

**NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION
AMERICAN STRATEGY PROGRAM
POLICY FORUM**

**WEIGHING THE UNIQUENESS OF
THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S
NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION-MAKING PROCESS:
BOON OR DANGER TO AMERICAN DEMOCRACY?**

**WITH
COL. LAWRENCE WILKERSON, USA (RET.)
FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, 2002-2005**

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STEVEN CLEMONS: Thank you very much for joining us today, and thank you for your patience about seats. I know when the room is crowded and full what a hassle it is to – you know, as the room heats up.

But I do promise a very active and fun, interesting question-and-answer period following Larry Wilkerson's presentation. For those of you who have not been here before, welcome to the New America Foundation. I'm Steve Clemons. I run our foreign policy programs here, and our foreign policy activities are expanding rapidly.

I hope all of you are on our list. If not, let me know and I'll be happy to add you to our roster of programs that deal with things international and national security policy.

This is part of a series of forums that we've begun this year that eventually will lead into a major project that we're calling our Solarium exercise. It's very interesting. When President Eisenhower and his team came in after President Truman, there was a lot of scrutiny and thought that went into questions about whether to continue the doctrine of containment, whether to take a different track. And it was fascinating that Eisenhower at that time orchestrated three competitive teams with economics analysts, generals, national intelligence experts, and essentially they had to think about the world view that they were trying to sell in terms of policy, and they had to pay for it; they needed to think systematically about the social and economic costs and consequences of these various policies. And it was a very interesting way to discipline thinking about the direction that made the most sense for the United States.

And so what we've tried to do is use that as sort of a metaphor for how we need to think about our own debates and thinking, and it's been a real pleasure for us to encounter folks that are both policy practitioners, but also people that bring, I think, real vision to the kind of world that we need to think that we are evolving towards in 20 or 30 years out, and who also think a lot about process.

And today we have Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson – Larry Wilkerson – who many of you know served from the years 2002 through to this year as Colin Powell's chief of staff at the State Department. He is also the former associate director of policy planning at the Department of State, the former director of the U.S. Marine Corps War College, and he's getting ready to teach some courses on national security at the College of William & Mary and at George Washington University.

He is also one of the speakers that spoke in our major September forum. Ted – oh, you've got a seat right there? Ted Alden, Financial Times – a very good guy. (Laughter.) Make sure he's comfortable, get him a Coke.

In any case, it is a great pleasure and privilege to introduce to you today Larry Wilkerson, who will share his thoughts on America's national security decision-making process, and I think will give some interesting historical context to what has changed and what's the same, and whether this is a boon or a danger to American democracy.

So without further ado, please welcome Colonel Larry Wilkerson.

(Applause.)

COLONEL LARRY WILKERSON: I couldn't help but grow somewhat nostalgic as Steve was talking about Dwight Eisenhower – (laughter). Though I was 7 to 15, roughly, during his tenure as president, I sometimes find myself longing for it – (laughter) – especially President Eisenhower's rather conformistic – if that's not too big a word – approach to the 1947 National Security Act. In other words, he thought it was a piece of legislation that was passed by the Congress of the United States, the people's representative, and he damn well ought to follow it, and did so probably to an extent that few presidents, if any, have since.

I want to thank Steve and the New America Foundation for giving me this opportunity, and thank some of my friends for turning out. I see an assistant secretary over here – I think he's left that post now – who used to spend some time in my office, and I see others around the room. I see some journalists in here who have been trying religiously to get me over the last three or four months. You finally got me, at least on this topic.

I was out in Montana recently fly fishing in Yellowstone National Park, standing in a river, and I had mistakenly brought my cell phone. And it went off and I answered it, and I won't tell you who it was, but it was someone from the New York Times wanting to interview me about the detainee abuse issue. And I feel so strongly about that issue I released the trout I was then catching – (laughter) – got out of the Madison River, got up on the bank, told me son-in-law to keep fishing, and talked to the gentleman for about a half an hour. And if any of you have any questions on that issue, of course I'd be glad to address them.

I have two approaches to what Steve was alluding to as my topic today. The one is the approach of an academic. For some six years at the Naval War College at Newport and then at the Marine Corps War College at Quantico, I taught some of the brightest people in America, 35- to 40-year-old military officers of all services, both genders, and all professional skills within the services. You want to teach someone who will challenge you on an hourly basis, try that.

One of the things that I taught them was a very esoteric subject to most of them who were battalion commanders, fighter squadron commanders, destroyer or cruiser captains, or some other really tactical-level position in their service theretofore – 15 years in some cases; in other cases, maybe as much as 18 or 20. They came to me as tactical experts, as the very best. In most services they were picked out of the top 15 to 20

percent. In all services I would say they were picked out of the top 50 percent. So I'm looking at a very bright seminar of 15 to 16 people who know a whole hell of a lot more than I do about their services, particularly if they're not in the Army, and who know a great deal about tactical applications of power, if you will.

But they know very little about such esoteric subjects as the national security decision-making process. So you go through a lot trying to get them up to speed so that they can then deal with what you're going to throw at them at a really rapid pace after they're up to speed. Some of them can't take it. Some of them tell you, "I'd like to go back to my battalion," "I'd like to go back to my ship," "I don't like this world of strategy, international relations, politics, interagency activities, and so forth." And they're very honest with you.

Others take to it -- like I think probably Colin Powell did at the National War College in the mid- to late-'70s -- and become bigger because of the experience, and then go on hopefully to gain stars and be fairly influential in their own professions.

As I dealt with the national security decision-making process, therefore I developed a bifurcated view about it. The one side was academic, the one side read the 1947 National Security Act that Harry Truman signed on 26 July 1947 and the amendments thereto, and understood that the Goldwater-Nichols Act -- the DOD reorganization act, 1985 I believe it was -- actually brought the 1947 act into a new realm, actually closed some gaps that had been in the original act, and created the finest military staff in the world from a staff that theretofore had been a desultory, at best, and even mediocre staff, and put at its head the man who had been the titular boss of the armed forces before -- and titular is probably too strong a word -- the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and made him the principal advisor to the secretary of Defense, the president of the United States, and the National Security Council. So this was a monumental change.

And I will tell you -- because I was there in the midst of the fight; I was in the arena, so to speak -- it was tough. It was very, very tough to force the armed forces into jointness, which is the jargon that we use to describe it.

Today, we desperately need a Goldwater-Nichols Act for the entire federal government -- desperately. We need to force the interagency process, for example, to conform to President Clinton's PDD-56, if you're familiar with that. It was a document that described -- it could be improved on, but it described very well how America should deal with crisis. The problem was nobody followed it. The problem was nobody followed it so bad that when a Senate group was set up to investigate that very subject, and called my boss, who was then a private citizen for whom I was working in a private capacity, and said, "Would you come sit on our group? Would you help us with this -- because we really think the process is broken," my boss' answer was simply, "No, I won't, because you've got it already. You can't hardly improve on what you've got already; you just have to force execution of what you've got."

Now there are many critics who will say you cannot, in our system of government, force the executive branch to do something that it doesn't want to do. The framers of the 1947 act I don't think would agree with that.

Now before I turn to the formal part of my presentation, which is a little bit of history, let me just say that the other side – the reason my views are bifurcated – the other side is my practical experience; practical experience sitting at the right hand of a very powerful chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, underneath a very powerful secretary of Defense by the name of Richard Cheney, and watching probably one of the finest presidents we've ever had – that's how I feel about George H.W. Bush – exercise one of the greatest adeptnesses at foreign policy I've ever seen. So many things happened in George H.W. Bush's four years, that I think when historians write about it with dispassion – 25, 30 years from now – they're going to give that man enormous credit for knowing how to make the process work. It took them awhile; took them about nine to 10 months to get their act together, but once they did, they worked very well.

So I've seen that aspect of it. I saw the Clinton administration, up close and personal. It took them a little longer than that to get their act together, and in a very intimate way, I saw the George W. Bush administration, from 2001 to early 2005 – a little over four years.

So I have two approaches, if you will: the academic over here and the practitioner over here, and sometimes I get them confused. The ground is so rich for an academic and for a person who has taught the National Security Act and what has come out of the National Security Act that I sometimes get to candid, if you will.

MR. : We're hoping that. (Laughter.)

COL. WILKERSON: On the other hand, as a practitioner and as a citizen of this great republic, I kind of believe that I have an obligation to say some of these things, and I believe furthermore that the people's representatives over on the Hill in that other branch of government have truly abandoned their oversight responsibilities in this regard and have let things atrophy to the point that if we don't do something about it, it's going to get – it's going to get even more dangerous than it already is.

Now when the framers began to think about – I say framers; we're talking about dozens if not hundred of people here, but we're talking about some minds who were engaged in this. If I cited some names – we don't need to, but of course you'd probably recognized them – Forestal among – you know, one of them who of course committed suicide. It got too heavy for him.

But these were probably some people who I think rivaled those who got together that hot summer in Philadelphia and put together the Constitution. We have had some peaks and valleys in our history, but I think post-World War II and World War II itself was a peak, and we had some really good people thinking hard about these issues. And one of the things that they probably wouldn't tell you if they were here today – unless

they'd had a few drinks, and Harry Truman would have had a few – (laughter) – is that they didn't want another FDR. They did not want another Franklin Delano Roosevelt. They even amended the Constitution to make sure they didn't get one for more than eight years. But they didn't want the secrecy, they didn't want the concentration of power, they didn't want the lack of transparency into principal decisions that got people killed, even though they'd been successful in arguably one of the greatest conflicts the world has seen. And so they set about trying to ensure that this wouldn't happen again.

I don't think even his critics would have argued that FDR wasn't a brilliant politician and a brilliant leader. But let's think about it for a moment, if you are one of the framers. How often does America get brilliant leaders? Put them down on paper. I can count them myself on one hand. You can perhaps count them on two hands and make persuasive arguments for the additions. I prefer one hand.

So we need a system of checks and balances and institutional fabric that can withstand anybody – or at least nearly so. (Laughter.) You know, you laugh, but I'm not trying to solicit your laughter. I think it's a real problem in our democracy. You have to have a system that is so elastic, so resilient, so able to take punches that at one time one branch can supplant another, or one branch can come up and check another. It's the old business of checks and balances.

If you concentrate power and you do it in a way that is not that different from the way Franklin Roosevelt concentrated it, but you don't have someone who is brilliant at the utilization of that power, you've got problems. You've got problems. You may have problems even if you have someone who is brilliant. Go ask people who've written about Woodrow Wilson – although I wouldn't say Woodrow Wilson had concentrated power quite the way FDR did. And of course the war and the depression gave him ample opportunity to do things to abridge civil liberties, for example, that even Abraham Lincoln didn't go to in a conflict that produced far more casualties and arguably was more passionately fought, certainly in terms of the families of America. But too much power, too much secrecy – they wanted to get rid of that.

They also wanted to institutionalize, more or less, the very thing that had brought about their success in World War II. They wanted to institutional that product, that success, that whatever, and so they wanted to consolidate the armed forces, they wanted to bring them together. They wanted to put one person in charge of those armed forces.

Talk about secrecy – Harry Truman, when he took over in April of 1945, didn't even know about the atomic bomb. He had had hints because he'd written -- as chairman of the investigating committee in the Senate, he'd written to Stimson, and he had said, "I've heard about this land-buying out in Washington; tremendous numbers of acres are being bought. What's going on?" And Stimson had said, "Please, Mr. Senator, it's too big for you" – essentially, and Truman had backed off – to give you a sense of the times and the seriousness of what was happening.

But it took Stimson and Leslie Groves, who sneaked in the back door so no one would know he was coming over – and George Marshall didn't even attend because he was afraid it would bring too much attention to the meeting – and Leslie Groves – Brigadier General Leslie Groves and Stimson briefed the president with essentially two papers in the Oval Office 12 days after he took office, and he found out exactly how serious this was and exactly what he had to deal with in terms of the nation's nuclear program.

So the process these people were going through was to try and make the system more transparent, make decision-making more transparent, make sharing of information and critical data more the likelihood rather than the exception, and they set about doing this through a legislative process.

Now, you know, how do you legislate that sort of thing? I heard the same thing about Goldwater-Nichols. I heard the same thing over and over again from my armed forces colleagues: you cannot legislate the armed forces into being a team. It's impossible, you can't do it. They did it. They did it, and the people who did it did a fantastic job because they didn't jump through their rear end, like Joe Biden wanted to do when I talked to his staff about something similar to this. They actually went about it in a very concerted, very organized, very disciplined way, and they built the information that they needed in order to make good decisions about how to make the armed forces work together. And it involved everything. It involved education, it involved assignments, it involved the professionalism of the forces. It involved almost every aspect of the armed forces that is crucial to building people up into a team, and they enacted it.

I used to use the 1985 committee print from the Senate on civil-military relations as my text for my students because it was such a brilliant exposition of civil-military relations since the beginning of our country. That's how good a work they did on that legislation. It wasn't pulled out of your rear end; it was five, six years in the making. It was superb legislation. Can it be perfected even further? Probably so. People are debating that now. But it was legislation that changed things. We need something like that today.

Now let me tell you why I say that. Decisions that send men and women to die, decisions that have the potential to send men and women to die, decisions that confront situations like natural disasters and cause needless death or cause people to suffer misery that they shouldn't have to suffer. Domestic and international decisions should not be made in a secret way. That's a very, very provocative statement, I think. All my life I've been taught to guard the nation's secrets. All my life I have followed the rules. I've gone through my special background investigations and all the other things that you need to do, and I understand that the nation's secrets need guarding, but fundamental decisions about foreign policy should not be made in secret.

Let me tell you the practical reason – and here I'm jumping over really into both realms, the practical reasons why that's true. You have probably all read books on leadership: "The Seven Habits of Successful People," or whatever. If you as a member

of the bureaucracy do not participate in a decision, you are not going to carry that decision out with the alacrity, the efficiency and the effectiveness you would if you have participated. When you cut the bureaucracy out of your decisions and then foist your decisions, more or less out of the blue, on that bureaucracy, you can't expect that bureaucracy to carry your decision out very well. And furthermore, if you're not prepared to stop the feuding elements in that bureaucracy as they carry out your decision, you're courting disaster.

And I would say that we have courted disaster in Iraq, in North Korea, in Iran. Generally with regard to domestic crises like Katrina, Rita – and I could go on back – we haven't done very well on anything like that in a long time. And if something comes along that is truly serious, truly serious, something like a nuclear weapon going off in a major American city, or something like a major pandemic, you are going to see the ineptitude of this government in a way that will take you back to the Declaration of Independence. Read it sometimes again. I just use it for a tutoring class for my students down in the District of Columbia. It forced me to read it really closely because we're doing metaphors and similes and antonyms and synonyms and so forth, and read in there what the founders say in a very different language than we use today. Read in there what they say about the necessity of the people to throw off tyranny or to throw off ineptitude or to throw off that which is not doing what the people want it to do. And you're talking about the potential for, I think, real dangerous times if we don't get our act together.

Now, let me get a little more specific. This is where I'm sure the journalists will get their pens out. (Laughter.) Almost everyone since the '47 act, with the exception, I think, of Eisenhower, has in some way or another perturbed, flummoxed, twisted, drew evolutionary trends with, whatever, the national security decision-making process. I mean, John Kennedy trusted his brother, who was attorney general – made his brother attorney general – far more than he should have. Richard Nixon, oh my god, took a position that was not even envisioned in the original framers of the act's minds, national security advisor, and not subject to confirmation by the Senate, advice and consent – took that position and gave it to his secretary of State, concentrating power in ways that still reverberate in this country. Jimmy Carter allowed Zbig Brzezinski to essentially negate his secretary of State.

Now, I could go on and say what Sandy Berger did to Madeline Albright in the realm of foreign policy, and I could make other provocative statements too, but no one, in my study of the act's implementation, has so flummoxed the process as the present administration. What do I mean by that? Remember what I said about the bureaucracy, if it's going to implement your decisions, having to participate in those decisions. And let me add one other dimension to that. If you accept the fact – and I do today, and if you'll look around you at some of these magazine covers – I don't need any more testimony than that I don't think – the complexity of crises that confront governments today is just unprecedented. Let me say that again: The complexity of the crises that confront governments today are just unprecedented.

At the same time, especially in America – but I submit to you in Japan, in China, and in a number of other countries soon to be probably the European Union, it's just as bad, if not in some ways worse -- the complexity of governing is unprecedented. You simply cannot deal with all the challenges that government has to deal with, meet all the demands that government has to meet in the modern age, in the 21st century, without admitting that it is hugely complex. That doesn't mean you have to add a Department of Homeland Security with 70,000 disparate entities thrown under somebody in order to handle them, but it does mean that your bureaucracy has got to be staffed with good people, and they've got to work together, and they've got to work under leadership they trust and leadership that on basic issues they agree with, and that if they don't agree, they can dissent and dissent and dissent. And if their dissent is such that they feel so passionate about it, they can resign and know why they're resigning.

That is not the case today. And when I say that is not the case today, I stop on 26 January 2005. I don't know what the case is today; I wish I did. But the case that I saw for four-plus years was a case that I have never seen in my studies of aberrations, bastardizations, perturbations, changes to the national security decision-making process. What I saw was a cabal between the vice president of the United States, Richard Cheney, and the secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld on critical issues that made decisions that the bureaucracy did not know were being made. And then when the bureaucracy was presented with the decision to carry them out, it was presented in a such a disjointed, incredible way that the bureaucracy often didn't know what it was doing as it moved to carry them out.

Read George Packer's book, "The Assassin's Gate," if you haven't already. George Packer, a New Yorker – reporter for the New Yorker, has got it right. I just finished it, and I usually put marginalia in a book, but let me tell you, I had to get extra pages to write on. (Laughter.) And I wish I had been able to help George Packer write that book. In some places I could have given him a hell of a lot more specifics than he's got. (Laughter.) But if you want to read how the Cheney-Rumsfeld cabal flummoxed the process, read that book. And of course there are other names in there: Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, whom most of you probably know Tommy Franks said was the stupidest blankety, blank man in the world. He was. (Laughter.) Let me testify to that. He was. Seldom in my life have I met a dumber man. (Laughter.) And yet – and yet – and yet, after the secretary of State agrees to a \$40 billion department rather than a \$30 billion department having control, at least in the immediate post-war period in Iraq, this man is put in charge. Not only is he put in charge, he is given carte blanche to tell the State Department to go screw itself in a closet somewhere. Now, that's not making excuses for the State Department; that's telling you how decisions were made and telling you how things got accomplished. Read George's book.

In so many ways I wanted to believe for four years that what I was seeing – as an academic now – what I was seeing was an extremely weak national security advisor, and an extremely powerful vice president, and an extremely powerful in the issues that impacted him secretary of Defense – remember, a vice president who has been secretary of Defense too and obviously has an inclination that way, and also has known the

secretary of Defense for a long time, and also is a member of what Dwight Eisenhower warned about – God bless Eisenhower – in 1961 in his farewell address, the military industrial complex – and don't you think they aren't among us today – in a concentration of power that is just unparalleled. It all happened because of the end of the Cold War. Harlan will tell you how many contractors who did billion dollars or so business with the Defense Department did we have in 1988 and how many do we have now? And they're always working together.

If one of them is a lead on the satellite program – I hope there's some Lockheed and Grumman and others here today, Raytheon – if one of them is a lead on satellites, the others are subs. And they've learned their lesson; they're in every state. They've got every congressman, every senator. They've got it covered. Now, that's not to say that they aren't smart businessmen. They are – and women – they are. But it's something we should be looking at, something we should be looking at.

So you've got this collegiality there between the secretary of Defense and the vice president, and you've got a president who is not versed in international relations and not too much interested in them either. And so it's not too difficult to make decisions in this what I call Oval Office cabal, and decisions often that are the opposite of what you'd thought were made in the formal process. Now, let's get back to Dr. Rice again. For so long I said, yeah, Rich, you're right – Rich being Undersecretary of State Richard Armitage – it is a dysfunctional process. And to myself I said, okay, put on your academic hat; who's causing this? Well, the national security adviser. Even if the framers didn't envision that position, even if it's not subject to confirmation by the Senate, the national security advisor should be doing a better job. Now I've come to a different conclusion, and after reading Packer's book I found additional information, or confirmation for my opinion, I think. I think it was more a case of – in some cases there was real dysfunctionality – there always is – but in most cases it was Dr. Rice made a decision, she made a decision – and this is all about people again because people in essence are the government. She made a decision that she would side with the president to build her intimacy with the president.

And so what we had was a situation where the national security advisor, seen in the evolution over some half-century since the act as the balancer or the person who would make sure all opinions got to the president, the person who would make sure that every dissent got to the president that made sense – not every one but the ones that made sense – actually was a part of the problem, and probably on many issues sided with the president and the vice president and the secretary of Defense. And so what you had – and here I am the academic again – you had this incredible process where the formal process, the statutory process, the policy coordinating committee, the deputies committee, the principal's committee, all camouflaged – the dysfunctionality camouflaged the efficiency of the secret decision-making process.

And so we got into Iraq, and so George Packer quotes Richard Haas in his book as saying, "To this day I still don't know why we went to war in Iraq." I can go through all the things we listed, from WMD to human rights to – I can go through it – terrorism,

but I really can't sit here and tell you, George, why we went to war in Iraq. And there are so many decisions. Why did we wait three years to talk to the North Koreans? Why did we wait four-plus years to say we at least back the EU-3 approach to Iran? Why did we create the national director of intelligence and add further to the bureaucracy, which was what caused the problem in the first place? The problem is not sharing information. The problem is not that we don't have enough feet on the ground or enough people collecting intelligence or enough \$40 billion eyes in the sky – national technical means. That's not the problem. The problem is our people don't share. The problem is the FBI is over here in its niche, and the CIA is over here, and INR is here, and Treasury is here, and the DIA is here, and the NSA is here, and the NRO is here, and god almighty, they never talk to each other. They don't share. They don't pass information around. They don't work in the same cultures. They don't have the same attitude about the information they're handling, sometimes for good reason. Some are domestic law enforcement; some are not.

There are all kinds of problems that need to be dealt with and we are not going to make it into the 21st century very far and keep our power intact and our powder dry if we don't start to deal with this need to change the decision-making process, and an understanding of that need, which, for whatever reason, intuitive or intellectual I don't know, I'll give credit to the Bush administration for, by suddenly concentrating power in one tiny little aspect of the federal government and letting that little cabal make the decisions. That's not a recipe for success. It's a recipe for good decision-making in terms of the speed and alacrity with which you can make decisions, of course. Harlan and I can sit down and we can make a decision probably a lot faster than all of you and me can make a decision, but if all of you bring something to the fight and will be integral in the implementation of the decision I'm going to make, and if you know some things I don't know and you might dissent because of those things you know, I damn well better listen to you, and I better figure out a way to get all of you to work together if we finally come to a decision and we decide to implement that. I better know how to get you to work together.

That is not what this administration did for four years. Instead it made decisions in secret, and now I think it is paying the consequences of having made those decisions in secret. But far more telling to me is America is paying the consequences. You and I and every other citizen like us is paying the consequences, whether it is a response to Katrina that was less than adequate certainly, or whether it is the situation in Iraq, which still goes unexplained. You know, if I had the time I could stand up here today I think and make a strategic case for why we are in Iraq and why we have to stay there and we have to get it right. As Winston Churchill said, "America will always do the right thing, after exhausting all other possibilities." (Laughter.) Well, we need to get busy and exhaust them and do the right thing.

We can't leave Iraq. We simply can't. I can make that case. No one in this administration has made that case. They have simply pontificated. That's all they've done. Now, I'm not evaluating the decision to go to war. That's a different matter. But we're there, we've done it, and we cannot leave. I would submit to you that if we leave precipitously or we leave in a way that doesn't leave something there we can trust, if we

do that, we will mobilize the nation, put 5 million men and women under arms and go back and take the Middle East within a decade. That's what we'll have to do. So why not get it right now? Why not get it right now? I don't see any signs, other than signs of desperation – that is to say, the polls are falling, people are finally listening, to a certain extent, to the evidence that's building up, and so people are getting desperate. And so Dr. Rice gets some more flexibility, some more leeway, and we do this and we do that; that looks diplomatic. But I don't see anything that looks coordinated because I think the decisions are still being made essentially in that small group.

And I'll finish just by bringing it down screechingly to the ground and tell you that the detainee abuse issue is just such a concrete example of what I've just described to you, that 10 years from now or so when it's really, really put to the acid test, ironed out and people have looked at it from every angle, we are going to be ashamed of what we allowed to happen. I don't know how many people saw the "Frontline" documentary last night – very well done, I thought, but didn't get anywhere near the specifics that need to be shown, that need to come out, that need to say to the American people, this is not us, this is not the way we do business in the world. Of course we have criminals, of course we have people who violate the law of war, of course we had My Lai, of course we had problems in the Korean War and in World War II. My father-in-law was involved in the Malmédy massacre and the retaliation of U.S. troops in Belgium. He told me some stories before he died that made my blood curdle about American troops killing Germans.

But these are not -- I won't say isolated incidents; these are incidents that are understandable and that ultimately, at one time or another, we came to deal with. I don't think, in our history, we've ever had a presidential involvement, a secretarial involvement, a vice-presidential involvement, an attorney general involvement in telling our troops essentially carte blanche is the way you should feel. You should not have any qualms because this is a different kind of conflict. Well, I'll admit that. I'll admit that. I don't want to see any of these people ever released from prison if they're truly terrorists. I don't want to see them released because I know what they'll do. I'm a former military man, 31 years in the Army. They will go out and they will try to kill me and my buddies, again and again, and some of you people, too.

So I understand the radical change in the nature of our enemy, but that doesn't mean we make a radical change in the nature of America. But that's what we did, and we did it in private. We did it in such privacy that the secretary of State had to open the door into my office one day – we had adjoining offices and he liked to do that, and I never objected – he came through the door and he said, Larry, Larry, get everything, get all the paperwork, get the ICRC reports, get everything; I think this is going to be a real mess. And Will Taft, his lawyer, got the same instruction from a legal point of view. And Will and I worked together for almost a year as the ICRC reports began to build and come in, and Kellenberger even came in and visited with the secretary of State. And we knew that things weren't the way they should be, and as former soldiers, we knew that you don't have this kind of pervasive attitude out there unless you've condoned it – unless you've condoned it. And whether you did it explicitly or not is irrelevant. If you did it at all, indirectly, implicitly, tacitly – you pick the word – you're in trouble because that slippery

slope is truly slippery, and it will take years to reverse the situation, and we'll probably have to grow a new military.

We may have to do that anyway because my army right now is truly in bad shape – truly in bad shape. And I'm not talking about the billions and billions of dollars of equipment it's burning up in Iraq at a rate 10 or 15 times the rate its life cycle said it should be burned up at, but I'm also talking about when you have officers who have to hedge the truth, NCOs who have to hedge the truth. They start voting with their feet, as they did in Vietnam, my war. They come home and they tell their wife they've got to go back for the third tour and the fourth tour and the wife says, uh-uh, or the husband says, uh-uh, and all of a sudden your military begins to unravel. And the signs are very concrete right now that the Army and the Marine Corps – to a lesser extent the other services because they're not quite as involved in the deployments that we're talking about here and the frequency thereof, the op tempo as we say it – problems are brewing. Problems are brewing.

So I'll just close by saying that when I met Biden's staff and Hagel's staff, the Lugar staff, and others know that I was available for whatever I could contribute, for however long they needed me to write whatever we called it – the Lugar-Biden Act, the Biden-Lugar Act. I don't care what we called it, but it would be a piece of legislation that would attempt to do for the federal bureaucracy what we had done for the armed forces. Okay. Impossible task? Okay. Impossible task, we've got to try it. We have got to try it. We have got to do better than we're doing today.

I was at – I'll close with a function I was at yesterday, the Yoshiyama Awards for the Hitachi Foundation, 10 of the brightest, bubbliest, exciting seniors from across the country that I've ever been associated with. This is the second time I've attended the awards and it was the same way last year. And these are not National Merit Scholars. These are not GPA 4.0, these are not Princeton-bound kids – although some of them probably are, this is not what's heralded about them. They're kids who come together because they've done community service. And the chairman of the board of the Hitachi Foundation was introducing them and he said, you know, the best way I can describe these kids to you is that you or I would confront the challenges, the problems that they've confronted and we would say, ain't no way, politically impossible, or something like that. These kids have said, I'm going to do it, and they've done it.

I made a suggestion, for example, that a young major up at the Naval War College who had written a paper, and he put the specifics in it – I mean, really put the specifics to it that we ought to merge the State and Defense Departments, that what we ought to have is an undersecretary for East Asia, an undersecretary for Europe and so forth, like we have assistant secretaries now – regional undersecretaries – and they ought to co-locate with the CINCs, the combatant commanders as we say today, the military proconsuls who are stationed around the world in Honolulu and other places, and make the undersecretary the boss and make the combatant commander his deputy, merge the State and Defense Departments. Holy mackerel – (laughter) – you know? But as the chairman

of the board of the Hitachi Foundation said yesterday, one of these kids would say, you know, let's get to work. Let's get to work.

We need some people on the Hill who look at the challenge of reformatting, reorganizing, whatever, our interagency process, our federal bureaucracy to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We need somebody on the Hill like that. We need somebody who's energetic. While they're about it they need to also investigate and then do a major revision of their own processes. And don't get me started on that one. Thanks you.

(Applause.)

MR. CLEMONS: Thank you, Larry. Thank you very much, Larry. I know there are going to be lots and lots of questions. I'm going to ask the audience, after I offer my own question, to pick one of the many you have. We're going to work through a lot so we're going to work on brevity – and I'm going to break my own rule. One is, have you paid any price for your candor, one; and two, when Colin Powell spoke – made his presentation at the United Nations on the WMD issue, was that your attempt to play ball and was the price you were trying to extract from the administration an attempt to get the process of inclusion fixed? Because otherwise, given what you've just said, Colin Powell's presentation makes no sense unless he thought that he was trying to rearrange the players, so to speak, and to demand different treatment for both his role and other player's role in the decision-making process.

COL. WILKERSON: Yes, I have paid a price, and it's a high price for me. I've paid the price that Colin Powell and I see eye to eye a lot less than we used to. Now, that's not to say that that wasn't the case a lot of times anyway. The great respect I have for the man emanates as much from his ability to tolerate me in my many dissenting opinions as it does for any leadership qualities that he's otherwise shown me, which were manifold. But at the end, I actually was physically thrown out of his office on one occasion, and that was a first in 16 years.

It showed, I think, his exasperation and it showed his tolerance level had sunk considerably for dissenting opinions. He's not happy – I think that's fair to say – with my speaking out because – and I admire this in him too – he is the world's most loyal soldier and feels that his inveterate optimism is right and that we will overcome these problems. And I share that. However, I feel like as a citizen and as a person very much concerned with the military – it was my old home – I need to speak out.

Now, on the other matter, I've been over that so many times in my head and with hundreds of journalists who are trying to figure it out for themselves – I can't tell you why the French, the Germans, the Brits and us thought that most of the material, if not all of it, that we presented at the U.N. on 5 February 2003 was the truth. I can't. I've wrestled with it. I don't know – and people say, well, INR dissented. That's a bunch of bull. INR dissented that the nuclear program was up and running. That's all INR dissented on. They were right there with the chems and the bios. Carl Ford and I talked;

Tom Finger and I talked, who is now John Negroponte's deputy, and that was the way INR felt. And, frankly, I wasn't all that convinced by the evidence I'd seen that he had a nuclear program other than the software. That is to say there are some discs or there were some scientists and so forth but he hadn't reconstituted it. He was going to wait until the international tension was off of him, until the sanctions were down, and then he was going to go back – certainly go back to all of his programs. I mean, I was convinced of that.

But I saw satellite evidence, and I've looked at satellite pictures for much of my career. I saw information that would lead me to believe that Saddam Hussein, at least on occasion, was spoofing us, was giving us disinformation. When you see a satellite photograph of all the signs of the chemical weapons ASP – Ammunition Supply Point – with chemical weapons, and you match all those signs with your matrix on what should show a chemical ASP, and they're there, you have to conclude that it's a chemical ASP, especially when you see the next satellite photograph which shows the U.N. inspectors wheeling in in their white vehicles with black markings on them to that same ASP and everything is changed, everything is clean. None of those signs are there anymore.

Well, Saddam Hussein really cared about deterring the Persians – the Iranians – and his own people. He didn't give a hang about us except on occasion. And so he had to convince those audiences that he still was a powerful man. So who better to do that through than the INC, Ahmad Chalabi and his boys, and by spoofing our eyes in the sky and our little HUMINT, and the Brits and the French and the Germans, too. That's all I can figure.

The consensus of the intelligence community was overwhelming. I can still hear George Tenet telling me, and telling my boss in the bowels of the CIA, that the information we were delivering – which we had called considerably – we had called it very much – we had thrown whole reams of paper out that the White House had created. But George was convinced, John McLaughlin was convinced that what we were presented was accurate. And contrary to what you were hearing in the papers and other places, one of the best relationships we had in fighting terrorists and in intelligence in general was with guess who? The French. In fact, it was probably the best. And they were right there with us.

In fact, I'll just cite one more thing. The French came in in the middle of my deliberations at the CIA and said, we have just spun aluminum tubes, and by god, we did it to this RPM, et cetera, et cetera, and it was all, you know, proof positive that the aluminum tubes were not for mortar casings or artillery casings, they were for centrifuges. Otherwise, why would you have such exquisite instruments? We were wrong. We were wrong.

MR. CLEMONS: Thank you.

We're going to work with microphones and we're going to have it here in the back. I'm going to start with Harlan Ullman then Allan Gerson in the back, then we'll work around the room.

Harlan?

Q: Larry, thanks very much, and I want to say I share your optimism as well as your views. Two observations and then a quick question. First, I would just suggest that all presidents are secret: Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower.

COL. WILKERSON: Yep.

Q: Kennedy was among the worst. Then of course there was Dick Nixon. And you remember we had a guy called Yeoman Radford that was stealing NSC stuff because Henry wouldn't share it with the Pentagon.

Second, I also think that the cabal really has a leader and the leader is George W. Bush, and I think that it's the president who's driving the ship of state. We had a referendum about a year ago and the public decided they would go with him, not with the other guy.

My question is this: I agree with you entirely that the absence of responsibility, authority, and most of all accountability is dereliction of duty in the highest degree. What would you do to try to reestablish some degree of responsibility, authority and accountability in both branches of government?

COL. WILKERSON: Well, I can't resist the first part of your question. The criticism that has come at me from colleagues in academia and other places is that, so what's new, which is essentially what you just said. Every president has done this or that. I think there are several things that are new. First of all, what I said about the complexity of the crises we face, the complexity of governance and so forth. And we've done something about this. We no longer have the patronage system that we once had, we no longer have, you know, you will be the postmaster in – over time, in an evolutionary way, we've done some things about the vestiges of corruption, if you will, or whatever.

The other reason – again, I spoke to it but I'll elaborate a bit – I really think we have to protect ourselves against institutional imperfections, and in particular we have to protect ourselves against the institutions of humans and the imperfections that they bring. And the way you do that, in my view anyway, is with firm laws. They're not perfect. Goldwater-Nichols isn't perfect but – and Harry Truman might say it this way, and really diligent oversight. And if you're going to exercise diligent oversight, then you better damn well have your own act together in terms of exercising that oversight. Eight committees had to be reported to by Colin Powell at the State Department – eight committees. He had to go give eight testimonies on his budget every year in order to get

the money for the State Department. That's ridiculous. I'm told Homeland Security's reporting requirements – 88? Oh, my god.

So Congress needs to reorganize. That might be where I would start if I was king for a day. Congress needs to reorganize. The executive branch is not organized optimally either, and I'm not sure – you know, I really have trouble saying this sometimes but I'll be provocative again. I'm not sure the State Department even exists anymore except in the minds of the Foreign Service. Yes, we have embassies around the world, and if you've been to one lately you know they look like concertina-wired Abu Ghraibs. They send a terrible signal. I was in one in Honduras that just – if I don't watch out I'll show my liberal leanings here. (Chuckles.) I'm not sure the State Department is effective anymore. And maybe the Congress realizes that and that's the reason their budget is so low, that's the reason they're so small. Blue ribbon panels and other things have said, this ought to be done, that ought to be done. You know, Admiral Crowe had some really strong recommendations about consolidation efficiencies and so forth.

I'm not sure, unless you can figure out a way to link the most lethal instrument we have, without militarizing ourselves too much. And our foreign policy, I'm not sure you can get around the non-utility of the State Department. So I would seek a way to revitalize what I call the diplomatic instrument. And it's not just money. It's not just money.

Another thing – hold on, let me get one more out. Another thing, I think we really need to take a look at the national security advisor position. As I said, it's not a position that was envisioned by the framers. It's a position that has become immensely powerful. It's a position that's very personal. It's a position that would be very difficult to get the executive branch to subject to the advice and consent of the Senate because it is that, and that would delete that somewhat, but I, nonetheless, think we ought to take a look at that position, and if you'd like to get together after, I've got some other –

MR. CLEMONS: In the very back, Allan Gerson.

Q: Thank you. I wonder if I could follow up on Steve's earlier question about the price of candor. This is something that you've wrestled with, I'm sure, and I'm really interested in the limits of candor. How free are you – how free did you – what did you think you were free to say when you went public? Where do you draw the line? Is the line drawn where you think the government acted illegally in violation of some laws, and can you speak out publicly the way you do even though you've been in government and been privy to so much private discussions, when you think the policy is wrong or there is ineptitude? At what point can you go public?

Now, the other question I have is you began your presentation by lauding the Bush 41 administration, and I wonder if you could point to any evidence that the kind of secrecy that you see – that you argue we see in this administration was not really practiced by the Bush 41 administration in making decisions such as, for example, the

invasion of Panama. Who was informed in the bureaucracy and wasn't this also done just at the very top by two people?

COL. WILKERSON: Good questions, all. The first one is a difficult – I feel like being glib and saying, when your wife tells you – of 40 years tells you that you have responsibilities beyond your loyalty to the man you've worked for for 16 years, and admire greatly – that's a glib answer. A less-than-glib answer is I think when you feel like what you might say has even a remote opportunity to affect some change for the good, that's sort of my personal criteria.

On the other question, I think what George H.W. Bush did in the short four years that he was in office was just phenomenal. Let's start – I mean, let's just begin the discussion with the reunification of Germany. When I say "secretive" I don't necessarily mean exposed to the full public glare on the front page of both – the full right side of the Washington Post. I mean the leaders involved in it, the allies involved in it, and those who will be impacted by it, largely in this case the Russians, are not only consulted but asked for their opinion, and even have evidence to take back with them that their opinion was not just listened to but the better points – and there are almost always good points in even the Russian's presentation – have been implemented, or seem to be being implemented.

There's a whole road of difference, a huge interstate of difference, between diplomacy conducted with all the parties that might be impacted by the results of that diplomacy and decisions that train and then a decision being made than a decision being made and foisted on the world, as it were.

The mayor of Beijing made a speech at Yale back in 2004, May I think it was, and he sort of comically suggested that the Chinese ought to have a vote in November 2004. And he said, I think it ought to be about 20 percent. That's the way the world looks at America. That's the way even the mayor of Beijing looks at America: When you make decisions, superpower, they affect me. Kim Campbell, the former prime minister, at the panel we had, she said, we're not anti-American, we're scared; we're scared to death the giant has no head. You're in the world and you have no head. Well, I could have been very cynical and looked back at Kim and said – because I have the experience to say it – well, as long as you sit behind our military up there in Canada, don't do a damn thing, eviscerate your own military and continue to look like you're the world's pacifist nation, you're getting what you deserve. That's not what I said to her.

When you put your feet up on a hassock and look at a man who's won the Nobel Prize and is currently the president of South Korea, and tell him in a very insulting way that you don't agree with his assessment of what's necessary to be reconciled with the north, that's not diplomacy, that's cowboyism. And I went to high school in Houston – I've got some connections with Texas. But there's just a vast difference between the way George Bush dealt with major challenges, some of the greatest challenges at the end of the 20th century, and affected positive results, in my view, and the way we conduct diplomacy today.

I like to use the word gracelessness, and I use that word because grace is something we have lost in the modern world. It's a very important product. It's very different, for example, to walk in with a foreign leader and find something you can be magnanimous about. You don't have to win everything. You don't have to be the big bully on the block. Find something you can be magnanimous about, that you can give him, that you can say he gets credit for, or she gets credit for. That's diplomacy. That's diplomacy. You don't walk in and say, I'm the big mother on the block and if everybody's not with me, they're against me, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. The difference between father and son, in my mind, sort of comes from that attitudinal approach to the world.

Yes?

MR. CLEMONS: I'm going to do it with the mikes because we've got to get on – (inaudible). Jacob Halpren (sp).

Q: Hi, just a quick question. I actually don't agree with your assessment of Doug Feith. I think the interesting thing about him is not that he –

COL. WILKERSON: It wasn't mine; it was Tommy Franks'.

(Laughter.)

Q: Right, but he's actually quite intelligent. What he also is is a zealot. And that makes me wonder, how is it that Dick Cheney, who was described to me by someone who worked with him in a senior post in the Pentagon in the first Bush administration as prudent, cautious. He said to me, I don't recognize Dick Cheney anymore. How did Cheney go down this path as well?

COL. WILKERSON: Well, there are a number of people who have asked me that a question and a number of people have offered their observations who are in a better position than I to make that judgment. I knew Secretary Cheney when he was the secretary of Defense, and he was, in my view, a good secretary of Defense. He would make a decision on a dime, and if you didn't give him the material to make a decision with he'd send you away. Good executive – 9/11 changed his entire approach to business, I think. Some people have called it paranoia, some people have called it not having enough – sort of the ivory tower complex, not having enough contact with the real world on a daily basis to understand how things are going or how things are building or how tension is being handled.

But I think – if I had to put my finger on it and I was having to bet on it or something I would say that Dick Cheney saw 9/11, saw the potential for another 9/11, particularly one with a nuclear weapon or some other mass destruction device, and suddenly became so fixated on that problem, not without some legitimacy, that it skewed

and bent some of the other approaches and decisions that he made. That's my interpretation.

MR. CLEMONS: Dave Colton (ph).

Q: Colonel, I was struck by, excuse me, the academic portion of your presentation, which was fairly structural in political science terms, and looked at the morphology of decision-making, who was included, et cetera. I'd like to throw out an idea and get your reaction to it, which is to take this presentation today up another 10 (thousand), 15,000 feet and suggest to you that the phenomena you observed is emblematic of decision-making across the government today, whether it be domestic politics – I'm up on the Hill a lot. And the fundamental strata I would suggest to you is not so much personalities, although they're important; it's the fact that most people do not seem to recognize what this gentleman hinted at, which is the presence of radical ideology. You had at one time –

COL. WILKERSON: You need to make it briefer; I don't have enough time.

Q: One last question.

COL. WILKERSON: Yeah, just finish it.

Q: Here's the point: Colonel, could you address the ideologicalization of American politics and leadership and the fact that institutions like the Republican Party, Hagel being obviously an outrider, have been radicalized. Lenin said, peace, bread, land, the dictatorship of the proletariat. How would your reforms for the CINCs, all these structural things, work when the governing apparatus has been contaminated, if you will, with a viral ideology?

COL. WILKERSON: Well, my answer, you might expect, presupposes I agree with your idea that we've been contaminated in that way. While there has been a serious attempt to do that, I'm not one who agrees that we are driven entirely by ideology now. If you're going to talk Republican and Democratic Party, now, that's a different ballgame. If we're going to talk the current administration as I knew it from the years that I knew it and have insights on it today, I don't think ideology drives them as much as the press and mass media in general and others would have it.

I do agree with your point that Douglas Feith was driven by ideology, and others in the administration. I don't think Dick Cheney is driven by ideology. I don't think Donald Rumsfeld is. If you mean by ideology a certain nationalism or a certain realism or whatever, perhaps, but not by what we associated with neoconservatism. So I can't address your question in a straightforward way – I'd like to – because I don't agree that we've been contaminated. I do agree that it's been a problem. I do agree that some people have advocated policies that have more or less been implemented strictly on the basis of ideology, and because those decisions were not exposed to the full glare of light – they should have been – they therefore got implemented.

But I don't think that's the fundamental problem of implementation. I think the fundamental problem is a broken bureaucracy and an inability to do the kinds of things that you need to do in the 21st century to succeed.

MR. CLEMONS: My colleague, Anatol Lieven.

Q: Thank you, sir, for a most interesting talk. Could I ask you to expand on one point? You said that if America withdraws from Iraq today or tomorrow we would have to go back in 10 years' time and basically re-conquer the Middle East. Could you explain why you think that that's the case? And could I ask you also to say, in your view, whereby America could draw down its presence and its interests in the region while continuing to defend its most vital interests worldwide? Thank you.

COL. WILKERSON: Let me take the second part first. I'm guardedly optimistic about what's happening there now. I think we may have reached the point, as I said earlier, where we've exhausted all the possibilities and we're actually listening to the Iraqis, we actually are in the ministries that we need to be in, listening to who is in charge of those ministries, and we're doing the kinds of things that are necessary to be done to leave at least something that's very different and not inimical to our interests in Baghdad, in Iraq in general, as we do leave – leave over the next five to eight years. Now, that's a fairly long timeframe. And I admire the president – for whatever reasons, I don't know, he hasn't intellectualized them; I think that's a shortcoming – for sticking to that sort of a timeframe and that sort of an attitude about the whole Iraq problem.

There are a number of reasons why I believe that this is strategic in a sense that Vietnam was not. Vietnam was a misinterpretation, in my view, of a Cold War side battle that really wasn't a Cold War side battle except in a superficial aspect. It really was a civil war. And the French misinterpreted, because of their colonial remnants, and we misinterpreted it because of our fixation on the Cold War, although I have some very provocative opinions about what we could have done in Vietnam if we'd stuck it out too. Nonetheless, Vietnam was not something that when we left, however with honor or without, we were going to have to revisit 10 years later because it was so strategic. I think Iraq is.

When I talk with my Turkish colleagues, for example, I really think Iraq is. One of the things the Turks are most perturbed about today, for example, is our inability to do anything about the PKK. Our inability to do anything about the PKK is not just because Secretary Rumsfeld doesn't want to do anything about the PKK or because Douglas Feith thought that the PKK would be a good ally. It's because he doesn't have enough troops. He doesn't have enough troops to do anything about the PKK. But the PKK disturbs the Turks, and I don't have too much problem envisioning the Turks taking over at least the top third of Iraq were we to leave a mess. I don't have a problem with the Syrians then becoming involved, the Iranians then becoming involved.

So that's one scenario I can draw for you. Another scenario is an Afghanistan in Iraq – essentially a terrorist breeding ground in Iraq. And people who criticize that opinion on my part say, well, it already is. The French are saying in this morning's Washington Post, as I recall, that they've actually got a conduit going from Paris or somewhere in France to Iraq and back again, training in Iraq and then coming back to Paris to blow up – kill Parisians and French in general.

The other thing that no one ever likes to talk about is SUVs and oil and consumption and, as one little girl said yesterday at the Yoshiyama Awards, do you know that we consume 60 percent of the world's resources? We do; we consume 60 percent of the world's resources. Well, we have an economy and we have a society that is built on the consumption of those resources. We better get fast at work changing the foundation – and I don't see us fast at work on that, by the way, another failure of this administration, in my mind – or we better be ready to take those assets. We had a discussion in policy planning about actually mounting an operation to take the oilfields in the Middle East, internationalize them, put them under some sort of U.N. trusteeship and administer the revenues and the oil accordingly. That's how serious we thought about it.

If you want those resources and you want governments that aren't inimical to your interests with regard to those resources, then you better pay attention to the area and you better not leave it in a mess. Now, people will say, maybe you, well, it won't be a mess that they won't handle themselves in the area. I don't trust that to be a good outcome.

MR. CLEMONS: Okay, well, this is the point where I try to be inclusive but I'm ultimately unfair. So we're going to skip the mikes. I'll repeat it for the camera, but we're going to do cluster questions. I gave you the pen so that we can track them if it's okay. So just your core comment. In the very back, yes. You've been very patient. Yeah, that's right.

Q: Yes, thank you.

MR. CLEMONS: And as brief as you can be.

Q: Yeah, sure thing. All right, you made the argument earlier that there was a consensus within the intelligence community that Iraq had a WMD capability, though not necessarily a nuclear capability. And equally important question: Was there consensus that Iraq posed an imminent threat for a potentially nuclear –

MR. CLEMONS: So was Iraq an imminent threat?

This gentleman right here in front.

Q: (Off mike.) What was the president's role in this cabal?

MR. CLEMONS: What was the president's role in the cabal?

Yes, sir?

Q: (Off mike.) What was it exactly that got you thrown out of his office?

(Laughter.)

MR. CLEMONS: What got you thrown out of the office? I'd like to know that as well.

Right here.

Q: (Off mike) – Executive Intelligence Review. If, as looks increasingly likely, Dick Cheney is pretty soon out of office, what would the effect of that be worldwide?

MR. CLEMONS: If Dick Cheney were out of office, the impact?

This gentleman, yes.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. CLEMONS: Is there a plan at all towards Iraq? I heard a few plans today.

Ian?

Q: Yeah, it seemed from your comments that one thing you've left out is that the military and foreign policy is much more highly politicized and – (off mike) – oriented than previous administrations. I wonder if you think that's true and how that affected foreign and military policy?

MR. CLEMONS: (Unintelligible.) Yes, ma'am?

Q: (Off mike) – one of three diplomats that resigned in office due to the war in Iraq. And can I get your comments on John Bolton as the U.N. –

(Laughter.)

MR. CLEMONS: Comments on John Bolton. I had nothing to do with that –

COL. WILKERSON: I remember your email.

MR. CLEMONS: I had nothing –

COL. WILKERSON: I remember your email. (Chuckles.)

MR. CLEMONS: I had nothing to do with Ann's (sp) comment but I am very interested.

Yes, sir.

Q: David Von Drehle of the Washington Post. Given the speed with which cabals can made decisions, why was it so slow in reaction to the changes on the ground in Iraq?

MR. CLEMONS: Yes, why are they freezing – Patrick Dougherty (sp)?

Q: Patrick Dougherty – (off mike). To what grand strategic purpose would you put this new financial security – (off mike)?

MR. CLEMONS: What grand strategic purpose would you put this – David?

Q: David Eisenberg, British American Security Information Council. With regard to your comments on the complexity of decision-making, how concerned are you that this administration seems to have a one-response-fits-all solution, which is to send in the military, whether it be in the aftermath of Katrina or in the pandemic?

MR. CLEMONS: One size fits all? This is all really hard.

Tom Olmstead?

Q: Could you very briefly comment on Condoleezza Rice's – (off mike)?

MR. CLEMONS: So Condie Rice's new flexibility.

We'll do these two last here. Yes?

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. CLEMONS: Karen Hughes – that came up a lot in Yasri Fuda's (ph) talk.

Yes?

Q: Short of your new regime you were thinking about – (off mike) – what would the state have to do, or we have to do, to restore some of the state's effectiveness, commenting perhaps in terms of Iraq?

MR. CLEMONS: And finally, Judge Schilling (sp)?

Q: A little bit on your last response: To what extent do you think that Rumsfeld and Cheney coming out of large business groups have led them to a different point of

view where the cabal you referred to gets more linked up to the cartels of the globalized firms that are trying to get greater control over key aspects and resources?

MR. CLEMONS: Cartel et al.

Now, I know that you're a great executive. (Laughter.) You're a legend in terms of how you process information, and so obviously there is no way that you can answer all of these as completely as you might, but we'll be interested in how you work through this challenge. (Laughter.)

COL. WILKERSON: How much time do I have? (Chuckles.)

MR. CLEMONS: As much as you like.

COL. WILKERSON: No. (Laughter.) Number one, was there a consensus about imminent threat? No. The president's role has been very integral to the process. When the president's weight is needed, the Oval Office is entered by one person and the president's role is obtained.

What got me thrown out? (Chuckles.) The nature of what we were turning over in Iraq to Dr. Rice, and my objection to a certain aspect of what we were turning over to her.

MR. CLEMONS: Save the rest for the book.

COL. WILKERSON: (Chuckles.) Is there a plan with regard to Iraq? I think so. I think we are at the point where we have exhausted all the possibilities, and that plan is very much dependent on Iraqis. And many people who have been there for a long time – like a good friend with whom I e-mail, who has been there two years and is principally dealing with the Minister of the Interior – say God bless us that we've finally gotten to the point where we're letting the Iraqis make the decisions rather than foisting decisions on them. That's the most – in my mind, the most effective change that's been made – out of necessity many would argue, but –

Military more politicized? Definitely, definitely. And how has that affected foreign policy? I think it has had a deleterious impact. It has had an impact that the military – is going to resonate with the military for a long time to come. I could be more specific, but I will not say anything about the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or a number of general officers who, in many occasions – if you're familiar – let me say it this way: if you're familiar with McMaster's book about the Vietnam conflict, for a long time there the military blamed the civilians for Vietnam. There's as much blame in the military – on the military for Vietnam as the civilians; certainly as much as one would hurl at McNamara can be hurled at a number of military officers.

I think the same thing is the case here, only it's getting worse. John Bolton – I don't remember the – I just wrote John Bolton. The specific nature of the question was –

Q: On just anything –

COL. WILKERSON: Just anything. (Laughter.) Well, what really was the straw that broke the camel's back with me was John going around trying to get Mohamed elBaradei eliminated from the IAEA, even after he had been admonished to stop, and doing it with our allies, with our friends, and doing it in a most blatant fashion.

Why so slow with respect to changes in Iraq? I don't think they've been slow. In fact, again, my correspondents in Iraq – both military and civilian – I think would say, "Wow, stop this train for a minute, I want to get off. I can't keep anything constant." The changes have been hurled at them at a speed that they couldn't manage.

If you're talking about being able to see the results of a change or being able to say that that's positive whereas the past was negative, I agree with you. There hasn't been a lot of visible sign of change; it looks like plodding on. But there has been enormous change, and that has been part of the problem: not sticking to a – not having a game plan in the first place and not sticking to it, and not tactically amending it as you go along as you meet reality.

Again, I recommend to you "The Assassins' Gate." George Packer gets this right. There was simply no plan, other than humanitarian assistance and a few other things like protection of oil and so forth, with regard to post-war Iraq. There was no plan.

To what grand strategic purpose would I apply this? I assume that you mean there is there some single word I could encapsulate our next 50 years, like containment or whatever. No. I'm not sure that that's helpful. I'm not sure that containment didn't become the word with which we encapsulated our policy well after George Kennan and others decided that that was a way to approach the world, but I would say that I think things have changed radically.

I was a long time coming to this conclusion. I was with Powell in 1989, '90, '91 and '92 as we built the base force, as we tried to convince the secretary of Defense that we needed to get ahead of the power curve on cutting America's armed forces, on delivering a peace dividend, and so forth, but I look back on that time and I say, you strategic idiot. You did not realize that while you were cutting and pasting, reality was outstripping you. Things were changing. Things were changing so fast that you couldn't keep up with them, and yet you were going along as if the Cold War was over indeed, but things hadn't changed that much, and things had changed dramatically.

And what I would say we're dealing with now is more or less what we had to deal with at another time in our life; you could say pre-Cold War. We have to deal with a whole messy world with a lot of people out there, and we've changed the parameters of that deal.

John Quincy Adams said we're the friends of liberty everywhere and the custodians only of our own. Well, walk into the National Defense University and you'll see what George Marshall said planted on the wall there, that we're not just the defenders of our own anymore; we're the defenders of all those with whom we have treaty alliances – Article V of NATO being the most formidable, an attack on one is attack on the other – and some people have even forgotten about – do we know we're an ally with Thailand? Do we know we're an ally with the Philippines? We're treaty signatories, and we've got a lot of other things out there that we have promised to defend. It's a very different world the world is essentially fractious today, and failed states are the future, not the past, and we are the proprietor. It is our obligation and our responsibility in some cases to be a good proprietor. In other cases, we have to be more realistic.

So I can't find a single term to encapsulate it, but this requires a much better decision-making process than that which was honed and made for and did a pretty good job in a monolithic struggle. It's a very different process I think.

One response fits all, the military? Absolutely. I agree with that. I'll tell you a story. I won't give any names. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff --1991 I think it was – (laughter) – and he comes out of the National Military Command Center leading a group that has just visited, a very prestigious group. And the leader of that group, who later went on to be in government, too – the leader of that group turns to Colin Powell and he says, "How does it feel, General, to be in charge of the only institution in America that works?" Now Colin Powell was embarrassed – one of the few times I've ever seen him sort of at a loss for words – and he quickly recovered and said something to the effect of, well, I don't think that's true, and the conversation changed. People believe that. People believe that. We could talk about that all day.

To what – Condie Rice's new flexibility – I have a Rasputin version –

MR. : Give us that one.

COL. WILKERSON: -- a cynical version, and I have, I think, a more realistic version. There are a number of reasons. One, she's more intimate with the president – unquestionably. Two, the administration finds itself in some fairly desperate straits, politically and otherwise. I was looking at the polls yesterday and had to do a double-take.

There is a wide gap – more than the five or six blocks between the State Department and the White House. It's incredible the difference in cultures, and that's why so much of foreign policy over the years has gravitated to the White House. But I think, because of her intimacy with the president, because of rather desperate straits in some other areas and definitely not wanting to take on anything new – I haven't heard anyone lately saying they want a war with North Korea, for example. And the president was wonderful in that regard during some very tense deliberations over North Korea. He essentially put his foot down: I do not want a war on the Korean peninsula. And that

was very helpful. It was very helpful. It didn't help us open negotiations, but it did help us fight off some other more – less desirable results.

So it's a number of things. It's a combination of her intimacy with the president, her own skills, a weariness on the part of the world to continue to deal with the United States unless it is forthcoming – more forthcoming, and willingness to accept her as being more forthcoming – a number of things.

Public diplomacy? Broken. Broken. But I will say this. I will say this. An Egyptian friend of mine said this to me: It's hard to say, "Oh, shit." (Laughter.) Okay? And I think if I had Karen Hughes here or Margaret Tutweiler or Charlotte Beers – all of whom were undersecretaries of State for – or are undersecretaries of State for public diplomacy, they would say, "You're right; it is hard."

So if you're unilaterally declaring Kyoto dead, if you're declaring the Geneva Convention is not operative, if you're doing a host of things that the world doesn't agree with you on and you're doing them blatantly and in their face – as I said before, without grace – then you've got to pay the consequences, and the consequences are your public diplomacy people have a really tough job. And is Karen Hughes going to turn it around? I pray for her every night. (Laughter.)

What does DOS need to do, in Iraq especially? Well, Colin Powell did something that I hope lasts for a long time. He was the first secretary of State – in I think it was 18 years – to hire above attrition. We hired over 1100 new Foreign Service officers. We redesigned the A-100 course, which is their basic training, and we put these young people – for the most part, but not all young people because we were hiring the skills we needed at whatever age we – you know, came along. But we put these people out into the field with a – I think, a new mystique, a new ethos, a new feeling about themselves and about America's job in the world, and I think that will be his greatest legacy. Those people are out there.

So getting the Foreign Service to wake up to the fact that the world has changed – and many have. I don't mean to say – I'm not speaking about the Foreign Service in a pejorative sense as much as I am the same sense I spoke about myself. We need to wake up; we need to realize the world has changed.

I'm really troubled by the way our embassies look around the world. And people will come up to me – with all justification – and they will say, "Do you want everybody dead? Do you want everybody dead?"

Well, there are ways to do that. They cost money. They cost money. You can do things like put in blast resistant glass. You can do things like make sure that the way you're looking at the place where the embassy is situated is the right way to look at it; that is, not just in terms of accessibility and so forth, but also in terms of security.

And Chuck Williams was doing some of this at OBO as he revamped and revised the way we built overseas buildings for our embassy personnel and consulates and so forth, but there are ways you can make it look more welcoming and yet still be a fairly secure place. They cost money – as Admiral Croft (sp) said in his report, lots of money. And so it means doing something about that 400 billion (dollar) versus 30 billion (dollar) discrepancy if you're going to keep the State Department and the Defense Department as separate entities. Personally, I'd like to see the entities put together in a whole new department, but that's revolutionary.

Don Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, from the business world – how much influence on their decisions? I think a lot – in how much the decisions reflect their connections with the cartels and the corporations and so forth, I think a lot. I think the president, too. You bring this sort of idea that the bottom line is everything.

I will tell you, as a military man, the bottom line is not everything. It's far from everything. One of the reasons Colin Powell answered the question when he was asked, after the first Gulf War, why he sent five carriers – one of the reasons he said because he didn't have six – (scattered laughter) – was because he understood that the bottom line is not everything. When you start taking a paring knife to the military to cut it -- like a businessman would cut his business -- you are damaging and perhaps destroying the potential of that military to win future conflicts. You never know what you are going to need on the battlefield, so you'd better have six of them. Five of them won't show up, four of them won't be able to communicate, and I could go on. But you need overlap, you need redundancy. You need, as Powell used to say “decisive force.” People say he said “overwhelming force;” most often he said “decisive force.” And when you are dealing with government in many ways, whether it's Katrina, Rita, responding to a nuclear attack or whatever, you'd better have 10 cases of water where you think you need one. You'd better have 15 million MREs where you think you need only a million because you never know in a crisis, and the best way to be prepared is to have lots more than you think you're going to need or want. And that's just the reality of the way you do business in government and in the military as opposed to the way you do it at GE – oh, I shouldn't use GE – (scattered laughter) – you know, wherever you do business. It's very – it's a very different environment. So when you have businessmen making the decisions within government, it's not necessarily bad, but you've got to be willing to listen to other people who might have different opinions to those you have.

I think that's it, wasn't it?

MR. CLEMONS: Well, I – Larry, I'm sorry – I've got to close it, I'm sorry. We had to make the decision, so – I know there were seven or eight other of you who had questions, and I would have liked to have taken them all. I just can't, but I'm pleased to say that Larry Wilkerson is working on a book, and I think that maybe we've gotten a – much more of a glimpse – I mean, I'll have to teach you a little about marketing, to hold a little bit back – (laughter) – but I want to thank all of you for joining us today, and I want to particularly thank Larry Wilkerson for a very candid, thoughtful and provocative set of comments today.

Thank you very much.

COL. WILKERSON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. CLEMONS: So we'll be back, and if you'd like to join us, make sure you get me your card. Thanks.

(END)