Panel 4: The Military and Operational Aspects of Preemption

Moderator: **Stephen Flanagan**
Panelists: **Elaine Bunn, Col. Charles Lutes, Ashton Carter**
Friday, October 1, 2004; 4:00 P.M.

FLANAGAN: I'm here with two of my current colleagues and one former colleague who will be joining us shortly from Harvard Square. This panel is about the military and operational considerations concerning preemption. Now to preempt a bit, or really to respond to two of the questions that were raised in the last session: we're discussing this not because we think preemption is the answer to all of these questions, or that we want to stifle debate. Rather, we recognize, as was discussed here earlier today, but also in the debate last night by Senator Kerry, no president, particularly in the context of the threat of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism becoming joined in a nuclear 9/11, can forsake the preemptive use

of military force against that particular threat, but also against other threats to our national security.

We're proceeding this afternoon on this panel from the assumption that preemption will probably be a tool in some future president's toolkit. However prominent or however far buried it is in that toolkit, as Steve Walt suggested, it will be out there. Particularly, as I say, with regard to terrorism, but also with the increasing risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other transnational threats that can no longer be controlled and addressed in the traditional state-to-state deterrent fashion that we have seen over the previous several decades.

So we thought this would be a useful rounding out of the discussion. Now, to let you know where we're coming from, our Institute at the National Defense University includes a program called Future Strategic Concepts. And the goal of that program is to assist the Department of Defense in developing plans and policies, organizations, and capabilities, to ensure that they can provide the President with the full spectrum of options for dealing with these emerging security problems that have strategic, i.e., fundamentally decisive national implications for our country—or, as my colleague Elaine Bunn to my right likes to refer to them, "messy strategic situations."

So let me introduce my two colleagues. First of all, to my immediate right is Elaine Bunn, who is director of our Future Strategic Concepts Program. She is a career civil servant with over two decades of service in the Pentagon as a policy advisor and strategic planner. In the last three years [she] joined us in our think tank setting at the National Defense University. And to show that this is truly a catholic gathering, she is a SAIS graduate.

Next to her is Colonel, U.S. Air Force, Chuck Lutes. Colonel Lutes recently joined our institute from the Joint Staff Strategic Plans and Policy section, the so-called J5. He has a background in strategic planning and counterproliferation and nonproliferation activities, and in certain aspects of counterterrorism. Again, keeping with the catholic theme, he was a former military fellow at the Kennedy School of Government.

Last but not least, Professor Ashton Carter, who just joined us, is Ford Foundation Professor of Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School, and co-director, with former Secretary of Defense William Perry, of the Preventative Defense Project. He is a former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy.

We're going to proceed in the following fashion: We've asked Elaine Bunn to provide, first of all, an overview of the nature and type of preventive military actions—to talk a little bit about the timelines—and then to also address the effects of various uses of preemption.

We'll then turn to Colonel Lutes who will talk about some of the more spe-

cific military operational planning factors that go into this. Essentially he will have a conversation with you all, as if you were a policymaker coming in and asking, "Okay, well I want to go attack some country preemptively. What are the considerations that I need to take into account?"

And then finally we've asked Ash to address the specific case which he was involved in directly with Secretary of Defense Perry, the consideration of preemptive action against the North Korean government in 1994, with regard to its first move toward development of nuclear weapons. I'll also give him the opportunity to address any other facet of this important topic. So without further ado I will turn it over to Elaine Bunn.

ELAINE BUNN

Thanks, Steve. The problem with being on the last panel of the day is that most things worth saying have been said. But since I haven't said them I will proceed unabashed. As Steve said, we at the Institute for National Strategic Studies are in the options business. I've worked in various parts of the Department of Defense under five presidents and eight secretaries of defense, which is what leads me to believe what many have said today, which is that preemption is an option that any administration is likely to want to have. It's hard to imagine any U.S. president who would give up that option completely, because there may be situations where it's the best of a bunch of bad options.

I'm not a president, but I have played one in exercises, and you often do get to choose among less than optimal options. Of course, as we've said earlier today, preemptive action can have a broader meaning and application, rather than just the use of force. There may be preemptive actions that involve non-military, financial, diplomatic, [or] law enforcement measures like going after terrorist bank accounts, the arrest of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. But although preemptive action won't always mean the use of force, sometimes it will come to that. And since it is the title of this conference, "The Preemptive Use of Force," I think we do need to assess the military and operational implications of preemption, the factors that policymakers

have to weigh when considering it, and the capabilities that are required to carry it out.

There are obviously other factors to be weighed—the political, the diplomatic—that other panels have already discussed today. First, I just want to talk about the types of military preemption. There is a tendency I think to conflate—certainly these days—to conflate preemption and Iraq. So I think it's important to lay out the range of scenarios that could include the preemptive use of military force.

I think on one end of the spectrum you have what we've talked about a lot today, preemptive war—an Iraq-type situation that includes regime change as an objective, and all the follow-on action required in that kind of scenario. On the other end of the spectrum we have the use of the military, for instance, to interdict ships at sea, to get at the components and piece parts of WMD capability. The Proliferation Security Initiative is an example that's already been given of that. It's what I call aggressive nonproliferation.

And then somewhere in the middle of that spectrum is the one-time, in-and-out military strike. It's what some people call the "golden BB." Usually we think about that as meaning bombs on target. It could use other means like Special Operations Forces, information operations—those could be used too. But we usually think about a strike on a particular target. An example of that, of course, that we've heard already today is the 1981 Israeli strike on the Osirak Reactor. Of course one of the problems with this spectrum is you never know when that one-time strike may lead to an all-out war which moves you to the far end of the spectrum.

Now each of these three illustrative types of military preemption has different objectives, requires different capabilities, and has different planning factors. I think often in the past in the debates about preemption interlocutors tend to talk past each other because one is really talking about preventive war, another is talking about the one-time strike, and they really don't make the assumption explicit as to what type they're talking about.

On the issue of timing: there are, several ways to think about the preemption timeline. One is the very traditional peacetime-to-crisis-to-conflict to post-conflict timeline, in which preemptive action is what you do in peacetime or a building crisis. But another way to look at the timeline, particularly with regard to weapons of mass destruction, is where on the timeline an adversary is in the process of acquiring or actually using WMD. There are some cases on the WMD acquisition-to-usetimeline that I think we could all agree passed the imminence test. In fact we've heard several people raise the case:if you had great intelligence that North Korea is fueling its missiles and is about to launch, I think we'd all agree. The director of the Japanese Defense Agency said that a strike against North Korea in that scenario really wouldn't even be preemption, because in

essence the war would've already begun. That was JDA Director Ishiba, not the new director Ono, but I found it interesting that the JDA director would say that wouldn't be preemption.

It gets harder, I think, as you back up the timeline from there to where an adversary has a usable WMD capability but is not on the verge of using it; to a point where he may have scientists, he's trying to gather the components and the materials to have that capability; all the way back to the first decision to acquire WMD. All along that spectrum there are preemptive actions that you can take—of course not all of them military. But even with the use of force there are a variety of options.

It is ironic, I think, that the closer you get to the imminent-use end of the spectrum, the easier a preemptive military strike—the one-time in and out—is to justify politically, but the harder it may be to be operationally decisive. And that's because the adversary will likely have protected the intended targets of the preemption through deception, through hardening, through burial, through dispersal, even pre-delegation of release. And then on the other hand, the farther from the imminent-use end of the spectrum you get, the less acceptable it's likely to be politically. But it may be that preemptive strikes at that stage are more likely to be effective in eliminating or at least postponing the WMD threat.

That leads us to the issue of effects. I think decision makers contemplating preemptive action have to really think through what their objectives are, the effectiveness of any military operation in achieving those objectives, and then how they measure the effectiveness. If, for instance, the overriding objective is regime change, the measure of whether you succeeded or not is fairly straightforward—though it's not necessarily easy to achieve the objective, and perhaps the second order effects may be very problematic and not easy in the aftermath. It's everything that we're seeing in Iraq right now.

On the other hand, if the objective is to disarm rather than to remove the leadership of the adversary, the measure of effectiveness may be more squishy and more temporal. Will a preemptive strike, the one-time in-and-out strike for instance, eliminate a threat or just delay it? If it's only going to delay it, for what period of time does it delay, and how useful is that delay? The Israeli attack on the Osirak Reactor—I think we can say it probably set back the Iraqi nuclear program. It's unclear whether it set it back a few months, a few years. But as the inspections after Operation Desert Storm in 1991 found, the attack did not end the Iraqi program.

Then there's the question of what level of confidence a decision maker requires, in both the intelligence information and the U.S. ability to effectively carry out the mission, in order to make a decision to preempt. If, for example, your objective is to destroy weapons that are already weaponized, how much of it do you have to destroy for the preemptive action to be considered a success? All

of it? That's what you'd like to do. What if you just destroyed most of it? What if it's just some of it?

There's unlikely to be absolute confidence in the intelligence that you're going to know where everything is to be able to locate the WMD, to take it out. So then you have to ask, will the preemption prompt the adversary to use the remainder? And if so, is the U.S. better or worse off after a preemptive action?

And I think there the answer really does depend fundamentally on the assumption the decision maker makes about the likelihood of use by the adversary. Would a rogue leader use WMD in any event? Either early or as his regime is falling, in an effort to inflict as much pain as possible? So if he were going to use WMD anyway, and the U.S. destroys only part of it, then preemption may have been worthwhile. But if it prompts an adversary to use the WMD capability that is left, that he otherwise would not have used, then preemption turns out to be a pretty bad choice. The difficulty, of course, is knowing the answer in advance when you're trying to make the decision about what to do.

We can also ask whether terrorists are a different case than rogue states and whether the assumption that possession equals use applies in the case of terrorists. And if so, then the better-or-worse-off presumption in the terrorist case would be in favor of preemption, whereas it may not be in the case of rogue states.

I'm going to concentrate on that one-time-strike part of the military spectrum. We've had a lot of discussion today about the preventive war end, so I'm going to focus on a different part. In that one-time strike scenario—since, as we've discussed, preemptive action may not be 100 percent effective—I think decision makers have to think also about the role of defenses when they're considering preemption. And that's defenses of all types. I'm not just talking about ballistic missile defense, but also cruise missile and other air defenses, port and border security, all types of defenses. Should they be put on a higher state of alert when you're considering a preemptive strike? And if you do that, does raising the alert level of your defenses have an adverse effect on tactical surprise, which you may want in that kind of one-time strike?

You also have to ask whether the U.S. government would be more likely to consider preemption if it believes that its defenses can be effective against any WMD capabilities that remain. Conversely, you could wonder whether effective defenses allow the U.S. to hold off on preemption because we could defend against the initial bad things that could be thrown our way afterwards. In other words, defenses may decrease the pressure on the decision maker to strike first in a threatening situation. Probably depends on the decision maker and how effective they feel those defenses are.

Of course then the decision maker has to ask, "Militarily, can we do it?" Not only do we have the intelligence, which is always going to be the long pole in the tent, but also do we have the military forces to carry out the strike. Chuck

Lutes will address those issues so I won't go into them now, but I would just note that it's not a given that we would have the right intelligence or the right military capabilities to do this kind of strike.

Finally, I just want to look at the issue of Iraq and what effect it has had on the preemptive use of military force in the future—whether it has raised or lowered the bar. And there again I think we have to be a bit more nuanced and look at this spectrum of the types of military preemption. For the preventive war/regime change type of preemptive action, which could involve 140,000-plus ground forces and high casualties and costs, and all the involvement in a long-term transition that we're seeing now—I think the bar is higher now. The credibility of intelligence post-Iraq will likely be questioned—maybe even by the decision maker and certainly by those at home and abroad. So for that type of preemption, I think future leaders are likely to be very cautious.

On the other end of the spectrum, for the Proliferation Security Initiative kind of military preemption, I think that requires very different capabilities—the kind of naval forces that can intercept at sea, the kind of intelligence that monitors the flow of components. And there the U.S. may be willing to act on less certain intelligence because the implications of being wrong are not as severe as in the other types. So I think the bar to that kind of military preemption may be lower post-Iraq. And partly because much of the world doesn't want to see the U.S. going to the other end of the spectrum, the preventive war end, they may be more willing even to join us in that type of preemption.

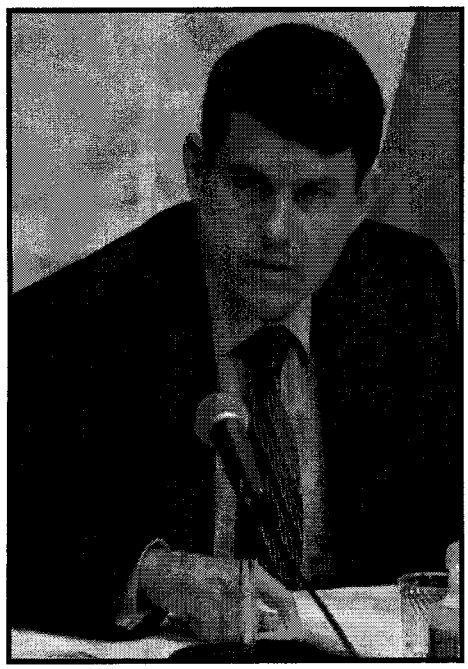
In the middle of the spectrum, the one-time, in-and-out strike, which would require very different capabilities—the kind of strategic strike capabilities that Strategic Command has been looking at in the conventional area, and perhaps special operations forces, and where a different type of intelligence would be required, such as detailed location and characterization of targets to be struck—it's hard to say, but I think the bar for that kind of one-time strike is probably lower than for preventive war and higher than for PSI-type interdiction. But the special consideration needed is whether it would lead to all out war.

I think it also makes a difference whether you're talking about preemption of terrorist or rogue states. Certainly in my discussions with foreign counterparts it seems that in the case of terrorists, preemption—even the use of military force type of preemptive strikes—is relatively non-controversial. It's the use of military force against nation states, even those that are labeled as rogue states, that raises the controversy.

So in conclusion, I don't think—as most of the people today have said—I don't think preemption is dead. Whatever happens in the elections, preemptive military action will continue to be an option. But I think there are likely to be few cases where the preemptive use of military strikes or preventive war will be chosen as the best option.

FLANAGAN: Great, thank you very much, Elaine. And just a brief commercial message too: For those of you who haven't seen it, we've made available Elaine's piece in our *Strategic Forum* series on preemption that goes into more detail than she was able to cover in her presentation this afternoon. Let me turn the floor over to Colonel Lutes.

COL. CHARLES LUTES



Okay, thank you, Steve. Most of you I'm sure are not aware that in February of this year, sensors detected a nuclear explosion over a remote part of the Indian Ocean. This caused the President to hastily convene a session of the National Security Council in the White House situation room. Characterization of this detonation was sketchy at first, but intelligence, as it dribbled in, indicated that it had nothing to do with India or Pakistan. After some further consultation with our Russian and Chinese allies, they seemed to rule out also North Korea as a suspect.

So therefore evidence seemed to be pointing to Iran as possibly having conducted a nuclear test well in advance of any intelligence estimates. The President, determined not to live under a nuclear-armed Iran, turned to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and asked for military options. Twelve hours later, B-2 bombers from Whiteman Air Force Base were launched on orders to attack five sites on Iran's nuclear program.

Now, if you seem to have missed this event, it's probably because you weren't home that Wednesday night for the episode of *The West Wing* entitled "The Warfare of Genghis Khan." And maybe the decision making there was a little bit dramatic and often simplistic. But what was missing altogether was what happens over at the Pentagon across the river. Like the proverbial duck on the pond there's a lot of feet going frantically to plan an operation such as this. And that's what I want to talk about.

When the president turns to the chairman, what is going in a military planner's mind and what does he have to consider? And I want to offer a few

thoughts about that. Now I'm going to talk primarily at the lower end of the spectrum—the middle to low end that Elaine just mentioned, that "golden BB" strike, the PSI thing—because preventive war tends to look a lot like major combat operations. But along the full spectrum of war a lot of these considerations still apply.

Elaine already talked about the need to understand strategic objectives, whether the object is regime change or more narrowly to just disarm an adversary. But primarily I'm talking about the latter in my discussion here. As a military officer, I'm honor bound to pay homage to the often quoted but rarely read Prussian Staff Officer, Clausewitz, who said, "War is a continuation of policy by other means." That's ingrained in the military mind. It's a universal concept in democratic societies that in formulating military goals for any endeavor, planners must ensure alignment to the greater strategic and political aims.

The case of a one-time preemptive action implies limited objectives. But we have to make sure that they get them right. Now closely aligned with this, the military planners are now starting to ask, "What effects are to be achieved?" In military jargon, effects-based operation—and yes we have an acronym for it, it's EBO—is a sophisticated method of crafting military operations to more efficiently achieve policy goals. In preemptive action we seek to illuminate an imminent threat, either to prevent an adversary from developing a capability or forestalling its use.

Now, looking beyond a simple view of physical destruction of such enemy capabilities, EBO would have us consider actions to prevent constitution of such capability. Rather than playing the carnival game Whack-A-Mole where we take a hammer and whack the moles every time they pop out of their holes, EBO would have us simply unplug the machine and not play the game at all.

Now, just as important is a question that I don't think we ask often enough. And that is what effect or results do we want to avoid. Now, here we've got to be aware of the law of unintended consequences. Elaine already mentioned that preemptive action may drive an adversary to the very behavior that we seek to prevent or affect a response that we're unprepared to deal with. She mentioned the Osirak example, and that's been mentioned several times here. Kadir Hamza, Saddam's bomb maker, said that it may have delayed it a little bit in the beginning, but it actually accelerated the nuclear program and drove it underground.

Besides those long term implications, military planners have to be focused on minimizing collateral effects and dealing with potential retaliatory responses. Since likely preemptive targets include chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons or facilities, we've done a lot of work in mitigating unintended releases of toxic materials from strikes on such targets. The Department of Defense is actively pursuing an agent defeat capability designed to smartly consume targeted toxins in the initial explosion, with little or no release of such agents. Now other considerations

may include limiting civilian casualties, damage to nearby cultural icons, or even friendly assets in the target area to include allies.

Now the law of unintended consequences has an impact on another major planning consideration, and that's the level at which execution decisions will be made. The decision whether to preempt is a presidential one. Once a general decision has been made, will it also require high level authority for weapons release? Real-time intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance tempts decision makers to retain control of such decisions inside the Washington Beltway, often at the expense of our ability to attack time-sensitive targets, in other words, moles that pop out of their holes for just minutes or seconds at a time.

As an unmanned Predator armed with Hellfire missiles reconnoiters over a suspected hideout, must the remote pilot wait for presidential go-ahead, or worse yet a legal review, before firing? Questions such as these need to be addressed in advance.

Now the next consideration for military planners is what type of force to use. We're assuming that the political decision has already been made and that the military is the tool of choice for preemptive action—or at least the tool that was chosen by the political decision maker. Now that doesn't guarantee that it's the right instrument, as was alluded to in a question earlier. There may be sound political reasons for using a hammer to drive a screw, but the execution then tends to get messy, and it's the military that will have to deal with that mess.

The question then becomes what type of military force is best suited. We offer a panoply of capabilities from the kinetic—to include cruise missiles from a carrier strike battle group, precision munitions from B-2 bombers, or other options from our conventional and non-conventional global strike capability. We also have non-kinetic options—information operations, computer attack, maritime interdiction, and special operations such as SEAL teams with the capability to disarm nuclear weapons. Here the military planner gets to put forward his option. Yet again, the choice must be made by the policymaker. For instance, in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Joint Chiefs of Staff was unanimous in advocating a preemptive strike to eliminate the gathering threat. They were convinced that a Naval blockade would lead to further war, yet in the end President Kennedy's "pretty weak response" as characterized by Curtis LeMay, proved that preemptive action is sufficient to get the job done. We'll never know what might've happened if LeMay had gotten his way.

Now another important consideration is how much cooperation is required by other nations. Despite its reputation, preemption can hardly be unilateral from a military perspective. At a minimum we will likely require some use of our own forces assigned to foreign bases, over-flight rights, or other types of permissions, if you will, to conduct preemptive action. For more extensive multilateral operations, interoperability and information sharing are key ingredients.

In planning preemptive action that relies on stealth and surprise, allied involvement is a delicate balance to ensure assistance and cooperation doesn't become a hindrance. In interdicting supplies of WMD, the Proliferation Security Initiative is an inventive approach that maximizes cooperation on a larger scale but minimizes participation in specific operations to those required to conduct the operation. Conceivably that may at times not involve the United States.

Now a related issue is one of training and exercising, particularly those involving joint or coalition partnerships. Preemptive missions by nature tend to be ad hoc. Yet we need to prepare for such mission in advance, to avoid disastrous results such as the Desert One debacle in 1980. Generic capabilities for strike and interdiction are now exercized on a routine basis, and with the capabilities established rehearsals can be conducted prior to final execution.

Now the last of these planning considerations, but not least certainly, is the issue of intelligence. And here the military planner needs to take the Clint Eastwood approach. And by this I don't mean "go ahead make my day." I mean the more enlightened Dirty Harry that would say, "A man's got to know his limitations." And for preemptive action his greatest limitation may well be the quality of his intelligence. Understanding what we know and don't know—and I don't have time to get into that in Rumsfeldian terms—is crucial to the military success and ultimately to the political success of the operation. More on this later, but it leads me to sort of the next section I want to talk about, and that is understanding the nature of our adversary and potential targets.

Now, clearly the type of preemption target dictates what the military can and can't do and how he might strike it. Is the preemption aimed at military forces? Weapons? WMD infrastructure? WMD material in transit? Terrorist leaders? Or even the regime of a state? They all have different characteristics, risks, and certainly repercussions. Now complicating military operation is the fact that adversaries or the targets of preemption are taking actions to counter the U.S. ability to preempt with military forces. For example, adversaries may embed a target within commercial activity, cloak it in denial or deception operations, put it underground, conceal it, make it mobile, embed it in populated areas that make it difficult to target without substantial collateral damage.

Now our adversaries have learned from the past. In 1981 Iraq had put all its nuclear eggs in one basket in Osirak. But today, in Iran, nation capabilities are dispersed among several facilities—Bushehr, Natanz, and Arak and who knows where else. North Korea relies heavily on hard and deeply buried facilities. WMD components move in unmarked containers on ships and planes, and terrorists move freely in ungoverned areas. Finding and tracking targets such as these present a difficult intelligence challenge. In planning preemptive action there will always be an element of doubt in characterizing the target. And for those on the move, time sensitivity becomes a big issue. We may not have the luxury of striking on our own

time table; we might have to strike when the target presents itself.

Adversaries may also choose robust defense methods to protect particularly valuable sites. In heavily defended North Korea a preemptive strike against the Yongbyon nuclear facility would have to deal with surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft batteries. While such threats can be defeated, they raise the stakes by increasing the force packages necessary that must be applied.

More importantly, planners must consider the potential repercussions of preemptive attack. As Ash Carter will probably allude to, consideration of such an attack against Yongbyon in 1994 was abandoned not because it was felt it wouldn't succeed, but because of the concern for the possibility that it may unleash hordes of North Korean troops coming over the DMZ.

Now given what I've said thus far, I can make a few generalizations and observations about the characteristics of our forces and what we need to have in order to conduct preemptive action. First, our forces must be capable of unwarned strike. In other words, they must be stealthy. Some forces should be able to reach their targets without forewarning, especially for relocatable and mobile targets. Surprise, at least in the timing of an operation, is crucial for its success.

Next, they must be timely and responsive. Some forces should be capable of striking targets within a brief period, with rapid arrival after a decision is made. The ability to act promptly is needed not only to take advantage of potentially fleeting opportunities but also to allow the maximum amount of time for consultation, consideration, and deliberation of whether the U.S. will take action. Some have said that the decision time will be so great that it doesn't really matter whether the forces can arrive in 15 minutes or 30 minutes or hours or days. But I can imagine situations where political leaders will have already thought through the decision on a specific target such as a terrorist leader, or if you have confirmed intelligence, and the go ahead will require timely response.

Our forces must also be able to operate from long range. We need to be capable of reaching wherever needed with minimal dependence on over-flight, forward basing, or forward access because the political situation may not always allow you to get those.

Our forces must also be decisive, in other words, effective in carrying out the objective. This includes the ability to destroy hardened and deeply buried targets, and to destroy nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons or agents without dispersing them. And to do that our forces must be precise and accurate. This contributes both to the effectiveness and in minimizing unintended damage, another key attribute. The prospect of widespread collateral damage would complicate a decision to take preemptive action. Minimizing collateral damage is related to precision accuracy and the ability to destroy CBRN weapons or agents without dispersing them.

We must also expect our forces to be reliable. For preemptive actions there would be a premium on ensuring that force options work the first time, which means using the most reliable forces, perhaps ones that we've predetermined. Some may also need to be sustainable, particularly on those actions that may have a longer duration.

And finally we must have diverse options—having a variety of types of forces, delivery, means, and weapons. Air, ground, and sea capabilities and effects provide a wider range of options and a choice about which characteristics are best suited for the situation and constraints at the time.

Now given these attribute there are a couple of key enablers that we've got to have in order to make this all work. The first we've alluded to is exquisite intelligence. Now by that I mean accurate, timely, persistent, and actionable. Military forces with the characteristics I've described can only be effectively employed in preemptive actions if there is adequate intelligence to carry out the mission. It is also needed for after-action assessment to be sure the objectives have been met. That said, however, we have to recognize that we'll never have as much intelligence as we want. Preemptive military action will likely be a judgment call based on incomplete or at least not fully satisfactory information.

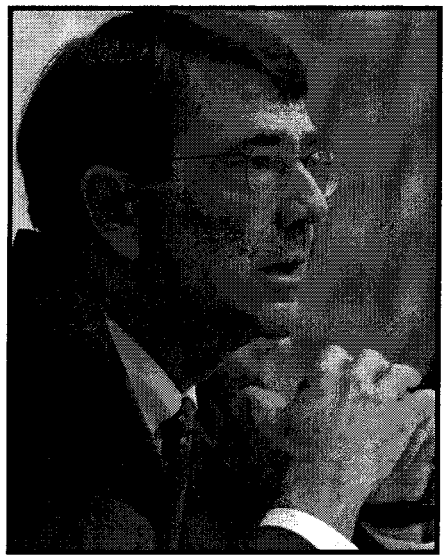
The other key enabler is robust command, control, and communications. Our military forces used in preemptive strike must have the C3 capabilities to allow them to be effective, timely, and responsive to senior decision makers.

In summary, while planners have a wide range of forces to choose from, it is an operational art to apply the right force to the right time at the right situation. And to some, preemptive use of force is nothing more than a blunt hammer. But skilled planning is an instrument of finesse.

And oh, by the way, in that episode of *The West Wing,* it wasn't the Iranians. It was the Israelis that were connected to that nuclear test, which opens a whole new can of worms. But fortunately for President Bartlett all he had to do was recall the bombers and we were able to forget about it for the next episode. If life were really only that simple. Thank you.

FLANAGAN: Thank you very much, Chuck, for adding that note of realism into this discussion. Professor Carter, the floor is yours.

ASHTON CARTER



Thank you, Steve. And let me thank Steve Flanagan, an old colleague, for inviting me to come here today. And Steve Bosworth, who I don't see here, but Steve and I have worked on North and South Korea, both of which have been problematic in very different ways over the years. He was a great emissary during the time when I was doing the North Korea policy review with Bill Perry, and for my sins went to Pyongyang and Seoul many more times.

I want to associate myself with the work of Elaine Bunn. I have a long history of doing that because she worked for me in the Pentagon, and I would simply take the work that she produced to the secretary and claim it was my own. But she's given a pretty good picture of the width and breadth of this concept—preemption—which is a very elastic thing, covers many kinds of operations, has been sort of noisily proclaimed over the last couple of years, not terribly helpfully but that's water over the dam. Now preemption is one tool in the toolkit of counterproliferation and one to which one might have to turn from time to time. And I think the reason for my presence here is that we seriously considered that in 1994. Let me describe the circumstances of that situation.

In 1994 you had at Yongbyon an operating reactor. The fuel rods within that reactor were still in the core, and they contained several bombs worth of plutonium. The possibility therefore existed to strike the reactor in such a way as to entomb the fuel rods—the spent fuel. Were one to do that, of course, one doesn't eliminate the plutonium—plutonium has a half-life of 24,000 years—so once you make it, it's there through many turns of the wheel of history, which is one reason that we have to be militant about not allowing that material to be created in the first place. But it would have taken the North Koreans some time and some hazard to dig it out. And of course they could have built another reactor and so forth. So this was not the end of the problem of North Korea's nuclear ambitions, but it would set them back some years.

Striking an operating nuclear reactor is a little tricky because if you're not careful, you can have a meltdown kind of situation. This is a graphite-moderated reactor like the Chernobyl reactor in which you have flammable material essentially associated with the core, which can volatilize the fission products in the core

and create a plume downwind, and that was something we obviously wished to avoid if we possibly could.

And we did have quite a bit of information on this reactor and the design of the reactor and therefore believed that we could, with precision munitions, which are an essential ingredient of this, strike the reactor in such a manner that the probability of a contamination event was very small. The probability of success was very high—that is, in entombing this material.

We could do it in, you know, a night or two. We could do it nationally, meaning you don't have to implicate anybody else in the operation if they don't wish to be, or if for operational security reasons you don't want to spread the word. And so this would, had it been conducted, have been a highly successful operation within its own frame.

Now of course you can't consider it within its own frame because the sequel to such a strike on North Korea might well have been to unleash the fanatical and large—rather antiquated—but fanatical and large North Korean Army over the DMZ. That's a campaign for which we have planned for decades now—Plan 5027, and many of you have no doubt participated in that—and within weeks we would destroy the North Korean regime with certainty. It's not a war that takes place in the desert though. It takes place in densely populated suburbs of Seoul, with an attendant intensity of violence that would shock the civilized world. So the problem wasn't that we wouldn't win and we wouldn't win quickly, but it would entail quite a significant loss of life: American, South Korean, North Korean, combatant, and non-combatant.

And therefore it was something that one didn't conduct lightly. But I at least felt, and I think my secretary felt, at the time that the stakes were high enough. It doesn't get any higher than this—plutonium in the hands of a government like North Korea. Because this material has a half-life of 24,000 years, you've got to wonder who is going to get it next. And Kim Jong-Il isn't going to be around forever. And who will he sell it to? Into whose hands will it fall when the inevitable happens and the North Korean regime collapses?

And so, it's undesirable for North Korea to posses the material—it weakens deterrence on the Korean Peninsula; could create a domino effect of proliferation in East Asia; isn't good for non-proliferation around the world. And then you have to consider that somebody, not just the North Korean regime, might get their hands on it. So for all these reasons this was a pretty big disaster, and we were therefore prepared to consider a preemptive strike.

That's history. It's worth reflecting on whether a comparable prospect exists today. As you all know, the fuel rods were removed from the reactor, canned, and stored at Yongbyon for eight years from the end of 1994 until the end of 2002. They were there and we could see them and we could have hit them again if we needed to. They were inspected and bomb-able for that period of time.

Through a series of events—there's plenty of blame to go around on this—in early 2003 they got out. We don't know where they are. The North Koreans say that they have reprocessed the rods and fashioned them into bombs. We don't know if that's true or not. But the fact of the matter is that the plutonium program at Yongbyon doesn't present the opportunity any longer, sadly, that it did in 1994. You can take out the facilities but the metal itself is somewhere else.

Ditto for the uranium program, which we believe the North Koreans began in violation of the same agreement which kept the plutonium at Yongbyon, which was verifiable. There was an unverifiable provision saying you can't make the other metal from which you can make a bomb, namely uranium, and the North Koreans in their inimitable way cheated on a provision that was not verifiable.

As you all know, for a uranium bomb, enrichment is the relevant technology and those facilities are substantial in size facilities, but they're not nearly as conspicuous as are the reactors and reprocessing facilities required for the plutonium route to a bomb. And the North Koreans, being great diggers, have lots of places where this might be going on. So we don't have the information upon which one could base such a strike. And entombing centrifuges isn't nearly as useful as entombing hot fuel rods.

That said, there's still some value today in eliminating the facilities and whatever you can of the material, along with associated delivery systems and so forth. And if it comes to that—it might well come to that—you have to do some things to prepare the battlefield for that situation. If you are intending an operation of that kind, I think it is terribly important to minimize the chance that the North Koreans turn that into the war that ends their regime.

So you want to be saying to them, "Listen, we're going to do this, and we feel we have to do that. And if you wish to turn that into a war, we don't want that but we're prepared for that and that will be the end of you." It's important that we talk in that way and not in the self-deterred way, which is we're afraid that you'll snap out and that this will be the end of the Korean peace. So if you're really serious about doing this, you need to condition them so that they're thinking carefully about whether that's really the right reaction.

And the second thing of course is that our relations with South Korea are not what they should be. We've been pretty ham-fisted, I would say, on our side. And on top of that there's a younger generation of South Koreans that seem to have lost their strategic bearings entirely. And put those two things together and you have an alliance which is not really a sound basis for joint action. And so probably today you've got to rule the South Koreans out of the picture and just say, "Don't take it out on them, they didn't have anything to do with it."

The second topic, if I may, to which I wanted to turn to for this group as I looked over the agenda was the following. No policy towards weapons of mass destruction—and, you know, preemption is one of many things we might do—

but none of those approaches can succeed without good intelligence. The Iraq case illustrates the difficulty of getting quality intelligence on weapons of mass destruction programs. They're by their nature compact, both regarding physical facilities and the number of people who need to be involved in them. So they're difficult to penetrate. And there is now a commission like the 9/11 Commission which is supposed to be investigating this problem. I'm going to testify before them on Monday, and I thought I'd share a little bit of what I intend to say to them on the basis of some work that Bill Perry—my Stanford collaborator, the only non-rogue mentioned in the presidential debates last night—and I have been doing with the intelligence community on this problem.

And let me just, if I may, take a couple of moments to summarize it. The challenges can be understood from two recent events in which we have felt compelled to take action on the basis of intelligence that was not everything it should have been. The first one is, if you remember, is Donald Rumsfeld's ballistic missile commission. Don, I think, did a very good job, and if you remember the summary of that report was encapsulated in the maxim, "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence."

Rumsfeld and other members of that commission came to feel that we would not have adequate information about an emerging intercontinental ballistic missile threat—that is, see it coming. And therefore a policy of preparing to deploy, waiting for the threat to appear on the horizon, and then deploying, which was the Clinton Administration policy on missile defense, was not safe. And instead we needed to go ahead and deploy.

Don came to that decision, and when he became Secretary of Defense, of course the administration went ahead and deployed. We're just about to open that site. But it's not obvious that the threat is there. And maybe if we'd waited, we could've had a better system. But anyway, you're forced to that kind of worst-case action in the matter of weapons of mass destruction because it's not safe to wait when that level of threat is involved.

The second case, of course, was Iraq where I certainly was in the camp that believed that Saddam Hussein was up to more than he proved to be up to. And even though maybe it wasn't imminent, it was inexorable, and it was only going to get worse, and waiting around for it to get worse didn't seem like a great policy and therefore you had to act. And of course we all know that that was misguided. That information upon which we made that judgment was wrong. And you don't want to repeat that experience if you can possibly avoid it.

So we need to get better at weapons of mass destruction intelligence or we're constantly going to be in the position of acting precipitously and having regrets later, and that's not the situation we want to be in. There's an analogy: If you think back to the missile gap of the 1950s, there was also a time in which we knew what our principal national security problem was, but we didn't know its exact size and

shape. That veil was pierced by satellite reconnaissance and in the Cold War we came to have a reasonable intelligence basis for our policy. Military policy, arms control policy, everything else—we knew what the Soviet Union was up to.

We don't have that when it comes to weapons of mass destruction today. What are some things that we need to do? And I'll just give you some of the results of our work. There are some technologies: they're not as juicy as satellite reconnaissance they're close in, they're forensic, but they're very powerful and can do quite a bit to penetrate these programs. We need to improve the quality of the science and technology cadre in the intelligence community. That's a big issue. A lot of the analysis done in the Iraq case was done by people a couple of years out of school, a couple years at their desk. That's no basis for making important judgments about a field that is inherently scientific and technological.

There's a new customer set out there in the federal government for weapons of mass destruction intelligence. It's not just diplomacy anymore, it's not just defense anymore. There's Homeland Security, there's Health and Human Services, there's FBI; there's a whole new constellation of customers out there.

Related to that is something I believe very strongly, which is you never get good intelligence if there is not some implied action upon which the intelligence hinges. If all these people think they're doing is writing reports to you, to inform you, that's not a career maker in intelligence. They want to be associated with action. In the last few years our intelligence effort associated with counterterrorism has, to oversimplify somewhat, gone from characterizing the terrorist groups, writing papers about them, to supporting action to interdict them.

When we further develop (which I fervently hope we do, and both presidential candidates last night said they were going to do) better counter-proliferation policy and action agenda than we have now, it will be a motivator, a focuser for the intelligence community, and that's an important factor.

So there's a lot that can be done. I'll just close with one thought, which is like what the 9/11 Commission found when they looked at the problem of terrorism. When you look at the problem of weapons of mass destruction intelligence, you can see all these things that could be done to improve the product. And then you go and look at the intelligence community and you say, what's the chance that any of this is actually going to get done in this community? And you find that this is a community that is not mismanaged, it is unmanaged. There is no central management, no managerial concept that goes with the U.S. intelligence community.

And I think that's how the 9/11 Commission got to the idea of a National Intelligence Director. It's not that you can show that the only way you're going to get good quality weapons of mass destruction intelligence is to have a national intelligence director. But you've got to have some managerial concept in this community or else you're constantly—I've been on a million of these task

forces—making lists of things that would make things better and it never happens. It never happens because there's nobody who can really make it happen in that community. And so we are on the cusp now of creating a management concept for the intelligence community. I give us maybe a 30 percent chance it will be a bust, and, depending on how the bills are written, maybe a 70 percent chance it will work out.

But anyway, if the 70 percent chance eventuates that will materially increase the intelligence on weapons of mass destruction, for preemption or whatever, will be done in the next few years. Otherwise I'm afraid we'll wait for whatever the equivalent is of 9/11 in the weapons of mass destruction field and only then pull our socks up. But of course none of us wants to see that happen.

FLANAGAN: Thanks very much, Ash, for those insights also into some of the emerging problems on WMD. Well I think you've heard now a good cross section of some of the operational considerations. Whether or not it's used in a future crisis, this tool of preemption is in the toolkit for future national leaders, and some of the operational and military considerations need to be taken into account beforehand. So we look forward to your questions about some of these issues and how they also relate to some of the legal and political considerations discussed earlier today.

Questions and Answers

Mustafa Kibaroglu, Fellow, Kennedy School

I promise this my last question. Actually what the Colonel and Professor Carter just said about North Korea reminded me of this question. It was not about the capabilities, but the consequences of an attack on North Korea, towards a U.S. decision to attack North Korea. So given this fact that U.S administration was concerned with a counterattack by the North Korean Army, how likely is it now to stage an attack against Iran while there is 130,000 troops on the ground nearby Iran?

LUTES: Well I would say it's very difficult to imagine that we would be able to do any kind of attack that would cause us to have to go into Iran at this time. I mean it would be—there are plans for lots of contingencies in the military—but it would be difficult for us given the force levels right now to do that.

Now that said, that doesn't mean we don't reserve the right for a strike. And what consequences and how we read that would really depend on the context. I don't think we're there yet; we'll have to sort of see how this plays out.

CARTER: I agree with that. Let's just think a little bit about what you might do with Iran. Iran—this is a uranium-based program for the moment, so you're talking about centrifuges. There is some information about the location of those centrifuges, and so you're talking about busting up the buildings in which they are operating and putting a large number of them out of action, and putting the Iranians in the position of digging them out and dusting them off and starting all over again. That's kind of what you get.

The Iranians don't have the option that the North Koreans have of lurching across a border and attacking a lot of Americans, or otherwise lashing out in any way. At the same time we don't have any prospect really of carrying out a campaign against Iran in a full-blooded military sense, tied up as we are in Iraq. The Iranians know that. So the likely sequel to such a strike, if one imagines one, is no war that breaks out.

You've got to be careful about that though in the Iranian case because if you think that it's only the Mullahs that want the bomb, you don't understand Iran. It's a widely rooted thing. It has to do with nationalism and a feeling that we're Persians and we're surrounded by barbarians, and the Americans are out to get us; and look at the Pakistanis, they're nobodies and they have a bomb. It's a mindset that goes well beyond the Mullahs, which means that even if there is a change in regime, you don't get rid of the itch for the bomb. You're talking about something that's deeper than that. That's pretty well-embedded already, and it's going to be hard to root out.

And, you hope it's possible over time to root that out, but in an attack of that kind you buy yourself a few years, but you also probably buy yourself a deeper rooting of the underlying desire to get it done. And so you make the problem for yourself harder down the road. I think that's the principal tradeoff today in contemplating that kind of action against Iran.

FLANAGAN: Just to reinforce that point, I just commend to you, if you haven't seen it, a monograph by Judith Yaphe on the Iranian approach to nuclear weapons program that reinforces exactly what Ash was saying about the broad based support for the program there. Question over here?

GUILLERMO PINCZUK, INSTITUTE FOR FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

In the North Korean case, if North Korea is found to be proliferating WMD, what would be a likely U.S. response? If the U.S. were to launch an attack, would that mean the end of the alliance with South Korea? And how does the repositioning of U.S. troops to the southern part of South Korea affect the decision-making calculus?

CARTER: Well, I think if we find that they're selling or diverting plutonium from an ongoing program, I would imagine we would conclude that that's the end, and that you've got to lance this boil.

As regards the force repositioning, I actually think that's pretty wrongheaded. To pick this time, in the midst of a nuclear crisis in North Korea, about which by the way we're not doing anything, to reposition our forces: What signal does that send? And withdraw some. What signal does that send to North Korea and South Korea? To North Korea and South Korea it looks like a reduced commitment. At the very time you're trying to get the South Koreans to re-feel the sense of threat from North Korea, and at the very time you're trying to strengthen deterrence with respect to North Korea. So you can't imagine a dumber thing to do. Yet, there we go. We do it. And we did it furthermore in the midst of a negotiation with the North Koreans and got nothing for it. So is this strategic behavior?

The repositioning south of the Han is, in the context of the war plan, a sensible thing to do. But once again we should have found the right time and manner, and running out in front of the Congress with white papers and so forth saying how smart we are to be repositioning your forces and the end of the Cold War, blah, blah, blah—which is what we're doing—was a strategic mistake I think.

FLANAGAN: If I could just offer a little bit of a counterpoint, having just come back from Korea in consultations with some of our colleagues out there. I think that there have been some recent discussions between the Defense Department and the Korean government about slowing down the pace of the repositioning. There are a lot of dimensions of this, and the whole question of having this huge military presence—essentially having a very large military presence, as it's been likened to, in the middle of Central Park in New York—is what we've been dealing with the South Koreans for many years; and it's been a huge irritant of having this large garrison right in the middle of downtown Seoul.

And there's also a logic to, as Ash was alluding to, getting further south of the demilitarized zone. As South Korean forces have become more capable, they can provide for more of their own defense. U.S. forces are providing reinforcement capability—which would also be augmented in the context of the repositioning through enhanced reinforcement by air and naval assets. So discussions are ongoing with the ROK government on this issue, and it's not clear that this will be on quite the timetable that was being discussed. But I have to say that on the North Koreans have certainly not seen this realignment as any sign of weakness. In fact, they see all of this as part of the development of, and the implantation of, a plan to effect regime change through enhanced military capabilities and deployment of new technologies and more capable forces.

So I'm not sure—I don't completely disagree with Ash about whether the timing was optimal in the context of negotiations, but I don't think the North

Korean government has seen this as any sign of weakness. In fact, they've used it as another pretext to raise the fear of a war on the Korean Peninsula. I think there's a question on this side.

CARTER: Well, wait a minute. I do disagree with you on that. Getting out of Yongsan Barracks in the middle of Seoul is a no-brainer. I don't think anybody disagrees with that.

I think it's the timing of the repositioning and the removal of a brigade. Those are the things that I think are ill-timed and ill-advised. And you know, we'll go back to the South Koreans and they'll save face. We'll have a discussion; it will all slow down and so forth. But this isn't what you do to an ally, particularly an ally who has already kind of lost its way. And it's not what you do in the middle of a crisis with North Korea.

FLANAGAN: Go ahead, question over here.

JOHN HAGEN, TEACHES NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES, THE AIR FORCE'S AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

I wanted to bring up—actually this issue was in our seminar the other day, and it had to do with the issue of expediency and preemption, almost using Sam Brown's idea of illusions of control. The fact that as we transform, as we get our effects-based operations working so well and our intel is so good, that we begin to believe that why worry about the other instruments of power out there. Why not just go with that military option. We can control everything, get the precise first order, second order, third order effects we want.

Do you see any danger in that? We're putting all this money and capability and effort into producing this, not just the hammer, but this very expensive, very nice recoilless hammer. Aren't we really going to want to take it out and give it a test drive as often as possible? And Elaine Bunn, since we had the honor of using your article in our class discussion, I thought I'd throw this one at you first, see what you thought.

BUNN: There may be some folks who say, "Won't you get cocky and think you can do this successfully?" I guess I tend to be one of those worst-case people who says, "Think of all the things that can go wrong." So I guess it really depends on what kind of decision maker you have, as to whether they say, "Oh I think we can actually pull this off."

I think no matter how good you get, you're never going to have all the intelligence. You're always going to have second and third order effects that you can't predict. What you do in this case may have an adverse impact on a different adversary. There are just so many complicating factors that, I believe if you

think them all through, you're not going to reach for this tool very often.

LUTES: If I can elaborate on that, I think what we're still struggling with is the decision cycle and the ability to make decisions like that. I've witnessed, in the interdiction business, sort of the PSI part of it. We will have intelligence that says there's cargo somewhere, and we'll have several days, maybe a week to decide to do something. Yet we have difficulty still, even in that amount of time, of making a decision. The capability is there, but the decision maker—and getting all the allies and everybody that needs to be put together—we haven't yet cracked that code.

FLANAGAN: Why don't we pull a couple of questions? We have about 20 minutes, but we'll pull a couple of questions. Go ahead.

EMMA BELCHER, PHD CANDIDATE, THE FLETCHER SCHOOL

I have a question about one of the possible tools that might be used in a preemptive strike, a deep earth penetrator or bunker buster bomb, if they're to be developed. And one aspect of that is can they actually technically destroy stashes of chemical or biological weapons? And a point coming off that, if they were to be used—surely there seems to be a concern about using them [and] setting a precedent for crossing the nuclear threshold and the possible implications of that. So I guess I just wanted a bit of a comment on the utility of the bunker buster bomb, should it eventually come about.

MIKE HARTNETT, FLETCHER SCHOOL OF LAW AND DIPLOMACY

I most recently come from a background of software development in the telecommunications space—complex projects, hardware, software. And even though there's technology and all sorts of variables, inevitably it comes down to the human capital: people understanding how to do things; teaching other people in a collaborative nature that really takes 10 [or] 15 years for the really skilled engineers and architects to be able to create something.

So when we look at the continuum-spectrum that you talked about for war and the golden BB and all the rest down to here, I wonder what we're doing to look at the human capital side of the production cycle. I've got to believe that, you know, when you look at Russia, we have a good sense of how many people have the skill set to participate in that production cycle. I've got to believe in some of the smaller countries it's a much more finite number. And I've also got to believe that because it takes so long to develop that capability and the collaboration nature, we ought to have a pretty good idea of who those people are. And I wonder, when we look at the military, and it might

bleed over into the intelligence sector too, but is that human capital a target as part of these plans? All the way from coercion to actual military targets. And is that a viable option to either slow down or deter a program within a particular country?

[INAUDIBLE] TAYLOR, HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

We've done a lot of stuff today. We talked about the legal framework, we analyzed the strategic environment, we had lunch, we talked about the politics and diplomacy, and now we're talking about the military operation. My question is basically, in the real world, and in real world situations like North Korea, what order did these things happen in? I mean were you creating policy options and then sending it over to the legal advisor to have them checked out? Were you analyzing the strategic environment and then decide that maybe we should create some options? What order did that take place, and what implications does that have on the strategic and tactics that end up being used?

FLANAGAN: One more and then I'll let the—

CHRISTINE CLEARY, SECOND-YEAR STUDENT AT THE FLETCHER SCHOOL

And thank you very much for being here today, we really appreciate it. My comment and question is actually directed toward Mr. Carter. I was interested in your recommendations for the intelligence community. And one of the things you said was that there needs to be an implied action on which the intelligence hinges. I was hoping that you could spell that out a little bit, and then also discuss whether you think there is any risk of that politicizing the intelligence process.

BUNN: The question about the utility of bunker busters and could it actually destroy the target. I guess those are the studies that are going on now that weren't undertaken before because of a law called the Prohibition on Low-Yield Nuclear Weapons. So, the answer is, don't know.

I do think, though, that the idea of—some have conflated preemption and nuclear, and I think that's the wrong conflation. I think that the decision by any president to use nuclear weapons would be the hardest decision a president can make. There's obviously the breaking the barrier after 50 plus years, there's the destructiveness, there's the international opprobrium. There are lots of reasons why a president, I think, would be hesitant to use nuclear weapons, and to use

them preemptively would be even harder. So I think, you know, you certainly never say never because you don't know what the situation might be down the road where you might be able to avert the loss of thousands, hundreds of thousands of lives, but I do think it is not something that any president would do lightly, or that would be the tool they'd reach for first.

FLANAGAN: Anyone else on bunker busters?

LUTES: I'll take the next one on human capital. There have been some efforts, you know, at the breakup of the Soviet Union, to redirect some of their scientists. After we went into Iraq there was a late attempt I think to redirect some of their scientists. You heard John Bolton mention that. Although the numbers he gave, a thousand scientists, 500 have been redirected, that was a little bit late of an effort.

And we're trying to get—I can't really go into a lot of detail on what the intelligence community is doing. I will say that, though, that there is an effort to try to get ahead of that a little bit in some particular areas. Because we recognize that it is a very technical, detailed, skill set. But, you know, humans are much harder to deal with in terms of knowing what they know.

But I'll tell you, in terms of some other WMD, biological weapons for instance, I think this might be a rich source for us. Because it's probably not going to be lack of toxins that are available, or biological agents that are available, it's just the ability to make them. Once somebody can make them in their bathtub, we can't detect them. So we need to know who is capable of making them, and that's probably a better way to go.

FLANAGAN: Ash, I think you're next, on the real world and the intelligence community.

CARTER: Well, the real world planning for things like this, I guess you'd have to say, I remember distinctly in 1994 this was controversial. We really had to push hard on the system to do this because it was not accepted as an orthodox option. I think it is now. People realized the stakes were high. The system doesn't like to

plan something that seems risky. Presidents don't like to get briefed on something that they don't want in the newspapers. So it's a sensitive matter to do it. And therefore the more undercover you do things, generally speaking, the worse they're done.

You've got five guys in a room somewhere, and it's not the right five guys, and they don't really think they're doing anything important anyway because nobody seems to be paying any attention to them. And then when they get their big moment it turns out that they haven't really thought it through very well. And you see that again and again. And so it's important, if you're serious about something, really to scrub it and get it right. And we did, but it took some considerable time.

Actionable intelligence, to the questioner on that: Well, what are the actions that constitute combating proliferation? Well, PSI is a good example. Interdiction. Deciding which combination of vaccination, quarantine, and antiobiotics you would use against a bioattack—public health authorities need to know that now in order to plan and procure.

The FBI needs to know what it is that people might be thinking about, whether they are al-Qaeda or the white militias who are interested in this stuff. They need intelligence support for their surveillance, for action if they need to go in. So there's a whole panoply of people out there who might take action if only they knew, or would take better action if only they knew. And it's getting those customers to articulate their demand which is so important.

I remember feeling real frustrated—Elaine Bunn probably remembers this also—in the early 1990s with the quality of intelligence about the former Soviet Union. Here's this place totally changing and you say, "God for 50 years we've

had hundreds of thousands of people watching this place, how come we don't know what's going on?" And it would drive you nuts. And my colleague Joe Nye, who was at the National Intelligence Council at that time, said, "This is a two-way street. You need to tell us what you want. You need to tell us the problems you're working."

And I said, "Well at the moment I'm not trying to target them, and I'm not trying to negotiate with them. Here's what I'm trying to get done." And sure enough, over time, they learned to serve our needs in DoD. But it's crucial that there's that feedback. There's never an intelligence failure in this world. It's always a policy-intelligence failure; it's always coupled. We didn't see 9/11 coming because we were asleep at the switch. And that was a policy and intelligence combination. I would say something about bunker busters too but I won't take the time.

FLANAGAN: Okay, we had at least two more questions.

GAYOS PINAR, SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

Thank you, thank you for taking this question. Exquisite intelligence is needed—that's one of the assumptions, right? —to use it as a last resort. It's not obviously the perfect situation and there's never going to be enough intelligence, but with that amount of intelligence, if the decisions have to be made at the executive level, what's the risk of miscalculation there? The difficulty of sharing this amount of information within a very few group of people, and then going with the use of force, that seems like an inherent conflict.

And really quick, the goals that you said, thinking of the Iraq situation, when I think of preemption, just use of force, waging war in a preemptive fashion, if the goal is regime change, how do we define that really? Is it just overthrowing the regime, then humanitarian assistance, managing day-to-day basis, stabilizing hopefully? Then if these are the goals, and then the assumption is preemptive, wage of war should be very focused. Then how do we bring these two together? I'm just having difficulty, I want to see it, I want to see it as a tool in the toolbox, but could it really be a tool in the toolbox with this inherent conflict?

BUNN: On the intelligence, you know, the exquisite intelligence is a goal. It is obviously something we'll never have. I didn't quite understand—the idea of then sharing it with senior decision makers—if you've got it, obviously you give them whatever you've got. So I think the sharing information with decision makers is not the issue. It's having the information that is the issue. The second question is?

The second question is in terms of defining the goal.

BUNN: Well, as I say, if the goal is only regime change, get rid of this leader or set of leaders, then you can tell—it's a yes or no—on whether you achieved that objective. As I said, there are all the follow-on complications that that brings along with it. The second and third order effects, the transition, the stability, all those issues. So it's not easy to achieve it. I only meant that you can tell; if it's simply changing the leader, you can tell whether you did it or not. It may not solve your problem, as Ash pointed out, if it's a regime that no matter who comes into power in that country, they are still going to want the WMD capability. Then it's the wrong objective to have had.

FLANGAN: I think there was one other question but Professor Carter unfortunately has to leave. And if anyone else does too, we're not over time, but I know it is getting late and a long day.

I think we've probably reached the limits of everybody's tolerance this afternoon. There are so many other questions I'm sure we could get to. Michael Glennon has left the room. I was going to ask if he had a benediction to give. Well, and let me give Colonel Lutes the last word.

LUTES: Yeah, I just want to tag on there on that last point—an issue of intelligence sharing. First of all, you've got to understand the military needs a different set of intelligence than the decision maker. You know, we need targeting kind of intelligence. And we really—if it's available, if there's enough to make a decision on, the military will get what they need in order to—or will get all the intelligence available. Now it may not be sufficient, but I don't think there's usually a sharing issue there. They may get direction though, if there is a sensitivity on what target to hit and how to hit it, and sometimes that can be a conflict.

And the other point. I think the goal—you need to be very careful on what your final goal is. If your goal is simply overthrow of a regime, that's a very limited objective. And I think in some ways that's what we went into with Iraq. Regime change means there has to be something to change it to, and that's a broader set of goals. Because once you change the regime you have to be able to build it and make sure it's successful, and I don't think we thought that one through all the way.

FLANAGAN: Thanks. I think we could go on probably for a bit longer, but I don't want to strain your patience. I want to thank my colleagues, and Ash Carter, who didn't mention that he raced over here from a memorial service for another colleague to get here and to participate. Thank all of you for your attention throughout the day. It's been a very interesting and fruitful experience. We look forward to the proceedings. We hope that you found this session on some of the operational considerations as one looks at preemption and the array of planning tools highlighted some of the considerations that policymakers need to grapple with. Please join me in thanking the panel.

APPLAUSE

END OF PANEL