Waging the War on Terrorism:

Looking Back, Looking Forward

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In-Depth Reports

* Secretary Roche's remarks represent his own views and not necessarily those of the U.S. government.

I have a new job. This one has 700,000 employees and a budget of $80 billion. That's the good news. The bad news is that we are paying for health care, not for equipment. The Air Force also has a bunch of operating bases in almost every continent and obligations to modernize its force, reorganize and support a new security environment, and train and equip for whatever the president may call on us to do.

In 1968, when I first went to Harvard and studied under Robert Anthony, he pointed out that he had been controller of the Department of Defense. I asked him, "What was the most significant thing about being controller?" He said, "The absence of a profit measure." I said, "You mean profit motive." He said, "No. Profit measure." And the second thing he said was, "You can never tell what anything costs." I could not believe that. Well, let me tell you. Many years later, we still have no idea what anything costs. All we know is the sum of it all. Inside of that, the accounting system is so bad, you never really know. The absence of a profit measure makes it very difficult to say, "If I put a dollar in this program, I will get a better national return than if I put a dollar in this program." Everyone makes the point that if we just give them one more dollar, they will do more good. So, you're stuck debating with the secretary of defense what he sees from his perspective as compared to what we see from our perspective.

In addition, I deal with a corporate staff of 6,000. In all of their discussions, the money only comes from one of three places: the Air Force, the Navy, or the Army. That's it. (Remember, the Navy includes the Marine Corps.) So we go and get the money and then they tell us how to spend it. As a result, there are endless fights, a waste of time.

And then we have a board of directors consisting of 535 wonderful human beings on a Hill somewhere in Washington, D.C., and they each have about forty staff members. About three members of each of their staffs worry about where I spend money and where I don't spend money. They worry about some little company in their district, et cetera. So I spend time dealing with this. Moreover, as chief executive of a very large department -- just to make it a perfect management situation -- I have no control over any facilities. You think I can close a base?

And I also have about 200,000 tenured professors. Think of the president just trying to get the Homeland Security Bill through. What was the big issue? Tenure. Tenure of civil servants. I have had to recall and keep on active duty close to 10,000 top-security members of the Air Force because I cannot hire contract civilian guards. We are trying to get that law changed. We have eleven months, and if in eleven months I cannot hire private guards, frankly I don't know what I will do. I have all of these bases -- 20 percent of which I do not want -- that I have to have people guarding day and night, lest one of Osama bin Laden's followers decides to do something bad. This is the business-management problem. If you wonder why your government can't get anything done, you now have a little bit of insight.

But the men and women of the armed forces, in spite of all of this, are just superlative. Southwest Asia -- the area that is of most interest to many of us -- had roughly 7,500 airmen who were carrying out Operations Northern Watch and

Southern Watch. Those operations police the northern and southern parts of Iraq. We have been doing it for ten years. (One of the problems of being in the Air Force is that we have sticky glue. A U.S. Navy carrier battle group can go somewhere and then they can go home. We go somewhere and we always leave a contingent behind.) So, we had 7,500 air personnel in Southwest Asia. In the course of ten years, these folks have flown more than 200,000 sorties, often under bizarre rules of engagement. For example, if someone is shooting at them and we go to get even, our pilots have to make sure they approach the target at the exact angle from which the photograph of the target was taken. The photograph is sitting on the pilot's knee. He is trying to fly the plane, prepare the weapon, look at the photograph, look at the target, look at the photograph, look at the target -- just to make sure -- and then he finally gets to shoot.

With Operation Enduring Freedom, the attack on the Taliban, and the disappearance of bin Laden, we upped that contingent of 7,500 airmen to about 23,500. But now that things have settled down, we only have 18,500 airmen in Southwest Asia. So, the question arises, what the hell are those extra 10,000 doing? The point is, once we are there, we cannot go away. We are operating all kinds of bases. And, by the way, when you have 18,000-20,000 airmen, that really accounts for close to 100,000 airmen, because you have to be able to rotate. You cannot send these men and women to an area permanently.

You would think this has to be a miserable life. They are not in some garden spot of the world. I have managed to visit each of their units. These young men and women serve our country willingly and cheerfully. They assume we know what we are doing. They have trust. They are absolutely superlative young people, and you should be proud of each and every one of them.

I want to touch on a couple of things to give you a sense of the agility of this country's armed forces, in spite of the fact that our equipment is getting progressively older. How many in this room ever thought we would be in Manas, Bishkek, or Kyrgyzstan? My other favorite is Karshi Khanabad, Afghanistan. I am sure that you have all read about the resort, Karshi Khanabad. Second prize is one more day in Jacobabad, Pakistan. But these are our coalition partners. These are countries that support what we are trying to do, and in each case these are places -- a couple of which used to belong to our former enemy the Soviet Union -- where we are now welcome in the name of continuing the war on terror. The interesting thing about the war on terror is how many countries quietly help us. We should be proud of that. We have not made quite the noise about the coalition that we made, say, in 1991, because for the most part, a number of these countries aren't paying. We were trying to get countries to pay in 1991. But lots of them have nevertheless really helped us.

And so those 18,500 airmen are there in this part of the world every day and every night, operating in many different ways. They provide a lot of input to regional security. But I would not want you to think that we have forgotten our strongest ally in the area, Israel. We have not. Those of you who know me know that this is a relationship of which I have been very fond for a long time. And the expectation is that the relationship between the U.S. Air Force and the Israeli Air Force will grow and deepen. It is not written about a lot, which is good.

Unfortunately, it only gets written about when we have disagreements. Sometimes a relationship is tough, but if you date someone for fifty years, every now and then you will have an argument; and every now and then, you will have a spectacular success. For instance, in my former life, an Israeli firm jointly produced with my own firm a special targeting pod that was purchased by our Air National Guard (not by the regular Air Force). This targeting pod had an interesting feature -- what is called a "spot tracker." That means if you are flying your airplane and you put a laser on a target, I can fly a plane with this Israeli-American joint product and I can put in the code for your laser and read your laser. So I can see your spot on the ground. For instance, Predator unmanned drone operators could say, "That is the target." And regular fighter pilots could then reply, "I've got it, thank you very much," put their own laser on the target, and drive a bomb down the laser. The only aircraft equipped with this were those in the Air Force that had the

joint Israeli-American system. A few systems comparable were in the Navy and then eventually the Army's A-10s.

So, we have some wonderful examples of special systems that have made a huge difference, even in the war on terror, because the targeting is really a beast. It was interesting to fly over that part of the world, to look down and recognize that you often cannot distinguish one hill from another. It's just one big gray rock or, if there is snow, it's just snow. How extraordinarily difficult it is to operate in those conditions. So, it is amazing that we have done as well as we have in an area where the terrain is very difficult.

And we have done some fascinating things. For instance, you have a Predator trying to talk to a C-130 gunship, which is a C-130 with a Bofors cannon and some other guns on it. It is really a bad day for an enemy when this thing shows up. Typically, the gunship only flies at night. (We tried a late-night mission in Iraq in 1991; when daylight came, a C-130 was, sadly, shot down.)

But when the Predator operator has a target and he is trying to talk to the systems operator on the gunship, he says, "You see the traffic circle? Okay. Come around to the 9:00 position. Okay. Go down a block. You see this place" -- and the systems operator is just not getting it. And the frustration is building in this Predator operator's voice. The irony is that the gunship is on top of the target and the Predator operator who is talking to him is many countries away. Because of technology, you can do that. By the way, the answer became easy. We now put the same Predator video in the gunship so you can say, "You see in the upper right-hand corner? Shoot there."

This month, we are trying an experiment that we call the "John Madden" approach. We want to give the kids an electronic pencil so they can say, "Okay, you got the picture. Good. See the circle? That's me. See the 'X'? I think those are bad guys. Now, when you shoot, shoot where the bad guys are, not where I am." We will see if this works, because increasingly we want to have the sergeants hooking together in interesting ways. Their imagination, how they approach things, is extraordinary.

I also want to touch on the fact that we get a lot of support from the Gulf Cooperation Council. It is not talked about much, but this support is very important. It is also important that we not speak too often about it. The Saudis get a bum rap, gang. They really do. A year ago, I was asked here, "What about Saudi Arabia?" I said, "Everything that we asked for they delivered on." Well, they continue to do that and they have done more. Yes, it is a strange society. Yes, wahhabism is probably creating its own demise, but the Saudis have been cooperative with us to the extent that they can be relative to their own dealings.

Kuwait has been especially helpful to the United States. It is quite a pleasure to go to a ready line -- the alert fighters -- and find that Kuwaiti aircraft and pilots and American aircraft and pilots are side-by-side. They work very well together. Kuwait is a small country and we put down a big footprint in it, which is tough for anyone. I often say that if you were to scale it to the United States, you could think of millions of foreign troops crawling around the United States. We would have a hard time. But Kuwait has stood by us.

Bahrain is known as the nice spot of the Middle East, if you happen to be Muslim. It has wonderful spots and caters to the tourism industry for people in the Gulf. It is also the home of the Fifth Fleet and was a transshipment point for C-17s and C- 5s. Bahrain is very cooperative with us, because they recognize that stability in their part of the world is threatened by someone like Saddam Husayn.

Qatar has quietly done enormous amounts for us and has a rather remarkable airfield complex. They have been extremely helpful. The United Arab Emirates have also been very helpful. We fly lots of things out of their country and they just say it's okay.

One of my favorites is Oman. First of all, Oman is a wonderful place. Second, in Oman, we have had some interesting things happen. It has often been said that our B-1 bomber is the finest example of how you can convert carbon to noise. It is only outdone by the new European Eurofighter, which does it better. But although our B-1 indeed does a

remarkable job of converting fuel to noise, we found that acoustic energy can cause mud huts to disintegrate; not only can we make runways start to disintegrate, we can drop houses just by taking off. So, we have had some problems with some of the villagers, even though we are trying to be good guests. We try to be as gentle as we can, but the Omanis have been so sweet in dealing with us that they were almost embarrassed to tell us that we were inadvertently dropping villages with acoustic vibration.

Let me tell you another story. When I was in Oman twenty years ago, the Arab- Israeli conflict was something far away. It was not part of the daily lives of Omanis. They were not into it. It is interesting to go back now, twenty years later, and discover how sensitive they have become to this issue. Then you go to a hotel and see channel after channel of Arabic satellite and cable television. I cannot speak Arabic, but I can certainly recognize al-Aqsa as a backdrop, and I can tell when people are angry. Al-Jazeera and other networks are pumping poison into village after village throughout the Gulf and the Middle East, and it is something with which we have to cope. These people are aware of what is happening on a daily basis with the Palestinian- Israeli issue, and they are aware because of cable television. It is not like it was twenty years ago, and it is something that I do not believe Americans are sensitive to. The governments cannot manage the news, and therefore people can be stirred up, asking lots of questions and applying lots of pressure.

In any case, we could not conduct the war on terror were it not for these countries helping us. They do help us, and we are grateful for it.

Let me talk about Iraq and the potential that the president may ask us to be engaged there. He will speak tomorrow night on national television, and I am not sure what he will say. He has certainly made the point that somewhere, sometime, the world has got to be rid of this menace, whether it is done in a wonderful Sun- Tzu fashion, where enough pressure is brought on the country that they take care of the problem themselves, or whether a coalition will do it. The president has also noted that if there is no coalition, we will do it ourselves. The fear that we have with international terrorism is that if some state with the facilities, infrastructure, money, and intellectual power develops weapons of mass destruction and then feeds them to these crazed people, the devastation could be far worse than we would ever imagine. Remember, terrorism is directed not just against Israel or the United States now. It is also directed against Arab and other countries. This is something that frightens many people. Somewhere along the line, we will have to do something.

Now, I have a chance to tell you that the senior officers of the armed forces are not objecting to the president's plans. We are a military organization. We go back as far as George Washington. We accept the orders that are given to us as long as they are constitutional.

What you will oftentimes find reporters not understanding is that these military officers, because they are required to give the president their personal and professional judgment, will tell the president or the secretary of defense things they are worried about. And there are things that we, as military people, worry about. In 1991, we did an appalling job of destroying Iraqi Scud missiles. We have worked at it, but it still has not been mastered. I would point out that in 1967, the Israeli destroyer Eilat was sunk by a cruise missile. Twenty years later, in 1987, eighteen U.S. boys died on board the USS Stark from a cruise missile fired by an Iraqi plane. Twenty years later, we were not a hell of a lot better, and even now it is not clear how much better we are. These are difficult military problems.

We would also be concerned about being in a situation where we were stuck outside of Baghdad and people came to us looking for food. How do we quickly grab an airfield to be able to bring in the amount of food we would like to bring in? The Afghanistan campaign probably represented the first time in the history of war that, within hours of bombs falling, we were dropping food to the tune of 2.5 million meals. And by the way, even though you think things have calmed down, to date we have flown -- the Air Force alone -- 54,000 sorties over Afghanistan. Of that, our tanker aircraft have flown 13,600 sorties and our cargo aircraft 26,000, because Afghanistan is a landlocked country.

Everything that has come in and everything that has gone out, until recently, has had to come in and go out by airplane: food, water, people, medicine, equipment, ammunition, and so on. These kids are still flying.

You can go to a base in Afghanistan, ladies and gentlemen, and in the daytime you would say nothing is happening. But if you went back at night and put on nightvision goggles, you would just be amazed. From young people in yellow gear who work the airplanes, starting the engines and moving the airplanes around, to young kids in Humvees, to pilots, they all have these goggles over their eyes, operating in the dead of night, flying great big planes -- not in the normal way that you land here at Dulles International Airport, but doing combat landings. That means coming in as high as you can and then dropping out of the sky, flaring just before you crash. (A combat takeoff is where you push both feet on the brakes as hard as you can, put the throttles as far as forward as you can, and then the whole bloody plane shakes until all of a sudden you pop the wheels and off you go into the air, thinking to yourself, "I hope these wings know what they're doing.") It is quite exciting.

The point is that your military is ready and willing to do what our president asks, but we believe it is important that he be apprised of any concerns we might have. He has been very open to that. But he is still the boss, and when the boss gives the order, we will move out and we will move out very well. These young people in our Air Force, Marine Corps, Army, and Navy are committed.

We are in an interesting position right now. My partner, Gen. John Jumper, who is the Air Force chief of staff, recently noted that almost every Air Force captain who flies airplanes today has combat experience. Virtually every engineer, trooper, and medic in the Air Force has deployed overseas to this area, except for those who are on watch in Korea. We have a veteran, hardened combat force. They have mostly all been shot at. They know what it's like, and when we go, we will be at the peak of our game. Our equipment may be old, but the brightness of our young people will carry the day.

Let me touch on our gear getting old. To use an analogy, it is as if you inherited your grandfather's house. You remember when you were young, what a wonderful mansion it was. It was just terrific. So you tell your wife, "Listen, we are going to move in. This is a great house," and you forget that time has passed. And so you get to your grandfather's house, having sold your own, and you find that the air conditioning has not worked in many years, you never use the bathrooms upstairs because they do not work, and someone has just put a sign on the deck saying it is not fit for human occupation because it is so weak it will fall down -- and, oh, by the way, when you turn on the heater, a bunch of black stuff comes out of the vents. The roof leaks, and you notice that there is a lot of wood rot, and maybe the footings have a problem.

The question is what to deal with first. To those of us who relish the fact that there was a peace dividend -- that there were effectively twelve years of no investment (like not investing in your home for twelve years) -- you can get away with it, but somewhere, sometime, things start to catch up. They are catching up with us now.

A lot of what you read in the press about some of the fights I get involved in has to do with this problem. Let me point out to you that our tanker fleet is now an average of more than forty-two years old. Our Marines and our special forces in the Air Force are flying helicopters in Afghanistan that were in Vietnam when I was in Vietnam. That's not good. Our helicopters are old. Our F-15 fleet is now, on average, twenty-plus years old. They suffer from metal fatigue in a number of cases. Our F-117s -- the magnificent stealth fighters -- are approaching twenty years of age. Of our F-16s, some are very young, some are very old. Our E-5 AWACS planes are old. Our E-8C Joint STARS are new.

Our bomber fleet is actually in pretty good shape. We have transformed the B-1, the great converter of carbon to noise, into a magnificent machine. In fact, we fly from one of those Gulf countries to Afghanistan, a distance of 1,250 miles, stay two and a half hours on station there, and return with only one in-air refueling, because we have learned to fly the B-1 at proper altitude with the wings set for economy. Moreover, it has three bomb bays; it carries 50

percent more big bombs than does the B-2 bomber. Our B-52s are old, but we use them in a way that makes it easier. A lot of our intelligence surveillance reconnaissance aircraft are old.

Again, it is like my grandfather's house. And so we try to lease tankers and do other things in order to modernize under a war budget.

Speaking of being at war, the imagination of our people is really spectacular. We took this little Predator drone that is not stealthy but cheap and we convinced ourselves that it is a razor blade. My boss gets upset every time one crashes, and I tell him, "It's a razor blade, don't worry about it." (Three million dollars, don't worry about it!) Then we put a little Hellfire missile on it. It can sit for thirty hours and be as sharp in the twenty-ninth hour as it was in the second hour. You control it from the ground, and you can change crews on the ground. You don't have to worry about feeding or resting a pilot. And if it finds something of interest, it has demonstrated -- at least in tests -- that it can be quite destructive. If you can get into a bunker with one of these, it is really bad. Now, the problem you have if you happen to be a troop on the ground is that you are depending on some guy in another country to come to your assistance. Invariably the troops on the ground say, "Fire one over there first so I know you're good."

This is the first war in which we have used very precise weapons -- Global Positioning System (GPS)-guided weapons or laser-guided weapons -- as extensively as we have. In doing so, we have found that we can continue to work at this issue of collateral damage. Interestingly enough, I gave a talk to the Israeli Air Force a number of years ago in which I predicted that one of the problems we will have is which of our pilots will get indicted first for war crimes. We claim how precise we are, so when a weapon goes awry it is hard to convince someone that we didn't do it on purpose. That, among other things, is why you see us being cautious about international courts.

We did something interesting in Afghanistan. First, we synthesized information in completely original ways with what is called a combined-operations center. There, we could pull in all the intelligence and guide all the aircraft in one place at one time. It was really quite a breakthrough. Then, we had these wonderful sergeants on the ground who combined a set of binoculars, a laser range finder, a crummy old map to get the elevation or Z-coordinate, a little computer, and a radio to prove that we can do close air support with the airplane at 38,000 feet. One of these sergeantcontrollers had a set of targets that were, we will say, to the east of him. He talked a B-1 bomber onto the targets. The B-1 said, "Fine, no problem. Look, I'm going to make one pass just to check everything, then on the second pass I'll drop." So the controller is sitting here with the targets to the east, and the B-1 goes over to the west. The controller calls up and says, "Hey, wait a minute, the targets are to the east of me and you're to the west of me. This is a problem." The operators in the B-1 paused and said, "Yes, but the winds up here are different than the winds where you are and this is where we should be. Trust us." As he tells the story, this controller said, "Okay," and the B-1 came back around, way over to the west, dropped, and his weapons proceeded right past the controller to hit their targets perfectly. These sergeants -- nineteen- to twenty-year-olds -- can talk directly to these airplanes like the control tower at Dulles.

Another one tells a great story of how they use little Garman GPS systems. He was moving from one spot to the next, and when he got to the next spot, his prior spot was overrun by the Taliban. He left with a modern escape system known as a horse and got himself to another hill. When he got to the top of the hill, he realized that he had kept his prior position in his GPS unit. Every place he stopped and set up he entered into the Garman as a waypoint, as if he were a sailor. And so he just picked up his Garman, called up to -- in this case -- a B-52, and watched the top of the hill disappear. These young people are absolutely exquisite.

Now, through this war on terror, we are all concerned about what is happening in Israel. We are saddened by people who have to get up every day and fear what they have to fear. I do not know what the answer is. I know many of you have worried about this issue for so many years, and I am sure you join me in my sadness. There was a time -- you remember how elated we were, how we thought there was hope. And then we started to get little hints. Still, we

thought, "No, it will get better." It is terribly sad that it has not.

So, let me close by saying that I believe somewhere, sometime, we have to deal with this creep in Baghdad. If we can do so in a Sun-Tzu fashion, it will be great. If not, let's go do what we have to do. We are ready. (Applause.)

Discussion

Dennis Ross, The Washington Institute: One of the things that we hear most from critics is that if we go after Saddam Husayn, it will impede our capacity to deal with the rest of the war on terror. You just described how much we still do in Afghanistan. How well equipped are we to handle not only Iraq, but the rest of the war on terror as well?

James Roche: I would not want to suggest that the president has made a decision to do anything in Iraq. It is my job to organize, train, and equip the Air Force to carry out the president's orders -- not to tell someone how to fight, but to make sure that they have the things they need to fight. So, I carry around the status of all of our major weapons in my pocket every day. I feel like the Shimon Peres of the Air Force. Remember, Shimon never went to war. He just built the stuff for war.

We worry about contingencies popping up in the Pacific. We worry about the fact that we have to have a rotation base for those 18,500 airmen. We worry about the fact that we are tied down in Operations Northern and Southern Watch. If we have to go into Iraq, if the president asks us to do that, we may finally get out of the problems related to those operations and will not have to send thousands of our young people there for another ten years.

Also, the Iraqi military is not what it was in 1991, but as sensible military people, we presume that we will be surprised. The one thing you should not be when you are surprised is surprised. You have to prepare and think about what could happen. The Central Intelligence Agency report released yesterday, as I understand it, talked about some of the things that we have to worry about that others may not think of.

My sense is that if we do not do something somewhere, sometime about Saddam, this war on terrorism could get much worse.

Participant: Something that you and we have been involved in thinking about for a long time is the future of the strategic relationship between the United States and Israel. Other colleagues of yours now in the Pentagon, some at the highest levels, have also been involved in or have given a lot of thought to that issue. I wonder whether you could give us some sense of where you think this relationship can be taken now.

Roche: I am as in favor of the relationship today as I ever have been. The nice part is that I can affect it. The relationship between the Israeli Air Force and the U.S. Air Force is close. We do a number of exercises together. We are, in fact, in the process of planning to have a much closer relationship in certain areas than I can speak about publicly.

There have also been difficulties. To be honest, some of you remember a former director-general of the Ministry of Defense with a personality more closely approximating a rattlesnake's than a human being's who foolishly went into a Pentagon meeting with uniformed Air Force officers and screamed at them, telling them that if they did not do what he wanted them to do, he would go to their boss. Well, let me tell you, gang, that is like yelling at a cop. It is not easier the next day. It is worse.

So, we have had some difficulties on both sides. We have had equipment technology that has mysteriously showed up in certain unusual places. I have been in this forum a number of times to talk about why Israel provided China with airborne early warning equipment. Now, that has stopped, but why was it even thought of in the first place? Why does the Seventh Fleet have to worry about one hundred Harpy missiles -- missiles that are designed to go after shipboard radars -- off the coast of China that were provided by Israel?

That is the downside. On the other hand, we have been jerks ourselves at times. Our mutual interests are such that,

over the long run, we really do have a lot in common. We share a lot of values. Everyone is saddened by what is happening to Israeli families today -- everyone -- every member of the Air Force I know, even those who sometimes have been upset in dealing with a particular Israeli company. No one can see what happens to these people and not get a pang of, "My God, what would it be like if it were to happen in Washington or Baltimore?"

So, I see the relationship strengthening. It will probably, in many cases, be based on military-to-military relations, which is fine, because they transcend changes in administrations on both sides. In fact, when things really got bad -- as in the case of the radar and the F-16s to China -- it was the Israeli Air Force that finally came in and said, "Hey, don't put distance between us and our U.S. Air Force colleagues." Our medical people have also sat down with the Israeli civil defense forces to learn from them as much as we can about how to deal with mass casualties from shrapnel bombs. So, the two democracies have a deep relationship.

We all recognize that Israel restrained itself in 1991. We are not clear on what would be in the best interests of both countries should we get into combat again. I would rather wait and look at the circumstances than make a judgment ahead of time. But I do not see this relationship as something that is fading, nor do I, by the way, think that it contradicts developments in our relations with the Gulf countries in any way. The Gulf countries -- in spite of people talking about rioting in the streets, in spite of al-Jazeera, and in spite of a number of other factors -- recognize in the long run that stability is in the interest of everyone and that someone like Saddam Husayn is a source of instability, not stability.

So, I see the relationship continuing on and remaining healthy, with bumps, as in a family.

Participant: Mr. Secretary, you talked about how grateful you are for the help of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, especially Kuwait. As a Kuwaiti, I think the least we can do is cooperate with our friends, not only out of the everlasting gratitude that we have for the American might that played a primary role in our liberation, but also because we are on the front line. The danger is there, and it lingers as long as Saddam Husayn is in power. Every time my plane lands at Kuwait International Airport, we see the Patriot missile launchers. Are they enough for, may God forbid, a chemical attack by Iraq's 150-kilometer missiles?

Also, do you see some sort of facilities being prepared in Kurdistan, especially at the Irbil airstrip in northern Iraq, prior to military engagement? And you did not mention the roles -- if any -- of Iran and Jordan, neighbors of Iraq.

Roche: Thank you very much for your comments. We recognize that when we have a large encampment, we become an attractive target for some of these types of weapons. We also recognize that our host countries, therefore, become subject to attack. You would not want me to comment about Irbil airport or the missile systems. Suffice it to say that we are very aware of our mutual interest in ensuring that Kuwait remains in a productive and healthy position.

Iran, clearly, will not do anything for us with regard to Iraq. Jordan is always a tough case. It has often been said that Jordan is "between Iraq and a hard place." They have a difficult time and I would not want to say anything publicly about our dealings with Jordan, other than to note that, whenever possible, they have been as helpful as they can be.

The notion of gratitude has long passed. There is no reason for Kuwait to have gratitude toward the United States. We are now in a position in which the sovereign state of Kuwait and the United States have common interests. I am quite proud that we serve those common interests together. So, my sense is that this is a terrific relationship, but we recognize that we are a magnet for certain things that we have to watch.

Participant: How important is it to get a new United Nations (UN) resolution to keep U.S. allies in the GCC on our side for what we all expect to happen?

Roche: If I am not mistaken, the president, or at least Secretary of State Colin Powell, has made the point that this step would be especially important. It is always helpful when there is a UN backdrop or support structure to any

particular coalition. The president has made clear that there can either be a United Nations or a League of Nations. My sense is that, having stirred them up, he will press this agenda with Colin Powell's help and we will have such a measure.

But if we do not, the president has made clear that we will act as a coalition. If we are provoked and the coalition does not act, we will act as a single country. But he is now looking at all of his options. Clearly, the UN resolution would be a terrific thing to have, and we will strive politely to get it. That is why we are patiently going through the current period with inspectors, and the inspectors recognize that they are not going in until there are some good rules and regulations. So, working with the UN is clearly in our interest.

Participant: Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the president have made it clear to Israel that they would prefer the Israelis not get involved in the event of a conflict with Iraq. Yet, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon has made it equally clear that, should Israel be attacked with weapons of mass destruction, he reserves the right to respond. Such a situation would place American and Israeli aircraft over Iraqi skies at about the same time. I would like to know whether you believe there are sufficient deconfliction mechanisms: identification, friend, or foe (IFF) technologies, as well as agreements, discussions, and understandings between the United States and Israel to prevent fratricide between our respective aircraft.

Roche: I am aware of the secretary making a comment in a hearing that he thought it would be best if Israel stayed out. I am not sure I am aware of the president saying it. But the point is the same. My own view -- and I think the secretary would agree -- is that it depends on the circumstances. We have enough ability to work closely with the government of Israel and we have people working with us today who did the same last time. Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz were on the phone with Moshe Arens twelve years ago. We know how to work together.

Prime Minister Sharon said exactly the right thing. Of course Israel reserves the right to respond. It is a sovereign state. But what happens will depend on the circumstances, and there will be discussion of what is in the best interest of both countries. It may be for Israel to engage. It may be for Israel not to engage. Generally, the sense is, "Let us take the heat, let us go in and do it," but we also recognize the patience that the state of Israel has exhibited in the past. I cannot speak for the State Department, but this is my own sense.

The easier part of your question is the technical part. We know how to prevent fratricide, and I am not worried. Remember, the international language of airplanes is English. Israel, for the most part, flies American airplanes and flies them quite well.

Participant: You referred to stability after an invasion of Iraq. There is concern about great instability within Iraq, and I have heard it said that the United States may have to commit, for a period of perhaps five years, at least 100,000 troops on the ground there. Is that a possibility? How will that fly in the region and in American society?

Also, is war inevitable? Are we on that trajectory? Has the president decided that, irrespective of what the UN decides to do and irrespective of what inspectors find, we are going in?

Roche: Let me answer your questions in reverse. I do not sit down with the president and chat about this. I am responsible for making sure he has an air force when he wants it. But I do not think anything is inevitable. The president has made the point that ours is not a country that likes going to war. Oftentimes we in the military find ourselves being criticized by members of the press because we appear to be so antiwar. It is one thing to talk about war in the abstract. It is another thing to have lived it, and war is not fun. Therefore, it should be done only when we have to. If the president so orders, we will. But I do not think it is inevitable. I believe that the diplomatic chess the president is playing right now is exactly what he ought to be doing. I am a Democrat working in a Republican administration, but I think this president is doing exactly the right thing.

With regard to the first question, the hope is that we will not need to have 100,000 troops. The hope is to have a

transitional government come into being that can govern in Iraq without territorial claims against Kuwait or other countries. If we must have forces there for a period of time, we would strive to do what we have done in Afghanistan, which is to turn to the Europeans and others for help. Countries like Turkey, Germany, France, Britain, and Canada have done a lot in Afghanistan.

It should be easier in Iraq, assuming a U.S. attack were to occur, because it is much more of a middle-class society and therefore has infrastructure. It is one of the few countries in the Middle East that has a lot of water. It has the second-largest oil reserves in the world and an educated middle class. Iraq is a country that respects the rights of women in interesting ways and makes use of women's talents. So it is a more advanced country, and one would hope it could take care of itself once it is rid of the evil from Tikrit. That is my personal desire.

Participant: You have given us an idea of how complex warfare is today. If we resort to force with a coalition, how difficult is it to coordinate between air and ground forces of various nationalities? Some say that although a coalition would be welcome politically, it makes it that much more difficult militarily.

Roche: The traditional term for this kind of coordination is "interoperability." We now recognize that in this era of information technology, the question is whether you can hook up into the network. When I was at the combined air-operations center at Prince Sultan Air Base, there were Saudi officers, British officers, Italian officers, Canadians, and a few others. The Saudis are now letting in more coalition partners. If you go down to MacDill Air Force Base, there is a briefing every day in which eighteen countries are represented.

We can link together. When I flew from Jacobabad to Oman, I went on the net just to listen, since my naval experience was in air warfare during Vietnam. It was a pleasure to recognize that a British AWACS was controlling the net -- it had the duty that night -- and all the aircraft were checking in, including U.S. Navy and Marine Corps aircraft. It was the first time in conflict that the U.S. Marine Corps had its aircraft under a single command other than the Marines themselves. There were also Italian and British aircraft.

These air forces know how to do interoperability. It is difficult. Information technology makes it a little bit easier, and working together in a combined operating center makes it much easier. So, we have made great strides.

Participant: Mr. Secretary, one thing that has bothered me is the release of a lot of our planning and battle strategies to the press. How damaging is this to the Air Force, and why can't we get this under control?

Roche: You sound like Secretary Rumsfeld. There are times you sit back and say, "If we were doing this purposely, we would be quite clever." The other day, when I was in Wyoming at the deactivation of the MX missile, the undersecretary of the Air Force was with me. He had worked at Martin Marietta for years on the MX, and he said that one of the most interesting things about this missile development program was how deliberately obvious we always were.

We wanted the Soviet Union to know that we had developed the single most accurate ballistic missile ever designed, that we had fielded it, and that it could fly ten warheads and they could all go "boom" within a few feet of where they were supposed to. We were not hiding it. So, one could almost think that all these leaks, if they were consciously done, would make us ecstatic. They are not consciously done and it represents something that is wrong with how we do business. Anything that could endanger the lives of our troops or our allies is wrong.

I have striven mightily to remove the famous "unnamed Air Force official" from the news. By the way, you do it the only way you can. You cannot hunt down a leak. General Jumper and I put out a tape to every general officer and field-grade officer that said, "You have an obligation to your country. You took an oath of allegiance. Your obligation is not to share classified material."

Secretary Rumsfeld repeatedly gets upset about this. We had lunch together a couple of weeks ago and I said to him,

"This sure is terrific. I don't have to attend a bunch of meetings. I can just read about them the next day." There is something wrong with how we operate. Maybe it is a holdover from the 1990s, but it is not right. Some things should be kept quiet.

Ross: Unfortunately, Jim, it precedes even the 1990s.

Participant: You said earlier that you didn't do a very good job eleven years ago in hunting down the Scuds in Iraq. What makes you believe that this time around your performance will be better?

Roche: I do not want to go into detail for obvious reasons, but I have tried not to buy more bombers. Bombers are wonderful against fixed targets, and we can blow up all fixed targets in most countries five times over. The tough things are movers. These are not just Scuds -- they are mobile missiles. These are surface-to-surface, shortrange rockets on the backs of flatbed trucks, cruise missiles, and command posts. In fact, surface-to-air missile defenses are becoming increasingly mobile. Things that move are difficult to hunt and difficult to identify when they are moving.

And, remember, there is the Kosovo experience. Something can look just like an air defense system on a truck but it can really be a tractor pulling a flatbed full of refugees. It is a hunting and killing problem. I do not know if I want to say that we will be a lot better at it this time. I can tell you we have worried about the problem a lot more. We have some thoughts that you would not want me to go into. Whether we will be as successful as we would like to be, I do not know. This is something I work on every day. I have said in the past that one of the most fascinating things about that part of the world is that the Israelis, by nature of how things change, always put in place the defense for the prior decade. But the opponent sees that and asymmetrically tries a different approach. We face the same thing. No one will come at us with big manned bombers. We have made that just a foolish waste of money. Increasingly, we will be able to handle ballistic missiles coming at us, because they behave according to Newtonian physics.

In a paper that Ze'ev Schiff and I once presented in Israel with The Washington Institute, we argued that, in the long run, cruise missiles would be the most dangerous, because they can come at you at any angle. You can program them to come in from behind, from the side, and so on; they tend to be launched from relatively small but mobile platforms; and they do not behave according to Newtonian physics. They are maneuverable.

So, my sense is that this problem will be part of modern warfare well into the future. I have also argued, as has the secretary of defense, that someday, pray God not, we will have to think in the United States about something launched from a freighter off our coastline. ❖

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