, stabilization and reconstruction, General Franks adopted the functional equivalent of that snooty New York waiter who says, "Sorry sir, not my table."

But after a bruising period under Rumsfeld, in which officers were seen as defending administration policies far beyond their portfolios, the current crop of senior officers appears to now understand their role, or maybe they remember what their role should have been, that members of the armed forces, the people in uniform, are the nation's biggest civil service. They salute and move out smartly, regardless of the party in power. In fact, one senior officer on the joint staff—I told him I was coming out here to give this speech—said that what he had learned under Rumsfeld was that it's best to distrust Republicans as much as they had historically distrusted Democrats. I think that nonpartisanship is healthy for our military today.

The word "transformation" really has vanished from PowerPoint slides and budget briefings, or at least it's been demoted back where it belongs. It's no longer used to bless favored projects or criticize a competing proposal. Now just because Rumsfeld pushed transformation doesn't mean it was wrong. The military did need to become more agile and expeditionary. His concept was correct that speed of operations brings a mass all its own, improving accuracy brings a mass all its own, but sometimes mass has a mass all its own, and there is no replacing boots on the ground in certain kinds of missions as we've learned in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the end, Rumsfeld became a public lesson that transformation is not just something you do to somebody else. I will report that the military-media relationship is healthy today, despite the routine arguments and frustrations. Both sides realized the military-media relationship is like a marriage: It's a dysfunctional marriage, to be sure, but we stay together for the kids. For the senior officer corps, the kids are their troops; for those of us in the media, our kids are the readers, the taxpayers, who devote a large amount of their treasury to send off sons and daughters, and husbands and wives to war, and the military understands the importance of explaining their mission, so not only are we married but we're also fairly engaged at the same time.

Now onto Iraq where I must say there really is a message in the battle. We are witnessing a very important moment. I don't like to predict the next six months are critical because every six months has been critical. But the surge that's underway has barely gotten started, which you might not be aware of from hearing all the rhetoric. The five brigades going to Baghdad and its area won't even be in place until June or so. If I were a student of national security, here are the questions I'd be asking about the surge, because they're being asked by all the smart officers back at the Pentagon and in Iraq.

It's been argued from the start that the problem in Iraq is that on one hand, it was described as a central front in the war on terror, if not the central front in the war on terror. Yet, at the same time it was resourced as an economy of force mission. There were enough troops to rush to capital of course, but not enough to hold and rebuild, so the five brigades now designated for the surge, is that the right number? Is that the wrong number? Is it even the number prescribed by

the Army's new counterinsurgency manual that was written under the command of General Petraeus who now is the senior commander in Iraq managing the surge. Was the number five brigades chosen because it's the most the military can muster today? And how can it be called a surge if it takes five months for all the troops to get there?

On the ground in Iraq, according to the military, the statistics are beginning to move in the right direction, and the Iraqis are showing up for the fight, according to officers on the ground. But one of the major unknowns was described to me by a senior intelligence officer during my last trip to Iraq in December. The Jaish al Mahdi, which is the Shiite militia loyal to Muqtada al Sadr, the radical Shiite cleric, has about two or three hundred senior ideological leadership. It's a tiny number, hard to track, they've gone underground. There are a couple of thousand serious fighters, five or six thousand more fighters who could be mobilized, and from Baghdad to Basra, if the Shia, Jaish Al Mahdi with a full mobilization, 60,000 fighters they can draw on. Will they simply wait out the surge? There's already evidence that that's what they're doing.

It's interesting to note the problems the U.S. and allies have in generating forces for Iraq and for Afghanistan and yet the Taliban, the al-Qaeda and the Sunni and Shia militias do not have any problems generating forces. Just last week I sat down with General John Craddock who is the new Supreme Allied Commander in Europe who's taken over the NATO mission in Afghanistan. He said the only way to beat the Taliban is to find jobs for the part-time fighters that he called "day soldiers." The hardcore Taliban leadership can't change them, but the thousands of foot soldiers sign up only because they need money for their family to survive, and General Craddock believes that if you could provide legal, legitimate jobs they would lay down their arms. So it becomes a question of motivation, and of morale.

Having spent a lot of time with the troops down range over the last few years, I think I have enough evidence to say with confidence that both Republicans and Democrats, those who are for the war or against, get it wrong when they stand up inside the Beltway and cite morale to defend their cause. On one side you hear people say that morale is good among the troops, they understand the mission, they want to fight them in Baghdad and not in the Bay Area. The other side are those who say that morale is at an all-time low, they're frustrated with the mission and military service. To be sure, you can find soldiers who articulate either view, but both views are wrong.

In truth, where it really matters, on the battlefield, morale has little to do with politics. It has to do with trust, for the soldier to your left and to your right, has to do with the quality of your leadership, the quality of your training, whether you have the right gear, and most of all, it has to do with at, whether at the end of a long day outside the wire, or a long night if it's a night mission, there's hot chow and a hotter shower waiting for you, a DVD to watch, a gym for workin' out, and today, an Internet line so you can get messages from loved ones back home. After an IED goes off or a mortar explodes and the armored humvee opens its doors or the Stryker vehicle lifts its hydraulic back gate, not one soldier has ever said to me, "Let's talk about the War Powers Resolution and the cap on spending." They might say, "Stay close, keep your head down and grab an extra bag of Skittles 'cause we may be here for a while." But most of all, they really like it when I bring pounds of ground Starbucks to drink when we get back to base.

It will be interesting over coming months to see how the scandal at Walter Reed Hospital plays out, whether the soldiers will feel they've been forgotten and neglected by the problems with the care, or whether seeing the attention it's getting from senior leaders renews in them faith with their commanders.

I have one final thought to share about the surge as it's being debated back in Washington. It's not about Iraq or Afghanistan but about Iran, North Korea, and the Taiwan Straits. A week or so ago I learned and reported that General Peter Pace, the chairman of the joint chiefs, secretly upgraded to significant the level of risk the military faces this year in carrying out its full national security mission. Now, General Pace in very clear comments said the military can still carry out any mission ordered by the president, but with the strains of Iraq, Afghanistan, lack of equipment, intelligence sources stretched thin, that the response of the American military would be slower, less elegant and more dangerous to the troops.

So here's the risk. Has the nation committed its strategic reserve in the surge in Iraq? As the ground forces are tied up, can air and naval assets fill in? If not as a strategic reserve, well, at least as a strategic last resort, if crisis rears somewhere else. Many officers feel that if the surge is sustained into next year, it violates basic military doctrine that says your strategic reserve is only committed for specific, decisive, achievable objectives and that it must be reset as quickly as possible. How the military mitigates the current risk elsewhere in the world, caused by the surge in Iraq, is one of the major themes that we'll be pursuing.

So does this surge, does this victory in Iraq require some type of national mobilization? That's the question I've been writing about for almost two years now, and it's finally gaining traction in the debate back home.

In the interest of full disclosure I have to tell you that like a major American corporation, I outsourced part of this speech. I've been greatly honored over the past years to develop good working relationships with many of the most senior commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan and back at the Pentagon, and I emailed many of them, told them what I was doing here today, and asked them to share some of their thoughts, so I think even though I must protect their identities, their level of interest in speaking with you should tell you something.

This is the email I got just the other day from a senior commander with multiple tours in Iraq. Quote: "What has hit me since returning to the States is the fact that America is not at war. When the president determined there was a requirement for 21,500 additional soldiers to Iraq, it affected 21,500 additional soldiers and their families, and no one else. No one was asked to pay additional taxes, no one else was required to serve, just our great service men and women." End quote.

If there was one thought I could leave with you today, it's this. The American military cannot win the war in Iraq. The American military cannot win the war in Afghanistan. Even more, not only can they not win those wars, the American military will not win those wars.

But before you rush out thinking this is some liberal East Coast journalist assessment, first of all, I'm from Oklahoma and I have no politics, and secondly, this is the assessment of the American military. It's not my own. Militaries don't win wars. Militaries defeat other militaries. Only

governments can win wars. Despite all of the Bush administration's rhetoric about America being a nation at war, only the military is at war along with the intelligence community being on a war footing, of course. Not the rest of the government. There's been no call for a truly national commitment to this endeavor that the Bush Administration calls "the long war" with its evocation of the decades-long Cold War.

To put this in context, recall that the great victory of World War II was not secured when troops reached Berlin, or with the signing ceremony aboard the *Missouri*. That just ended the fighting. What truly brought victory in Europe? The answer is in this email, from another senior officer whose name you've certainly heard before, but I can't tell you. Quote: "The military doesn't win wars. The military defeats the militaries of other nations. The Army doesn't win wars. It sets the conditions by which a *government* can win wars. We didn't win World War II until the Marshall Plan. This is ultimately a long war for the soul of Islam, but we do not yet have a Marshall Plan for the new Middle East. We need to help the moderate governments of the Middle East. We have to have an incredible effort to eliminate poverty, provide housing and jobs across the Islamic world. The scale of the effort would dwarf the Marshall Plan and we have not even acknowledged that is what is required." End quote.

At the military's war colleges, officers are taught military strategy but only as a subset of national strategy. The idea was you should think about wars, think about your desired end state, where you want to be when it's over. You have to consider not just what the military has to do, but more importantly, the diplomatic and political end states. That, according to many seasoned officers, is just not happening today. Perhaps the clearest statement of this concern was delivered by a senior general with combat experience who answered just the other day in this email. Quote: "Remember, Thom, that asymmetric warfare is dependent upon the notion that the more powerful force will either be constrained by the international community, or constrain itself for various reasons. This remains true only as long as the stronger power does not believe survival is at risk. It's interesting to look at the inter-war period, between World Wars I and II, where states looked to constrain themselves as a result of the horrors of World War I. By 1940, the constraints were starting to give way to total war, and by 1944, total war reigned. Only then did we win. I think the lesson is clear, if we want to win in this one." [End quote.]

The default mode of democracy is peace—that's—why we like democracy. It's hard to keep a nation on war footing. It is America's DNA to make money and watch football and take the kids out for picnics and that really is a very good thing. And if the goal of terrorism is to terrorize, well, then victory comes in not altering your behavior. Fair enough. But many in the military with whom I spend time rankle every time they see an SUV roll by with a yellow ribbon on the back on its way for the 10-block drive to Wal-Mart to buy charcoal. The sticker on your car, to people in the military, is not adequate support. It's no wonder the military is becoming self-regenerating. Soldiers are the offspring of soldiers, officers are the offspring of officers. We risk becoming the Prussia of the 21st century.

I'm just curious. How many people here have served in the military? Thank you very much. How many have a family member in the service? How many even have a close friend in uniform, you know, a really good, good friend? Great. Now there are certainly many ways to serve the country. I'm just curious. How many of the students here are at least thinking about a job in the public service sector, government, national security policy? Great, thank you very much.

During the previous long war, the Cold War, the entire nation shared in the risk and danger and sacrifice. The American government, too, was organized for this lengthy conflict, but this global war on terror has produced no similar new organizations to rival those created by the National Security Act of 1947. Yes, there's Homeland Security, yes, there's the new director of national intelligence, but critics in Washington will say, that was more just moving boxes around than creating really new structures.

The State Department's having a very hard time staffing its embassy in Baghdad and the provincial reconstruction teams. A few weeks ago I was leaked an interagency memo from the State Department asking the Pentagon whether it would assign military personnel to fill about a third of the new State Department jobs in Iraq. After my story ran, there was an incredible bureaucratic argument back and forth across the Potomac, and Secretary Rice went up to the Hill and said it's just temporary until we get the funding authority. Deputy Secretary of State Negroponte asked me to go with him to the Foreign Service Institute where he delivered a speech urging new Foreign Service officers to volunteer for hardship posts.

But it's the same across the government. Drug Enforcement Administration, Justice, Agriculture Department, those seats at the jobs in Iraq and Afghanistan are empty, and often filled by the military, because when the military points, you have to march.

The other critical ingredient of course is national will, which historically is mobilized by leaders who focus and articulate and rally it so that each individual citizen has personal ownership of the threat, the urgency and the sacrifice required. This can't be left to mature on its own. It's not all that hard. Newsreels and war bonds and gas rationing worked in World War II, along with victory gardens, of course. Today, though, a draft is out, the joint chiefs don't even want it. They like the all-volunteer service. But there's no talk about a tax increase to pay for a defense budget that's more than *half a trillion dollars*, including a wartime supplemental that's larger than the GDP of most nations in the world.

There are proposals out there, of course. Create a new U.S. Information Agency to take the war of ideas around the world; more development money for the Muslim world; housing, jobs, education to push moderate political views; increase the State Department. You know, to be fair, there are only 6,000 Foreign Service officers in the entire U.S. government. That's the size of one brigade. The Army has 43 active-duty brigades. There's talk of a civilian reserve corps. Most interesting I think is the new debate about a new Goldwater-Nichols Act that would do for the interagency what it did to force jointness on the separate armed services.

This next email is from a civilian who's held a variety of very senior positions in the national security apparatus. Resourcing is one of the problems. Quote: "The government wants to believe it can succeed at complicated and ambitious undertakings at a price it's willing to pay, instead of what price it's willing to exact to force people to change their views. We are not adequately resourcing the problem today. We as a government are really bad at translating the political objectives into government strategy, and our government is not good at the elegant orchestration of various elements of power." End quote.

And one last email, if I could. This is from another senior officer with multiple missions to Iraq and Afghanistan who wanted me to read this to you. Quote: "What would happen if we flowed

an additional 5,000 State Department staffers at all levels into Iraq? What about Department of Agriculture? What about Treasury? What if we scaled back stateside operations of all U.S. government agencies and funneled the resources to al-Anbar province, Baghdad, Bagram, Djibouti? What would happen if we sent 5,000 teachers to Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan? What about 5,000 U.S. college professors? What if we mobilized 5,000 bankers and financial service employees for six months at a time across the Islamic world? What if we launched 10,000 Fortune 500 executives to Iraq or across the Middle East or the Horn of Africa to work in underdeveloped countries and ungoverned spaces? Would it become the incubator for new business in Muslim lands? Would it help take angry young men off the streets? What if every local U.S. law enforcement agency with 20 or more law enforcement officers gave up 5 percent of their officers for one-year tours in Iraq or Afghanistan? The only people at war now are the military and the CIA. We've asked nothing of our populace at large. Our country talks a great game about using all the elements of national power, but what exists is a say-do gap, where we talk a good game on strategy, but then have only two agencies within our government actually fighting. We need the other 85 percent of nonkinetic soft power in order to win." End quote.

Before I conclude this formal portion of my presentation and take whatever tough questions you may want to ask, I want to share one final set of thoughts, especially for the students here today who've taken time off to join me. As I reflected back on my undergraduate years, I deeply regret all the time I wasted on studying, and so I thank you for taking off from your studies to join me here today.

What I want to tell you is this. I don't tell war stories because true stories of the combat zone defy retelling, and anybody who's been down range will agree with me. But I would like to relate one conversation I had in the combat zone. I've told this story only once before in public, and it was to an academic gathering not unlike this. It was December 2001 and January 2002 in the desert outside Kandahar-- The final Taliban holdout whose fall ended the war in Afghanistan. This place is truly at the edge of the world. It's also where I learned to sleep on a Kandahar waterbed. Does anyone know what a Kandahar waterbed is? It's when you roll your sleeping bag on top of the pallets of bottled water so you can stay above the poisonous snakes and the vermin and all that sort of stuff. Bottled water. I was in bed at the time with Army Special Forces, the Green Berets, and this was the A-Team that had joined with Hamid Karzai to route Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader from Kandahar. These guys are among the smartest and most creative warriors in the U.S. military. And not since the war in Vietnam had a reporter been allowed to live with them and go out on missions, no ground rules whatsoever except for security, but I could see everything they did and go with them everywhere.

These Green Berets at a primitive forward operating base outside the Kandahar Desert were needless to say reluctant to have a reporter pushed upon them. But they warmed up over the course of a week, maybe after they saw that I carried my own gear and I wouldn't freak out under fire and most of all that I could eat boiled ramen noodles three times a day and not complain about the chow.

But on our last night together there, we were sitting around the campfire and I asked, "It would be pretty bad for you guys if I got killed, wouldn't it?" "Nah," they said. "We don't care if you get killed. If you got killed it would be because we were on a mission, we came under attack,

it's what we do, it's the risk we accept, it's the risk you accept. No, we don't care if you get killed. But it would be really bad for us if you got lost." LAUGHTER.

So after returning to Washington, my two boys and I went to our favorite camping store where we bought this pocket compass, which I've worn on my wrist band every day since then. I carry it as a reminder, don't get lost. I carry it as a reminder that there are things in this life truly worse than death. It's a reminder that the opposite of life is not death. The opposite of life, the antithesis of life, the negation of life, is a life wasted. But before you think I'm dispensing reckless advice, please let me assure you that I know a thing or two about courage having observed it, and it doesn't take any special talent to get shot at. It takes talent not to get shot at, but if you want my description of the characteristics of the really courageous people I've met on the three fronts that we've been talking about, the Pentagon, Iraq and the home front on Main Street, here's what I've learned. Courage is when you get up every day and go to work or go off to class and try to make a contribution to society despite the manifest frustrations of the modern workplace and of modern academia. Courage to ask questions of those in authority like those we've been pondering today, and do what is right even if you risk severe repercussions from those in authority. Courage to bring a new generation of children to life on this earth despite seeing every day on TV and in the papers what a mess has been made by the current generation. What takes courage? To love, even when that love is not returned, and just as much as the courage of your convictions, have the courage to listen to your doubts.

The tough questions we've been asking today won't be answered today or tomorrow and not by the next administration in the White House and not even by my generation, because this struggle against violent extremism is truly a marathon and not a sprint. Grim but true, these wars, this campaign, this effort, this danger will last through the life of all the students here today. So it is up to you, though, to go out into the world because you students here at Stanford University represent the very best that America has to offer to show the world that there is something in America that is the very best.

So your assignment, go out and get a good compass. Finish your studies. You can calibrate the compass any way you want—the natural sciences, the social sciences, the arts, humanities, whatever you want to study. And if none of those point the way, I suggest a good old-fashioned method to find the magnetic north pole which requires personal magnetism. Nurture friendships and some day if you're lucky as I have been, form a lifetime partnership with someone whose love is as constant as the star Polaris shining at true north in an otherwise dark sky.

So to the students at Stanford University, I will say to you what some very brave warriors said to me at Kandahar: It'd be very bad for us if you got lost. It'd be bad for our nation, too.

Of course take the long way home, peer over the edge of tall buildings, but set your course for that place of precise definition. Chase the facts, chase knowledge, gather experiences that will give you wisdom, because when you get there, honesty, integrity and justice are within reach.

Thank you. Good luck. God bless. APPLAUSE

CHAIR: I told my wife this morning that when Thom finished speaking, as I had just read his speech, I didn't think there'd be a dry eye in the house. I think that's true. Who'd like to ask the first question?

QUESTION: I'm Vicky Brooks, at the King Institute. My question to you is why do the people that you've talked to in the field, the military people, why don't they understand that the reason that many Americans are not willing to sacrifice, are not willing to do what it takes is because the war was based on the lie that it was, and the people in America, not everybody but a lot of people really don't believe that we should be in this war at all, and that I believe that if it was a different kind of war, this whole country got together after 9/11 so I know it could happen, but I just--I just don't think people want to do that now.

SHANKER: I think the military does understand that. I guess their argument in response would be to the extent that every citizen benefits from the national security umbrella, every citizen should in some way be called to contribute. You know, it's really old-fashioned, but you know, buying a couple pounds of coffee and grinding it up and sending it to a soldier, that's not a vote for Republican or Democrat. That's just sort of saying, hey, you know, thanks for being in a really crappy place, and doing what you were ordered to do. And I think, you know, everybody here of course gets a chance to vote and if that's how you feel about the war, then I'm sure you express that to your local political leaders.

CHAIR: I see many students here so I hope that it's not just my generation and older who are asking the questions, please.

QUESTION: I'm not a student here, but my name is Dena Mossar and I'm on the city council in Palo Alto, and thank you very much for being here. It's been a pleasure. I'm wondering if you see any signs in Washington with the change in Congress, that anyone is doing anything towards the new Marshall Plan that you referred to.

SHANKER: I think at the rhetorical level, I think there are after a couple of years of really not dealing with these issues, you're suddenly hearing a conversation about it, it's in its very early stages, but as you know from watching TV and reading the papers, the debate about the war in Iraq is not about sending more money over; it's whether there's a way to politically pass a resolution or a sense about cutting money off. So there's not in any way a sophisticated discussion about a Marshall Plan for the Middle East, just as there's not yet a sophisticated discussion about laws or regulations that would make the civilian agencies of government as agile and expeditionary and as committed as the armed forces are today.

QUESTION: My name is David Redfield. I'm a retired physicist. I'm curious about the term "Marshall Plan." It's hard to see a parallel with the European destruction after World War II and the Middle East now which is full of wealthy Arab countries that are not at all demolished. Why do you call it a Marshall Plan?

SHANKER: Mostly because it has historic resonance. Your point, sir, is absolutely accurate and I wouldn't argue with you a bit on your definitions. I guess the discussion that people in the military and some national security civilians are having is instead of only talking about money for combat forces and reset, shouldn't there be more money applied with greater cleverness to go

at some of the underlying problems that—again, whether you agree with the war or disagree with the war—America has problems in the Islamic world, and are there ways to mitigate those problems by funding schools and a free press and things like that, rather than just delivering the American message through an M-1 A-1 Abrams tank.

QUESTION: James Madsen, CISAC Honors Program. I'm curious as the military becomes increasingly self-regenerating, how is the relationship between the civilian control of the military and the military itself changed, and is that control decreasing as time goes on?

SHANKER: You know, I think this is really a case where the Great Man Theory of History comes into play. You know, Don Rumsfeld had a certain personality and created certain frictions with the military. Again, history will judge whether he was a successful secretary or not, but it doesn't have to be that way. Again, I don't want to overtly embarrass anyone here today but a couple of weeks ago, the Council on Foreign Relations convened a small panel on civilian-military relations, and I went just as an observer and it's Chatham house rules again it's all anonymous, but near the end somebody asked, "Well, does it have to be this bad? Has it ever been better?" There was a long pause and all of the officers, retired and serving, and a lot of civilians there said, "Well, when Secretary Perry was here, it worked and it worked really well and everybody benefited." So...

QUESTION: What do you think will come of the talks between Iran, Syria, Condoleezza Rice, Saudis, et al.?

SHANKER: It's not quite at the Rice level. As you know, it's first at the ambassadorial and then may move upward. I guess, you know, one of the most powerful arguments for engagement was in the Baker-Hamilton review of our Iraq policy. It was bipartisan, decades of experience of the authors, and they all said, "We should talk to our enemies. We negotiated with the Kremlin throughout the Cold War." And so I think that argument is indeed gaining traction. In fact, Secretary Baker has a great line. He says, "Nobody asks me anymore why we didn't go to Baghdad in '91."

CHAIR: I could ask a follow-on about Iran and Iraq, Thom, you made I think a powerful speculation that Sadr forces and Shia militia will go underground, have at least the potential, to wait this out, and then to come back with a vengeance after we think that success has been achieved. There is an even a more pessimistic shorter-term scenario which is that some people in Iran and some in Iraq who would actually like to see an escalation of the war into Iran because they think that that's the best way to ensure the popularity of the Iranian regime is to get the Americans to do limited bombing and then everybody will support Ahmadinejad. What in your view is the danger of that shorter-term escalation scenario occurring if there are cross-border incidents or an increase in violence in the Shia areas of Iraq?

SHANKER: It's an incredibly important question and again I get to hide behind my reportorial neutrality and say that my view is less important than the views of Joe Biden and other very powerful members of Congress who said that if the U.S. engages Iran militarily, it will provoke a Constitutional crisis, and so I would let his powerful words answer your question. The fundamental analysis that drives you to ask that, Scott, is really interesting. When you look at this surge from the operational standpoint, I mean strategically we understand what they want.

They want to tamp down the violence in Baghdad, the center of power, in order to give the new Maliki government time to grow and to mature and to stabilize and start sending up its own security forces. The problem with that is I don't know what the war in Iraq is today. Is it a civil war between Sunni and Shia? Is it an insurgent war against the Maliki government and its coalition partners? Is it a proxy war for Iran, as Scott asked about? And there's no small amount of criminal activity that's creating the violence here. So I think an interesting question is whether the tactics of the surge are designed for counterinsurgency alone, or for all the other five wars that are occurring simultaneously? And that's Petraeus' big challenge now.

QUESTION: My name is Aksun Derwarr. I'm an American-Palestinian. I'm a photo journalist. I'm also part of the Jewish-Palestinian Dialogue Group and on the board of directors of the American-Arab Cultural Center. So to be blunt with you I don't mean to offend you by any means.

SHANKER: You won't.

QUESTION: I missed the first 10 minutes of your speech.

SHANKER: It was the best. The first 10 minutes, that was everything. LAUGHTER.

QUESTION: However, I found myself to be very disturbed by your speech, because basically, and I've lived in this country for 27 years—basically, the crux of your speech basically amounts to meets what you hear on the media every day, and to me as someone who lived throughout the Middle East and also studied this subject as far as the United States and its conflicts—whether it's with Russia and the Cold War or with various other countries since—it basically sounds like media gibberish just designed to brainwash the American masses, most of which really don't know any better because they are too busy with their own lives and families and work and trust the media to enlighten them. And basically, the media, all it does is instill fear in them.

CHAIR: Do you have a question?

QUESTION: Yes. My question is to one comment you made you said, about how to do things to correct the Muslim world. I don't think the problem is in the Muslim world or whoever is them, tomorrow or the following day but with us and how we treat other people. So can you address that?

SHANKER: Of course. It's an absolutely valid point. I probably agree with you. Any proposals in my speech, I want to be clear, those were reading email ideas from the generals with whom I speak. I don't believe I proposed anything today, but to your broader point, you're right. It's not just the Muslim world; it's that part of the Muslim world that may be committed to violent extremism, and does America have an opportunity to support mainstream thoughtful moderate democratic voices in that part of the world just as we have done in Eastern Europe during the Cold War and other parts of the world. I don't see anything wrong with that, actually. Oops. I expressed an opinion. Can I take away that last sentence, that I don't see anything wrong with it. I just don't want to....

QUESTION: Hello, my name is Stephanie and I'm a student in Professor Sagan's International Security class. Thank you for coming, sir. You mentioned in your speech that one difference

between the Iraq war and the Cold War is that it has been a war of the military and not of the people necessarily, so what I'm curious to hear is whether you believe the Bush administration at this point can galvanize the American public so that the Iraq war becomes a personal issue and concern for each citizen now that it has been five or six years after September 11th.

SHANKER: Sure. I guess take away the part of what I believe again, but what I believe doesn't really matter. But if you look at the evidence, President Bush has given many major speeches to try to do just that, and public opinion is not being moved. I think a lot of people in the military and a lot of analysts have said that an opportunity was squandered after 9/11 when there was a chance to mobilize America to fight sort of forces of violent extremism but now that opportunity has been squandered. It's an interesting view as you walk the Pentagon now. Early on the civilian leadership of the Pentagon acted as if they owned the place, and I think they have evolved already under Gates to a sense that's a little more proper, which is they have been loaned the national security apparatus by the American people who renew that lease every four years. I think it's a very substantial change.

QUESTION: Bob Siegel, Human Biology. Thought provoking and an inspirational—

SHANKER: Can I give you my son's phone number? Would you call and tell him that his old man--?

QUESTION: Just wait. (laughs) You suggested by proxy through the emails of the generals that a humanitarian war sending both educators and businessmen and so forth would be a very effective strategy. That raises two questions in my mind. You can answer by proxy. The first question is--

SHANKER: He's quick this guy, he's really really quick!

QUESTION CONTINUES: Do bellicose nations like Iraq and Afghanistan merit more aid than other countries like peaceful Tanzania or, you know, impoverished countries like Haiti. So that's the first part. The second part is there's an implication that military actions may actually foster rather than defeat the inclination toward militarism and terrorism, so it actually is accomplishing the exact opposite of what it proclaims to accomplish.

SHANKER: To your first question, it's an excellent one. There's a growing ongoing dialogue back in Washington about lost opportunities and doesn't take a math whiz to tally up the billions spent on the war effort and ask the question, What might that money have gone for in Africa, Latin America, New Orleans? So I think that's absolutely a valid point. And as far as the military creates a more bellicose location, you know the whole Pottery Barn metaphor has been way overused, but we did break those places, and I think there's a certain sense of obligation of at least trying to get it right. I'm going to go out on a limb here. The question you asked really goes to a thought I've been hearing with some frequency just the last couple of weeks. I need to phrase this carefully. All the American military, they're kind of optimists by nature. How could they do what they do if they didn't believe in the opportunity for creating a better world, and that their missions will do something good. And so they are optimistic about the surge. They are seeing statistics beginning to move although it's early. So the officers have hope. At the same

time, when I talk to some of the real thinkers in the military, the word has started to creep up a little bit, and it's Dunkirk, and they really do wonder what happens, not that we would be pushed out of Iraq like the British expeditionary force was from Dunkirk. But what happens if the American military and therefore American policy has to beat a hasty retreat out of that region? There isn't an answer to that.

QUESTION: Rick DeGolia. I'm a local entrepreneur and support CISAC. This is the question. I think it's true that a great opportunity was lost right after 9/11 to mobilize the population, and I think the comments from the military are extremely respectable. It strikes me that with the recognition of the growing impact of global warming that an opportunity is once again growing, that the American population could be mobilized to reduce its dependence on particularly Middle Eastern oil, and the question is what is the effect, or what would be the effect if we were to meaningfully reduce our dependence on this oil, how would, what would that response generate?

SHANKER: That is such an important question. Unfortunately, of all the Thom's at the *New York Times*, you've got the wrong one here today. LAUGHTER. Tom Friedman writes so thoughtfully on that question, and I think his geogreen strategy that he lays out in his columns carries a lot of weight. He asks why should we let American foreign policy be hostage to gas-guzzling cars and all of this, and I think, you know, I'm not an economist, I don't have your entrepreneurial skills so I don't know whether the answer is gasoline taxes to make the prices such to drive the market, laws, whatever, but I think absolutely the extent that this country, as Tom Friedman argues, can become more energy dependent. Not only does it help the global warming question, but it lessens the ability of that part of the world to dictate to us. Perhaps I miss—

CHAIR: The follow-up please?

SHANKER: Again, I'm really sorry I'm not Tom Friedman. LAUGHTER.

QUESTION: No comment. But the question is what, the really fundamental question that I have is what would the impact be on the Middle East if we were to meaningfully reduce our dependence on their oil?

SHANKER: That's a brilliant question that I'm afraid is just beyond my knowledge base. It's a great one. I'm going to ask Tom Friedman on that. I'll bet--he should give you credit for a column idea?

CHAIR: We may have a column in the making here.

SHANKER: Really, it's a wonderful question. I'm sorry, it's just not my area.

CHAIR: Chip.

COIT "CHIP" BLACKER: Daniel has a question. LAUGHTER.

DANIEL: Thank you, Professor Blacker. LAUGHTER. So I'm Daniel, I'm an undergraduate here, second year. You mentioned your fear that there might be some kind of lost generation here in the United States, and you see the surveys of entering freshmen, it seems to be

painting a pretty bleak picture. The ones entering this year seem to be more focused on self and wealth than any other. So, I mean, I'm only removed from this by one year and I see it, so what, I mean what would you recommend, say, to people like me, students, to counter this? Should we just, I mean presumably, what should we do? Shall we all sign up? Should we go into government? What would you say concretely to counter this very disturbing in my view cultural trend?

SHANKER: Right. You know, I guess my DNA is just spun wrong, because I believe in work that somehow gives something back to society. I mean, it's not that I like being underpaid and overworked and all of that; it's just the way it is. But, you know, I don't have problems sleeping at night because of what I do for a living. You know, every day I get up and I participate in the democratic process, and I just feel really good about that. It's one of the most selfish things I do, but it's important. And so what can you do? Seek a calling like that. I mean the classes that are offered at a place like Stanford certainly give you the academic knowledge. Volunteer. I mean these sound so clichéd but it matters. My older son tutors kids in reading. It gives him such a thrill. His grandfather, my dad, tutors kids in reading. He's eighty-something years old. It gives him a thrill. There are summer opportunities. Many cities in America need your help. Places overseas where you can go. Call Scott for my email. I'm happy to give you some recommendations. Honestly, the answer to your question is really easy. Just look around at a problem, and ask yourself how you might be able to make it better.

CHAIR: Or you could go to the International Institute for Strategic Studies for the summer as an intern, which is what Daniel is doing as well. So thank you for joining in that effort.

QUESTION: I'm Michael May, a professor here. I had a student who when he graduated spent two tours of duty as an intelligence analyst in Iraq, one in the green zone and one outside and admittedly—he came back and gave us a discussion—and admittedly, this was a worm's eye view in his world of what went on, but pretty much all the infiltrators that he knew about, that came into Iraq and had been recruited for al-Qaeda came in through the Syrian border and they were practically all Saudis, and my question is what is your view of the purely ambivalent role of Saudi Arabia as a country, not just the royal family, in this situation?

SHANKER: Once again, my view is irrelevant but the facts speak for themselves. What you've just said is true. There are a lot of charities in Saudi Arabia that have been found to be funding the Sunni insurgency. The Saudi royal family has a very difficult job internally to both remain in power and exert order but not exert such pressure on these groups that they begin to more aggressively foment unrest against the Saudi royal family. The latest sort of corner being turned in this was just late last year when some Saudi columnist in the Saudi media questioned were these articles endorsed or not, began saying that Saudi Arabia would overtly enter the war in Iraq on the side of the Sunni unless the U.S. government cracked down more on the Shia militias, so there are very, very troubling regional dynamics. That's one of the reasons I think that the surge was launched and is trying to be even-handed in both suppressing Sunni and Shia violence because the last thing that would be in regional interest would be for this, would be for Iraq to become an Iran vs. Saudi proxy war in the schism between Shia and Sunni Islam.

QUESTION: My name is Michael. I'm also an undergraduate. Shifting back to Washington a little bit, the Democrats have been focusing a lot of discussion on setting a withdrawal date, and

I'm sure it'll be discussed a lot more in the next couple of days, and I'm curious in knowing the high level military people you do, if you have a sense of how they would react if there was a resolution passed saying we need to withdraw by 2008, or if it was attached to a spending bill which is one proposition that's currently being discussed.

SHANKER: Yes, I mean the military officers discuss among themselves a lot. I think, again, the military views your question not as Republican or Democrat, but, how can a date be chosen that would drive their operational and tactical decisions. So they don't want to enter the political debate, but I think they would say that those deadlines are not realistic militarily, and I think the Democrats realize too that any resolution that affects funding for troops on the ground and therefore might put the troops at risk is probably something that as they approach the presidential election would not help their campaign strategy. Does that make sense?

QUESTION: Lynn Eden at CISAC. Let's turn the question a little bit differently. You said that there's a possibility that a lot of insurgents are simply going underground and may be trying to outwait the effects of the surge, and in fact U.S. presence in Iraq. Well, it's one thing for the U.S. military to say it's not a good outcome for the military to have a deadline, but what about the other side of the military? Is the military thinking about what if that in fact is the case, and we're not going to be able to win? What kind of planning is being done, or thinking about it's one thing to say we've got to do more, the American people aren't doing enough, I mean a lot of what you read implies, indicates that, but what if it's not going to happen? That effort isn't going to be made, this is going to be failure. And the U.S. military is going to withdraw and it's going to be a catastrophe, and that will happen in two years or five years or ten years. Who in the military is thinking about that and what are they thinking?

SHANKER: There's a short-term answer and a long-term answer. If you ask the military as I do this question about whether all the bad guys are just going to ground, they're trying to put the best face on it but they say that's great, because again the idea of the surge is just to buy time and space for the Maliki government to get going and to establish its authority and to bring its own security personnel online. So an argument can be made that, you know, the insurgents and the militias going underground to wait out the surge may actually be a terrific unexpected third-order effect of the surge, and it may benefit Maliki. Now, I know that's a pool ball bouncing off of like all these different bumpers, but I can see though the logic there. And they are thinking long term, not just about if they have to leave. That's why I kinda mentioned very cautiously, you know, I've heard the word Dunkirk for the first time since graduate school in the last couple of weeks, but asking the even bigger question, which is that the military is going to leave Iraq in some numbers at some point, either with victory or under a more grim scenario, and they're asking themselves what kind of military do we want to come back to? How do we want to reset, 'cause all the ground brigades going over now are not getting what's called full spectrum training. You know, a soldier is supposed to be able to do a whole bunch of jobs, but because the surge is demanding such short turnaround times, the training for the troops is only focused on desert counterinsurgency, not for the whole range of other missions, so they'll be really good at that and they will be certified as okay for this mission, but the military, the ground forces in particular, are losing a lot of specialties that a nation like America might want to continue to keep resonant in the military. So there's no answer, but I assure you the 50-pound brains are discussing that.

QUESTION: I'm Sig Hecker. I'm Scott's scientific cohort at CISAC, and as Scott explained that you know our Center has tried to bring the science and technology together with social sciences, thanks to Professor Drell and the previous leaders we've had at CISAC, so I can't help but to also think then about science and engineering in Iraq, and in all your visits and your discussions, have you met scientists and engineers? Are there any left in Iraq and what sort of roles do they play? I understand you know in today's turmoil there may not be much thought, but is there any hope? Have you talked to them? What could be done from our side to perhaps help to make sure that when the time is right, that they can help in rebuilding their country?

SHANKER: Right. Sadly, at the risk of irony, the only engineers I talked to in Iraq are combat engineers. A whole class of educated people, to the extent they can, have either left, and if they remain in the country, they're often underemployed because so much of the scientific community has language skills, they're working as translators and drivers and all that sort of stuff, for the international community that's there. There are no major construction projects—not “no,” there are not sufficient construction projects that can be carried on today because of the security environment, and that's one of the major, you know, initiatives that people like General Corelli who believed that you could put a soldier on every corner and you're not going to win, but you have to rebuild society, and I know that there's initiatives underway to try to get Fortune 500 companies to go and reopen some of the state-owned factories that can produce things that can be sold internally, and I guess as an academic institution, just as you have exchanges and fellowships and reach out to support your colleagues in safer places, to try to reach out and support them in less safe places too.

QUESTION: Gerry McGilvray, Palo Alto freelance artist. The McGilvrays are the builders of this beautiful [inner and outer](#) Quad. I feel terrible that you say we should go, or I think we're very involved in this war, and I feel when you say we should go into Iraq sending all these different very talented people from my country, when we wrote our Constitution, I believe we had completed and declared an end to our war here with our last king, and when we left the women, the teachers, in Afghanistan to be beheaded and the Taliban to come back and infiltrate the places we had secured a little teeny smidgen of freedom, and then we went in Iraq and we sent a message when we allowed, we sat there, our army was there and allowed all the art to be plundered. I really care about art. And it was all allowed to be destroyed and our tanks were there and would not, we sent a message that we have no values about law and order, and we can't send our people in to help when it isn't safe. We tried to pretend it's safe. There's 82 reporters that have been killed in Iraq. So to say, oh go in and help. I think we're all helping. I think we're part of the democratic process, and thank God, I'm not that affiliated with Washington, so I can still say this.

SHANKER: You can say it in Washington, too.

MCGILVRAY: I hope my house is safe when I go home. But how can we send ourselves in to help? We are—now we're having random bombings of the students. We have allowed the law and order to disappear by—and our armies had had time to learn how to do a war. Thank you so much.

SHANKER: You could say that in Washington. People say it all the time. If you heard me say that you should do this or that, I misspoke, or perhaps you didn't listen. All of the “should's” in

my speech were in the voices of the officers, and I guess what they're saying is if you're prepared to participate in the Democratic process, and if you're prepared to accept their security, then you should be involved somehow, even if your involvement is to oppose it and end it, but just don't sit idly by while this is going on. So I have no problem with what you said. I mean, that's terrific and I'm sure that you are actively involved in pushing your point of view. That's better than doing nothing. So thank you.

QUESTION: I'm Theo Milonopoulos, I'm a sophomore in Professor Sagan's, Professor Blacker's class, and the War on Terror was expressed in part as a response to a substantially different threat, demanding a unique solution, playing out on the ground, however, the conflicts can be viewed fundamentally as a war between states, a dynamic that's not new to the international system. How much did the perspective that the conflict in Iraq was a necessary response to a new threat, a new challenge, lead senior officials in the Administration to issue diplomatic strategy traditionally pursued before military action is taken in a state system.

SHANKER: Yes. LAUGHTER. You know, one of the central debates back in Washington about the war in Iraq is, Is it really a part of the War on Terror or was it something else? And I think how you come down on that very central question is the answer to your question. You know, was it about Saddam Hussein in Iraq or was it about global terrorism? And that is truly the defining question for which camp you sit in.

CHAIR: You earlier noted that you believe that Secretary Powell was deeply embarrassed, as he has acknowledged, by the inaccuracy of the intelligence that he presented to the U.N. in his failed effort to get the U.N. to support intervention. Does the U.S. military think that Powell was misled? Do they think that he deliberately, and not Powell individually but that the civilian leadership deliberately cooked the books? Do they think that it was utterly inadvertent? How do they feel about the question that he's posing, in terms of whether this was for WMD that didn't exist or an intervention for neoconservative views to spread democracy or some other feeling?

SHANKER: Right. You know, I think the military commanders that speak with us about this issue are absolute in their role as consumers-only of intelligence. It's the intelligence they were given so even the most thoughtful, I can't say liberal or not, that's not the relevant point, but even the most skeptical officers before the war might have questioned is this the right war, is Saddam in his box, should we finish with the low-hanging fruit in Afghanistan first? That debate you heard among the officer corps, but they were given intelligence that had been blessed by their government, so they didn't really question it the same way, and again, every soldier that crossed the berm, you know, in March of '03 had a full chemical suit with him. They actually believed it. I know that one of the most significant scoops that Eric and I had before the war, we were able to disclose, there was a small team inside the Pentagon that was doing its own analysis of selected intelligence looking for links between Saddam Hussein and terrorists. That story provoked a lot of debate, a lot of internal scrutiny, and eventually when provoked by Congress, an inspector-general's report, those completed just two weeks ago, which found that while there was no law broken, that it was a really stupid idea.

QUESTION: John Iganslen, just a citizen. I'd like you to flesh out, I'm not quite tracking on your, the military's concern. Are they really serious about this Dunkirk possibility, and specifically, are they really afraid it's going to be like that?

SHANKER: No, it's a great question, and again, I tried to say they would not be, nobody in the military thinks that the coalition forces can be pushed out of Iraq the way the British expeditionary force was forced into the boats at Dunkirk, but they do begin to, they're concerned that politics, violence, civil unrest will dictate the timetable of their withdrawal before stability is achieved, which then raises the question, What's the functional equivalent of the D-Day that gets America back into the Middle East in a productive way? Again, not as an invasion of force, but if our policy initiatives are pushed out in a symbolic Dunkirk, what is the symbolic landing that gets us back into the region to protect our valid national security interests? So again, please don't take it as a literal soldiers off the roof of the embassy, but I think they do see a risk that our interests could be pushed out of the region, and how do they reset to get, to protect our interests forward again? Does that help at all? Thank you.

CHAIR: I'd like to ask one of the students to ask the last question, so yes, right here.

QUESTION: Hello, I'm Ed. I'm a graduate student in physics, and I tend to think that the reason a lot of young Americans don't serve overseas is because there are insufficient opportunities provided by the government that are not related to the military. I was actually excited by one point of President Bush's State of the Union speech when he talked about a civilian reserve corps that would allow Americans to utilize their talents to help other people, and I was wondering if that was actually a viable solution in Congress and in Washington, and if it will it ever come to pass?

SHANKER: I think it's a very valid idea. I think it may be several years in setting up, but I think there's great interest. In fact, the joint staff, the Pentagon has a lot of money and the joint staff actually just tried to transfer some of that funds to the State Department, for hiring contractors to sort of do a quick fix, civilian reconstruction corps. Some of the money went across, Congress blocked part of it because of arcane laws and all sort of stuff, but I think the idea is taking root. At the same time, you don't really need a government program if you want to find work in complicated parts of the world. You know, the State Department is forward, you know, nongovernmental organizations are forward. So, again, CISAC can give you my email if you want to discuss this personally and specifically I'd be happy to share with you some people you can get in touch with.

CHAIR: Well, it just remains for us to thank Thom. I do want to note that Bud Wheelon gave the funds to support this annual lecture in honor of Sid Drell, but was in honor of not just Sid's career but of the idea that he represented, which was great scholarship but combining that with public service, and therefore I thought it was extremely fitting to have a great journalist and a great scholar come to inspire many to think about what kinds of service of different sorts that they could have in the future. So we should all thank Thom for that very thoughtful and very inspiring speech. Thanks for coming. APPLAUSE.