

Occupied Iraq: One Country, Many Wars

by [Jeffrey White \(/experts/jeffrey-white\)](/experts/jeffrey-white)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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On June 17, 2005, Jeffrey White participated in a forum titled "Occupied Iraq: One Country, Many Wars," the fortieth installment of the Middle East Policy Council's Capitol Hill Conference Series. The following is an unedited transcript of the entire forum. [See video footage of the event.](#)

http://www.mepc.org/public_asp/conference_video/conference_video.asp

Speakers

Ivan Eland Senior Fellow and Director of the Center on Peace and Liberty, the Independent Institute; Assistant Editor, the Independent Review

Robert Newman Colonel, U.S. Army

Jeffrey White Berrie Defense Fellow, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

W. Patrick Lang Global Resources Group INC.; Formerly the Defense Intelligence Officer for the Middle East

Moderator/Discussant:

Chas. W. Freeman, Jr. President, Middle East Policy Council

CHAS W. FREEMAN, JR.: (Off mike) - used to a podium, but we will make this presentation sitting down. And it is about 9:30 Arab standard time and I will - it's my pleasure to welcome everyone here. I'm Chas Freeman. I have the honor to be president of the Middle East Policy Council. And we will proceed - I'll make a few remarks and then we'll proceed directly to discussion of "Occupied Iraq: One Country, Many Wars."

But I will proceed from the least interesting to the most interesting. The least interesting for many of you, but I hope not all, is a brief report on the condition of the Middle East Policy Council. In brief, for reasons which many understand, namely, the conclusion by many Arabs who have been donors in the past that Americans are uneducable and that continuing to spend money on educating Americans about Arab issues and Islam is a waste of money; the concern about investigation of wire transfers and checks donations generally; the shrinkage of the American business community in the Arab world in general, in the Gulf in particular, where in Saudi Arabia it's down to about a third of what it is was; and the sudden discovery - and the concomitant, I should say -- lack of interest for image reasons by American corporations in being associated with Middle-Eastern causes, plus the sudden discovery by governments in the region of public relations. As you all know, when god passed out public

relations genes, he somehow overlooked the Middle East, but in the case they have finally discovered public relations and are focused on the immediate and urgent issues rather than long-term education.

For all of these reasons, the sort of existence we've had living from month to month from small donations of one sort or another is no longer viable and we are engaged in a drive to get an endowment so that we can continue our work, which I will explain in a minute.

And I'm happy to report that due to the generosity of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, we have markedly improved our position in that regard. We used to have exactly enough money to be able to drop dead. (Chuckles.) Now we have enough money to shut down in an orderly fashion. We do not have enough money to sustain this but I am encouraged by quite a number of potential donors with whom I have been in contact to believe that we may indeed achieve long-term viability.

What does the Middle East Policy Council do? We do three things. We raise politically incorrect questions for public discussion. We tend to be well ahead of the curve on raising issues. We publish views that don't find a voice elsewhere in Middle East policy, the most often-cited journal in the field. And an edited transcript of this session will appear as the lead item in the next issue of Middle East policy.

And finally, invisible in Washington, but perhaps most significantly, we train high school teachers throughout the country - trained about 18,000 - how to teach about Arab civilization and Islam, and therefore confuse a high school kid or two, actually about 1.4 million every year with a fact or two, which they otherwise would not encounter in the course of the splendid American public school educational system.

So that is what we do and we think it's worth doing, and it's a service to the country, and that it should continue, and we will see whether it does or does not.

Today's session was sparked really by a comment by a very senior U.S. military officer, to the effect that the strategy of the insurgency in Iraq did not make sense to him. He couldn't figure out what this insurgent movement was attempting to accomplish. And in the spirit of Sun Tzu aphorism - (in Chinese) - know yourself, know your enemy and you will win a hundred victories and a hundred battles, it occurred to us that it might be worthwhile examining what is actually happening in Iraq to determine whether there is an insurgency. In fact, is there anyone with whom we could negotiate a comprehensive settlement of some sort of the violence? Is there anyone who could call it off? And we will be discussing that issue in various ways this morning.

I would give you my own impression at the outset, which is that there are at least three insurgencies going on. One is a secular nationalist resistance to the Anglo-American occupation led by ex-Ba'athist elements of secular movement. The second, that there are religious - there is a religious resistance, religiously inspired resistance to the occupation, which draws on people who have - who feel their honor has been offended in some manner by the occupation forces and who seek revenge. And, third, there are international jihadis who are attempting to exploit both of the foregoing and adding their own agenda to the mix.

But this doesn't, to my mind, explain the whole picture. We are of course trying to build an army that would provide a new Iraqi state with a monopoly of force in a new Iraq. And it is dealing not only with these insurgencies, but increasingly with what appears to be a low-intensity civil war or civil wars between different Iraqi factions who have become part of the general anarchy and insurgency in Iraq.

There are Sunnis resisting the prospect of Shi'a majority rule and resisting the legitimization of their own disempowerment by attacking the Iraqi armed forces or attacking Shi'as, whether military militias or civilians. There are Shi'as revenging themselves on Sunnis. I am speaking of Arabs here. There are Kurds seizing Arab property and expanding Kurdish control of parts of Iraq using our presence as a screen for their dream of an autonomous or independent Kurdish state on Iraqi territory. There is an Iraqi army hired by us, trained by us, which

is finding itself trying to deal with all of the above.

But perhaps the situation is neither as complex nor as dire as the description I have just offered. In any event, it is a - it is not a simple situation and I have no pretension to be an expert on either Iraq or guerilla warfare. And that is why we have what I think is an extraordinary panel assembled to address some key questions.

Has the mix of factors and forces that constitute the so-called insurgency in Iraq been changing or is it more or less as it was from the outset? Is this a dynamic or a static situation? If it is changing, how is it changing, in what direction? If there are indeed civil wars, incipient or low intensity going on, does the famous advice of whoever it was who spoke - articulated the three rules for intervention in civil war - apply? Those three rules of course are, one, don't; two, if you do, pick the side that will win; and, three, help that side win fast and win big. Is there anyone in Iraq who can win? And is there anyone who could sustain such a victory? Does this advice apply?

And, third, what are the implications for American policy? What is the policy? Not entirely clear and some people are arguing that we are militarily getting better and better at implementing a policy that may be counterproductive. So is the policy, whatever it is, likely to work, and if not, what are the alternatives?

These are some of the issues we want to get at. We have until about noon to do it. These sessions are always more or less the same. Each speaker will get 10 to 12 minutes. As the 12-minute mark approaches, I will seize a weapon and move menacingly in their direction and force them to - I hope - although you're a pretty tough guy - to stand down.

MR. : No surrender.

MR. FREEMAN: No, that's right. Resist to the end, right? So, anyway, 10 to 12 minutes per panelists. We'll then open it up for general discussion. That is generally the most interesting part of these sessions. And I encourage all of you to come to the mike, identify yourselves, put a question to us that is intelligible and succinct, or a comment that meets those criteria. We'll do just as well. Speakers will proceed in the order shown on the program, and if you turn the program over, you will see a brief, more or less correct biography of all four. There are a mistake or two, but we will just pass by that.

We will start with Ivan Eland, who has been a participant in the past, formerly with the Cato Institute, now senior fellow and director of the Center on Peace and Liberty at The Independent Institute, newly established here in Washington, the author of a very widely praised book recently called "The Empire Has No Clothes," and many other studies of U.S. security issues in the past.

Colonel Robert Newman is an active duty soldier who currently serves as the assistant chief of staff for civil military operations for III Corps, Fort Hood. And he of course is here in his individual capacity. He is not representing either the U.S. Army or the U.S. government. But he is a very noted expert on the Shi'a militias. Ivan will talk about the Kurds; Bob will talk about the Shi'as.

And Jeff White from the Washington Institute on Near East Policy has also completed a 34-year career with the Defense Intelligence Agency and is an expert on Sunni affairs in Iraq. And he and the aforementioned Colonel Pat Lang, who is also an expert on Sunnis I think - well, on everything really, will bring up the end of the discussion.

So I would like to ask you all to join me in welcoming the panel. (Applause.) and Ivan, you're on.

IVAN ELAND: Thank you, Chas.

MR. FREEMAN: Push the -

MR. ELAND: I have got to push the button. Thank you, Chas. I appreciate the opportunity to give my views on this very important subject. I noticed in the program we're going from the - talking about the groups that are most friendly to the U.S. to the least friendly. So I guess I'll start off by staying that even though the Kurds are friendly to us now, that

may not necessarily hold.

I will give a quick introduction about the - some of the Kurdish militias and then I'll get into the meat of my presentation. There have always been two Kurdish militias or peshmerga, meaning those who face death. And they are controlled by the parties largely and the security forces have been heavily influenced by these militias. The first one is Mustafa Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party. Now, the numbers have been disputed. The number I have found most is about 35,000 fighters - rules Western Kurdistan and has elected - Barzani has been elected to the presidency of Kurdistan.

The other one is Jalal Talabani Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK, and the number that I have seen most there - of course these are - any time you see estimates like this, you have to question who is giving it and that sort of thing. But he has 25,000 fighters. His party rules Eastern Kurdistan. He has been elected to the presidency of Iraq. Now, together with the regulars, the Kurdish militias probably have about 100,000 fighters, but of course, again, that figure can be contested.

The Kurdish militias are first loyal to their party, then to Kurdistan, and only thirdly, and lukewarmly, loyal to Iraq as a whole. Since the Gulf War in 1991, the coalition no-fly zonings have made Kurdistan essentially independent from Iraq. There is a separate flag, police force budget, and all of this has been guaranteed by the recent Iraqi election. Barzani has been quoted as saying, quote, "What we really need to work on in the parliament of Kurdistan is that the region of Kurdistan should have its own special constitution and laws. There is absolutely no need to have that link that whatever is done in Baghdad should be done here too."

So what they really want - the Kurds want nominal control of the militia from Baghdad - real control of course in their region. And the militias have the trappings of a separate military officers college, training camps, and armor and artillery units operating independently from Iraqi Security Forces. And Kurdistan is essentially a semi state that has kind of a bunker mentality because of course there is a lot less violence in most of it than in the rest of Iraq, but they are very wary about that violence coming to their doorstep.

The Kurds are playing a game or have accepted a unified Iraq in rhetoric, but I think they are hitching their wagon to the U.S. occupation in order to get an independent Kurdistan eventually. And I think they have a lot of big demands as Chas and were talking before the program. They have a lot of demands which may not be able to be fulfilled under the current negotiations.

Barzani has also been quoted as saying, quote, "All the Kurdish parties have agreed that for now we are living with a federal regime in a democratic Iraq." Notice the words, "for now" - I think are the operative words there. I think if the Kurdish interests diverge from the U.S., they will not be loyal allies. The Kurds are famous for shifting their loyalties over the years when their insurgents have changed, and they even fought a - the two militias fought a civil war in the mid-'90s that killed 3,000 Kurds.

One Kurd militia also allied with the Iraqis against the other Kurdish militias at one point. And Chemical Ali, the Iraqi general who gassed the Kurds, was warmly welcomed in - by the KDP, even after he had gassed the Kurds, as an indication that alliances are changeable. Now, the two Kurdish militias are cooperating more closely and they are worried about the Turks. They want to broaden to Germany and to Syria and Iran and Turkey to try to recruit people to come to Kurdistan - that is Kurds to come to Kurdistan to potentially fend off any Turkish challenge.

And of course both militias helped the Turks against the Turkish Kurds, the PKK, across the border in Turkey. So you can see that these alliances are changeable, and I think that, you know, we have to realize that the Kurds are after their own agenda, and like many of the other groups in Iraq, they are playing the U.S. for their own reasons.

Before the Iraqi elections, the Kurds seemed to be willing to get rid of their militias but that has changed now. They did well in the election. And I don't think they - they no longer trust the United States to bring peace and stability to

Iraq and ensure their interest vis-à-vis the other groups. And I think the United States has no choice but to allow them to keep their arms because we are using them as a fighting force to fight against the Sunnis. And so we're also using them to provide intelligence which we sorely lack there.

So I think there is no choice but to leave the Kurds with their arms, just like some of the Sunnis, or I mean, the Shi'a have been left with their arms. And of course we have the Sunni insurgency. So we have all of these groups running around with weapons and of course that will be a problem in the future. I think it's going to be very hard to disarm all of these groups.

Now, the U.S. has helped in the fighting of Fallujah and Tall'Afar and also in Mosul - has been divided into a Kurdish and an Arab West. And the coalition has asked the Kurds to control the Western half of the city. And of course, this is going to increase tensions between the Kurds and Sunni and there is already, as Chas has mentioned, a low-level civil war there going on.

So, now, the peshmerga have raised the ire of the Sunni community by helping Americans against the Sunnis. And I think the situation in Kirkuk and in Mosul are both explosive with the daily ambushes, assassinations and car bombings. In Kirkuk, the local battlefield centers on a critical oil pipeline which is often blown up. Now, the Shi'ites might try to block the autonomy of the Kurdish militias from the Iraqi Security Forces, but they too have militias they want to keep or at least have them incorporated into Iraq security forces as whole units. For example, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution has the Badr organization. And so the Shi'a might decide that they don't want to press the Kurds to do it because they might have to do it as well.

Now, of course the official U.S. policy is that all of these groups should not have their own militia outside states sanctioned, but the U.S. government tried unsuccessfully to disarm the militias before turning power over the Iraqis last summer. And so now the U.S. military is now saying that the Iraqi government must figure out what to do with these militias. Well, if the United States government can't disarm them, the Iraqi government certainly isn't going to be able to disarm them either. Larry Diamond, the former advisor to the coalition provisional authority, sees a drift toward warlordism and potentially a Lebanese-style civil wars.

Now, Kurdish militia are some of the most potent in Iraq. They seize thousands of armored vehicles and many weapons from Iraqi forces after the second Gulf War. They have been trained by the U.S., South Africans, and Israelis. And of course, according to investigative reporter, Seymour Hersh, Israel concluded that the U.S. had already lost the battle against the Sunni insurgency as early as mid-2003 and hooked their wagon to the Kurd forces to defend Kurdistan. And the less well-equipped peshmerga, actually fought well against Saddam's army, particularly in rural areas and the area of a major city.

Now, Kurkuk is a very interesting case and the U.S. government and the new Iraqi - or excuse me, the U.S. occupation and the new Iraqi government are supposed to be ruling it. In effect, the Kurdish militias are ruling this important oil city and the Kurds want this city because it will allow them to get the oil and provide revenue for an independent Kurdish state. So possession is nine-tenths of the law. And Saddam has cleansed the Kurds from Kurkuk and replaced them with Sunni Arabs, and of course, the Kurds are, as Chas mentioned, seizing Arab property and territory and using it under the U.S. screen.

Now, there have been lethal clashes between the peshmerga and the Turkomon and Arab residents of Kurkuk in the northern Sunni triangle for some time. The peshmerga checkpoints are designed to keep Arabs out. Now, these Kurdish military have been in the paper two days ago of kidnapping Turks and Sunnis. And they have used rough tactics in the past. Of course this is nothing new in Iraq but I think we need to realize that these militias are not necessarily any more humanitarian than other ones in Iraq. They are our allies and so we kind of make excuses for them sometimes.

There was a proposal at the Pentagon to have them do this type of snatch operations but I don't know if it went anywhere. So the U.S. military is saying that they are trying to stop it. But I think this was a widespread initiative by the Kurdish political parties to exercise authority in Kurkuk in an increasingly provocative matter. And I am quoting a State Department cable that was released recently. So I think I'll just stop there and take your questions later. Thank you.

MR. FREEMAN: Thank you very much. And admirable introduction to the entire subject by reminding of the existence - longstanding existence of armed political movements and militias in Iraq. I don't believe, although Colonel Newman's experience with Iraqi Shi'a goes back at least to the first Gulf War -- I mean, you were in the special ops - special forces in Southern Iraq where the Shi'a rebellion occurred, I don't believe that there was that depth of history to Shi'a militias. And I am not inviting you to give us a history of Shi'a militias, but clearly with 60 percent of the Iraqi population or so being an Arab Shi'a, what happens among Shi'a and between Shi'a and others is absolutely vital. And we look forward to hearing what you have to tell us about it.

COLONEL ROBERT NEWMAN: Good morning. Thank you for letting me be here today. I promise to be candid but I ask you to understand that I will not discuss any classified information or respond to questions on policy issues that I know have already been answered by chain of command. My perspective has always been that of the guy in the field, whether in an embassy or a unit. And I have worked in a series of headquarters recently in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia mainly as a liaison officer dealing with their militaries. That experience has given me abiding respect for academics, diplomats, and intelligence officers who are real subject matter experts on Iraq and the Middle East.

As a soldier who returned from Iraq three months ago and who will probably returned next year, I have to be both optimistic and profoundly realistic about the challenges that the U.S., its allies, and the Iraqis face. In my perspective of Iraq and Iraqis is a very personal one and it is heavily influenced by the fact that my friends, both Americans and Iraqis are getting killed there on a daily basis.

On this topic, "Occupied Iraq: One Country, Many Wars," it probably should be one country, many people's many wars. I am addressing the Iraqi Shi'a militia groups as I feel that they and the political organizations that they are tied to are key to the reconstruction of Iraq, whose major goal now is the process of transition to majority rule of the Iraqi Shi'a coming to power.

Twenty years ago, Professor Phoebe Meyer (sp) wrote that if one can speak of an Iraqi state, it is not yet possible to speak of an Iraqi nation. Iraq's present borders incorporated averse medley of peoples who have not yet been welded into a single political community with a common sense of identity. The process of integration and assimilation has gone on steadily since the inception of the mandate, but it is by no means complete.

Ivan has just talked about the Kurdish component to that and I agree with everything he said mainly. The current elected Iraqi transitional government dominated by Shi'a and Kurdish parties, but especially by Shi'a of the United Iraqi Alliance is a significant step forward in that process. The bottom line of my remarks will be that in the near future, Iraq's political leadership and the U.S. and its allies will make a series of difficult decisions with regard to the DDR, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of these militias. And those decisions will decide whether the political process that has been ongoing will continue to move forward or whether it will be delayed, which has big policy consequences for the United States.

As Ambassador Freeman has mentioned, I have had some personal close contacts with the Iraqi Shi'a beginning in 1991. At that time, most of the other panel members all had a much bigger worldview. And at that time I was particularly knowledgeable, or so I thought, about Iraq and Iraqi Shi'a as I had just finished two years of graduate study at an outstanding Ivy League university. And I first got to watch the March '91 Shi'a intifada from the perspective of Safwan and the Abdali border crossing into Kuwait.

At that time I was able to talk to a lot of Iraqi Shi'a. At that time, for the record, none of them were claiming that their uprising was due to President Bush's call for an uprising. And then later that year, while Embassy Riyadh when I went up to the Iraqi refuge camp at Rafah in Northern Saudi Arabia as a translator, note taker, the ambassador was quite clear that I shouldn't exceed that role. I was amazed to find the Iraqis organized into a sort of Congress. This was a group that I was expecting to be mainly Iraqi Shi'a from the Southern three provinces. But they were from all 18 provinces.

And every group class and interest described by Professor Hanna Batatu - and the ("big-blue death" ?) is the classic for any one in Middle East studies who is studying Iraq to read. You need a small red wagon to carry it around. But everything that he had described there was present in the tents that we listened to - hours and hours of issues. At that time all of those Iraqis said that their uprising was a direct response to President Bush's call. And since that time, I got to spend most of that period in the Arab world meeting Iraqi expatriates all the time and dealing with the issues of Iraq from the countries that border it.

I was also present at the first Iraqi people's meeting on April 15, 2003 at Ur, the birthplace of civilization near Nasiriyah. That meeting was once again very similar to what I had read of previous Iraqi opposition conferences where there seemed as much, if not more, disagreement among Iraqis and especially among Iraqi Shi'a on the nature of their future state as there has been in any period since the end of the Ottoman Empire.

There are primarily two Iraqi Shi'a militia groups, even though officially they all ended last summer as Ivan explained. He mentioned securities Badr organization previously known as the Badr Corps or Badr brigades or Badr force. And then there is Muqtada Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (sp). I will show my prop before Jeff makes his high-speed presentation and puts me to shame.

But if you come by and look it and, you know, for those of you who read Arabic, it has got some very simple but very powerful messages on it. And then there is a lot of other guys with guns, okay. They are linked to the Islamic Dawa (ph) party, to Dr. Chalabi, to Abdul Karim Mahoud al-Dowy (ph), who is, a.k. the Hattem, "The Lord of the Marshes." And then a host of others at the local level including the Shi'a and Turkomon and tribal militia up in the Tolafer (ph) area who have been clashing with the Kurds as well as with the Sunni Salafi Jihadis.

I will not discuss the Iranian opposition militia, the MEK, Mujahedin-e-Khalq, but they are also a complicated part of this process of dealing with the Shi'a militia. The issue of DDR, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of party and tribal militias, as Ivan says, has been recognized from the beginning is an important one. The CFLIC (ph), the military headquarters in Iraq, ORHA (ph), the predecessor to the CPA, General Garner's, all issued proclamations and the CPA's transitional administrative law, the TAL, in article 27 specifically prohibited militias not under the command structure of the Iraqi government. And the reaction at that time by those militia groups is they all officially went away. The recent contradictory announcements by senior Iraqi government officials, multiple ones on this subject in the last several weeks, are particularly perplexing and frustrating.

The Badr Corps, Fahl (ph) Badr, as the Iraqis continue to call it, officially became the Badr Organization and a political vice, a militia group following the issuance of the TAL. Probably as a response to the QDP, PUQ position that the peshmerga was not a militia, but the official security forces of the KRG or Kurdish regional government. And it was notionally under the control of the central government even though Ivan pointed out there has been some discrepancy in those comments by senior Kurdish officials.

The Badr Corps members have been playing significant political and security roles in all of the province of Southern Iraq. There are senior Badr Corps members throughout the Iraqi government under both the IGC and IIG, the predecessors to the current ITG, Iraqi Transitional Government. And they have assumed significantly more responsibility with the election of the ITG. There are probably significant numbers of Badr Corps members in the

Iraqi Security Forces, but there is a tendency not to admit this membership to coalition forces.

The Badr Corps officers in the ISF that I have worked with were previously field grade officers in the Iraqi Army. They claimed to be Iraqi patriots and not to be under Iranian influence. That said, they seemed to me to be concerned only about former regime elements, Ba'athis and Sunni jihadis, and not about the Sudris (ph) or about Iranian influence. The issue of Iranian ties is central to all of the Iraqi Shi'a militia, but especially to the Badr Corps, who are originally formed around the cadre of former Iraqi Army Shi'a EPWs from the Iran-Iraq war. They were reportedly trained by the past Iran IRC on an IRGC base and had IRGC advisors.

In the presence of RGFC revolutionary guard and MOIS -- intel guys, agents from Iran - as well as Iranian weapons continues to be an issue. The Jaysh al-Mahdi, or Muqtada Sadr's militia were reportedly formed in 2003 and clashed with coalition forces in April and August 2004 in a series of bloody clashes and multiple locations, but especially in Najaf and Sadr City. Jeff White has written a series of excellent articles describing, identifying those clashes as well as their impact.

By and large, they tactically defeated by the coalition forces in all of those engagements and forced to turn weapons and dismantle an incredible web of IEDs and their sanctuary of Sadr City. Muqtada Sadr has become a significant political force in Iraqi politics and may have also suffered some operational strategic defeat as his Sadrs movement was forced to morph. Muhammad al-Ya'qubi formed the Fadilah Party. And this has been described by a Professor Juan Cole (?) University of Michigan and Fah Abdul Shabar (ph) London University.

I think we need to pay a lot more attention to the origins of the Sadrs movement in order to understand how that organization and its related organizations is morphing and playing an increasing political role. I have never personally observed any militia forces clearly identified with the Islamic Dawa party, just personal security forces, but they were identified with assassination attempts in Iraq and Kuwait in the '80s. Dr. Chalabi was reportedly accompanied by a 742-man militia when he flew into Tallil and Nasiriyah from Kurdistan in late March 2003. However, that force was officially disbanded by an order from CFLIC and ORHA in late-April or early-May 2003.

Abu Hattem or Abudl Karim Mahoud al-Dowy is one of the Shi'a leaders who incites strong reactions from many Iraqis. Where there is a popular hero, the Lord of the Marshes, or a murderous criminal depends on your perspective. His role since April 2003 as well as his brother, the former government of Maysan Province and is a mara-base (?) militia also incite debate. He is currently supposedly promoting a Shi'a federalist alternative involved Shi'a provinces under the name of Sumer (ph), which seems to be much at odds with what many would perceive is Iraqi Shi'a interests, as well as the recent proclamations concerning the Badr organization.

The process of transition to Iraqi or to Shi'a majority rule has resulted in insurgency over the past two years, which has made it very difficult for the U.S. and its collation to establish a secure environment for the reconstruction of Iraq. Coalition forces are currently working hard with the ministries of defense and interior to equip and train Iraqi Security Forces in order to facilitate resolution of the more complex political problems. There are a multiple of challenges associated with the establishment of those forces, but progress will largely depend on the decisions made by the current Iraqi political leadership, especially the Shi'a leadership.

If both Shi'a and Kurdish leaders continue to feel the need to maintain large armed militias, coalitions forces will be again faced, just like we were last year, with major choices in terms of confrontation or accommodation. The U.S. and its allies must continue to work hard to engage Iraq's neighbors to play more positive roles in this process to achieve regional stability. In particular, in order to influence the Shi'ia parties and their militia and particularly and its allies may wish to increase their engagement with (the Iran ?).

A long-term approach, a multilateral approach to disarmament of the Iraqi Shi'a militias, as well as the other militia forces in Iraq, is going to be necessary if we are ever going to develop a truly trained and competent Iraqi Security

Force. Thank you.

MR. FREEMAN: Thank you very much. I think what you have just heard, which is an extraordinary presentation, demonstrating the level of complexity on the ground in Iraq that is not made visible to most people in this country, illustrates something that I observed in the course of my 30 years in government, which is that intelligence failures are virtually invariably failures of the intellect, not failures of people in the U.S. government to have the necessary information to make correct decisions. And it's clear that we do have experts in the U.S. Army who understand a lot about different elements of Iraq and I'm proud to have spent a short time serving with Colonel Newman in Saudi Arabia.

I wonder, as we turn now to Jeff White and begin to talk about the Sunni insurgents, whether the two previous presentations shouldn't have reminded us of this alleged report of two Sunni groups coming forward with a proposed negotiation with the coalition forces addressing two agendas, one, a date certain for American withdrawal, and second, assurances against excessive Iranian influence in the future Iraq. I wonder what is wrong with this agenda and why it has not been picked up. And perhaps Jeff can, in the course of his presentation, explain why that shouldn't be taken seriously. But I throw it out as an issue to be talked about when we get to a discussion period.

JEFFERY WHITE: Okay, thank you, Ambassador Freeman. I'm glad to be here. It's a pretty interesting panel, interesting topics and so on. Surely, the Sunni-Arab insurgency in Iraq is at least as complicated as Ambassador Freeman mentioned in his remarks, maybe even more complicated. But what I wanted to talk about though is why it's so hard to deal with. Why are we finding the insurgency in Iraq such a confoundingly difficult military and political problem?

Before I did that, though, I wanted to say there some things that are going right in Iraq for sure. I don't want to be accused of just looking at the empty half of the glass so I will look at the full half of the glass from the beginning. From the start, we have got a lot of things going for us. We have the will, it seems, at least for now, to persevere in Iraq, to accomplish our objectives there. That is I think in question or increasingly in question now maybe with the talk of U.S. withdrawal, date certain, and so on. Reconstruction is making slow progress, difficult progress, but yet it is going forward. It is not a win yet, but it is I think positive overall in the country.

And we have a lot of resources in Iraq. We have 138,000 troops, 150,000 coalition troops. That is a lot of troops. My view is it's not enough troops, but there are a lot of troops there. We have a lot of money we're pouring in there. We have a lot of skilled people and so on. The Iraqis now have an elected government. The political transformation process is proceeding if haltingly slowly, it is proceeding; they always make the gates. They move forward.

The ISF, the Iraqi Security Forces, military and police have massively expanded: 169,000 more or less at the last count. The key issue there is how many of them are any good? How many of them are capable of operating independently and so on. But they are expanding and the U.S. Army, the U.S. military knows how to train people. So over time - I think it's years, not months - but over time, those forces will come on line.

Just as important as those sort of factual things, there are number of processes and dynamics in Iraq that are also going well from our standpoint. We did create the elections - not we - the elections created a - hold on a second - I'm going to bring this up here - the elections created pressure on the Sunnis to make decisions about their future political life.

And this slide here (Slide 1) is just an attempt to capture what the spectrum of Sunni-Arab political choice is, ranging from absolute resistance and opposition on the left to collaboration. And the secretary of defense stated the other day that what we want to do basically is push people toward the right end of the spectrum. That is our objective and I think the elections did accomplish that.

We have also made intelligence gains I think in Iraq. We're getting better information on the Sunni-Arab insurgency.

There has been a lot of attrition to the Zarqawi network, even in the last few days. And we have created a number of stresses. A number of stresses have developed on the insurgents, which are making their life more difficult - calls for amnesty, there is some tribal fighting out in the West, indications that the insurgents are or at least some - (audio break, tape change) -- things were seen and putting stress on them.

Against that, though, we have to set what I call the elements of intractability, you know, what is the bad side of the situation. And I can count at least 11 of these. You can probably some, you might disagree with some, but there is - (chuckles) - a number of things that make it difficult there, make it hard for us to achieve our objectives.

At the first you have to start with grievance. The Sunni community sees itself as seriously aggrieved for a number of reasons. They are the big losers of the war. They lost power, they lost position, they lost influence, and no jobs program or no provision of electricity can really compensate for that. So there is a definite and serious loss there. But they were never - but they are not the defeated in a sense. They didn't have a military catastrophe visited upon them like Japan and Germany did at the end of World War II to fundamentally change their outlook about the political situation in Iraq. They didn't see that. The war really passed by I think most of the Sunnis and the Sunni Arabs in an important way.

A second area of grievance is the coalition and Iraqi Security Force actions that - we have heard all of the stories of things that happen that antagonize the Sunnis. There is kind of a sense of an emerging war against the Sunnis. That is, the complex of actions produced by the government, by the security forces, by coalition action all focus of course on the Sunni population and there is this notion that it is coming down to that, that it isn't just war against resistance or the insurgents. It is a war against the Sunnis themselves.

A second major factor I think in the intractability is the early onset of the insurgency, and this doesn't get a lot of attention. But the insurgency emerges very quickly. You can see by the beginning or by the end of April it's already started, by November of 2003, it's well underway and a serious thing. And we were caught on our back foot on that issue and we never caught up. The insurgency is also pervasive now. It exists in a wide geographic area. And this is just an example of data we have for May, which shows the number of provinces or the provinces in Iraq where insurgent activity is in fact taking place (Slide 2).

There are now what look like zones of resistance - the area from Tall'Afar to Mosul, the Euphrates Valley down from the Hizbaya (ph) the Syrian border down to Fallujah, Northern Babil Province. These are not just one little town here are there. These are beginning to look at least like actual zones of resistance.

And the insurgency, resistance, whatever you call it also pervades the Sunnis in a psychological sense. Notions of resistances, notions of jihad, that is in the Sunni-Arab mind. There are lots of myths now that are developed about insurgency and resistance. Our sniper, virgin soldiers, you know, bloodless or woundless death - these are things that are talked about within the Sunni community.

The insurgency is also persistent. This is the incident trend (Slide 3) beginning in the - starting December or '04, of December last year running up to the first week in June. And you can see it goes up and down, but basically it persists. And this slope here - it is the slope leading up to the elections - you have the falloff in activity after the elections and then down here in March or in April, May, June, you begin to see peaks of activity again.

It also persists in individual places. It has proven very difficult for us to secure any area on a permanent basis. The oil-spot theory of counterinsurgency doesn't seem to be working. These are just four towns we selected (Slide 4). Do you see what happens to Baghdad? It goes up and down, gone up dramatically. So you get these changes in the level of activity, but basically it just continues to go on.

It is also imbedded. I think now in the Sunni community it is hard to say how deeply it is imbedded. There is some level of popular support. It's penetrated in a number of Sunni-Arab institutions and so on. It is decentralized. There

seem to be at least two major elements I think functioning. One is the Ba'athist element and the other is foreign jihadis and they are cooperating.

On the jihadis themselves, I think they have captured the attention and the imagination of people probably more than they deserve but that can be argued (Slide 5). There is some issues about numbers and so on. But the effects are for sure there. They produce lots of casualties, horrific images and so on. But they also provide a hard edge to the insurgency. They are a stiffening element. They will do the most terrible things and they set the benchmark for true resistance, pure resistance against the coalition.

And the insurgents are adaptable. This slide here shows how they match weapons to targets (Slide 6). In the upper left, that is how they attack ministry of defense troops - some of the weapons they use against them. EDs are explosive devices; SA is small arms. On the right here we have how they attack police forces and on the lower part of the slide is how they attack coalition forces, and this just for a period of the first two weeks in June. And you can see they don't attack everybody the same way. They match their efforts according to the target, basically for best results.

And the insurgency is lethal (Slide 7). One of its main productions is death. They kill lots of people. They kill quite a few Americans, they kill many more Iraqis and so on. And so this lethality is the handmaiden of intimidation. They have an intimidation campaign that operates - that has operated basically since the earliest days in the insurgency aimed at undermining the transitional government, holding the Sunni population enthralled (?). And the killing supports that.

They also do a lot of things to contribute to instability. And this is the track of the spring bombing, you know, what we call the spring bombing offensive (Slide 8). It begins in earnest. There is always some level of bombing activity. And these are car bombs or suicide bombs of any type. And it begins to peak at the period of the new formation of the new government and continues along sense then.

As I said, they do a lot of attacks. They carry out a lot of attacks on collaborators (Slide 9). This is one of their main lines of operations. You can see the peak. This point here represents the fighting at the time of the Mosul and Fallujah events. This is the build up to the election. And these are attacks on government forces, government individuals, people supporting the government. You get the falloff after the elections and then it begins to build back up again as you go into April and May.

Basically we think that the insurgency will persist in its activities over time. This chart (Slide 10) shows what we call their five lines of operations: counter stability, counter election was the sixth line they added just for the election period, counter reconstruction, counter mobility, counter collaboration, and counter coalition. And all - just basically all insurgent activity fits into one of these - all of their actions fit into one of these categories and you can see how it evolves over and changes over time. And the bottom half shows how it has been conducted basically since the election. And we think they are - fundamentally they are going to continue along those lines.

Since I have got to finish up here, I'll just make a couple of - (chuckles) - on-balance type requirements. The first thing we have to remember and always keep in mind here is that this is in fact a war, and - (chuckles) - war is a contest between at least two sides. And their side holds a lot of cards. They are not just simply responding to our actions. They have a lot of resources and they have a lot of capability to employ those resources.

I think critical for the future is at some point the Sunnis have to see the futility of resistance. The Sunnis as a whole have to see the futility of resistance, the futility of the insurgency. They have to recognize that that is a dead-end street; they can't win. And closely related to that I think is the level of U.S. forces on coalition forces in the country. We have to have enough troops there to do the job and that means basically suppressing the insurgency to a level consistent with our other objectives, giving the ISF time to grow and become effective, extending governance into Sunni areas, and allowing the political process to go forward.

And my own view is that we don't have enough troops there to do that. So instead of talking about withdrawal, the argument - (chuckles) - ought to be turned on its head and we ought to be talking about getting enough forces into Iraq that can create the conditions that support our objectives. And with that I will conclude.

MR. FREEMAN: Thank you. Actually, Jeff, two things. First, thank you for the superb presentation. Normally we don't like view graphs or PowerPoint, which of course are - you know, the death by PowerPoint in the Pentagon daily. But you have demonstrated the utility of such things I think quite convincingly.

The last time we discussed Iraq I believe Colonel Lang concluded the discussion by noting that while many of the panelists saw problems in our operations in Iraq that would justify withdrawal, the American public did not see things that way and that proposing solutions to a problem that is not perceived as a problem is an exercise in political futility.

My sense is that in fact people do now see a problem in Iraq and I think Jeff has very succinctly and helpfully reminded us that to the extent that problem has a military solution, it may require greater investment of resources probably than the lesser one. That raises the question whether it's politically viable even with a greater investment of military resources or whether we have so much at stake in Iraq that we are willing to make that investment. And I'm sure Pat Lang will have a thought or two on these subjects and I turn it over to Pat.

PAT LANG: Good morning. Can everybody hear me? You know, I'm struck by Ambassador Freeman's statement about really, really superb intelligence failures being failures of intellect rather than of data. And in many cases that is really true. I think you could probably argue that that wasn't the case with the 9/11 attacks but in the really big strategic questions, I think that is true.

And you always come back to this business of is the glass half-full, is the glass half-empty. I have been a winner and I have been a loser in the great game of counterinsurgency and been on both sides of that, and it isn't at all clear to me that the present state of affairs makes it very, very clear actually how this business is going to come out in Iraq. And I would easily concede in fact that the glass is half-full. I don't have any problem with that at all.

MR. : Actually, those glasses are empty, but -

MR. LANG: Yeah. But in fact, the - you know, because a great many things have been accomplished and things on the political side - all of the milestones have been met, forces are in the process of being trained, and as was observed, the United States Army knows how to train troops -- we get it right eventually - and there will be a substantial force there. There have been a lot of civil affairs things done, a lot of infrastructure being created, and it's very hard to argue with the fact that this has done a lot of good.

On the other hand, I am afraid I have the conviction in my heart that in fact that what has happened so far is largely irrelevant to the probable outcome of the war in Iraq because I believe there is a basic intellectual failure occurred in the process of deciding what and where and how much we were going to do in Iraq. And you see -- you have heard the essence of this problem explained here this morning. And I'm very lucky, by the way. I don't have to do a data call here today because my colleagues have taken care of that so wonderfully. So I get to just kind of muse on this subject.

But in fact the problem really with this place - Iraq - as in all the other states in the region, except one, is in fact that these places are not nation states. You know, the assumption we went into Iraq with was that Iraq was a nation state and that in fact Iraqis were one people and that they would perceive their interests as being aligned in such a way that once they are released from the tyrants grasp in fact they would move forward into a bright new dawn. And this was just a - was in fact not correct, in fact. It isn't true of any of these places out there.

It is very easy to fall into that idea because of the fact that these places, as was also said, are all in - have been in the process of becoming nation states ever since the end of the First World War or the end of the Ottoman Empire, the

various machinations of the colonial powers. They have been in a kind of pressure cooker trying to become nation states inhabited by a single people in each case. But in fact they weren't anywhere completed anywhere and Iraq was certainly an exemplar of that in fact.

So what has happened is that we - by demolishing the national government of Iraq and its national institutions - the army, the civil service, et cetera, et cetera, even indeed, the much hated despised Ba'ath Party in Iraq, what we did is we screwed the lid off the jar and released all of the inner pressures.

Now, I say that at some risk because somebody will get up to this microphone up here and say to me in fact that I am following the path of the colonialists in seeking to divide them in order that they can - the people of this region can be more easily ruled. Well, you can say that all you like, but in fact I happen to know what the truth is and in fact the truth is that these people are much divided.

And that leads directly to the fact that the general officer who made the statement Ambassador Freeman referred to, in my opinion, if he really meant that, he just doesn't get it in fact because what you have here is you have a number of different peoples, factions, ethnic groups, sectarian groupings of one kind or another all having been released from the coercion in which they were building held in kind of stasis - the Iraqi people, who are now striving to achieve whatever it is they think is in their best interest.

At the same time, do many of them believe in fact that they should be Iraqis and they should feel that way? Of course we do. We all know what our higher aspirations ought to be. But what we really believe in our heart of hearts as to where our real interests lie is another matter. So you have all of these people in fact struggling against each other.

So I would say the Iraqi insurgency, or indeed many insurgencies - that in fact, it appears to me, after having talked to a bunch of folks who have come back from there and who worked in the business of trying to figure this out, that in fact I really believe there was a stay-behind operation as we would call it in special forces with regard to resistance to foreign occupation - that there was such a plan and there caches of material around the country, certain institutions were giving the - mission of handing out weapons to people, which they did.

I had one young woman who is a military intelligence officer ask me why it is that ever house they go into in Iraq has at least one or two AK-47s in it and a case of ammunition. And the answer is largely that the previous Iraqi government issued it to people because they had a program of setting up for resistance to occupation. I have had other people tell me that if you go through in the non-jihadi, non-international jihadi vast bulk of the insurgency - and by the way, I think it's not a good idea to keep calling them Ba'athi, Ba'athi, Ba'athi all the time because this really is a term of denigration which leaves - you're minimizing in fact how substantial they really are.

But if you look at those groups, and the many different groups that are centered by personality and region and tribe and one thing or another - former military unit, whatever - if you get down, winnow down through these things, you find at the heart of each of these groups that there one or two guys who used to be officers in the Iraqi Army and who - and on a rough kind of basis coordinate the actions of these groups in such a way that you can see shifts in targeting strategy and you can see trends in doing this and that. It cannot be all together happenstance for that to occur in that way.

So I think you have a lot of different things like that going on at the same time. Supposedly, this same senior American officer wanted to know why - that he couldn't understand all of this because in fact they weren't coordinated enough. Well, I would say to you this is early days yet. I mean, if you want to make the analogy of the great Vietnam thing, which was the greatest insurgency thing of all time probably, it wasn't until about 1949 or '50 that the Vietminh got everybody in the country sorted out who was fighting the French and unified them under communist command so that they were - you didn't have a multiplicity of groups that weren't just loosely coordinating with each other.

So what are we into this? We are into the second, third year of the war. Give them two or three more years of this going on and you'll probably see them under the hammer of our pressure unified more and more with the jihadist kind of standing off to one side. But they are going to go in that direction and you can see that it is almost inevitable that that will happen. And the reason the thing got started so fast was that there was an existing, in my opinion, plan for the generation of resistance throughout the country. And that is why it got started up so quickly.

Now, I think you have to be very, very careful about a number of things you want to say. Now, my dear old friend in colleague, Jeff down here, thinks we ought to have more troops in the country. And I would think that if we are going to persist there that would certainly be a good idea. I just don't know where we are going to get them, you know. I have a difficult time with that and I'm sure he does too. How much more can we use the National Guard? How many more rotations can we have with shorter tours of duty, of regular Army and Marine Corps units? Now, there is a limit to what you can ask people to do in fact under those conditions.

So there is a question as to where you will get these people. Everybody here knows that the return to a draft is politically impossible and that in fact you don't get much out of a draft anyway; you get a lot of semi-trained privates who are 20 years old and you have to cadre your other units to get leaders and then you generate units. You have got another two or three years there in order to generate a brigade or a division. You know, this is a long and slow process if you do that.

So you really can't do that I don't think. On the other hand, people want to talk about a quick withdrawal from Iraq, setting a timetable. I am against setting a timetable because that really will telegraph your actions to the insurgents in fact. And you have to consider the fact that we have now done this and when we withdrawal, we will have to live with the consequences of what we have done because anybody who knows what happened in Vietnam, what happened in Algeria, what happened in this place and that place know that a great many native peoples who sided with the foreign army suffered horribly as a result of that, suffered horribly.

Think of how many millions of Vietnamese left. Think of all the thousands and thousands of Algerian dock workers and things like this - were put to the sword literally by the FLN when the French Navy left Oran and places like that. Think about that. You have to start dealing with the idea - what are you going to do with refugees in fact in this country if you pull out all of the sudden. So this is not a very good idea either.

The other thing you have to consider is to what extent is the Iraqi example typical of every other place in the region. And Ambassador Freeman likes to quote my one inspired moment I think in which I said that we have probably not invaded the real Iraq; we had invaded the Iraq of our dreams. But in fact, if you look around at these other places, to what extent are we not doing the same thing there.

Look at Lebanon. Look at the incredibly claims that have been made with regard to Lebanon in the aftermath of Rafik Hariri assassination, that everything would be wonderful, it would be a wonderful democracy, a completely new system of government would exist, all of that kind of business. In fact, what is emerging from their political process is simply a reshuffling of the deck with the same players coming up with very substantial control of the government and with Hezbollah having a yet larger and stronger role in the functioning of the government.

You can look around at other places around the region. Are they that much different? I mean, look at Iran. We have been claiming in fact that - it's clearly we have had in mind that a youth-led revolution was about to occur in Iran that would bring to power a pro-Western government, which would probably ensure the good behavior of the Shi'a Iraqi government. Is that what it looks like today in the election? I don't think so. So we have to be very careful that we stop in fact projecting ourselves onto these people and start trying to understand them what they are. Thank you.

MR. FREEMAN: Thank you very much. I think Jeff said that the key to success against the insurgency, which is what we have been discussing today, is to convince them that resistance is futile and that they cannot win. And I think we

have just heard a very good point made that we are getting much better at combating these various insurgencies, but the insurgents are getting much better at combating us. And in fact, one of the major concerns in the region, which I have just returned from, is that the large number of jihadis going into Iraq are receiving the world's best training from the world's best-armed forces about how to conduct urban operations and will in time go home or re-deploy elsewhere in the Islamic world or perhaps even to our homeland.

Do we really have the option of hanging on - this question of where additional forces, if they are required, would come from really is crucial. I mean, do we have that option? If we don't then we're probably wasting time talking about it. And I think that my final point on the fact that we will be held accountable for the consequences of our intervention in Iraq is unassailable. So the question is then, since that intervention presumably will not last forever - it will end somehow, sometime - how do we mitigate those consequences? How do we reduce so that we can live with ourselves morally.

And I guess the final point is I'm delighted that the discussion and the quality of the presentations today because I don't think you can solve a problem if you don't understand it. And I think the level of expertise on the military level that has been demonstrated here is a prerequisite to beginning to consider what we do in a situation that clearly is not getting better. But this of course brings us to reality-based analysis which is out of favor in Washington and it reinforces the political incorrectness of this entire gathering I suppose.

We now turn to the question/comment section and several old timers know the rules and have immediately put their hands up. If you do that, I will note down who you are and then I will call on you in sequence. And, Jeff, you're first, you're second, you're third, you're fourth, and we will - please tell us who you are.

Q: My name is Jeff Steinberger. I'm with - (inaudible) - Magazine. There's another aspect of the Iraq situation that's been a point of great confusion to me and I'm hoping maybe the panelists can comment on this, which is that it's not clear to me that there's really just one occupation of Iraq. I'm confused about what the objective of the occupation is. Some people seem to think that there's an element of a permanent or semi-permanent military presence to secure the oil fields. Others say that we want to bring stability and leave. It seemed at one point that we were pursuing a kind of traditional occupation, utilizing the nationals and as much of the existing governing infrastructure to put things together quickly. Then we de-Baathified and reduced the military to nothing and seemed to adopt a sort of a Shiite-only strategy with a Kurdish corollary to that. And in the recent period, it seems that Rumsfeld and Rice and Zoellick have been running over there to make sure that the Sunnis get a greater share of the action. And I wonder whether that's going to produce the long-awaited other shoe dropping, namely, some kind of much more substantial Shiite opposition to the U.S. presence. So I'm wondering - and then the final thing is that there's an overt American and British component to the coalition occupation. I'm not sure that American and British interests are identical there, and then there's the issue that Ivan raised about the Israeli presence, which is sort of a - (inaudible) - factor, but they're a regional power as well with their own interests. So I'm hoping possibly some clarification on what the actual U.S. objectives are there.

MR. FREEMAN: I think that's a very - (inaudible) - set of issues to raise. I'm sure all of the panelists will want to dive in. It does bring us back to the statement of the president that we don't have an exit strategy; we have a success strategy. But if you don't define what success is, it's pretty hard to know what that means. And I'd like to ask the panelists to tell us what they think success will be. Pat, you start.

MR. LANG: Well, I think that at this point, and you have to figure from this point - you know, you can't go back a few years and say what you think ought to have been about something like this because you actually are in the situation. I think that what we have to try to do is to try to influence the Iraqis, all the different kinds of them, in fact, to create a sufficiently stable situation so that we can justify our own withdrawal. I don't think our presence there has anything to do with strategic basing. If anybody ever had that fantasy, they gave it up a long time ago, I think, probably at one of

the crests in Jeff's charts. And I don't think it has to do with our wanting to own their oil. We just want them to sell their oil because of the - you know, the more oil in the market, the cheaper the price and it's much too expensive now. So the only thing I think we could possibly have as a goal is to achieve sufficient stability so that the resistance dies down to a level at which we are justified in withdrawing our forces. I don't know what else you could do.

MR. FREEMAN: Ivan, would you like to comment?

MR. ELAND: Yeah, I think that - I'm pretty much a radical on this. I think we lost the war a long time ago and we just don't know it yet. But I think the president actually could get out of this by realizing that Iraq is a fantasy and that he sh ❖

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