

Published March 15, 2004
Traprock Peace Center
<http://www.traprockpeace.org>

February 5, 2004
West Hartford, CT

Thanks to Don Smith
WHUS Radio, Storrs
FM 91.7
Thursdays at 5PM
<http://www.whus.org>

Part One

Of the Town Hall Forum featuring **Scott Ritter and Rahul Mahajan**.

This is a transcript of the Ritter talk given in West Hartford, CT on 02/05/04 in an event that was sponsored by West Hartford Citizens for Peace & Justice, and co-sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council, Saint Patrick/Saint Anthony Pax Christi Group, American Friends Service Committee, Hartford Independent Media Center, Veterans for Peace, Inc., Charter Oak Cultural Center, Hartford Green Party, and Pax Educare. Contact: whcpj@yahoo.com

West Hartford's Mayor, Jonathan Harris, introduced Scott Ritter as a former UN-Chief Weapons Inspector in Iraq from 1991-1998. A 12-year career officer in the US Marine Corps, and author of "Frontier Justice: Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Bushwhacking of America," a 2003 publication. He also created a 2000 Documentary Film: "In Shifting Sands," The truth of UNSCOM and the Disarming of Iraq.

Scott Ritter

"Thank you very much for the very kind and warm introduction. It's an honor and privilege to be here tonight to talk to you about Iraq. I just wish it was under different circumstances, because the circumstances we face tonight are anything but heartening. We are barely two months into a new year. In the first month of this year over forty Americans died in combat operations in Iraq. They didn't die storming the beach at Normandy. They didn't die raising the flag at Iwo Jima. They didn't die in classic combat operations closing with or destroying the enemy through fire power maneuver. They didn't die in defense of their nation's borders. They died seated in helicopters being shot out of the sky by an enemy they didn't know was down there. They died in an anonymous roadside explosion, an improvised explosive devise set by an enemy they didn't know was there. They died with a rocket propelled grenade bursting through their vehicle blowing their body apart fired by an enemy they didn't see. They died asleep at night as mortars shells rained down on their barracks, never knowing that when they went to bed

that night they would never see the light of the next day.

That's the way the war is being fought in Iraq, ladies and gentlemen. Don't for one second believe that this is your classic, honorable military operation in defense of the Constitution of the United States of America. American troops are in Iraq today, and they are dying in Iraq today, they are being maimed in Iraq today, physically, they are being maimed in Iraq today psychologically, and one has to ask for what purpose? I say this as a twelve year veteran of the United States Marine Corps, who took the oath proudly as an officer and marine to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic. I say this as a veteran of combat operations in defense of this country and in defense of the rule of law. I am no pacifist. I cherish the young men and women who honor us by wearing the uniform of the United States of America. (applause)

The men and women who do so have made a solemn vow on something every one of us needs to reflect on. They are willing to lay their life down in defense of you. They are willing to sacrifice their life, their limbs, their future, in defense of the country that we live in, in defense of the ideals and the values that are set forth in the Constitution they have sworn to defend. They are willing to die for you, and I ask you tonight: What are you willing to do for them? Because when they are willing to give up their life in defense of a cause. Are we, therefore, obligated to insure that before we ask them to do so, it's a cause worthy of that sacrifice, and I wonder whether anyone in this room, especially after hearing the past presentation can say that Iraq, and what is going on in Iraq today is worth a single drop of American blood. I say no. (Applause)

Prior to this war beginning, one of the framers of the Bush Administration's Iraq policy, Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, in an interview with "Vanity Fair Magazine," spoke of the reasons we need to go to war with Iraq. He said, first of all it's the weapons of mass destruction issue. Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction, significant quantities, that he had retained in violation of his obligation under international law to get rid of these. Saddam Hussein has defied the will of the international community, Saddam Hussein refuses to cooperate with the United Nations inspectors, and these weapons in and of themselves pose an inherent risk to international peace and security, and indeed the security of the United States of America.

Reason number one, weapons of mass destruction. Reason number two are the known links between Saddam Hussein's government and the forces of international terror, in particular, the Al Quada organization of Osama Bin Ladin, the organization which attacked the United States so viciously on September 11, 2001, killing nearly 3000 Americans in the span of less than an hour. Saddam Hussein's links with an organization that has attacked the United States, were seen as unacceptable, and in and of itself justification for military action.

Reason number two... known links, and remember, this isn't speculative links, these are links that Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz's boss said, are "bullet proof". Links between Saddam Hussein's government and the forces of Al Quada. The third reason; is the synergistic effect that comes from the first two. Weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a man who has no regard for international law, a known enemy of the United

States, who has links with the forces of international terror, who have already acted to attack the United States, the fact that Saddam could transfer this weapons of mass destruction capability to these terrorists created a new paradigm, a new threshold of threat that had to be dealt with. Threat three: The synergistic effect between weapons of mass destruction and known links with Al Quada.

The fourth reason is the criminal nature of Saddam Hussein's regime, the brutal way in which he treated his people, his violations of human rights, his violations of international law, the fact that he has invaded his neighbors twice in the span of less than a decade. And yet, Paul Wolfowitz, the man who wanted more than anything to go into Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein himself said that the fourth reason, the criminal nature of Saddam Hussein's regime is not worth any American kids getting killed. It's one of the few times I agree with Paul Wolfowitz. We do not die for the people of Iraq. When I put on the uniform of a United States Marine I swore to die for you, I swore to die for my country if required, I did not take an oath to the Constitution to die in a far off country for other people. That's not my job. Paul Wolfowitz said so. I agree with him.

So now we face this situation today. Ten months into the occupation of Iraq. No weapons of mass destruction have been found. Scratch reason number one. No link between Saddam Hussein's government and Al Quada has been established. In fact, there is an overwhelming body of data which mitigates against there ever having been such a link. Scratch reason number two. And without the first two reasons, you cannot have synergism. There is no synergistic effect between unaccounted for weapons of mass destruction and links with Saddam Hussein, so the only reason American troops are in Iraq dying today, is because of the criminal nature of Saddam Hussein's regime, and that is no reason at all. And yet Americans continue to die, and I think 'We The People' owe it to them to reflect on why that is the case.

George Tenent, the director of the CIA, made a presentation today at Georgetown University, his alma matter, where he was going to explain to 'We The People' of the United States about these so-called "intelligence failures," that led to the President acting on a threat that has failed to materialize. Why did George Tenent speak? Because his appointee, David Kay, himself a former UN weapons inspector, who was selected by the CIA to head up what's called the Iraq Survey Group--1400 Americans, British, and Australian weapons experts, who are scouring occupied Iraq with complete access to every industrial facility imaginable, complete access to every single one of the top scientists involved in Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs, complete access to all documents necessary which are related to weapons of mass destruction; David Kay had spent 9 months in Iraq, and come to the only conclusion one can come to when confronted with the totality of facts, that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, there have not been weapons in Iraq since early 1990, the early 1990s, that UN weapons inspections succeeded, and that, according to him, "we all got it wrong." Though, with due respect to David Kay, I didn't get it wrong. (applause)

As the man who ran United Nations intelligence operations in Iraq from 1991 to 1998, I perhaps have a unique insight into what the real picture is. Not only inside Iraq but what is transpiring outside of Iraq. I led liaison activities with the CIA. I would spend many days every month in Washington D.C. having total access to all the intelligence data the

United States had about Iraq and their weapons of mass destruction programs. I would fly to London, where I would meet with the British Defense Intelligence staff and MI6, the secret intelligence service, and again, I had total access to what the British knew about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

From 1994, to 1998, I led the liaison to the State of Israel, where I met with the head of Israeli intelligence, and again, I had total access to everything the Israelis knew about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

I also led the investigations in Iraq, and I knew what the United Nations knew about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and I can tell you this with all certainty: In 1998, when I left the United Nations, we could account for 90% to 95% of our ex-weapons of mass destruction. That's pretty darn good given their record of lies, deceit and obstruction. That's why they brought me in as an intelligence officer. You check my resume, you know where you think you are gonna look for chemical weapons you would want a chemist and when you are going to look for biological weapons you would want a biologist, and a nuclear physicist would be useful in the search for nuclear weapons, and there is a role for rocket scientists if you are looking for ballistic missiles. I'm none of those. I'm a spy. I'm an intelligence officer. I do the dirty work. I get in where they don't want you to get in. I get access to the data they don't want you to have access to and I bring it forward and turn it over to the experts, so they can do their disarmament job. And I was darn good at what I did.

So when I say 90% to 95%, this is not guess work ladies and gentlemen. It means we know what we accomplished. Now there's 5% to 10% out there that I can't tell you what the final disposition of it was. No one can. Because the Iraqis destroyed their weapons of mass destruction in the summer of 1991 unilaterally, without any UN weapons inspectors present, and they did not document this. This meant for us to reconstruct these event we had to become forensic archeologists in some case, forensic investigators, you've seen crime scene investigators, I'm sure on TV, they've got CSI Las Vegas, CSI Miami, all these very good looking people running around doing very interesting things. Well, I ran CSI Baghdad. We weren't good looking. I'm living testimony to that, but we were a heck of a sight better than anything you ever saw on TV and we were real. And we did a good job.

So while we couldn't account for it, understand this; inability to determine the final disposition of something does not automatically translate into retention, and we could mitigate against Iraq's retention of weapons of mass destruction by underscoring that in addition to the disarmament activities, we were monitoring the totality of Iraq's industrial infrastructure with the most intrusive, comprehensive, technologically advanced, on sight inspection regime in the history of arms control. No one has ever seen anything of the likes which we brought into Iraq. Camera systems, monitoring the factories 24 hours a day. Sensors sniffing the air. Ruby lasers shooting through the air looking for chemical substances. "No notice" inspections swooping in, gaining total access to administrative files and budget files. We knew what the Iraqis were doing 24/7, 365 days a year, 366 in a leap year. We know that Iraq was not producing weapons of mass destruction. We know that Iraq did not have the capability so long as weapons inspectors were in place to do so. So while we couldn't tell you what happened to everything. We can tell you this.

They didn't have viable stocks of weapons of mass destruction as of December 1998 and they were not producing weapons of mass destruction.

Now comes 2003, 2002, the President of the United States starts talking about the case for war. The President says some interesting things like I know Iraq has chemical weapons. I know Iraq has biological weapons. I know Saddam intends to acquire nuclear weapons. These are stunning assertions. And I may be a simple Marine but when I hear someone say, "I know something," that implies certainty of knowledge, and as an American citizen who believes in the concept of democracy meaning Mr. President with all due respect, you work for me, so when you say you know something and you want me to support a certain policy line, demonstrate how you know. Put the facts on the table. (applause)

I screamed for these facts. Others asked for them. The President never delivered, telling us that he must hide these facts behind a wall of secrecy, because the national security was on the line. Now I accept that Mr. President. I'm just a mere citizen. I don't have a need to know the methods and technologies used to gather intelligence. Congress does. Congress has interesting committees, oversight committees. The Senate Select Intelligence Committee, for one, who are mandated by the Constitution to review this kind of sensitive information. Why? Because we are dealing with the national security of the United States and the Constitution is very specific on who has the right and the authority to declare war. That is the sole purview of the Congress of the United States. Not the President. Not the Executive. (applause)

So if the President of the United States says that we have a case for war based upon intelligence information that says Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction, it is the duty and responsibility of the congress of the United States, these select committees, to say, "bring it on Mr. President, lay it out before us, so we can support you." Congress did not do this ladies and gentlemen. Congress did not do this.

In August of 2002 I was in Washington, D.C. I met with members of the Select Intelligence Committee, including Diane Feinstein, one of the senior democrats, somebody who was opposed to war with Iraq. I sat down with her and I said, "look, Maddam Senator, I'm a loyal America. If Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction, more than 10 years after the Security Council said he can't, I presume ill intent, and i'll be the first to line up and sign up for the Marine Corps to lead the charge into Baghdad. Because I'm all about enforcement of the law and if we pass a law that says he can't have these weapons and he does, "bring it on". I don't want to be an impediment to the National Security of the United States. I have no right to know exactly what you know. But just look me in the eye and tell me that you have seen factual data to sustain the President's allegations. Just tell me, "yes I have seen hard facts." She said, "I haven't seen anything."

This was August 2002, on August 29th 2002, the President of the United States signed the execute orders to go to war in Iraq. Now, that's an important date. Because in September and October of 2002, the President sent members of his administration to sit before Congress and they were asked this specifically. John Kerry, one of the leading candidates for the democratic nomination said, "If there are no weapons of mass

destruction in Iraq, if weapons inspectors go in and find nothing, removing the cause for war, would the president still seek to go to war? And Colin Powell said, no. If we remove the causes belli, there is no need for military action. Furthermore, the President of the United States has not made a decision to go to war. That was a blatant lie, ladies and gentlemen, a blatant lie told by a government official to the Congress of the United States. Now I am a simple man, but I understand this. A government official who tells a lie in the conduct of his or her duty has committed a felony. A felony is a high crime and misdemeanor, and there are specific language in the Constitution calling for impeachment. (Cheers, applause) But it's not just Colin Powell who told lies. It's Donald Rumsfeld who said the same thing. It's Condoleezza Rice who said the same thing. Ladies and gentlemen, it's the President of the United States, who has told lies. (applause)

Now George Tenet today in Georgetown, said no don't blame the president. He didn't lie. The president just didn't have perfect intelligence. I agree. (laughter) But I'm also dealing with the professional aspect of the intelligence equation. Excuse me I that was a cheap shot. (laughter) George Tenet made a speech today that Bob Galucci, my former boss in the United Nations called, "a great performance" and I agree totally. It was a performance, it was a bit of theater, on the same line as Colin Powell's presentation to the Security Council on 5, February of last year. Ladies and gentlemen, need I remind you that the brilliant case that Colin Powell laid out to the Security Council, not a single point he made has turned out to be true. In fact, every single point has been shown to be false. Now Colin Powell is justifying this saying, I acted on the best intelligence that was available. No, Mr. Powell, you didn't. You know better than this Mr. Powell, because you use to be General Powell, who use to be Captain Powell, who served in Vietnam, and understands what happens when ideologically motivated policy makers start twisting the truth for their own objectives, and you swore that if you ever got into a position of power, you would never allow this to happen. You betrayed the troops Mr. Powell. You betrayed the troops. (applause)

Now we have George Tenet saying the same thing. But I ask you to consider this. In his speech. Review his testimony. It is full of speculation. It is full of rhetoric. It is full of assessments. It is full of assumptions. It lacks any factual data whatsoever. None. The CIA, and I can guarantee you this, had no factual data to sustain any allegation that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, and it's not just the CIA. The British had none. The French had none. The Russians had none. The Israeli's had none. As I have said I was the chief liaison with Israel, if any nation needs to fear Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, it's the State of Israel.

When I went to Israel in 1994, I was told by the director of military intelligence that Iraq was the number one threat to Israel because of their weapons of mass destruction. And after over 30 visits and many months and hard work, when I last left Israel in June, 1998, the director of military intelligence said that the most recent assessment put out by the Israelis was that Iraq was the number six threat and falling and that's because they knew through the weapons inspections work that Iraq no longer possessed weapons of mass destruction, and as long as inspectors were in Iraq, could not reconstitute this. This is the status quanti that existed internationally in 1998, what happened between 1998 and 2003 to change this? September 11th ladies and gentlemen. September 11th. And at least the

Bush Administration is honest enough to say that. But it didn't change the facts.

All September 11th reflects, is representative of, is our collective ignorance as a people. (applause) Shame on us. Because from that ignorance comes fear. If you listened to George Tenet today he spoke of intent. We know Saddam intended to acquire weapons of mass destruction. We know he intended to have a ballistic missile program. We knew no such thing. How can you know intent? Unless the man said that, and Saddam's not confessing anything. There are no documents to show that he wanted weapons of mass destruction. It is purely speculative. Based on what? What I call the theocracy of evil.

You see we label Saddam Hussein evil. We live in a black and white world. A good versus evil world. And by calling Saddam evil a couple of things happen ladies and gentlemen. A. The ends justify the means now. You see Saddam is evil. He must be confronted. Evil must be eliminated. So things such as the democratic niceties no longer matter. We need to get rid of evil. So whatever we do to get rid of evil is justified. Even lying to Congress and lying to the American people. The other thing that happens is because he is evil, everything about him becomes evil. An evil man must, therefore, intend to acquire weapons of mass destruction. We don't need to prove it. We assume it. And now that we assume he intends to acquire, every piece of data that passes our desks as CIA analysts is, therefore, interpreted based upon that assumption. The theocracy of evil is the undoing of American democracy because we could never tolerate a situation in which the rule of law established by the Constitution, is overcome by the ends justify the means, because if it's good enough for Saddam ladies and gentlemen, it's good enough for us. Meaning, that when the government starts to turn it's attention on us, and one only needs to reflect on the Patriot Act to understand the real potential of this, the rule of law will not be there to protect us. (applause)

But George Tenet said that there was no pressure on the President, it was just bad intelligence, and yet George Tenet, the only time George Tenet gave out any specific data he gave away his hand. You see George Tenet spoke of the defection of Hussein Kamal, Saddam Hussein's Son-In-Law, in August 1995, underscore August, he said without that defection UN weapons inspectors would never have been able to uncover Iraq's biological weapons program. Hussein Kamal spilled the beans in August. With all due respect, Mr. Tenet, your chronology is off a little bit. Because our investigations uncovered Iraq's biological weapons program in April 1995. We confronted the Iraqis and they confessed.

In July 1995, the Iraqis admitted to having an offensive biological weapons program. Hussein Kamal defected in August. You tell me how that adds up Mr. Tenet. Mr. Director of the CIA. But there's other problems too because I led the investigation into Hussein Kamal's defection. I know what he told the United Nations. I know what he told the CIA and British intelligence. It's the same. He said that there are no weapons of mass destruction left in Iraq, everything has been destroyed. He said I ordered it all destroyed, including the biological agent. Now, this is known to the CIA. This is documented. It's in black and white, and what George Tenet said today either is reflective of his ignorance of his own intelligence data or it's an outright lie. But now we need to reflect on this. What he said mirrors exactly what Dick Cheney the Vice President of the United States said before the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Nashua Tennessee in August,

2002. Now, Dick Cheney is the same Vice President that spent almost a dozen trips, or took almost a dozen trips down to Langley to sit down with the CIA analyst saying, you need to give me some data to prove Saddam Hussein has weapons. Now Dick Cheney is spouting lies in August 2002. The Director of CIA is spouting the same lies today, and they are trying to tell us that there was no pressure put on the intelligence community.

The President signs the authorization to go to war in Iraq in August of 2002. Tells the CIA to prepare an estimate in September 2002, that is published in October, 2002, that is used as the justification to go to war. It's not the intelligence that triggered the war. It's the policy that triggered the war. It's the policy that used the intelligence. It's the policy that abused the intelligence. (applause) Now, I'm somebody who believes in Democracy, ladies and gentlemen, so much that I'm willing to die for it. But let's understand this. American democracy is founded in the Constitution of the United States of America and the ideals and values contained within. American democracy demands much of 'We the People.' In fact, the Preamble of the Constitution, says just that: "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union." The Supreme Court of the United States, says that that Preamble, in effect, means that the Constitution belongs to the People, not to the President, not to Congress, not to anyone else, it's our document.

So what are we gonna do about it? If we have a situation where the President of the United States has lied. We have a situation where 'We The People,' together with Congress, the media, and the Executive Branch, have fallen victims to the theocracy of evil, where we could be exploited through our ignorance to fear things enough that we allow the ends to justify the means, it means that we have given up on the Constitution, we have walked away from the Constitution, this is unacceptable.

A couple of things have to happen, Ladies and Gentlemen. We have to realize that we can blame the President all we want. We can blame Congress. We can blame the media. But we better be fair and look in the mirror, blame ourselves, because we're the ones who have failed here. We have failed our troops. We have failed ourselves. Reflect on this. Are you a citizen or are you a consumer? Have you wrapped yourself in the cocoon of comfort so long as the powers that be keep you waddling down a path of relative prosperity? You don't want to rock the boat. You'll believe anything that comes from the government. In the Democratic primaries a couple of things have jumped out. Here we are at war with Americans dying on a fraudulent basis, our Constitution is under attack, our democratic processes are under attack, and yet our number one concern is the economy, our jobs.

Consumers, ladies and gentlemen, not citizens, because if we are citizens one thing would scream out loud. The President lied, what are we going to do about it? There is a concept of democracy, in the circle of democracy, that is called, "accountability". When we elect people to higher office to represent us, we must hold them accountable for what they do in our name. (Audience member calls out impeachment.)

Now, we can say, "impeachment" but we also can say, "election". We got a date coming up in November of this year. President Bush is running for re-election. He has opponents who want to take his job from him. What are 'We The People' gonna do? And this is a black and white issue ladies and gentlemen, because when we speak of national security,

we don't just want to talk about what's happening outside the border, although that's important. I guarantee you this. On every level, the war on terror waged by President Bush has made this country even more at risk. (applause)

We haven't won the war in Iraq. We haven't won the war in Afghanistan. We haven't won the war on terror, but we have created perpetual warfare. Perpetual warfare, thereby, raises the fear factor here in America. Exploiting our ignorance. Allowing the greatest assault on the security of the United States of America to transpire, and that is the assault on the Constitution, on the basic principles of law that is being done by the Patriot Act, and being done every day in the name of "Homeland Security". When we speak of Osama Bin Laden we speak of a threat to the United States. This may shock you, but I view George W. Bush as a greater threat to the United States than Osama Bin Laden, (applause) because Osama Bin Laden is not assaulting the bedrock that defines who we are and what we are as a people. He attacks us physically. He kills us. He destroys our buildings, and yes, this is bad, but George W. Bush is destroying our soul, destroying our spirit, destroying who we are and what we are as a nation. (applause) This war in Iraq represents the manifestation of all the failures of Bush's policies and I ask you what are you going to do about it? The President of the United States has lied to you. He has got us involved in a war that is killing Americans. He has made a situation that has resulted in the total loss of honor and integrity for our nation. We are not viewed in the world anymore as a nation of honor. The President has done this, and if you want to retain your status as members of a representative democracy. What are you going to do about it? (standing ovation)

Thank you."

Scott Ritter's most recent article 02/05/04, is, "Confronting the Theocracy of Evil," it appears on Altnet.org <http://www.altnet.org/story.html?StoryID=17769>

Part Two of this program will be available shortly and will feature the first speaker of the evening, Raul Mahajan, Middle East expert, author of "The New Crusade, America's War on Terrorism," and, "Full Spectrum Dominance: U.S. Power in Iraq and Beyond." Web site holds information on texts and his work in Peace Action, and End The War. <http://www.rahulmahajan.com/whcpj@yahoo.com>

PART TWO

Town Hall Forum features Scott Ritter and Rahul Mahajan. This is a transcript of the Ritter talk given in West Hartford, CT on 02/05/04 in an event that was sponsored by West Hartford Citizens for Peace & Justice, and co-sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council, Saint Patrick/Saint Anthony Pax Christi Group, American Friends Service Committee, Hartford Independent Media Center, Veterans for Peace, Inc., Charter Oak Cultural Center, Hartford Green Party, and Pax Educare. Contact: whcpj@yahoo.com

West Hartford's Mayor, Jonathan Harris, introduced Rahul Mahajan, Middle East Expert and author of, "The New Crusade, America's War on Terrorism," and, "Full Spectrum

Dominance: U.S. Power in Iraq and Beyond." Speech 02/05/04 at West Hartford Town Hall in Connecticut. Rahul Mahajan invited the audience to <http://www.empirenotes.org/> A web site with daily updates and commentary on US Foreign Policy and the State of the Empire.

see corrected version

RAHUL MAHAJAN: "So listening to that introduction I'm feeling a little bit apprehensive because I'm sure, I'd like some assurance from you. There's nobody here who actually disagrees with me. I would like a show of hands of everyone who agrees with me. No? Come on come on. I hate it when there are people who disagree with me in audience, it just sucks. Then you have to argue and give evidence and things and could be a real pain so I try to avoid it whenever possible. And, actually, I have to disagree with something the first introducer said. Views like ours I'm pretty sure Scott's as well, you can hear them on Fox News. And in fact, Fox News is the only network TV station that regularly puts on critics of US foreign policy like me, like Scott, like a lot of other people. I was, in fact, on Panady and Cohns my only foree into Fox News, April 16th, right at the height of the so-called, "liberation" of the war.

Now they put us on, now what do they do when they have us on? We're there to be used as punching bags and if you can get out an entire sentence you're lucky. If you can get out three sentences in a row it's a miracle. And I remember I started talking about US war crimes in the war on Iraq and Kennedy cut me off and said, when we return from commercial I'm gonna explain just how assinine you really are. So, (laughs,) so we get on Fox News, that's not exactly the problem.

So, intelligence failures. Everybody knows of course that there have been massive intelligence failures? Let's get a show of hands, how many people think there were massive intelligence failures in regard to the weapons of mass destruction? OK. I want to point out to you that in fact there were no intelligence failures. There were no intelligence failures. What happened is, we had an administration that decided it was gonna go to war on Iraq, decided it would manufacture any excuse it could, and decided it would take people who were supposed to be neutral analysts of what's going on and pressure them until they said things that could be used.

Intelligence failures don't even come into the picture. It was lies right from the beginning. I've never ever seen or even imagined an administration that lies as much as this one. (applause) You see the problem is that all presidents lie and all administrations lie. This is true. We've known this, we discovered this in Vietnam, and we discovered it in Watergate, and we've pretty much, most of us believed it ever since, but usually they try to tell the kind of lie that you have to get some access to information that is hidden to figure out that it is a lie. You have to learn something. These guys tell things that all you have to do is read the newspaper to know they are lying.

Do you remember back, some, I think most of you do remember, back in 1985, when Ronald Reagan went to the Nazi Cemetary at Vickberg and did not visit the concentration camps, and there was a bit of a ruckus about this, and he said in his defense, "I doubt there are many Germans alive today who remember WWII." (laughter)

This was 40 years after the war, so say if you were 20 at the end of WWII you would be 60, and of course, we know Germans mostly live to about 40 and then die. (laughter)

But this guy, George W. Bush has a different idea. So for example, you remember his jobs for the 21st century program he talked about in the State of the Union address? Well, when he came out with his budget just the other day, it's actually cutting adult education and vocational training from 2.1 billion to 1.4 billion. So George Bush's excuse is well I don't suppose there are too many Americans alive today who remember January 20th 2004.

This is the way these guys lie. And on the weapons of mass destruction I've gotten to the point where it's just boring to detail them. There are entire books, I mean, all kinds of people are being made into public intellectuals just by writing books about the lies that these guys told over weapons of mass destruction. I think we all know that and yet there's this convenient intelligence failures story. And it goes to every level. So for example in August there was a great article in the Washington Post. By the way, I should recommend to all of you, if you want to find the best reporting on the occupation of Iraq, which is what I'm going to talk about in just a bit, or on the weapons of mass destruction, it's in the Washington Post. It's true. It's better than the reporting in the Guardian or the Independent right now, which is shocking to me, the British papers, and it is really, uh, it is worth reading.

So anyway, in August, they wrote this brilliant piece 8000 words, you can imagine how many people read through to the end of it, all about the lies over nuclear weapons. Remember the aluminum tubes? Powell goes to the Security Council and says, "well I don't know maybe they manufacture their tubes to much higher specification than we do, but it seems to me they must be being used for centrifuges for uranium isotope separation and not for artillery. And look, they're anodized, the proof is they have anodized coating. In fact, if you read this article, which came out only in August, one of the things they will tell you is that all the experts they talked to is that A. the tubes are not suitable for use in centrifuges they are for artillery. And B. if you wanted to use them as centrifuges you would have to remove the anodized coating.

So what was evidence that they were not for centrifuges, Powell told us was evidence that they were for centrifuges. And this is just like one of the tiny little lies in a whole massive structure of lies. The authors of that article were Walter Pincus and Barbara Gellman, two reporters at the Washington Post.

Well recently, after the David Kay thing came out, after he criticized the CIA and the intelligence and said they owe the President an apology. That's an interesting idea. It's like what happened in Britain. It's actually, what happened in Britain, this is one of the few cases where they did worse than we did. So yes, we're bashing, we're making the CIA, we're blaming the CIA for what the Bush Administration did to the CIA. But they are saying, "well Lord Hutton has said," well you know it turns out Blair lied about weapons of mass destruction, the BBC reported it, and so naturally we must blame the BBC for reporting on Tony Blair's lies, and let's make a few of them resign into the bargain.

So anyway after this David Kay stuff comes out, Walter Pincus and Dana Milbank write a piece where they say, even the most hawkish supporters of the war have to admit that there are serious intelligence failures. After they just wrote this article, Walter Pincus wrote this article himself, talking about how they were lying. It wasn't about intelligence failures. So it seems to me there is an intelligence failure here by Walter Pincus. He didn't read his own article. By the way I'm kidding. I think he knows what he's doing. But the massive intelligence failures in all of us and in the media and I must say in 99% of the democratic politicians, in not saying well, this is an administration that lied to get us into war, and that's pretty much all you have to say about it. And all this stuff about intelligence failures is nonsense, is garbage. (applause) If they really cared about intelligence, they would have kept guys like Scott on the ground in Iraq, well not Scott, he had left earlier, but they would instead of pulling them out in December of 1998. One of the things, the conclusions of David Kay, was by far the best source of information about Iraq's WMDs was the UN weapons inspectors. And as probably most of you know by now, although you wouldn't know it if you read the New York Times, they left because the United States wanted them out. Bill Clinton wanted to do a little bombing in Iraq and so he pressured Richard Butler to remove the inspectors.

But that is not the subject of my talk today. What I want to talk to you is primarily about what I saw when I went to Iraq. It was an interesting thing. I went in early to mid January. I was only there in Iraq for ten days. It was a very short trip, and I have been working on Iraq for six years. It says five in the bio so I guess it's at least a year old. I have been working on Iraq for six years, and in all that time frequently the idea of going to Iraq came up. It was something a lot of activists were doing. Many of you may have heard talks by people like Voices in the Wilderness for example, who went to Iraq and came back and reported. And, it never seemed to me that I was going to learn very much when Saddam was in charge, because everything was very tightly controlled. It didn't seem worth going just to sort of do tourism, essentially.

And this time I said I wanna go to Iraq for a long time. I need to really find out what was going on. This trip because it was with an activist delegation was ten days and I said well, this is just going to be getting my feet wet and I'm really not going to learn anything, what can you learn in ten days? I even said was it really worth the money that I'm gonna have to pay to go there and so on for just such a short trip. And this was in the context that I have been, I write about this stuff, and I have been obsessively reading everything I can about the occupation of Iraq.

By the way, how many of you, can I get a show of hands, how many of you would say you are keeping up on what is going on in Iraq, not the weapons of mass destruction, what's going on in Iraq. That's about what I expected, about 30%. In fact, that's a little high, I've been getting lower numbers in a lot of talks. And how many of those of you that are reading, I assume the rest of you wouldn't say this, would say you really think you have a good idea of what's going on in Iraq? Three guys. Four guys. And I say "guys" advisedly. Um, it is always men who say yes on those kinds of questions. I thought I did before I went, and what I have to tell you is what I learned shocked even me, and I have studied US policy on Iraq very closely as my primary work for a very long time now. It shocked me, it was astonishing. And since I can sort of run on forever

and I am incapable of looking at the clock when I'm speaking if someone can give me a time check in about thirty minutes I would appreciate it.

The first thing that I noticed when we flew into Amman and we drove across the border, I was expecting because of the impression you get, you hear all these stories about foreign infiltrators into Iraq and how the US is cracking down on that, I was expecting tight security. I was expecting all kinds of checks and intrusive searches and a real pain and hours and hours spent at the border. Instead what happened was this.

There are basically two borders you cross. You cross the Jordanian border, which is much like any other country. You know there is some security. There are some checks. It's normal. It's not a particularly heightened level but it's like a normal border crossing. Then there's the Iraq side, the Iraqi border, where there's nothing all right? They don't check anything. They don't have people or personnel to check anything. Literally, and I'm not joking, I've had more trouble coming back from the United States from Canada than I did crossing into Iraq. In fact, both of the times I've come back from Canada recently I've been harrassed, but that's another story for another day.

So that was, that set me thinking what the hell is going on right? It's just the opposite of the impression that you would have thought. Then we come into Baghdad. It's a long car drive. It's about twelve hours total. We come in and of course the one thing I expected to see all over Baghdad was construction. Remember, we're reconstructing Iraq. You've heard about this, right? We're reconstructing Iraq. We're spending 20 billion dollars to reconstruct Iraq so there must be a lot of reconstruction. And amazingly, there was nothing, and I'm not kidding. In all our times going around Baghdad I saw two buildings with construction crews. If I had gone around New Delhi in the same amount of time I would have expected to see about 50, and New Delhi hasn't been bombed recently. It is a city full of bombed out buildings. Not a huge number but a substantial number of bombed out buildings and there's no construction being done.

So I am seeing this and I'm saying what in God's name is going on here? What could be happening? And this is born out by everyone, everyone I've talked to. You ask, I asked one reporter who has been there since May, is there any reconstruction in Baghdad? He said well, I saw some guys putting some paint on something a couple times. We actually saw some people painting an underpass some horrible lime green color for no reason I could imagine, but that was all the reconstruction we saw in Baghdad, a whole city of six million people.

OK? So I'm a little confused and I'm wondering what's going on, and then the first thing we do is we go to a couple of hospitals. And we went to two hospitals, one in Aba Mia, which is a heavily Sunni neighborhood, it's very anti occupation, they say it's the center of the resistance in Baghdad. The other right across the Tigris is Kosa Mia which is a Shitte neighborhood, which is primarily, mostly for the most part they say nominally pro American, although as I'll explain to you "pro American" has a specific meaning that's not what you would think when you say it here.

In both of these hospitals we got the same thing, which was this. Doctor in the hospital at Alba Mia when we walked in the first thing he said was, "just today we ran out of

ampicillin." Ampicillin is a very basic antibiotic. They don't have any. He told us. He may have been exaggerating slightly, in fact, I think he probably was, but I think the gist of it was true, he told us they have gotten nothing since the war from the Ministry of Health. I should explain that in Iraq right now there is a dual track system of government. There is the CPA, the Coalition Provisional Authority, which is the governmental or you could call it civilian if you were really stretching it, wing of the occupation, and then there's the Iraqi Government, that's "Iraqi Government" in quotes. Which is, first they created the governing council, then associated with each member on the council, they created a ministry and a bureaucracy to go with it, so there is the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Electricity, the Ministry of Education, and so on. So that's the so-called, "Iraqi Government."

And this was a government hospital so they were supposed to get their drugs from the Ministry of Health. He said we have gotten nothing from the Ministry of Health since before the war. The doctors in Kosa Mia told us this hospital is the Kosa Mia teaching hospital, it is one of the finest hospitals in Baghdad, or, supposedly. It doesn't have heat. So we were there, in the winter, it was getting down near freezing. You had in the pediatric wards you kids coming in with respiratory illnesses and having to sit there in the night in freezing temperatures. Um, sewers backs up onto the floors of the operating theaters, for lack of a simple, a machine which they said would cost them about \$3,000, would take care of their sewage problem. They don't have it. There is only one functioning elevator, in the building. They have a complete shortage of any sort of later generation drugs, the kinds they need to treat specialty cases, um, they don't have enough respirators. They don't have enough of any basic equipment, all right? They have to turn patients away even though they have empty beds because they simply don't have enough of anything that they need to treat people. And in both of these hospitals, they said, and I don't think they are exaggerating, they said they have less now than they did under the sanctions.

I'm sure you have heard some talks most of you about conditions in Iraq under the sanctions. But they have less in the government hospitals now than they did then. We went to a school, which was supposedly again, one of the finest schools in Baghdad. The former President of Iraq Ahmad Hasan Bakir <http://www.iiss.org/iraqCrisis-more.php?itemID=4> went to this school lots of other dignitaries and notables went to the school. During the looting after the war all of the wiring in the school was ripped out. So places that can afford it keep going, and you all know that there's electrical power only part of the time. In Baghdad it's usually about half the time they have electrical power, so most of the places that can afford it keep going with generators. But now a school that has no wiring a generator is no solution, obviously.

To this day they have gotten nothing from the Ministry of Education, they are teaching children in a school without lights, without electricity. We saw these kids in a room on a very dreary winter day with a little bit of diffuse light streaming through the windows trying to read and study and this was in one of the flag ship schools in Baghdad.

I'll give you an example that I find perhaps most telling of the difference between this and Saddam's regime, there are many differences, and you've heard a lot about some of those differences, but I'll tell you another difference right here. Across the street from the

hotel we stayed in there is a building, demolished building, which was the telephone exchange for that building. In the Gulf War it was a four story building. It was demolished and it was targeted because of their claim that telecommunications, electrical power, water and everything else, is a military target, and it was demolished, and this happened throughout the country, of course, after the Gulf War. The Gulf War, there was far more destruction all through Iraq than there was all through this war. If you want to put a number on it, maybe five to ten times as much destruction, and probably more than like ten, after the Gulf War than there was after this war.

So then we have this country which has just been shattered by this incredible bombing campaign. It's also under the sanctions which at that time meant that they could not sell any oil and they could not import any parts. The only thing they were really able to import right after the war was food and medicine, and even then, only if they had the money for it, which they usually didn't. So they had to go on a massive reconstruction campaign entirely through cannibalization. Take machines that were destroyed, take out parts from one destroyed machine, put it in another, and try to make one of the two work. They did this on a country wide scale.

This particular telephone exchange was redesigned to be a two story building, rebuilt, reconnected to the telephone grid, and they had the phones up and running in about three months, and this was throughout Baghdad that these people told us three to four months after the war they had their phones and their power back. To the degree possible. They couldn't restore the prewar level because they couldn't get the parts.

This time, ten months into the occupation, nobody has even swept up the rubble from this bombed out building. That's the level of difference, that's the level of reconstruction. In a sense there is no government in Iraq. Government in the normal sense that all of us understand, the things, the things that provide for all the basic amenities which we don't even notice. Garbage collection, garbage piles up and rots all over Baghdad. There's no municipal garbage service. Phones. Most people don't have phone service. There's no one supplying it. All of the basics of life, and this was a basically, Baghdad was more or less, the reported areas were more or less was the middle class society. Not at the level of affluence that we see in the United States, but it's something you can imagine, with the middle class society with these amenities, provided and maintained by the government, now there's none of that. It's all gone and they are left to basically stew in their own juices.

And so I came to my first conclusion, which stunned me, and I'll say it, and I don't think I've seen anyone say it. You remember how supposedly after the liberation one of the great things was that the sanctions would be over? And Iraqis would of course, get their joyful era of reconstruction and happiness? The sanctions aren't over. The sanctions are worse. Let me describe it in two ways.

How do the sanctions actually work. Iraq needed permission from a subcommittee of the Security Council, and the Sanctions Committee, to sell it's oil. Now, the permission for oil sales were after a while were automatically granted, and there were many different phases and times they could only sell a certain amount of oil, then that amount was increased, and then finally the last few years they were allowed to sell as much oil as they

could, which wasn't very much because of the destruction of the oil infrastructure. But they were allowed to sell the oil with the appropriate permission from the Sanctions Commission. Then, the money from that oil went into a bank account in New York from which they were allowed to make requests for disbursements for contracts with foreign corporations. Except in the North, which was treated differently, they were not allowed to use that to pay salaries, or to pay local businessmen. They were allowed only to try to make contracts with foreign corporations. For those contracts they would have to specify what they wanted to buy, it goes from the corporation to the warehouse in Baghdad, and who is the end user. They had to specify that whole path, put that contract in a request to the sanctions committee, they were not ever allowed to address the Sanctions Committee directly. It met behind closed doors, the Iraqi representative was outside, and every representative of that committee could hold up indefinitely any contract for any reason. And over the course of it was really the six years of the oil for food program, the United States imposed holds on over a thousand contracts and did it, there is an excellent article by Joy Gordon of the November 2002 Issue of Harper's Magazine called Cool War, Economic Sanctions as a Weapon of Mass Destruction, <http://www.harper.org/CoolWar.html> in which she details the extremely malicious way in which the United States denied certain contracts and really tried to keep reconstruction from happening.

But anyway, they get through all of that. They get the goods finally, some of them, some of the time, and then they are distributed to the people who need them and there there are more problems because you are trying to take in the goods for a whole country right? And you don't have, you have some massive inventory problem, and you're not allowed to import computers to deal with the inventory so nobody knows where, how much of anything there is, it's a real pain. You don't have enough transport. At one time the main warehouse in Baghdad had one operating fork lift. You don't have enough refrigerated trucks to carry medicines around, but somehow, these things got around in a limited way, in a very poor fashion, but things got around, and some of them actually worked very well. Like the food distribution was regularly praised for its extreme efficiency. That's still continuing now because what the United States did was take over the system the Iraqis created and allow it to work in exactly the same way it did.

Everything else though has changed. So how did the disbursement of funds change? Well, now it's not the UN in charge. When Iraq sells its oil all of the money goes into a fund administered by? Any guesses? The Iraqi people? The United States. It's called the Iraq development fund. It was created by Security Council Resolution 1483 last May, and it gives, that resolution gives the United States discretionary power over Iraq's oil revenues through the year 2007. Then what happens once it goes into that bank account? Well you see there used to be a government of Iraq. It was not a nice government. I have very little good to say about that government of Iraq. But one of the things it had which it holds in common with most governments is that it wanted to keep the society running. So it made plans to keep, to do the things which were necessary, which is not just, you know day to day distributing food but also making sure the hospitals have some medicine. And they did a lot of other things too. Saddam went on a jag of building palaces and Mosques which everyone in Iraq you talk to will complain about it and they say it was ridiculous, I mean it was just extreme extravagance, but they also provided

food, medicine, they also tried to come through with contracts for infrastructure, for electricity, for water, and so on. Now there is no government of Iraq. There's nobody doing any of this stuff, nobody is making those plans, and it's all being left. And you go and you try to get answers about anything, when is this going to be fixed, you get shuffled from one person to another, to another, to another. The United States has independently, in Iraq, without reference to that which exists, recreated the concept of third world beurocracy. It's remarkable. You cannot get any answers. You cannot get any action. Nothing is done. I went through the building of the State Company for Internet Services. You know, another great thing about the liberation. Before, Saddam was not too happy about people having free access to the internet, because of course, he figured that .1% of the people would use it to find out what's going on in the world and political stuff and 99.9% would use it for pornography, but, you know, he didn't want that .1%

And now, with the liberation, of course, we're gonna get internet for everyone in Iraq. So I went to the State Company for Internet Services, and I walked through the building, and I'm not exaggerating, you're not gonna believe me, I'm not exaggerating when I tell you, that in the entire building of the State Company for Internet Services, there was not a single computer. It's a joke but it's a very very bad joke and it's a joke that is causing a lot of harm and destruction to the people of Iraq.

So that was the first thing I learned, and I said, oh my God, this was like three days in, and I said well, all those feelings that maybe it wasn't gonna be worth the time or money, you know 48 hours in Iraq was enough. And I said well gee, you know i've learned so much, and of course I'm reading all this stuff anyway, there's not that much more to learn right? But the big picture I'm not gonna learn anything more about the big picture. How mistaken I was.

So, one day we decided to go and have an audience with the Baghdad Chief of Police. Now, nominally you expect that the Chief of Police of a large city is a somewhat important person. I was amazed you know? Who the hell do they think they are just saying we're gonna go and walk in and interview the Chief of Police? Doesn't he have better things to do? We're just a bunch of random activists from the United States. But, no problem, we got in. Interestingly enough when we got in, you remember the Iraqi police is often under attack, and sometimes it's even from the resistance? It's about half and half from the US Military and the resistance, but they are under fire from everyone. Um, there was no metal detectors and we were not frisked.

We walked in to the office of the Chief of Police without ever being checked for weapons. That's how much, how important, the Chief of Police is. Then we were told we were very very fortunate to meet with him because he has just this minute come back from two weeks at a conference in Tunisia for Arab ministers of the interior. <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/030109/2003010919.html> (Arab ministers of interior, information to meet in Tunisia on Wednesday Tunisia-Regional, Local, 1/9/2003 The first joint meeting for the Arab ministers of the interior and information will be held on Wednesday in Tunisia to discuss the Arab information document on security awareness and crime, taking into account the dimensions of the pan Arab national security and the national security of the Arab states, along with use of drugs and

terrorism.) And I thought oh wow, he's been really busy and he's gonna meet with us, how great. So we walk in and this man has been apparently out of the country for two weeks, there's not a single piece of paper on his desk. You know how in offices they have those on the desk they have those little boxes for in and out, or is it in and out, no in and out boxes? There was a computer in back but it was purely for show it wasn't turned on. We asked him questions like, "what's your budget?" He said, "I don't know."

Translating for him this whole time by the way is the chief of internal affairs of all Iraq's police. Why he's translating I don't know because we have our own translators, but that's another story. So, this man has nothing to do. He doesn't know what's going on, and after two weeks in Tunisia he had nothing better to do than sit around for hours answering our questions, and then we terminated the interview not him. And this is a standard pattern. You want to talk to American officials in Iraq? No chance. They don't have time for you. They're very busy. They have a lot of work to do. Maybe they will squeeze in two minutes somewhere but probably not. Iraqi officials of the Iraqi Government? No problem. Sit, chat for a couple hours, have tea. The entire Iraqi Government is basically being given almost nothing to do.

You know all this talk about the transfer of sovereignty? This is a fascinating story right? And if you, again, if you read the Post and even some of the other papers you get, it's a very very interesting what's going on when the United States the great beacon of democracy is regularly getting lessons in the meaning of democracy from a Shiite cleric. So, the United States says look here's our version of democracy, it's very simple, the Supreme Court appoints George Bush. George Bush appoints Paul Bremer. Paul Bremer appoints the governing council. The governing council appoints people, the Caucus, the Caucus will appoint representatives to an Assembly. The Assembly will appoint an interim government. That's democracy, right? This is what we all learned in school. And Ali Al Sistani, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani, says "hmm," it seems I read somewhere, I don't know where it was exactly, you know how funny these Shiite clerics are; that democracy involves elections somehow, and where are the elections in all of this six or seven layers of appointments?

So it's a fascinating story. But the real story is not even there, it's not even in the fact that the United States doesn't want elections. Part of the story is this. It's very simple. Even when they first talked about the transfer of sovereignty you had Ahmed Chalabi and Paul Bremer both saying the same thing, which is you know this transfer of sovereignty is really great, because now we have an occupying army and after the transfer of sovereignty it will be an invited army, which is to say we will create that government which invites us to continue the occupation. There's a real transfer of sovereignty for you. All right? So we've known from the beginning is that this transfer of sovereignty is a joke. They are going to continue the occupation they are just going to give it a slightly different face.

But what I saw in Iraq tells you it's actually a step beyond that. Forget about transferring sovereignty. There's not even a shred of a chance for that. As of now, they're not even moving to transfer minimal governmental functions. They are not even moving to transfer minimal governmental functions. They are not even moving to transfer minimal beaurocratic functions to the government of Iraq. They are not doing them themselves.

All the United States is doing in the Sunni Triangle, which includes Baghdad, is military operations. Now we've heard that it's somewhat different in the South, there is some reconstruction going on in the South, but the Sunni Triangle is one third of the population of Iraq, it's not a small amount. And it's not all Sunni, by the way, it's just mostly Sunni.

So they are only doing military operations, but they are not creating a government which will carry out the minimal civilian operations. We are told that shortly before we got there the administrator for electricity was on TV on Al Iraqia, the new TV station created by the United States, um, that was created by Science Applications International Corporation, because you all know about the great experience that they have in the Arab World. That was another brilliant decision of theirs. He was on TV saying, he was being asked, you know, what about the electricity. That's something you can ask even on Al Iraqia. In other ways they say it's pretty much not so different from Iraqi State TV under Saddam.

And he said well, I don't have any money, I don't have any funds, I don't have any authority. The Minister for Electricity has no funds or authority to rebuild the electrical power in Iraq. Forget about sovereignty. They are not even allowing the creation of a government. You know in Palestine, in the Oslo Accords, they created the Palestinian Authority with the clear idea that it was not going to be a state, it was not going to be a sovereign state, but it was going to at least have power to clean up the garbage in the West Bank. This one the United States is creating is not even getting that. The power to clean up the garbage. So forget about any transfer of sovereignty. The whole point of the transfer of sovereignty is pretty much this. In fact, there was another article in the Washington Post about it. "Soldiers in Baghdad are pulling back." They use to have about 60 different military operating locations in Baghdad. Now, by now they have about 26, and by mid April they want to have 8, two of which are in the heart of CPA bases, and 6 of which are in the outskirts of the city.

So what they want to do with this transfer of sovereignty is continue the occupation, continue the control of the Iraqi people, but simply remove American soldiers from harms way. Because the one thing they are getting flak about for the occupation, they are not getting any flak from anyone about the condition of the Iraqi people and what we are doing to the Iraqis, but they are getting flak about the deaths of soldiers. That's the one thing they are getting flak about and so they are going to move to take care of that in the cynical presumption that that's all that the people of the United States care about and that after that Iraq will simply go away as an issue.

Everybody in Iraq will tell you, no matter whether they claim that they are for Americans, against, up, or down, they will tell you that the transfer of sovereignty is all about the US elections and not about Iraqi elections. And you know if things go as they have then they will be correct in that presumption because I am sad to say that even Dennis Kucinich, who has the best position of any of the presidential candidates, who actually talks about ending the occupation, when he gets a chance he says very little or nothing about the condition of Iraqis. He talks again about the deaths of soldiers and the costs of occupation, but not about what we are really doing to the people of Iraq, let alone why we might be doing that to the people of Iraq.

So it's a very bad situation right now. It's not an exaggeration to say that Baghdad and the Sunni Triangle in general has been plunged into anarchy. It's not a real high level anarchy with armed gangs running around shooting everyone, although it could come to that. It's a low level anarchy, but it's still a very miserable one. You know even a bad government, even Saddam's government in some ways can be better than no government at all, because really nothing is getting done. And, it's amazing, I'm not kidding when I say probably over 95% of people in Baghdad will tell you, it's worse now than it was in Saddam's time. And that's a shocking, shocking thing to say, because let me assure you, Iraqis are not stupid. There is no one in Iraq who doesn't understand that Saddam Hussein committed atrocities, that he was a dictator, it would have been better if he wasn't, all right? They do understand that, again, there is a broad variety of opinions about Saddam, but that much people will say, and they will even say we have more freedom of speech now, although it doesn't matter because nobody pays attention to anything that they say.

And let me close, since I'm running out of time, with explaining to you what the United States is doing, because what I've told you is essentially what they are not doing. They are treating Iraq as a military campaign. In the Sunni Triangle they are engaged in search and destroy missions. That's it. Let me describe to you how they work. What every Iraqi will tell you when they complain about these things is this. They will say if they think there is a suspect in some house why don't they go, knock on the door, say we need X and arrest him. The way you do in normal police operations in most of the world. The way even Saddam's police did.

Instead, what do they do? At three o'clock in the morning, the family is peacefully sleeping. Suddenly a tank barrel smashes down the door of their house. People run through yelling in an incomprehensible language, pushing people around, kicking them, shoving them down into the dirt, which is of course a very humiliating thing for an Iraqi, very often they throw the Koran into the dirt too just to sort of add insult to injury. If someone is shot which often happens when they break in, because they are all extremely, extremely paranoid about everything, if someone is shot we have heard several cases in which they let these people bleed to death while they searched the house, did not give medical attention until after they searched the house. They are right there looking around while people are bleeding to death. We talked with a human rights commission, group, in Iraq, which is documenting these cases, has documented in detail about a hundred of these cases, and they tell us that in almost every case the soldiers also steal money and jewelry. So they are destroying people's houses, killing people, very often the kinds of tips they get could be anything, all right? Somebody, a neighbor of yours has always hated you so he goes to the Americans and says "oh, there's someone with the resistance here," that's all it takes. Someone was in the Republican Guard, automatically a suspect, that's a hundred and fifty thousand people.

I mean there's all kinds of things being done that have nothing to do with ferreting out a resistance. And then what happens if they take someone, either in a home raid or pick them up off the street. They disappear into the new global Gulag Archipelago the United States is creating. You have heard a lot about Guantanamo. Unfortunately, you have heard very little about the camps in Iraq, which are very similar to Guantanamo.

There is the Abu Ghurayb prison, who's name may be familiar to you because Saddam used it for the same purpose. There is the airport camp. It's known only as the airport camp or sometimes as Guantanamo, to Iraqis. There is Um Kasar, there's a big pen down in Um Kasar. Estimates are somewhere between thirteen and twenty thousand people are in this, most of them held incommunicado. Right, while the Red Cross was in Iraq sometimes, families could get some communication into prisoners, now they usually can't. These people are incommunicado, they're being held, when they release the stories of people who got out they are being held in pretty bad conditions all right? In the summer, in the height of the Baghdad heat they were in tents without any kind of electricity, they were on rationed water, they are beaten fairly often, the stories of real extreme torture seem to be rare, but then, as we all know just from reading the papers what the United States does when it wants someone really tortured is outsource it: you know outsourcing is the way of the world, send them to Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia. Now it's interesting, because in many cases we are the ones who taught them initially how to do this torturing, and certainly in Latin America it was all US training, but now, now we send it out.

So these people are kept in these horrible conditions, up to twenty thousand of them. And, of course, what's happened in Iraq is there's an atmosphere of total frustration and anger against the occupation, and incomprehension, because honestly a lot of the Iraqis were naive enough to believe some of the promises that the United States made and did not understand that the United States had no intention of fulfilling any of them. And the strange thing is of course, that all of this is not even fulfilling the designs the United States had. Since I am out of time I won't be able to talk to you much about this, which is what are the larger imperial plans and out does Iraq fit into them and how does control of oil, which of course everyone sort of knows is involved but nobody really wants to really talk about it, how does control of oil fit into this, but none of this makes much sense even from their point of view while they are almost deliberately abandoning Baghdad and Iraq to chaos and anarchy. And I think what has happened is that even the grand planners, the Richard Perle's and the Paul Wolfowitz's who had their plans and their long term vision of an empire and a new American century, didn't want to think about the plans for how to get from here to there, and Iraq right now stands in the way of getting from here to there and the only people coming up with policy in Iraq on how to do things day to day are the military. And the military are not part of this imperial plan and they don't know how to fulfill it and so it's all completely random and it devolves into basically a military ethic which is this. In the Sunni Triangle there is resistance, so the military idea is simple. If there is resistance, starve em out. Deny them resources, deny them services. If you are my friend you get help which happens in much of the South. If you are my enemy or if there is one in a thousand of you who are my enemy, you get nothing, and that's pretty much what's happening in Iraq today.

Thank you."

