U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS IN IRAQ: PLANNING, COMBAT, AND OCCUPATION

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FOREWORD

Even before Operation IRAQI FREEDOM began, the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) published a monograph about planning for transition to Phase IV operations. Now that we are 3 years beyond the start of that transition, the debate continues about the adequacy of planning for and proficiency of execution of Phase IV operations in Iraq and elsewhere. The debate most often surrounds three issues concerning this final operational phase: the relationship to preceding operational phases; responsibility for planning; and responsibility for execution. Inevitably, the interagency process becomes central to addressing each of these issues.

A colloquium on "U.S. Military Operations in Iraq: Planning, Combat, and Occupation" was held November 2, 2005, and was co-sponsored by SSI and Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). An exceptional combination of scholars, practitioners, and policymakers examined persistent issues central to the important and ongoing debate surrounding the colloquium theme. Much of the debate to this point has been an unproductive effort to assign blame for shortcomings in the planning for and execution of stability and reconstruction operations; participants in the colloquium moved beyond finding fault, began analyzing the central issues, and addressed solutions.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to provide this summary of the colloquium presentations, along with a distillation of conference findings and conclusions.

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Introduction.

On November 2, 2005, a colloquium entitled "U.S. Military Operations in Iraq: Planning, Combat and Occupation" was held in Washington, DC, at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). The Merrill Center of the Johns Hopkins University organized the colloquium and co-sponsored it with the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College. Its objective was to gain insight from the apparent successes and problems of different phases of the 2003-05 Iraqi war. Distinguished military officers, national security scholars, leading authors, and journalists gave presentations.

Forging consensus was not a goal of the colloquium, but panelists' presentations and participants' comments and questions appeared generally to support the following significant conclusions:

- Military lessons, even for Phase III, of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM remain subject to considerable controversy, and what we now see as conventional wisdom and insight will be increasingly challenged.

- Appraisals of the importance of speed in military operations may be subject to considerable revisions as the study of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM continues.

- The transition from Phase III to Phase IV of military operations is particularly challenging. Considerable effort may be needed to address aspects of Phase IV while Phase III is still being waged.

- All phases of future wars need to be coordinated to work towards the same end.

- Serious analysis must be given to the interplay between force protection and accomplishing stabilization requirements. With regard to Iraq, some commentators argued that force protection should not be a priority at the expense of winning, and protecting the Iraqis.

The remainder of this colloquium report is devoted to detailed summary and analysis of presentations from each panel, comments and questions from attendees, and keynote speaker's comments.

Opening Remarks.

Professor Douglas Lovelace of the Strategic Studies Institute offered brief opening remarks, followed by remarks by Professor Elliot Cohen of the Merrill Center. In his remarks, Professor Lovelace noted several different schools of thought about current difficulties in Iraq. He stated that one school projected that the intervention was manageable and could have been effective, but that it was characterized by flawed planning. A second school of thought suggested that many problems that the United States faces in Iraq were inevitable, and more effective planning would probably not have done much to alleviate them. The final judgment is for future historians to provide, but under current circumstances, pre-war and wartime planning must be continuously reevaluated for historical lessons. He also noted that, under the current circumstances, it is not only imprudent but also insensitive to declare the policies to be a failure while troops are still in the field attempting to enforce them. To the greatest extent possible, finding solutions to present problems is a more pressing challenge than assessing blame.

Professor Lovelace suggested that the intersection between politics and operational planning was an unseemly, although perhaps inevitable, issue. He cautioned about the overuse of analogies in the planning process, noting that many observers have their own favorite analogies which are compelling to them but do not always reflect the reality of new situations. In conclusion, he noted that future planners would be well-served by listening to doubters and pessimists and not relying too readily on views that stress how quick and easy an operation may be. He also stated that every effort must be expended to avoid groupthink and the politicization of intelligence. Professor Lovelace suggested that a key lesson was to seek a broad range of expertise when deciding how best to proceed.

In his opening remarks, Professor Cohen introduced the problem of perception in assessing military operations in Iraq. He argued that it is difficult to maintain perspective because the war is yet unfinished

and deeply contentious. Therefore, Professor Cohen attempted to project 30 to 40 years to assess how military historians might view the war in hindsight. He discussed possible disputes over when the Iraq War really began. One school of thought, he suggested, would look to the start of major combat operations in 2003. Another interpretation might focus on the Bush administration and its policies immediately after September 11, 2001 (9/11). And yet another interpretation will look back to the 1991 Gulf War and before, to the rise of Saddam Hussein's Iraq as a gathering threat to American interests.

Professor Cohen also argued that combat operations and planning for the war will be viewed somewhat differently in the future. He said that there will be more focus on the Iraqi side of the question, especially in light of the vast amount of documentation that has been recovered, but not yet critically analyzed by military historians. To date, he argued that much of the analysis has been solipsistic, seeing the issue only from the American side. Professor Cohen further predicted that future military historians will seek to place the intense combat phase of the war in a larger framework of conventional war. They will focus more on broader themes such as the relationships between quality and quantity on the battlefield, rather than the day-to-day issues that are so closely monitored. He also suggested that more analysis on such issues as network command systems, the changing nature of the front line in warfare, and views about the relationship between air and ground forces will take place.

Professor Cohen forecasted another trend that will emerge in future military history: the debate about the influence of U.S. military institutions versus the influence of personalities. On the institutions side, many will analyze the U.S. military and whether or not it performed well in counterinsurgency operations, or whether there were differences in the ways the various services performed in these functions. On the personalities side, future historians might focus on the influence of such individuals as the combatant command (COCOM) generals, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Administrator L. Paul Bremer, or current Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad. Professor Cohen also suggested that a much different view about watershed events in OIF will probably emerge. Currently, he argued, the administration has focused on elections and day-to-day matters that may receive significantly less attention in the future.

Professor Cohen also hoped that historians will draw parallels to previous wars in order to put the conflict in context. He argued that too many of the historical analogies and parallels have been polemical and have not offered a constructive framework. A final difference that Professor Cohen discussed, perhaps the most significant, is that future historians will know how the war turns out. Because there is a great amount of uncertainty regarding how the war might finish, our analysis is greatly restricted. Because the consequences of the war are yet unknown, Professor Cohen closed by remarking that we need a certain amount of modesty in predicting the outcome.

Defeating the Iraqi Regime.

The first presenter focused on what was referred to as "American Anabasis: The United States Army's Entry into War in Iraq." The speaker prefaced his remarks by mentioning ancient Greek history as recounted by Xenophon, on the subject of "Anabasis," where ancient Greek soldiers faced deep difficulties in waging a war in Mesopotamia. He drew parallels between that war and OIF. Both wars were expeditionary. Both wars had limited political and military objectives that became protracted over time. And finally, both wars were tactical victories that later turned problematic.

A great deal of this presentation was based on information drawn from a comprehensive understanding of the OIF Study Group (OIFSG), which, under the leadership of General Eric Shinseki, generated an early historiography of Phases I-III(b) of the war. The goal of the OIFSG was to produce a "lessons learned" volume drawn mainly from combat interviews. The speaker stated that OIF is the first coherent campaign since the Korean War. He also drew several other parallels to Korea—for example, the use of Army National Guard in combat operations. The presenter included other watersheds in OIF, such as the high levels of special operations force and general purpose force integration in such missions as protecting the oil fields. He further discussed new levels of air and ground force coordination and the prominence of net-centric warfare. While this work considered many recent phenomena of military operations, it also included continuities of warfare that OIF displayed. OIF demonstrated the continued centrality of ground operations, as well

as the physical demand of these operations. The presenter also noted the difficulties of stabilizing population centers.

The arguments included in this presentation suggested that many important lessons were gathered in the 12-year interregnum between Operation DESERT STORM and OIF, and that these lessons helped the U.S. military to build the sort of data base and infrastructure to achieve rapid tactical victory in Phases I-III. The presenter argued that much was done in the interregnum to change mindsets about the contemporary operating environment by going back to pre-Cold War models that emphasized dynamic and asymmetric elements of warfare. However, he also noted that, while the lessons were gathered, they were not learned fully and have contributed to problems in planning for insurgency operations. The speaker argued that a chasm exists between getting things right in planning and doctrine and getting things right on the ground. One such problem that he discussed is the blurred transition from Phase III to Phase IV. It was not only unclear when this would occur, the speaker argued, but it was also unclear who would lead the transition. Not only were there problems on the ground, but also significant problems in the interagency process tasked with planning for the transition.

The first speaker also highlighted certain areas where lessons were gathered and learned "on the fly" rather successfully. He pointed to the lessons drawn from the "darkest of days"—March 24, 2003—in which there was an incident of fratricide. Operators were able to quickly implement changes that prevented similar occurrences. In addition, he discussed lessons that were quickly incorporated about such things as employing simultaneous attacks to seize the initiative. He also suggested that the main area which OIFSG identified as needing improvement is how to operationalize noncontinuous and nonlinear formats into force structure and doctrine. He said that transformation is an ongoing issue, but that there is a lot to learn about force structure in these operating environments. The speaker closed by posing what he feels to be the biggest challenge to military planners: that in OIF, the military objective and the political objective did not coincide. This created significant tensions between plans and realities, and this has contributed to some of the post-Phase III difficulties that have emerged.

The second panelist's presentation was entitled "Speed Kills? Reassessing the Role of Speed, Precision, and Situational Awareness

in the Fall of Saddam." He argued that many analysts believe that superior speed, precision, and situational awareness allowed the U.S. military to achieve such a quick tactical victory in OIF. He also suggested that these elements led to a relatively low casualty rate for Coalition forces and allowed the Coalition to prevent an Iraqi policy of "scorched earth." However, he cautioned that the strengths of the U.S. military do not explain sufficiently the rapid victory in major combat operations in Iraq. Rather, he suggested that Iraqi military ineffectiveness and poor decisionmaking largely explain U.S. tactical success, and that we should be cautious about extrapolating this success in military planning for future opponents.

He assessed the argument that speed prevented the Iraqis from massing fire on Coalition forces and preempted a policy of scorched earth. The argument made here is that the Iraqis faced standoff precision strike and that our speed demoralized Iraqi defenders. He also pointed out that speed did not take the will to fight out of most Iraqi soldiers, evidenced by the fact that resistance continued long into combat operations. Furthermore, speed could not eliminate the fact that paramilitary forces, with 10,000 troops predeployed in Baghdad, defended all critical Iraqi cities. Regardless of the speed of advance, we eventually would have to wage urban warfare and occupy cities to achieve our objective.

He indicated that, while we were often able to outmaneuver Iraqi forces, speed did not deny them the opportunity to mass fire. He mentioned the instance of one "thunder run" in which every Coalition vehicle in the brigade was hit, not uncommon during major combat operations. He also noted that it was not speed that prevented Iraqis from sabotaging the oil fields, but rather decisions taken by Saddam Hussein. In the Rumaylah oil fields, only 22 of the 250 wells were rigged for demolition, and only 9 were detonated. Furthermore, those prepared for demolition were in the very south and appear to have been rigged for visibility to Coalition forces entering from Kuwait. In addition, the key bottlenecks in the Rumaylah oil fields were not prepared for demolition at all. In the Kirkuk oil fields in the north, Iraqis controlled the oil wells deep into the war. These fields, it was argued, appeared to be protected against destruction rather than rigged for demolition.

So, rather than speed preventing the Iraqis from massing fire and pursuing a scorched earth policy, the speaker suggested that Iraqi

weaknesses and decisions also mattered. Our superior technology allowed Coalition forces to punish Iraqi tactical and strategic mistakes with severity. He argued that poor positions, tactics, and marksmanship explain Iraqi forces' inability to survive against U.S. firepower. He also showed pictures in which rural Iraqi tank positions provided neither cover nor concealment, thus leaving them susceptible to airpower. In addition, he argued that poor exploitation of urban terrain by Iraqi forces contributed to the relatively low casualty levels faced in urban warfare. Rather than prepare the interior of buildings for warfare, Iraqis fought outdoors in the cities, thus forfeiting a principal advantage of asymmetric tactics in urban environments.

This speaker concluded by emphasizing three main points. First, U.S. military strengths do not sufficiently explain our quick success in early combat operations in OIF. Second, the low cost in terms of lives and resources was shaped by Iraqi weakness and the resulting decisions they made. Finally, he argued that a better opponent would have the potential to make urban warfare much more costly to U.S. forces, and that it is dangerous to assume future opponents will share the weaknesses displayed by Iraqi forces.

The next presentation was entitled "Air Power and the 'Afghan Model'." This speaker opened by explaining what he terms the "Afghan Model," which he defines as U.S. Special Operations Forces employed alongside local indigenous forces, backed by U.S. airpower. This model was successful in deposing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and the speaker argued that we used this model in northern Iraq, where 13 of the 23 Iraqi divisions were positioned. He argued that if the Afghan Model can be employed, it has three distinct advantages. First, fewer forces are needed to achieve the military objective. Second, there is less U.S. "footprint" and therefore less resulting local anti-Americanism. A final advantage, he suggested, is that it presents an attractive option given that U.S. troops are generally overextended.

He then discussed a military technology revolution in airpower, led primarily by the rise in precision bombing capabilities. Today, targets are more easily located and more easily hit, which he stressed means that old models of airpower and lessons learned no longer apply. However, he also emphasized that technological change is

not the final say in airpower. For example, NATO tried to fight a war in Kosovo without ground forces. One of the primary lessons learned is that if you cannot control the ground, it is very difficult to achieve your military objectives. Still, under certain conditions, the Afghan Model can lead to tremendous success while only employing limited ground forces. For example, hundreds of miles were taken in Afghanistan with very small numbers of U.S. Special Forces on the ground.

The presenter then discussed how the Afghan Model works. First, he argued that precision close air support (CAS) plays a much different role than previously. Precision CAS now has the ability to be much more destructive and significantly control the battlefield. However, the presentation included a warning that CAS capabilities are not all that is needed. For the Afghan Model to work, there is a high premium on command and control (C2) capabilities, and a significant amount of skill must accompany the advanced technology. A second element needed for the model to succeed is that airpower must disrupt enemy communications and force them to disperse throughout the theater before ground operations begin. This allows ground forces to seize the initiative without significant numbers of troops.

This presenter also evaluated the record of the Afghan Model in northern Iraq. He noted that Saddam had massed many of his forces in the north to prepare for an invasion through Turkey, but U.S. forces were denied access by the Turkish government. However, Coalition forces hoped to hold Iraqi forces in the north along the Green Line to prevent them from advancing to the south. The United States, therefore, put 50 Special Operations teams (600 personnel) in the north alongside Kurdish Peshmerga forces backed by airpower, to match 120,000 Iraqi forces. The presenter argued that the Afghan Model was successful in northern Iraq, citing the disruption of Iraqi C2 structure. For example, Saddam had been so far removed from the operational loop that he was still sending troops north when Baghdad fell. In addition, even though we were greatly outmatched in numbers in the north and there were difficulties with projecting airpower in the region, Iraqis were still prevented from massing firepower.

The presenter also assessed the advantage we maintained through friendly relations with the Iraqi Kurds. He additionally suggested

that one significant advantage of the Afghan Model is that allies are much easier to acquire when the United States offers precision CAS, which has huge implications in other countries. Furthermore, he suggested that this model also presents another advantage in that it means indigenous forces will largely bear the burden of their own liberation. In conclusion, the presenter noted some cautions and limitations to be considered in the Afghan Model. These included an assessment that the Iraqi Kurds may now be unable to dispense with U.S. support. Furthermore, he noted that serious mistakes were made in Afghanistan and Iraq after the successful employment of the Afghan Model. Rather than continue to work through local forces, the United States injected high troop levels in these areas after the initial routing of enemy forces. He warned that this type of action only serves to increase the U.S. footprint in the area and tends to alienate local populations.

During the question and answer period, participants raised many important issues about the major combat operations phase and the transition into Phase IV operations. One questioned the extent to which the planning for Phase III led to the problems encountered in Phase IV. One speaker responded that the difficulties faced in Phase IV arose from the fact that we had a military objective that did not match the political objective. Where the major combat operations phases were successful in deposing Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athist regime, the political objective of democratization and occupation should have required a much larger force, possibly as high as 700,000 troops. A second speaker touched upon the issue but also mentioned that, at some point, there is a diminishing marginal utility to increasing troop levels. He argued that this would not solve the problems of sectarian conflict that plague Iraq today.

Another participant questioned whether the Afghan Model would be useful in other scenarios. One panelist discussed the implications of this approach on the Korean peninsula, suggesting that it appears to be one case in which the model might work. It has one of the basic ingredients for the Afghan Model to succeed—an indigenous ally with sufficient military competence, South Korea. However, he also cautioned that, while this approach appears useful, a war on the Korean peninsula is full of unknowns that cannot be predicted. One of the final questions had to do with whether the Afghan Model is

risky in practice because of the need to rely on indigenous forces that might not always share American interests. A panelist suggested that this is a relative question—risky compared to what? The Afghan Model was contrasted with what was called the "Roman Model," which involves overwhelming force to pacify and occupy a territory. This model was presented as inevitably involving high American casualties.

Reconstructing Iraq.

The second panel, entitled "Reconstructing Iraq," began with a presentation entitled "Too Much Phase IV Planning: Coordinating the Theater Plans." This presenter suggested that the problem with Phase IV involved too many plans. Support for this analysis involved examining some key decision points, without placing blame. The three key points were Afghanistan, the Central Command (CENTCOM) planning, and the creation of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). The analysis started with Afghanistan, because the roots of some of the later problems seen in Iraq can be located there. In Afghanistan, there was no Phase IV, and very little of the campaign planning we are used to. Soldiers needed to relearn how to fight, because the manner of fighting did not follow any of our typical ways of combat. It was a very different way of doing things, and not the way it is taught in our war colleges. For example, there were never enough headquarters, not enough people in the headquarters, and too many of those assigned to the headquarters were undertrained.

The presenter noted that there was a scramble to create a Phase IV plan in Afghanistan. It was done initially from a top down approach and modified to employ provisional reconstruction teams. The planners then had to compete with Iraq for resources. International organizations and nongovernment organizations (NGOS) became disillusioned by the chaos in Afghanistan, creating a reticence to provide aid in Iraq. Turning to the issue of CENTCOM planning, the presenter suggested that initial guidance indicated that the Department of State or the exile government would control Phase IV. This guidance changed in June 2002 to the concept of a military government. CENTCOM did most of its planning, focusing on

humanitarian affairs and stabilization. Everyone involved assumed someone else would do reconstruction. Headquarters were short-handed and continually looked for additional support.

The evolution of the planning process, according to this presenter, returned it to an unprecedented centralized control of reconstruction in the hands of the Department of Defense (DoD), and in the summer of 2002, stabilization planning began. It was a sophisticated planning process. There was an awareness of the need for Phase IV, yet no awareness of who would have long-term control of Phase IV. Initially it was to be done by the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), but with no follow-on organization named. By October 2002, leaders suggested that a military occupation was needed. Planners created and kept a task list of what was needed to rebuild Iraq. Implied, but not stated, was that the tasks would need many people, much time, and significant resources. The United States faced combat shortages, but more importantly, more troops were needed to win the peace than to win the war.

Moreover, the presenter noted that Phase III and Phase IV were not distinct; they overlapped and merged. The ideal vision of Phase IV would be a hand-off from the military, to the civilians, to some indigenous organization. However, in reality, there was a hand-off from the military to the indigenous organizations, because there is no one to fill the civilian gap. Additionally, the creation of ORHA came too late and led to more confusion and incoherence because of a dispute about the chain of command. ORHA was poorly coordinated with CFLCC. The reconstruction plan assumed that more troops would continue to come after the war was over, but this did not happen. Units were leaving the theater, thinning coverage because there were no reserves. Throughout Iraq, divisions were short of units where they needed them.

The presenter suggested that the disbanding of the Iraqi Army in May 2003 was one of the key post-war mistakes. CENTCOM successfully encouraged soldiers to leave, but expected to recall them within 2 weeks. However, that never happened. The army was disbanded without pay and with their guns. The way the announcement was made impugned the honor of the soldiers, something that was very important to them, virtually ensuring there would be problems afterwards. The presenter concluded

with an emphasis on two points. First, organizational rotations are not necessarily better than individual replacements at the higher levels. The old units that left took with them the lessons they had learned, leaving the new units to start the learning process again. Additionally, the primary goal of CENTCOM and CFLCC was to prevent an insurgency, not defeat one. The bombing of the United Nations (UN) headquarters in August 2003 was a serious sign that the United States and coalition forces had failed in this goal. The decreased UN presence created a ripple effect throughout Iraq, decreasing the number of international organizations throughout the country.

The next presentation was entitled "Phase IV Perspective from the Pentagon and the Palace." The speaker began with a disclaimer that his presentation involved his views alone, and did not represent the opinions of the U.S. Government. His basic premise was that DoD and the Army need to be more concerned with stability operations. The American way of war sees a distinction between war and peace. In Iraq, the United States was after a "better state of peace." Instead, we need to look at the war continuing into the peace. There is a blurred line between these two elements. The presenter provided two perspectives on Iraq. The first was a policy perspective, and the second was a tactical and strategic perspective. There were assumptions about how operations forces would be working, and how the war planning could be handled. The Army War Plans Division sought to determine if these assumptions were correct. They discussed who would provide stability in the post-conflict, and how they would do this. They looked at many possibilities of who would be in charge: the Army, the coalition, NGOs, the Iraqis, or international organizations. If these organizations did not have enough resources, it was obvious the Army would pick up the slack of needed personnel.

In dealing with the reconstruction, planners determined the United States would not need additional personnel for a number of reasons. First, there was to be heavy reliance on independent contractors before the war even began. Second, the planners expected to have a new Iraqi Army constructed from the "surrendering" army; that they would collect, vet, and put them to work. However, the soldiers were not surrendering, they were just leaving, and planners

realized their numbers would not be sufficient. An alternative plan was needed. The Phase IV coalition assumptions about the number of coalition partners who would come on board for reconstruction and about what the security situation would be were incorrect. Both assumptions needed to change.

The speaker also noted some of his tactical experience in Northern Iraq. This involved work with the 101st Airborne in an area that included four provinces containing a quarter of the Iraqi population (6 million total, including 3 million Kurds), and included heavily militarized areas. In the absence of a detailed plan, commanders had to decide how to handle their individual situations in Iraq. The division accomplished tasks that were usually considered civil affairs work because public administration units were very small teams. In the North, they focused on civil affairs: food, fuel, shelter, getting money to people, deciphering the economy, fixing the infrastructure, getting students back to school, establishing security, and debathification and dissolution of the Baathist party (i.e., the need for reconciliation). The 101st was well-structured with the number of soldiers, but even though they were well-positioned, they faced security challenges.

The presenter concluded with two key points. The first point involved the "outbox" mentality that is usually part of the reconstruction plan—planning to pass off the reconstruction effort to the next organization. It is essential to change the "outbox" mentality because, frequently, there will be no such organization to take charge. The U.S. Army is the usual answer as to who is responsible for reconstruction. The presentation indicated that this is being accepted and integrated into the doctrine and education. However, a capacity issue remains about who can handle reconstruction and how that should be integrated into military planning. Finally, the presenter discussed the interaction part of reconstruction. Reconstruction needs to be dealt with in terms of the complexity of the entire situation. From the outset, planners need to address what the policy aims are, and how willing the local population will be to accepting those aims. In Iraq, the United States demanded a high price of the Iraqis in order to change their society. These conditions made each task very difficult.

The next presentation concerned "Military and Civilian Interaction in Postwar Iraq." It focused on the interactions between the military and civilian authorities, which were problematic at best. The presenter

asserted that the roots for this can be found in the pre-war process. On November 28, 2001, the planning process for Iraq began, but there was no interaction with civilians in the initial process. DoD assumed the Department of State would deal with the reconstruction, but the Department of State was not informed of this until later. By August 2002, the planning was almost complete, but with little consideration of the post-conflict (Phase IV). Everyone assumed someone else would take care of the post-conflict reconstruction. By this time, the interagency structure had discussed reconstruction only in terms of humanitarian relief. Humanitarian relief was the focus because of two basic pre-war assumptions that caused planners to focus on a best-case scenario planning strategy. First, they believed that the United States would be greeted as liberators, not occupiers, and they had no expectation of an insurgency. Second, they assumed the Iraqi government and infrastructure would continue to function without Saddam.

DoD established itself as the lead post-war agency to ensure unity of command under the Secretary of Defense. There was a belief that the Department of State could not plan the reconstruction or carry it out well. This assumption was made during the beginning of the post-war period, but DoD itself did not have any experience with reconstruction. Eight weeks before combat began, ORHA was created to stabilize the post-war situation. Initially, most of the personnel in ORHA were military, not civilian. However, ORHA was not permitted to enter Iraq until the military command felt that it was safe/secure/stable enough for the civilian authority. This highlighted a disconnect between the civil and military authorities — a fundamental problem that continued under the CPA.

The CPA was an explicit occupying organization that inherited the situation. Tensions worsened between the military and civilian organizations, largely due to problems between the heads of the different command structures. The CPA was created to complete a job unforeseen in the planning process. It took a long time to set up; it had many problems with staffing and turnover; and, initially, it was radically understaffed. In the process, military forces had to deal with the problems in Iraq, being continually told that the CPA would deal with governance. The Army and Marine divisions waited for the CPA, but after a time, started actively to do reconstruction on their

own. Then, realizing the security situation needed improvement, they started working locally on security. In this power vacuum, the military commanders also started to work on governance. They slowly accrued the responsibility for reconstruction because no one else was taking care of these issues. This created a problem when the CPA finally arrived on the scene, because of the implementation of different policies in different areas.

The presenter noted that three lessons that can be learned from the Iraq situation. The first was a general lesson: Post-war planning cannot be separated from war planning. All phases of the war need to be coordinated to work towards the same end. The second was a lesson for the military: Ground forces need to be prepared to take on stabilization and reconstruction tasks after the conflict. Only they are able to do it in the immediate aftermath of the conflict because of the power vacuum. They must be given the proper training to handle these tasks. The final lesson was for the civilian authorities: Effective civilian interagency preparations and planning are needed to increase the capacity to handle reconstruction roles.

Countering the Insurgency.

The third panel of the day began with a presentation entitled "Leaving in Order to Win?" This presenter discussed the prospect of U.S. forces leaving Iraq, and whether, as some might say, the United States should "leave in order to win." The speaker asserted that the recently popularized phrase presumes that the U.S. presence in Iraq is the principal cause of violence, and that as long as U.S. forces perform the security role there, no urgency will exist on the part of the Iraqis to assume responsibility. The speaker asserted that neither of these points are truly valid, and that it is wishful thinking to assume that violence in Iraq will subside enough for a 2006 withdrawal.

Similarly, he argued, the term "exit strategy" was criticized as unhealthy because it implies that it is more important to *leave* than to *succeed*. He stated that, to win, the United States must achieve the objective of a democratic, stable, peaceful Iraq. The presenter emphasized the importance of remembering that no effort at enforced democratization has been successful within a period of less than 7 years, and that average counterinsurgencies last 9 years. He also highlighted the importance of understanding the enemy.

The insurgency is made up of 90 percent Iraqi Sunnis, driven by a concept of "good" resistance and the optimism of having yet to be defeated by a vastly superior U.S. force. The other 10 percent of the insurgency is made of foreign fighters and criminal armies. In total, there are around 20-30K insurgent combatants; if rough math holds, this indicates the presence of at least 5,000 active supporters and a large number of passive sympathizers. The presenter also warned that observers should not view the enemy as a homogeneous force. Such a view prevents a full understanding of different elements of the insurgency, and hinders the effectiveness of plans to change the social environment and eliminate the conditions that fuel the insurgency.

Security in Iraq, while improved, continues to rely on U.S. leadership. The speaker predicted that coalition leadership will be required for at least 1-2 years before Iraqis can take the lead. Although Iraqi forces play an increasing role in security—particularly in Najaf, Karbala, and parts of Baghdad—the most important goal is in quality and not simply quantity of forces. Some field commanders estimate that Iraqis will be able to assume responsibility for security by the end of 2007. A key goal is to train and equip the Iraqis, and to help them develop a military infrastructure to handle logistics, maintenance, etc. Until the Iraqi police and army can perform duties throughout the country, however, the line of defense must be the American soldiers and Marines.

The speaker noted that there is an important distinction between a counterinsurgency and a military battle, and emphasized that a successful counterinsurgency must rebuild the government and the economy, meeting the political, social, and economic expectations of the Iraqis. An example of success is Fallujah, where a steady long-term accumulation of successes was essential to stabilization. The presenter recommended that a strong effort be made to reform and functionalize the Iraqi government ministries, such as those for health, education, and trade. He concluded by noting the variety of roles that Coalition soldiers had to take in Iraq, including those of government advisors. He quoted a common phrase that "If someone in uniform isn't doing it, it's not being done." Despite this, more effort—not less—is required from the United States and the U.S. military. In the end, "Leaving to Win" would be more accurately phrased, "Leaving is Losing."

The next presentation concerned "Civil Affairs Operations to Counter Insurgency." This presenter began with a discussion of the critical role of civil affairs soldiers in stabilizing Iraq. Although these soldiers do much different work than soldiers and Marines elsewhere in Iraq, the presenter argued that they are a key tool to facilitate progress and ultimately achieve victory in Iraq. Since leaving Iraq is contingent on forming a capable Iraqi state, he argued that the United States must assess its role over the next 3 years. An important aspect of this role is to show the Iraqis that the United States is in Iraq to help them and to work for them. To do this, the United States must develop an Iraqi civil affairs capability to show the Iraqis "what we're all about." In describing the success of operations at Fallujah, the speaker emphasized the importance of identifying cultural and economic leaders within Iraqi cities, and maintaining a dialogue and relationship with them during peace as well as during military operations. In Fallujah, U.S. forces maintained such a dialogue with the city leadership, even during the fight. The presenter attributed the success of the Fallujah operation to this communication, as well as the fact that U.S. forces permitted 90 percent of the citizens to evacuate.

He argued that a key goal must be to understand the true needs and wants of the Iraqis. They need a system of small business loans, electronic banking, and other systems that will improve their standard of living. Until this happens, they will support the insurgency. He described one of the successes of Fallujah being that in the immediate post-operation period when U.S. forces were able to help implement responsible governance in the city successfully. Thus commerce and street vendors were able to return quickly to the streets. An important need exists for national institutions in Iraq that can function well: no aid organizations ever came to Fallujah, nor did any independent electoral commission. The fear that prevents these organizations from engaging the Iraqis, he argued, must be reduced. Above all, the United States must help to build town councils, staff polling centers, and staff police forces, so we can show the Iraqis what we are doing for them. As the President has said, the United States must focus much effort—perhaps 50 percent—on countering ideological problems that lead to Iraqi resistance.

The presenter further argued that one of the current problems is that the Iraqis do not have a positive or common vision for the future

of their country. He contended that if the United States can focus on ideology and continue its economic programs, tacit support for the insurgency will disappear. As it stands now, however, the Iraqis do not trust the United States. A key goal must be to show the Iraqis that there is a different future, and that if they are involved and engaged, they will be able to determine their own future successfully.

The next panelist discussed "Suppressing the Shi'a Rebellion" in southern Iraq in spring 2004. The speaker, who had been an important participant in this operation, began by noting the importance of discussing the Shi'a uprising and the battle for Karbala: Although it was the smallest of the insurgent problems in Iraq, it is the only one of three insurgencies that has been resolved. His presentation provided insights into how the uprising was satisfactorily closed, and how the lessons learned can be applied to other counterinsurgency efforts.

The Shi'a rebellion in April 2004 was led by Muqtada al-Sadr, an extremely influential Shi'a cleric who has strongly opposed the Coalition presence in Iraq. Al-Sadr began gaining power in 2003, particularly among disaffected youth, and ultimately used this constituency as a power base to form a major stake following the Baathist collapse. The April 2004 clash developed after a prolonged buildup of tensions. Initially, the CPA did not have the courage to seize and disarm Sadr. However, in March 2004, Paul Bremer moved to close Sadr's newspaper, and his followers demonstrated against the United States. One month later, following a number of arrests (including that of Sadr's deputy, Mustafa al-Yacoubi), Sadr released a full insurgent effort in Karbala. The estimated 250 members of the Sadr militia (later estimated at 500) overran most of the city and were in control of the "old city," which included the Hussein and Abbas shrines. They attacked city hall and overran the Governor's building, the Baathist party headquarters, and other locations. The militia members began implementing traffic checkpoints (where they forced women to wear veils), and established an ammunition cache in an amusement park.

Coalition forces—including U.S., Polish, and Iraqi forces—were sent under the control of the Polish combat team. It took 2 weeks for these forces to restore order to Karbala. Key events included May 4, when forces cleared Governor's Street; May 5, when forces cleared the amusement park and confiscated a cache of insurgent explosives;

and May 6-9, when forces retook the new city of Karbala. U.S. forces then worked 5 weeks on reconstruction efforts. The composition of the Coalition forces for attack was unique: one of the few times in Iraq where a very diverse coalition of forces worked together at a tactical level. There was a joint unit of more than 50 percent Iraqi soldiers (possibly even 80-90 percent), and close bonds were formed with the Polish soldiers.

After discussing the operations, the presenter described the restoration of Karbala. This took $1.2 million of Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) aid money for civic action projects. The weapons buy-back program was very successful. Coalition forces were able to rebuild the police academy and restore the Iraqi army in Karbala. They created a joint coordination center in case of a future emergency, and restored the electrical grid in the city. Karbala is now considered under control. The presenter concluded by discussing the keys to success of operations in Karbala. Among others, these successes included the integration of Iraqi forces into military operations, the support of local citizens, a visible and robust police presence, and a swift infusion of money to local businesses.

In response to a question, one speaker with extensive experience in Iraq noted that the British are definitely prepared for counterinsurgency operations, and the Poles ("with whom I am hugely impressed") would be if their rules of engagement allowed. Although he did not work closely with the rest, his sense was that they are not prepared to do counterinsurgency operations. In answer to a question about the composition of the insurgency, one speaker answered that the militia in the Southern Shi'a area that is controlled by the British is still a problem. The British have been losing some control in that area, and the militia has been facilitating transfer of weapons across the border. Asked if the media was adequately reporting success in Iraq, the same speaker answered that the media tends to over-report incidents and under-report everything else. It often misses the real stories and should be better at covering longer-term issues. The Coalition should help by providing the right kind of data and stories.

Another questioner asked if we had the right number of troops in Iraq. A panelist referred the questioner to a RAND report that concludes the right ratio for counterinsurgency is 20 security personnel per 1000 citizens. That means a half-million forces are

needed in Iraq. However, the panelist noted that it is impossible to tune numbers so precisely. Suffice it to say that the more security forces are present, the sooner the insurgency can be suppressed.

Concluding Session.

In the final session, Dr. Cohen introduced the two commentators who would provide their thoughts on the day's panel discussions. He asked them to give their general thoughts, but also asked them specifically: Having reflected on events in Iraq (and bearing in mind normal expectations about performance of government and military organizations), how each commentator would evaluate the U.S. Government for:

a. planning major combat operations;

b. operations and counterinsurgency; and,

c. particular individuals or institutions.

The first commentator began by comparing operations against the insurgency in Algeria to the U.S. position in Iraq. Although he defined the good news as the fact that U.S. forces are adapting, the bad news is that we have wasted a year, spent billions of dollars, and alienated the Iraqi center. He argued that it will be difficult to reverse that. He stated that we are making military progress, but that he is concerned that the "political clock" will run out before we are ready. He framed the war as one of "containment": the first Iraq war began in 1991, and he considered that an 11-year containment campaign. He asserted that there will be another 10 years of containment to come. He argued that force protection should not be a priority at the expense of winning and protecting the Iraqis. Too many officers fail to emphasize these goals.

On grading of officials, the speaker gave a firm "F" to the war planning, and asserted that the war plan was perhaps the worst in American history. On grading of the counterinsurgency, he gave an "incomplete." He said that the U.S. military is correctly moving from anti-insurgency (killing insurgents) to counterinsurgency (a broader effort). He asserted that the focus must shift more toward protecting Iraqis: It is wrong that we are putting them in situations of greater vulnerability than our own soldiers.

He agreed with all the prior presentations on Phase IV. He asserted that it is important to create indigenous Iraqi forces, but there is much more to be done. On Fallujah, he reminded the audience that we should recall that the struggle there was actually a very well-fought urban battle by insurgents. On the topic of understanding the enemy, he reminded the audience of the Algerian insurgency, and the failure of the French to understand their enemy.

The second commentator noted that the panel on Planning and Execution was "very upbeat," despite the grave problems of Phase IV. He emphasized that, indeed, "it was a great war if it wasn't for the victory." He assigned grades of "A" to military commanders. Everyone else, particularly those involved in political and diplomatic areas, received a "conditional" or "failing" mark. He praised the presentation entitled "Speed Kills," but had some reservations. Although he agreed that we were fighting against an inept enemy and that we used speed as a great advantage, he remarked that the presentation raised the point that we still do not know whether a new transformation of the military can do the job against a first class enemy. Certainly, though, speed was helpful in Iraq.

He found the Afghan model to be fascinating, and agreed that, with only a very few people, the United States was able to change the dimensions of battle strategically. He agreed with the presenter on the importance of operating with locals on the ground who are welcoming. He then examined the assumptions about key elements that drove what happened in the war. From the DoD point of view, the war in Iraq was laid out to be an industrial enterprise. Some of the key assumptions were that Iraq had chemical and biological weapons, that the Iraqis would destroy infrastructure, that Baghdad was the center of gravity, and that the Republican Guard was the military center of gravity. In the Phase IV stage, the DoD also assumed that the United States would receive international support. He asserted that the validity of all of these assumptions is arguable.

However, some assumptions were indeed correct. One was that the Iraqi military was weak enough that a small, mobile force could do the job well. Another was that the United States would have near-perfect battle space awareness, and that "shock and awe" would be effective and would cut down Iraqi command and control. He pointed out that, although this was true, it was counterproductive in the

sense that command and control would be needed for reconstruction efforts later on.

He argued that one element overlooked was the paramilitary Fedayeen. In the end, this was the force that the United States had to fight, and which was the military center of gravity—not the Republican Guard. This reflected an intelligence failure, and ultimately gave basis for the insurgency after Baghdad fell. Another element that he claimed was overlooked was post-combat operations. He argued that a disconnect remains between the military and politics: the military does almost everything in Iraq. The State Department gave responsibilities to DoD, and the only people with resources are the military, so nobody else takes the responsibility.

He concluded by noting that changes to the National Security Act of 1947 are necessary for us to learn from the civil-military disconnect. We have seen in Iraq that civil-military operations cannot be disentangled, and that legal authorities must be properly distributed.

A question was asked, "Was insurgency unavoidable? Is the presence of American troops supporting the insurgency, and would leaving help?" The second commentator answered that even if the United States had everything it needed, an insurgency would still have been likely. He asserted, however, that it would be a matter of degree: the insurgency would still exist, but perhaps not to the same extent. The first commentator discussed how the presence of the troops was fueling the insurgency. His primary worry, however, was the undisciplined behavior of the support structure (i.e., supply truck drivers, contractors not responsible to the U.S. chain of command, and personal security details). Reducing the presence of this support structure—rather than of the U.S. forces—might help against the insurgency.

Several panelists answered a question about embedding political advisors to support the military, addressing the possible role of State Department representatives. Although the consensus was that State representatives would play an important role, it would be a challenge, given limited staff and the difficulty of forcing staff to spend time in the field.

Dr. Cohen then asked whether previous panelists would like to make any last comments. One speaker raised the issue of CERP

and its usefulness as a short-term injection of money into rebuilding Iraqi infrastructure. He said that there was just not enough money: more aid could have given a major boost to Iraqi small businesses and communities. Another panelist noted that advisors available to suggest how to apply these funds also would have been useful.

Another speaker stated that the escalation to insurgency was a direct result of U.S. mistakes. He maintained that assumptions about post-war were wrong, were not challenged, and that the military did not do contingency planning. Another panelist commented on the difference between political and military objectives and recalled the Clausewitzian concept of war as policy. He asserted that the agenda for Iraq, as it was written, was a political and not a military object. However, he noted that the United States operationalized plans based on the *military* objective, and then implemented the policy. However, this did not equate to a strategic victory.

Cohen noted that the most effective wartime conduct of operations often occurs when civilian-military relations are in-depth and heated. He asserted that this did not happen during the war in Iraq, and that there were limits to the willingness of the military to argue and debate with civilian authorities. Ultimately, civilians are responsible, but such debates are important to effective wartime decisionmaking.