

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS
19TH ANNUAL ARAB-U.S. POLICYMAKERS CONFERENCE

“Arab-U.S. Relations: Going Where?”

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2010

**RONALD REAGAN BUILDING & INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTER
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

"DEFENSE COOPERATION"

CHAIR:

Secretary William S. Cohen – Chairman and Chief Executive of the Cohen Group; former United States Secretary of Defense (1997-2001).

SPEAKERS:

Dr. Anthony H. Cordesman – Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy, Center for Strategic and International Studies; Adjunct Professor in National Security Affairs, Georgetown University.

Mr. Joseph McMillan – Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Department of Defense.

Mr. Christopher Blanchard – Analyst in Middle Eastern Affairs, Congressional Research Service.

COMMENTATORS:

Major General Mohammed Elkeshky – Defense Attaché of Egypt to the United States and Canada.

General Joseph P. Hoar (USMC, Ret.) – Former Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Central Command.

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DEFENSE COOPERATION

[Secretary William Cohen] I am delighted to be here to chair this panel. It's a program that has been in existence now for some 19 years. It's been a great platform for discussing what I think is one of the most relevant and complicated relationships in the world. And that is the relationship between the United States and the Arab World.

Recent events, I think, tend to highlight the differences between the U.S. and the Arab World. But I travel a great deal to the region and I can tell you that we have far more in common than we do have differences. We share common security issues and these issues must be addressed in a very positive and constructive way.

Today's panel is one that is going to focus on defense cooperation in the Middle East. I want to set the stage just for a few moments and quickly review some of the more complex and significant security issues that are facing the United States today in the Middle East region.

First, of course, we have Iran. The Iranian nuclear program continues to have a destabilizing effect on the region. It's quite clear that Israel considers Iran with a nuclear weapon to be an existential threat. It is also clear that Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf states do not want to see a nuclear-armed Iran that might throw its weight around and also spread its revolutionary ideology. There are some in our country who believe that arms sales to our friends such as the Saudis and the UAE will serve as a counterbalance in the region against a nuclear-armed Iran. There are others who worry that the arms deal might just lead to an arms race in the Middle East. There are others who question why do we want to sell arms to people in the region who can simply cause even more harm to each other. So that will be an issue that will likely be discussed today.

The other issue would be the withdrawal from Iraq. We currently have some 50,000 so-called non-combat troops that continue the training of Iraqi troops for counter terrorism operations. But you may have noticed that the President said we are going to withdraw from Iraq. He said, basically, unconditionally, without regard to the conditions on the ground. And so, when it comes time during the course of this year, we're likely to see a reduction in the 50,000 troops in Iraq, at a time when it is by no means clear, that Iraq is going to be stable enough to handle the security situation on its own. Also at a time when we're likely to see a reduction of our troop levels in Afghanistan, all coming at a time when the Iranian nuclear program continues relatively unabated. So that will surely be a subject that will be addressed.

Yemen is ripe with instability. The Houthi rebel group in the north, the separatist region in the south, they continue to cause more instability of this struggling nation. Al Qaeda has moved in, has taken advantage of this. They are using Yemen as a staging and training area for terrorist attacks within the country and abroad.

And I think we could probably spend the rest of the afternoon talking about the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and how it's going to be moved forward and resolving the very thorny issues that continue to exist especially in talking about settlements. So our panelists will touch on

many of these issues as well as the changing nature of the defense cooperation between the U.S., Europe and the Gulf region.

Our first panelist today is Doctor Anthony Cordesman who currently holds the Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS. He has completed multiple security studies on Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East generally among the many other topics that he addresses. I worked with him when I was on the Senate Armed Services Committee and we always turned to him for absolutely brilliant insight into issues affecting our security. He is going to be talking about the changing nature of the Gulf military cooperation with the U.S. and Europe and the changing nature of the Gulf military cooperation within the Gulf States, the GCC. So please welcome Doctor Anthony Cordesman.

[Dr. Anthony Cordesman] Thank you and I will get this right, Mr. Secretary. I'd like to very quickly skim through some key indicators. It's very easy to talk in generalities. But I think to understand what is happening occasionally you have to found your opinions in hard numbers and hard trends. And let me begin with one of the key realities here.

Before the United States invaded, Iraq was the dominant conventional power, relative to Iran by a decisive margin. [PowerPoint Slides] If you look at the red lines, and these are only a few of the force ratios involved. You can see to the left, that Iraq led Iran in every capacity. Today we are just beginning to give Iraq some capacity in main battle tanks. That is the only conventional land weapon system that we will equip Iraq with before we withdraw. In the case of the air ratios Iraq led in air combat before the invasion. Now it has no armed combat aircraft and has no immediate plans to purchase these aside from a limited up arming of some helicopters.

This is not something that has to continue. The United States worked with Iraqis to develop a modernization plan from 2009 to 2011. It is supplying 144 M1 battle tanks. There has been talk of F-16 sales. But several things have delayed Iraq's military modernization very, very seriously, and far below the levels we had planned to see when we withdrew. One of them is the lack of the formation of government and the ability to take decisions.

A second is that Iraq's ministries simply did not have the capacity that we had hoped for and expected to see in implementing plans. But the most critical one has been a budget crisis that began in the spring of 2009 that led to a freeze on the expansion of critical elements of the Iraqi armed forces, that has led to a serious decline in the readiness of Iraqi manning, the underfunding of operations and maintenance and the virtual paralysis of investment programs. This crisis is easing but it cannot really be resolved until a new government is not only chosen, but is in place. So what we had expected to have at the end of 2011 now can still be achieved. But it will be 2013 at the earliest. And for us to complete even the anti-counterinsurgency programs, the anti-counter terror programs will run about two years later than we had originally planned. And at this point in time we do not have, because Iraq does not have, a plan for the modernization of its conventional forces. Worse than that, because of the way the Iraqi budget is structured, most of the budget goes simply to paying for manpower in the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense.

All of these numbers are presented in much more detail in a briefing we put out on the CSIS web site today. They are Iraqi numbers and quite frankly they're also numbers, which were made very clear, and their content and impact was made very clear, in reporting by the Department of Defense. But there are no miracles here. We need an Iraqi government, as Ambassador Crocker pointed out, that is unified, willing to act, and can define what strategic partnership means and act upon it. That won't come with the selection of a government. It will take perhaps another six to eight months to bring the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense back to the level of effectiveness we had hoped for and have it begin decision making.

Iraq will not be able to fund the programs it had thought to fund. Its budget crisis extends far beyond the defense sector and it will be years before its petroleum revenues can fund the programs it wants. The U.S. has put forward, tentatively, plans to provide critical military assistance as well advisory missions after we leave.

I think the Administration has made those plans quite clear. But let me say there are several ways we can lose a war we have seemed to have won. One is in how Iraq's politics deal with the security agreement and the development of Iraqi forces.

A second is for other Arab states to basically leave Iraq outside the structure of security and economic cooperation. And the third major threat to Iraq at this point, in deterring and in dealing with security issues, is the United States Congress, and perhaps the media and the American people. Unless we see a strategic partnership with Iraq as something we are willing to fund over the next half decade there is no practical way that Iraq can move forward with anything like the effectiveness that it needs.

Let me also note that strategic cooperation in this region is changing radically. We would think a few years ago about the conventional balance. Secretary Cohen has mentioned the nuclear side. But Iran has put most of its assets into creating asymmetric warfare capabilities. And that is the area where it has a significant advantage over other states. We are often fixated on the vulnerability of the Strait of Hormuz but when you look at the overall Gulf it is one of the richest target environments in the world. You can attack almost anywhere in the Gulf, onshore or offshore. Our inability, frankly, to look at the entire Gulf is a serious issue, not within the U.S. military or CENTCOM but often on the part of think tanks and strategic analysts outside the Department of Defense. The vulnerability here is shown in broad terms in this satellite photo of Ras Tanura. Let me note something about modern communications. You can get incredibly high-resolution photos of every sensitive facility in the Gulf, off the web. And frankly looking at some of those photos it is obvious even from them that the security arrangements are dysfunctional. We have not looked at security of facilities and we have not looked at the ability to repair them. And it is no secret because it is in the open literature, when we talk about Gulf cooperation you have probably six of the most critical, vulnerable targets in the world. These are the desalination plants. There is no redundancy, there is no backup. If these plants are hit at a critical point the water that is critical to the cities in the Gulf disappears along with critical parts of the power. And after 20-odd-years of talking about the need for redundancy, to have critical replacement parts to avoid long lead items and to avoid creating added vulnerability the practical progress in these areas could be politely described as zero, if not negative. You do not have security cooperation purely in active defense.

In terms of the capabilities. I have heard people talk rather carelessly about Iran as a hegemon of the Gulf. That bottom line is the level of Iranian defense expenditures since 1997. That darker red line is Saudi Arabia alone. The top line is the Gulf Cooperation Council. The problem is not resources. And none of these figures include our presence in the Gulf. It is efficiency. It is organization. Now we have states that are reacting. The impact of the Iranian growth of capability on the Gulf States is not something Gulf States say politically and openly, wisely I think. But if you look at the increase in arms orders of the last five years, they are clearly responding. That is not simply the Saudi set of orders, it includes the UAE, it includes Kuwait and it includes other states that are smaller. And it is important to note here that when we talk about an arms race in the Gulf that the Saudi purchase is not out of context of a consistent pattern of cooperation in arms sales with the United States that has gone on in the last six years not does it produce some vast bulge in capability. After every F-15 that Saudi Arabia has on order today is delivered it will have fewer combat aircraft than it had during the Gulf War in 1991.

It is time, I think, to look at balances, not at dollar figures. And look at capabilities because they've had to phase out the F-5E and they have dealt with the Tornado and other systems. Now in terms of total arms orders, I quoted 8 to 1 for defense, the Gulf Cooperation Council has led Iran by a factor of 54 to 1. With all the limits, if you put Iraq in, it is 62 to 1. And these are declassified figures from DIA. This is not a sort of random think tank estimate. Although I should probably never say that about think tanks. When it comes down to the practical structures, the other thing is, what we can do and Iran cannot do, is provide a level of sophistication and technology which makes Gulf arms orders far more effective and far more advanced than Iran can possibly get from any source.

Now, I won't take you through all of the numbers. But I would will say that the National Council will make this briefing available to you and what it tells you is that basically, in every meaningful way, if the United States could be omitted from the Gulf balance you would find that the Southern Gulf states would have a decisive lead in equipment, numbers and quality over Iran in every meaningful element. I'll skip through those, the numbers will be available for you.

Where does the problem lie? The one area where Iran has a massive buildup is in paramilitary and asymmetric forces. We don't have simple numbers or ways to really compare these. But if you look at these you can see where Iran is a threat. And you'll also see where Iran is building things up. Most of you are familiar that Abu Musa and the Tunbs were, shall we say, thoroughly acquired from the UAE by the Iranian government in past years. What's very interesting to see is to look at overhead photos of Abu Musa and the Tunbs and find out that strangely enough Iran has done far more to create infrastructure and potential defense capabilities on those islands than it has on many of its other islands, which have been Iranian since Iran emerged as a modern state. There are a lot of ways to talk about policy but occasionally you might want to look at a few facts. In terms of asymmetric warfare capabilities Iran has put assets into naval capabilities as well as groups like the Al Quds force and a presence outside that area. It has critical advances in mine forces. There basically is almost no modern mine warfare capability in the Gulf today. You have five aging Saudi minesweepers and you look at the Iranian capabilities. You look at landing craft, but that's, I think, a minor issue.

Now let me just very briefly talk about the other area of change. It would probably be a healthy development if the Department of Defense or some source that has access to classified data would provide a realistic picture of the Iranian missile effort. Because a great deal is said to exaggerate this threat and misstate its capability. It is becoming a very, very serious potential threat. At this point in time most of those missile remain in development. They have, as far as we can determine, unitary conventional warheads, or unitary chemical weapons. Remember that Iran is a declared chemical weapons state, something that often gets lost in the focus on nuclear. We have no indication that these missiles are either highly reliable or highly accurate. And the fact is that a conventional unitary warhead, because of the way missiles close and the velocity with which they hit, have about 1/3 of the lethality of a bomb of the same size. So a 2000-pound missile warhead, even if they could launch one, would have roughly the equivalent of a 750-pound bomb if you could hit a target with it. The problem is that you can't decouple these developments from the obvious issue. Why do you do them? Because if you're going nuclear, all of these equations and realities change.

In one of our problems in analysis is to focus only on the nuclear breakout capability and not on their overall force developments. That leads the whole issue of major changes in defense cooperation. Let me say that as a Republican I sometimes find that there is a religious belief in missile defense within the Republican part of Congress unrelated to either the real world progress or test programs. There is unfortunately, sometimes an equal religious belief they can't work. What is critical however, is we need interoperability. We need integration. And as is the case in dealing with asymmetric warfare, you need constant exercises, tests, and integration of command and control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance that cuts across what are the deep national barriers between Gulf states. To do this we need real world plans, real world programs and real world interoperability between the United States and its Southern Gulf allies.

Finally, just a minor issue about nuclear. You can say all you want about the good intentions of Iran, but let me just note, this is the facility [slide] at Natanz, and I think, again, sometimes pictures are very useful. Any of you who have ever seen an underground parking garage under construction may note that what you see here is a small down ramp. That was an attempt to conceal the scale of the underground facility that was being built, which houses some 30,000 centrifuges in terms of capacity. It is hardened in multiple chambers and strangely it does not seem particularly peaceful.

In terms of concealment once they finished the excavation, that's an overhead picture of what this actually looks like. It basically is a small building which in no way seems to house, or hide, what is a vast underground complex. If you can believe this is a peaceful project designed purely for the purpose of creating nuclear power, let me just close by saying that after this briefing I'd be happy to discuss real estate derivatives with any of you who have that level of credibility.

With that, thank you.

[Cohen] It has been said that amateurs study strategy, experts study numbers. With Mister Cordesman you have an expert. He does a brilliant job at analyzing strategy but also looking at the numbers and integrating the two of them. So thank you very much, Tony, for that.

Our second panelist today is Joseph McMillan who I had the pleasure of working with when I was at the Department, not the State but DoD. Mr. McMillan is a career member of the Senior Executive Service, he was appointed to be Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs back in 2009. In this role he is the principal adviser to Secretary Gates in the formulation and coordination and implementation of strategy and policy involving Africa, Europe, NATO, the Middle East and the former Soviet Union. So please join me in welcoming Mr. McMillan.

[Joseph McMillan] Thank you Secretary Cohen. I would hasten to add I have to fix that biography. I am usurping my boss's prerogatives to be "the" Principal Adviser to the Secretary of Defense.

It's a pleasure for me to be here. One of these days I'm going to learn that when I see Tony Cordesman's name on a panel that I ought to just say I'll be a commentator but there's really no point in my duplicating the substance of what he says.

I strongly endorse his analysis of the region and I think perhaps it's most useful for me on that basis to take a step back and try to put this into a strategic context that bridges what Kathleen Hicks started to tell you before she was so rudely interrupted and the details of what Dr. Cordesman just went through in his presentation.

I would like to start by talking about broad US national security interests in the Middle East. I'm going to say some things that you're going to think don't sound very much like security interests but there is a reason for that.

Since the 1940s we have seen energy security as probably the chief interest that we have, certainly in the Gulf area, if not in the Middle East as a whole. It also, as is well known, the security of the State of Israel when Israel was created soon became a major concern of the United States as well and more broadly the creation of an enduring peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Both of these, energy security and Arab-Israeli peace, clearly still are centerpieces of American strategy towards the Middle East. But as time went by we became more and more concerned about other issues and when I was working for Secretary Cohen in our Near East, South Asia office we were focusing increasingly on things like nuclear proliferation, other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, the growing threat of terrorism, even if you stretch a little bit beyond the core of the Middle East, it's obvious that it's also a center of the struggle against narcotic trafficking. And in fact, I can remember a conversation I had when some one came and talked to us about these new transnational threats. Sitting in the Middle East office, I said well what do you mean and they went down the list of the new transnational threats. And I said, "narcotics is us. Terrorism is us. Proliferation is us." Tell me about these new threats are that you are talking about. Well now we have a new, new transnational threats that we are dealing with. You heard Katherine Hicks talk about the increasing focus on anti-access capability, but that's largely in the context of the Gulf region that we worry about anti-access problems.

We talk about state weakness. Yemen is a classic case of state weakness, and Secretary Cohen

mentioned that earlier. Not just Yemen but if we can get past the habit we have of thinking in terms that our bureaucratic boundaries are real lines and real divisions than we simply take a quick ride across the strait of Bab el Mandeb we come to Somalia that's an even better example of state weakness, and the ability of terrorists to take advantage of that weakness even more so than Yemen.

So all of these transnational threats that we think of as being new in fact are embedded in the strategic picture of the region. And the U.S. interest in preserving stability and protecting our strategic relationships are not just the classic state on state issues that we traditionally think of but it's embedded within that broad picture of the nontraditional threats as well.

But at the same time 9/11 brought to the front what a lot of us had been working in Middle Eastern affairs have recognized for a long time, that there are other strategic challenges that face the region that the United States has to worry about, such as political development, the expansion of economic, education and social opportunities, the human right's question, including questions of how to handle aspirations of women, how to handle aspirations for religious freedom and aspirations for more representative governance.

There is nothing new about these issues on the regional agenda but a lot of people in the United States and a lot of people in the West in general, and I think and a lot of people in the region itself became more acutely aware that there are consequences to a lack of progress in these areas and so in a way that they weren't, when I was working for Secretary Cohen, these issues to have become security issues and issues that we have to think about as we are thinking about a security strategy toward the Middle East.

So as complex as these interests are they face a range of multidimensional challenges just as complicated as the interests themselves. We can take it geographically but that wouldn't capture everything. Dr. Cordesman talked about the Iranian challenge which is clearly very much on our scope and we spend a great deal of time thinking about how to do deal with this both politically and if political means fail it's part of the business of our department to think beyond political means obviously and I don't want to overstate at all the prospects of that, but clearly these are matters of concern.

Not least of course we think of the danger of a conflict between Israel and Iran. Israel clearly has concerns about Iranian behavior that is perhaps more acute and immediate than ours for understandable reasons. Israeli action would complicate our position in the region immensely and so this also is one of the dimensions, one of the main challenges that we have to deal with it.

At the sub state level we have the attempts I mentioned earlier of Al Qaeda trying to establish safe havens in fragile states. Yemen and Somalia I already mentioned. But in Iraq itself we still have a continuing challenge of Al Qaeda trying to regain the toehold that we and the Iraqis, had a reasonable success in taking away from them a few years ago, but it is a constant struggle to keep them from reemerging as a very serious threat in Iraq.

The threat of renewed ethno-sectarian violence again in Iraq. It's very true that as Secretary Cohen and Dr. Cordesman laid out, we've accomplished an amazing amount of success in Iraq.

And I would say as somebody dealing with that country it didn't surprise me that the job was a lot harder than some people expected it to be in 2003. But it also surprised me if you had asked me in 2007 would we be where we are in 2010 I think that I would have laughed at you because I never would have imagined that we'd have this much success. But the job is far from done.

I'll be reinforcing it in a couple of minutes the point that Dr. Cordesman made about the need to follow through with the program and not to simply assume that that at the end of 2011, at the end of the current plans for military engagement there, that the job is somehow done and the United States can walk away altogether.

Then the whole issue of other Iranian proxies elsewhere in the region that's equally destabilizing. As people have come to call it a Hamastan in Gaza and Hezbollahstan in southern Lebanon, continuing challenges to stability in the region that have little to do with the classic state on state model that we think of in conventional military planning.

The regional dynamics are also changing. The balance of power is constantly shifting and realigning. There are always ups and downs in the state of Arab-Israeli tensions. At one moment we think there is hope for progress on peace the next moment things are falling apart. This is a customary part of the life of people who work the Middle East but it's no different now, it doesn't show any signs of getting any better in the future. It's something that has to be worked and we have to be prepared to react to. And the changing U.S. force posture in the region, Secretary Cohen mentioned and express some concern about the prospect of the United States getting forces out of Iraq by the end of 2011, alluded to the prospect of reductions in forces in Afghanistan over the course of 2011, although I think the degree to which we anticipate quick withdrawal from Afghanistan has been widely overstated in the way people have understood the Administration's policy and I can talk about that if people like.

And then again the other challenges in the region that we all know about --demographic crises and resource pressures. Ambassador Jubeir got a question about the Saudi demographic challenge. I'm happy that he is so optimistic in saying this youth bulge is an opportunity for his country. I wish Saudi Arabia all the best in dealing with it that way. I will remain agnostic and wait and see whether it really turns out that way but I think throughout the region the demographic challenge is very serious and something that the United States has a very strong interest in seeing dealt with in a productive and successful way.

And finally the question of regime succession. I feel silly even bringing this up because I can remember probably writing papers for the Secretary when he was first coming aboard into DoD, and we probably wrote them for Dr. Perry when he was coming aboard, and probably for Secretary Cheney and his predecessors as well that the region is facing an imminent crisis of regime transition as rulers are becoming older and older. But I think the actuarial charts are catching up with us at some point, and so there's a number of countries where the people that we have been accustomed to dealing with for decades now are almost certain to be passing from the scene in increasing numbers and who will replace them is not always clear. In some cases, the rulers think it's clear. Whether it really is clear we will see when the time comes. But this again is a challenge that we have to be prepared to deal with.

So what I've laid out here are multifaceted interests, multifaceted challenges and the obvious conclusion to this is they require multifaceted conclusions. I'm not going to surprise anybody by saying that. I will say that one of the pleasures of coming back into the department with this Administration is, I think, we have a team of leaders who understand more clearly than has been the case in the past that these challenges do require holistic inter-agency, whole of government solutions.

The Secretary will remember, I'm sure fondly, that during his tenure we used to drag him out to the Gulf every six months whether there was anything to talk about or not. It paid huge dividends for us in establishing the relationships so that when there was something that needed to be done, he, the chairman and the other senior officials in the Department of Defense could call their counterparts and get quick action because the personal relationships had been built.

What we heard consistently from our partners in the Arab world, in particular, was why is it only the Defense Department that was doing this kind of engagement. Well now I think we have broader engagement across the board and we certainly have a broader appreciation that this list of problems that I've identified can't all be solved by the Defense Department alone, despite the fact that we have clearly the most generous set of resources in monetary terms to deal with these problems. But they include this task that Dr. Cordesman mentioned of consolidating Iraqi stability getting it re-integrated into the region, forging a long-term partnership as the U.S. forces drawdown. This is indeed going to require resources on the part of the American taxpayers to succeed but I think we've invested a great deal of blood and treasure so far, and I think not to get into a sunk cost fallacy, the benefit of continuing to make what is a relatively modest investment from this time forward, clearly would pay huge dividends for this country in terms of regional security.

I have pretty much covered the other aspects of things that we need to be giving attention to throughout the region. I would only say in the Gulf specifically, to the point that Tony Cordesman alluded to a little bit really needs to be reinforced and some of you here in this room are people who can make it happen. Which is that one of the great advances that can be made would be for the GCC member countries to get to the point where they genuinely can collaborate together in the area of security and to multiply the forces that they have, that they've spent billions of dollars acquiring, but that they aren't getting the leverage out of that they could be getting with cooperation.

I know this is easy for me to say. I know it is hard for these countries to do. We spend a great deal of diplomatic effort and military/diplomatic effort trying to highlight that the Gulf countries biggest rivals are not each other, and sometimes we feel it that that's the way to behave, is that they are greater threats to each other than the Iranians across the way or in past decades than the Iraqis were to the north. But it really is something that all of us need to get past. We need to combine the common efforts of the United States, other allies, the Gulf countries and other like minded powers within the Middle East to deal with the threats that we face, because it none of these countries can do it by themselves.

With that I will stop and thank you it very much.

[Cohen] Joe was absolutely right. As a matter of policy I traveled to the Gulf at least twice a year sometimes three times. But there was this second rule. Don't visit just one Gulf state make sure when you go you visit all of them. Otherwise there will be some repercussions that will flow across your desk very quickly.

In any event our final panelist is Christopher Blanchard a Middle East policy analyst at the Congressional Research Service, CRS. I know that many of you have read his reports on subjects such as the Gulf Security Dialogue, U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia and the war in Iraq. Today Mr. Blanchard is going to discuss US congressional actions and views in regard to current defense issues in the region. It is my understanding that he served as chair of the panel last year, so it is a pleasure to welcome him now as a panel member. Thank you very much.

[Mr. Christopher Blanchard] Thank you Mr. Secretary. Sort of the opposite, big shoes to fill. I see you are collecting titles, Ambassador.

Again thank you to the Council for inviting me back as a presenter at this time on such a distinguished panel. I should note at the outset that my remarks today are my own and not those of the Congressional Research Service. I should also say that it's not every day that a former United States Senator and Secretary of Defense introduces you to talk about congressional views of Middle East defense policy the day after a \$60 billion arms sales is announced to Saudi Arabia. So it should be no sweat.

I'll do two things briefly this afternoon, first I will address the news of the day and make some observations about the views and reactions in Congress. Second I will try to address the theme of the conference and discuss some lenses through which Congress is likely to view future U.S. defense policy initiatives in the region.

So, on the proposed arms sales notified yesterday, as you've seen comments from officials are suggesting the administration is fairly confident that Congress will not act as, quote, a barrier to it the arms sales and media reports have not featured thus far many statements to suggest otherwise. This could lead observers to conclude that by historical standards there is a rather remarkable lack of Congressional opposition to what by all accounts is a major arms sale of major importance that features technology that Congress has objected to in the past.

If we look back to Octobers past, October 1981 was the AWACS and the F-15 upgrade confrontation in Congress, with a House resolution of disapproval narrowly being voted down. October 1992, again another consideration of a controversial F-15s sale. So what accounts for the apparent shift in the Congressional approach?

I can't and won't try to definitively speak be for my bosses, members of Congress and Congressional staff, but I will say as many in the audience know and panel members know from personal experience in the cases I refer to there is more going on up on the hill than meets the eye.

In the current case the Administration in general and Mr. McMillan's office in particular, worked very hard behind the scenes to gain approval for the sale. Prior to yesterday's announcement

there was careful scrutiny of the details of the proposed sale and others by the committees of jurisdiction and by other members of Congress.

Beyond that I'd argue that the priorities demonstrated by Congress' current approach are familiar and consistent. The changes in regional conditions are in fact the key factor to explaining the difference in response we have observed so far.

Congress and the Executive Branch have actually shared priorities with regard to arms sales in the Middle East but they differ about the relative importance and about the impact that individual cases will have on those priorities. Both branches seek to contain and counteract regional threats, to maintain the physical security of key allies and to maintain the strength and long-term strategic partnerships. At times however these priorities compete. At present members of Congress as my colleague, Dr. Katzman, alluded to earlier today are voicing clear concerns about Iran, its role in the region, its nuclear program and its potential to threaten U.S. allies both in Israel and in the Arab states.

These concerns are most evident in the bipartisan support for expanded sanctions legislation and congressional insistence that the Administration enforce existing sanctions rigorously. I would submit that these concerns are in fact creating synergy among potentially competing priorities that I described earlier. This synergy is a key factor shaping Congress' response to the currently considered sale.

Other contributing regional factors are Israel's quiet consent to the sale, its recent commitment to purchase F-35 Joint Strike Fighters and the Administration's strong endorsement of its partnership with the Saudi government as an ally in its campaign against Al Qaeda.

So turning to the theme of the conference and looking ahead a little bit. The proposed sales suggests the administration is seeking continuity in a key strategic relationship at a time when many in Congress have questions about the future of the U.S. role and their presence in the Gulf after the withdrawal from Iraq is complete.

That fact, combined with concerns about Iran, suggest that Congress may be more open than it has been in the past to considering certain arms sales and endorsing certain policy initiatives, particularly to the extent that they advance the type of agenda that Dr. Cordesman and Mr. McMillan have described as necessary today.

In other words, sales and initiatives that address asymmetric, maritime, border security and critical infrastructure threats and that begin to make progress on achieving true interoperability that can lessen the regional strategic burden on the United States are likely to be looked on more favorably.

Whatever course the administration chooses to take, however, Members of Congress are likely to weigh future authorization, appropriations and arms sales requests through three different lenses.

The first is the traditional lens of oversight and compatibility with broad policy goals. And this is in line with the issues that Mr. McMillan raised that are nontraditional security concerns. For

example, in Yemen right now, the Administration is seeking and implementing a significant expansion of counterterrorism and security assistance for using funds appropriated to the Department of Defense.

Congressional concerns about the end use of that assistance and wider concerns about its compatibility with broader U.S. goals on corruption, human rights, government and development will continue to apply in that case. And I would argue they will be applied to others including Iraq.

The second lens, and this is certainly in the news at the moment, is fiscal discipline. The clearest example of this and a current congressional approach is the transition to Iraq. Congress has long sought to ensure that U.S. security assistance to Iraq will prepare Iraq's security forces to provide security for their own country and lessen the burden on the United States. At present debate focuses on remaining U.S. investment that is necessary to help Iraqis meet minimum essential capability goals outlined by the administration.

Some in Congress are seeking to ensure that Iraqi, rather than U.S., funds are invested in key remaining sustainment and logistical needs. In the future this approach suggests that Congress may continue and increase its scrutiny of grant assistance programs and may favor more reliance on use of FMS, Foreign Military Sales, funded training and equipment programs. This would be similar to models already in place in Saudi Arabia but also in place in Iraq.

The third and final lens is a political lens. And here we also see some caution about countries where the U.S. has clear interests and the Administration feels it has important goals. If shared strategic perspectives and security concerns have the potential to create the types of synergy I mentioned earlier that's facilitating the Saudi case and other cases differing or uncertain strategic perspectives have the potential to jeopardize congressional support for assistance programs and arms sales.

In Lebanon, for example, the August border incident drew the attention of many in Congress but it added momentum to a trend that has seen increasing questions raised about the ultimate purpose and goals of the U.S. defense assistance. These questions of course also divide Lebanon's political leadership. As such pending decisions about the future of that program may be weighed in light of developments in Lebanese politics, particularly with regard to a national defense strategy. And perhaps most importantly, in Iraq. Congress has appropriated taxpayer funds for a massive, multiyear investment in the training and equipping of Iraq's security forces. The administration has articulated a desire to a long-term security partnership with Iraq. While there are multiyear programs to supply major defense equipment already underway and under consideration, the scope of the future defense relationship remains unclear. While many in Congress also have articulated a desire to capitalize on the U.S. investment thus far, it is reasonable to expect that Members of Congress will weigh policy and arms sale proposals regarding Iraq in light of the positions adopted by the new Iraqi government when it emerges, as well as its regional orientation and its own plans for and use of its military.

Thank you

[Cohen] Our final speaker of the panel is Gen. Joseph Hoar. As with Mr. McMillan, I had the pleasure of working with General Hoar when he was then serving as Commander-in-Chief of the US Central Command, during the early 90's. Following his retirement from the military he set up, oddly enough, a consulting firm, J.P. Hoar and Associates and he is engaged in business development in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere. General Hoar is one of our most outstanding military generals and a great public servant, so General Hoar it's a pleasure to see you. Welcome to the panel.

[General Joseph Hoar] Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I think as most of you realize my duty here for the next few minutes is to comment on what has been discussed already. For somebody that is dyslexic trying to keep four people straight in what they said, and under what conditions is going to be difficult. But let me start by talking for a few moments about the threats as perceived in the Gulf because this is I think very important to the arms buildup. I think it bears on the almost unanimity in the U.S. government that we have to do more to assist our Arab friends in being able to protect themselves.

A number of years ago the then Foreign Minister of Qatar, Hamed bin Jassim traveled to Tehran, he spoke to his opposite numbers in the Foreign Ministry. He said that while Qatar had supported the United States in the liberation of Kuwait and in the attacks Iraq, that he wanted to reassure his colleagues in Iran that Qatar would not participate in an attack against Iran. His interlocutors told him that he had it all wrong, that if Israel or the U.S. or both attacked them, they did not have the capability to reach the United States, but they did indeed have the ability to reach the United States' friends along the coast of the Persian Gulf. So this was the message that came back and resonated within the GCC.

During the discussion that Tony mentioned the issue of facilities security, let me just give you a couple of examples about the vulnerability. Exxon Mobil has had a joint venture in Qatar, for I guess I'd nearly 20 years now, with liquefied natural gas and I think there is an executive here from Exxon. I think that the capital expenditure for Qatar gas and Exxon Mobil now on this very mature project is something on the order of \$20 billion. It is all fixed and it is all easy to see right along the coast.

If you go down to the UAE, the principal point for gathering offshore oil extraction is on Das Island. Das Island is a very small island 187 miles at sea from Abu Dhabi, very vulnerable to attack. We heard about missiles and their capability but perhaps the more important one that Tony had mentioned was the ability of Special Forces or Al Quds, or these fellows to come ashore and attack widely dispersed things.

So there is a very real sense among the Gulf countries of this threat. Unfortunately as we heard earlier the cooperation among the GCC to work together to provide for their defense, both Tony and Joe alluded to this, is not forthcoming. Any of us who have had the opportunity to work with our Arab friends on cooperating with one another in some of these ventures, particularly in complex areas have had a very difficult time. I can tell you that about 15 years ago or more I spent three years trying to convince the GCC that their air defense system should begin with what we call Common Air Picture, so all six countries could look at the screen and see the same aggressors moving into the region and coordinate how old they were going to deal with them.

Alas it was an abysmal failure. When I left, nothing happened. My successor nothing happened. Tony Zinni after him nothing happened. We hope one day this is going to come to fruition but it's a very first step in dealing with an air threat. We have a long way to go with our friends but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't continue to work with them.

I think that our efforts in many ways have been successful. Chris mentioned the robust training that is going to go on in the future with the Iraqis. There has been a very significant training program going on with our Arab friends in the region for very many, many years. We routinely train with each of these countries. Egypt holds a bi-annual exercise called Bright Star. It is very large and very extensive, all the services participate. Frequently when there are U.S. services units committed in the region, they stay out and then sequentially do some exercises with some of the other countries. The services that do a particularly good job of this of course are the special forces, which are perhaps overcommitted right now but the fact of the matter remains that that is their business to train and they do an affective job of that.

The Marines by virtue of being aboard ship are often able to go ashore into these various countries and work with their hosts as well.

Let me continue just with the training for a moment because it is important. This training, some of it is funded by us, some of it just bonded by a host country and it varies according to who gets the help. Egypt as you know gets the most foreign military funding, \$1.3 billion a year, which was tied to the Camp David Accords.

On a personal note I always felt that at CENTCOM my responsibility to the countries with which I worked was to act as an advocate for the things that they wanted to do if it made sense.

I sometimes think that we lose that kind of thinking. For example, in Egypt there has been discussion with the Egyptians of abandoning a heavy armed force consisting of tanks, armored personnel carriers and so forth, and they should pay more attention to counterinsurgency operations. The response from the Egyptians is, we are not going to conduct counterinsurgency operations, our Armed Forces are designed to defend the homeland, therefore we want to have tanks and armored personnel carriers and set forth. I think that's meritorious, I think it makes sense and when we can, we should support our allies who perform many, many other services in assisting and moving forward our foreign policy in the region.

Finally, under the rubric of training is the attendance of military officers on formal military education in the United States. And as I think most of you know there are provisions for young Captains for Majors, Lieutenant Colonels and Colonels all to attend courses in the United States. I spent some time this week with a delegation of Kuwaiti officers, the senior officer had been back here to school four different times. Excellent English, very comfortable in the milieu here in the United States, very big supporter of what we do. We get our money reinvested 100 times over from these officers that come to the United States, live in our society and work with us.

You could almost compare it to what Ambassador Al Jubeir said about the 30 some thousand students in the United States. It's King Abdullah doing essentially the same thing of bringing

young men and women to the United States to study so they have an opportunity to experience our culture firsthand.

Mr. Secretary, I think I've run out of time and thank you very much.

[Cohen] We have time for some questions. I have been receiving some and I'll try to repeat them but I might open up, and put to the panel a couple of questions and see if we can get some response.

There was an article in Foreign Affairs magazine, as I recall the March or April edition in which the title of the article says "After Iran Gets the Bomb." In your opinion, Dr. Cordesman, is Iran getting a nuclear weapon. Is that inevitable? And if so what does that mean for the reaction on the part of other Gulf States?

[Dr. Cordesman] "Inevitable" is an awfully strong word. And you use the phrase quite correctly "a bomb" because that's about as far as thinking seems to go. You don't have a nuclear force of one bomb. You have a nuclear force where you have to have a delivery system. You have to have enough bombs to create some kind of capability to target. While we think of nuclear weapons as being inherently devastating the fact is that small fission weapons, lethal as they are, are radically different in impact from that kind of thermonuclear weapons where we know that Israel acquired the technology and test data from France, as well as the baseline designs for its missile program.

So we're not talking about Gulf countries alone. We are talking about what already is a nuclear arms race where you have, I think, re-targeting, re-posturing, development of improved boosters and potentially sea launched systems being examined within Israel. And the problem that Iran may or may not understand is, that if you have a 25-year lead over your opponent and you do acquire nuclear weapons they will continue to improve and develop their capabilities.

Now when it comes down to the Gulf States, their immediate short-term option essentially is missile defense, and the United States has announced a willingness to use what is called extended regional deterrence. It's been very careful to note that that might be regional deterrence in terms of conventional precision weapons rather than nuclear weapons.

We are looking at a process where once it starts, if Iran even goes to a breakout capability, it will at a minimum force the United States to develop different contingency plans and, I think, it is fair to say that Israel has already begun to examine these. If it begins to put missiles in the field with nuclear weapons, then the basing mode, the nature of those missiles will not only affect missile defense and how we see the problem but how Gulf states might see whether they can or cannot acquire their own nuclear armed systems. There are, at this point, seem to be only two potential suppliers, one is Pakistan and the other is North Korea.

This is something where the only caution I can give is once this starts, as everyone has learned the hard way, it is remarkably difficult to stop. It is extremely interactive and for every action one side takes it tends to provoke an equal or different reaction and not always the wisest one. So I think that really, we as a country concerned with arms control, people in the Gulf and people

in Iran need to stop talking about this as if it was a toy, where if you had one bomb it suddenly gives you a new macho status in the international community, and begin to look at just how risky and dangerous this process is and what it could trigger for everyone involved.

[Cohen] I would point out that Israel did not seem to wait until Syria developed a nuclear capability before taking action against a reputed “A-bomb.”

[Cordesman] I think you're absolutely correct and they didn't wait until Iraq did, but that fundamental difference at this point in time is, while we all focus on about three or four known facilities, if you look at unclassified sources like the National Threat Initiative that Senator Nunn has been involved in, you're talking about more than 80 scattered facilities involved in some kind of nuclear research or centrifuge production. Some of them are up in Mashad, which is really difficult for the “IAF.” So I think we're talking about a force already or a threat already technologically mature in fundamentally different ways.

[Cohen] Joe would you like to comment on that? Anything from CRS? No?

Let me go on. We have here, does the imminent need for force security, and the security of civilian, international organization personnel, security of humanitarian aid workers risk militarizing civil society operations to a point where they are inevitably ineffective. Said another way, does providing security for foreign personnel create a self-fulfilling prophecy of low intensity conflict that is also self-negating?

[Cordesman] If I may. It has been 20 years since a blue flag provided people with security anywhere in the world. What everybody knows is if you have undefended UN or NGO presence, one of the fastest ways to push people out and to score a victory is to attack an undefended aid or UN mission. And we have a few unfortunate, tragic examples in Iraq as well as Afghanistan of what has happened. I think the unfortunate choice is you either defend the aid effort when it is under attack or the aid effort collapses and is abandoned. But it cannot hope to operate unless someone chooses to protect it.

[Cohen] Is it your assessment that the threat posed by Iran is being greatly exaggerated much as the question of set down Hussein having weapons of mass destruction turned out to be false? Paraphrasing a question that has come from the audience.

[Hoar] May I take a whack at that? I'm not sure about the aspect of nuclear weapons but certainly the assistance to Hezbollah as we see in Syria today and in Lebanon is going to be a serious threat. And if what we read in the “Defense Weekly” is true the Israelis have planned a more aggressive sort of ground attack should they find themselves in this same circumstances they did a few years ago fighting Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. So that's a much greater threat than heretofore and again Hezbollah supported by Iran.

[Cordesman] If I may pick up a little on that. I think part of our problem is that you go from a trend to the worst possible case, turn it into a war and then you get a disaster scenario. So I think everyone in the U.S. in this room realizes that according to the Gulf press we invaded Iran at least seven times over the last eight years. That perhaps indicated that the U.S. threat can be

exaggerated to.

But what bothers me about Iran is you need to look at nuclear and missiles together, the threat these pose relative to asymmetric and the use of non-state actors together, and you do not know their intentions, and you do not know the contingency of the scenarios and you can not predict them. But I would urge anyone who wants to really think about Iran to read what Iranian commanders said in "Military Week" this year. There were a whole host of statements, about 15 of them that went into considerable depth. And in that rhetoric, if you take it seriously, are a whole series of warnings. So I think that sometimes we focus far too much on the nuclear, we are far too careless about Iran as a hegemon; but it is important to listen to what Iran says and it is particularly important to look at the overall development of Iran and where it is going rather than exaggerate where it is right now.

[Cohen] In your opinion would the transfer of S300 technology by the Russians to Iran pose a significant threat or have destabilizing impact?

[Cordesman] I think it would be very the stabilizing but one needs to be careful because when you talk about the transfer you always to get into how many? Will they update the sensor net? Will they create the kind of integrated facilities to tie these systems together? And the S300 comes, I believe, in four or five models. Somebody here in the military may be more expert on this and it really does make a difference which set it is transferred. But right now when you look at what they have it consists largely of U.S. systems dating back to the Vietnam era, Chinese copies of the SA-2 -- which basically the Israelis broke electronically over a quarter of a century ago -- a few obsolete SA-5's and some very limited defense system called the Tor M.

If they got the S300 their ability to deter any time of air operations against them would be increased by any order of magnitude if it was to deploy as an effective system.

[Cohen] Anyone have any additional comments?

What is it the United States doing to reduce the likelihood or risk of inadvertent or accidental conflict between our naval forces in the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz and the IRGC? Joe that looks like it's for you.

[McMillan] Well I think it is for me and I'm not sure that I can say very much about it. So I think I might have to pass on giving an answer and you can interpret that as meaning whatever you care it to interpret it as.

[Cohen] Would it be fair to say that we are doing everything we can to reduce the risk of an inadvertent conflict?

[McMillan] There are bridge-to-bridge communications that we periodically conduct, and the Admiral probably is better qualified to address this from his own experience than I am, and it's been going on for quite a long time.

But there have been some initiatives that people have put forward to do a more formal set of

discussions, off-line discussions, that would lead to something similar to the old US-Soviet, I shouldn't say old because it is still in effect, the US-Russian Incidents at Sea Agreement. And those have been put forward kind of in public environments by people who do Track Two kinds of undertakings and I would note that they have been put forward and I would decline to say how well we are picking them up or not.

[Cohen] I'm not sure what you just said.

[McMillan] I'm not sure what I just said either.

[Cohen] The reverse would seem to be true here. If we are not doing what we can to avoid either a risky situation, miscalculation, mistake in terms of intent that could produce a conflict, then the reverse of that is where we are doing everything we can to increase the risk so that it would then cause the Iranians to back off.

I raise this in conjunction, as I'm thinking it through General Hugh Shelton just had a book that's been published and it's called "Without Hesitation," and in it he describes a meeting he had in the Situation Room in which there is a conversation taking place among some of us. And he's over with an alleged cabinet official, I say allegedly because he does not identify who the cabinet official is. And the cabinet official asked General Shelton is there a way that we could actually fly the U2 lower and slower so that Saddam Hussein could take it down therefore we would have a reason to attack Iraq. General Shelton had quite a comment in response, I won't repeat it exactly, but he said, "Yeah we can do that as soon as we qualify your backside to put in the U2, we can fly it as low and slow as you'd like."

And so I think from our perspective, my perspective, it would be we should take every reasonable precaution to make sure that it we are not starting some thing, which could have the untoward consequences that Dr. Cordesman has just suggested. And without knowing what that could lead to could it escalate very quickly, so chances are we are taking

[McMillan] I guess I would say that, not to carry it to the absurd to do everything possible, we could take the Fifth Fleet out of the Gulf and that would reduce the prospect of a confrontation close to zero, which clearly we are not going to do, on up to negotiating a formal agreement which seems to be very difficult because of the state of diplomatic or lack of diplomatic relations between two countries.

I think it's fair, not just fair to say, it's true. The Fifth Fleet does whatever they can to minimize as the chances of an unintentional conflict happening because of miscalculations by either side. There are some limits obviously on the degree to which you can communicate with the Iranians. They use the methods that they have available to them and are continuously thinking about how you can continue to reduce that prospect of conflict that I, I'm hesitant to say anymore.

[Cordesman] If I could pick up on a specific case. I think we all remember the British boat that was seized in Iraqi waters and basically created a temporary hostage situation for the British naval personnel involved.

If you allow those situations to occur, because any reaction might escalate, you then create an incentive to keep testing the limits. Or you find yourself, as Joe has pointed out, pushed out of capability. And we've had low-level incidents in the Shatt al Arab and along the Iranian border which create a similar case. So finding the mix between avoiding any unnecessary conflict and avoiding signals that could lead the other side to escalate, forces you to get as subtle as for Mr. McMillan's answer was.

[Admiral Bernsen] I had the pleasure of being over to visit the Commander Fifth Fleet not long ago and this particular issue was the subject of much discussion. He was of the opinion that the training our forces was sufficiently good, that they were able to minimize the possibility of some kind of confrontation, and that there was some communication with the Iranians. And that since that one confrontation in the Strait sometime ago that there had been no provocation, particular provocation subsequent to that point in the Strait of Hormuz. He seemed reasonably confident.

[Dr. Anthony] I'd like to add to Admiral Bernsen's talk. Since 1996 the National Council has taken more than 135 officers selected by General Petraeus and his predecessors to the region and the most recent one we took was in mid-March and we spent two days on a dhow, an Arab wooden traditional sailing vessel, in the Hormuz Strait and the two days that we were there 300 Iranian boats came within 50 feet of us. They saw the close-cropped haircuts of the Americans and knew exactly who they were or suspected correctly who they were. They grinned from ear to ear and saluted the U.S. Central Command officers and the US Central Command officers grinned from ear to ear and saluted the Iranian ones. 300 boats inside of 48 hours came within 20 to 50 feet of vessels on which U.S. Central Command officers selected by General Petraeus were sailing.

[Cohen] Much attention has been focused on the security issues surrounding the Gulf but what about the security of the Red Sea. Obviously there are piracy issues but don't the Red Sea routes become increasingly important as Saudi Arabia further industrializes its West Coast.

[Cordesman] Let me just take a stab. I think that first the United States has worked, as has Britain and France, closely with Saudi Arabia because at this point it's Gulf Fleet is much stronger and more effective than its Red Sea fleet. We also have seen a real concern with not simply the Red Sea but Somalia and the Gulf of Aden. And I think that's very justified, first because there are some maps that show how quickly pirates adapted, expanded their range, and became a problem. We also know from the history of, strangely enough Libya, using mines in the Red Sea, there are examples of how dangerous even a limited presence can be as a threat.

You have other difficulties. It isn't just Somali. It's Eritrea and Sudan that you have to consider as issues here. So the Red Sea is not as yet been critical but the Red Sea is next to the Gulf of Aden and if you look it at the density and the way in which the Somali pirates adapted in the Gulf of Aden you've got to be very careful. Now I believe that the arms sales that we are giving to Saudi Arabia don't directly address this but another thing to remember is that the helicopter capabilities that we're providing, also can be used to deal with low-level threats at sea, that the AWACS does have a very advanced maritime patrol capability and does not have to operate over the Gulf, so there is the ability to strengthen regional capabilities there.

[Cohen] Another question. Does a close security relationship especially one that includes arms purchases from the U.S., close cooperation of U.S. forces and even offering base facilities to U.S. forces between Arab states and the United States actually put the governments of these states at greater risk.

[Hoar] I don't think that there is any doubt that when you have large facilities, Bahrain comes to mind right away and Hal [Bernsen] knows this better than I, but when you have a headquarters of numbered fleet in Bahrain, ashore, in Hal's time it was afloat, that's a target that would certainly be very lucrative to an aggressor in that part of the world, certainly. But there are not many permanent facilities like that. The U.S. Army has a large training facility in Kuwait and there are Air Force, a fair amount of Air Force activity in both Qatar and UAE.

[Cohen] We have quite a pre-deployment element in Qatar with a subset of CENTCOM right there and have had for some time.

[Blanchard] I would add. I think there is pretty clear bipartisan support for regional allies demonstrated over a long period of time, both in the Executive Branch and Congress. So I'm not sure from the perspective of the U.S. commitment that you could say that doubts were warranted. On the other hand I'd also add I think it's a bit naïve to think that Bahrain, for example, would be more secure without the Fifth Fleet. I just don't believe that with regards to its neighbors that would be the case.

[McMillan] This is actually one of the many balancing acts that you have to do when thinking about force presence in the Gulf. I've noticed we've answered this question in terms of does it make them a target for other countries to attack. Clearly one of the issues the Saudis faced during the 1990s was domestic political objections and resentment about the presence of large American forces in Saudi Arabia. And I think there's a balance that we have to figure out how to strike, between being able to have force capabilities, able to respond to crises in the region, while not getting so big and so heavy-handed that we become a political issue that the countries in the region have to deal with domestically. And my sense is that at the moment we're doing it pretty well but there is always a strong temptation to replicate in the Gulf, the way that we have defended other areas with different political realities. So I'm always cautioning, yes, we do have to be able to protect air power in the Gulf but that doesn't mean we have to build Ramstein or Yokota. We need to find creative ways to maintain that presence and the capability without the political downside if it's possible.

[Cordesman] I think there are two other issues. One, a lot depends on the degree of partnership you have and whether you are building up their capabilities and it is clear that you are acting in their interests and not simply on your own. Arms sales and the way they're structured, programs that give them real capabilities, do have, I think, a major set of signals. One thing Joe mentioned and I think is very critical, is how discreet are we in the way U.S. troops behave and operate in these countries, because there is a significant cultural difference. And I think that's been greatly improved over the last 10 to 20 years.

So a lot of this is the way you manage it. But as Chris pointed out would Bahrain be safer without a US presence? Is Qatar providing air facilities in Qatar out of sheer indifference to its

own security? No. Because it provides it with a major degree of capability. We always forget that Kuwait has already been invaded once. Would it be better off relying purely on Kuwaiti military forces without U.S. contingency capabilities and bases in Kuwait? And I don't want to go through the entire Gulf Cooperation Council, but the word I would really use his partnership and I guess after that sensitivity. Because as long as we treat Gulf countries as real partners and as long as we really respect them, I think the balance is very clearly that we provide added security.

[Cohen] On that positive note, we will conclude this panel. I would like to thank the panel members for their contribution and this will conclude this panel.

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