

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB NEWSMAKER LUNCHEON WITH FORMER SENATOR GEORGE  
MCGOVERN

TOPIC: GETTING U.S. TROOPS OUT OF IRAQ

MODERATOR: JONATHAN SALANT, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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MR. SALANT: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the  
National Press Club. I'm Jonathan Salant, a reporter for Bloomberg  
News and president of the Press Club.

I'd like to welcome club members and their guests in the audience  
today, as well as those of you watching on C-SPAN.

Please hold your applause during the luncheon -- during the  
speech so we have time for as many questions as possible. For our  
broadcast audience, I'd like to explain that if you hear applause, it  
is from the guests who attend our luncheons, not from the working  
press.

The video archive of today's luncheon is provided by the National  
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area code 202-662-7511.

Before introducing our head table, I'd like to remind our members  
of future speakers. On January 19th, Terri and Bindi Irwin, the wife

and daughter of the late Steve Irwin, the "crocodile hunter." And on January 26th, actor Gary Sinise will launch a campaign to recognize the sacrifices of America's troops.

If you have any questions for our speaker, please write them on the cards provided at your table and pass them up to me. I will ask as many as time permits.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests, and ask them to stand briefly when their names are called. Please hold your applause until all of the head table guests are introduced.

From your right, Chuck Ross, national political editor with Gannett News Service; David Hess of Congress Daily, a former president of the National Press Club and currently co-chair of the Fourth Estate Committee; Joe Rothstein of USPoliticsToday.com; Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey of California; Gil Klein of Media General and a former president of the National Press Club; Dr. William Polk, a co-author of the book with Senator McGovern of "Out of Iraq: A Practical Plan for Withdrawal Now," and also Dr. Pope is the brother of the late George Polk, in whose memory some of the most prestigious journalism awards are handed out every year; Melissa Charbonneau of CBN News and a member of the National Press Club Speakers Committee.

Skipping over our speaker for a moment, Ed Lewis of Toyota North America, the member of the Speakers Committee who organized today's luncheon -- and, Ed, thank you very much -- Congressman Jim McGovern of Massachusetts, no relation -- (laughter) -- David Broder of The Washington Post; Bob Kaiser, associate editor with The Washington Post; and Wes Pripet (ph) of the University of Missouri, who covered Senator McGovern even before he was elected to Congress. (Applause.)

"The war is the greatest military, political, economic and moral blunder in our nation's history." That's what today's speaker, Senator George McGovern, said in 1971. The war at that time was the Vietnam conflict, and his opposition to that war would be the centerpiece of his 1972 Democratic presidential campaign.

Now there is another war that the polls say is just as unpopular, and Senator McGovern is just as outspoken today as he was more than three decades ago. He is the co-author of a book calling for the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq within six months, to be replaced by a two-year commitment to build up an Iraqi police force and rebuild the country.

Senator McGovern's opposition to war comes after experiencing it firsthand. He is a decorated veteran of World War II, winning the Distinguished Flying Cross.

His appearance here follows President Bush's call for sending 21,500 more American troops to Iraq. The president also called for a new effort by the Iraqi government to stop the violence there, and pledged more than \$1 billion for reconstruction projects.

Democrats are not embracing the president's plan following an election when voter dissatisfaction with the Iraq war helped the party take back both parties of Congress. A new Associated Press poll out

today shows 70 percent of Americans opposing the proposed escalation.

The Democrats controlled both houses of Congress back in 1972, when Senator McGovern's opposition to Vietnam was not enough to help win the presidency. He carried only Massachusetts among the 50 states. He once said to Congressman McGovern -- as we told you, no relation -- that the commonwealth was the only state that knows how to vote. (Laughter.)

Senator McGovern also once described his campaign this way: "I wanted to run for president in the worst way, and I did." (Laughter.)

Senator McGovern was swept out of office in the 1980 Reagan landslide, but has remained an elder statesman. He has teamed up with Senator Bob Dole, who also lost a White House race, on a United Nations program to provide school lunches to every hungry child in the world.

In 2000, President Clinton awarded Senator McGovern the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

President Clinton was in South Dakota last October to dedicate the new library at Dakota Wesleyan University named for Senator McGovern and his wife, Eleanor. Senator McGovern taught history there before entering politics. The dedication brought together veterans from that 1972 campaign, including the former president. Missing, however, was Eleanor, who is very ill, and we pray for her recovery.

While he never reached the White House, Senator McGovern is writing about someone who did. He's at work on a biography of Abraham Lincoln.

Let's welcome Senator George McGovern to the National Press Club. (Applause.)

MR. MCGOVERN: Thank you. (Applause.) Well, thank you very much, President Jonathan Salant, my co-author, Professor William Polk, all the members of Congress and the journalism corps, and your guests at the National Press Club.

I'm glad to be back at the National Press Club after earlier appearances some time ago. Indeed, at the age of 84, I'm just glad to be anywhere. (Laughter.)

In my younger years, when the subject of aging used to come up, trying to sound worldly wise, I would say, well, it's not so important how many years you have, but what you do with the years that you are allotted. Now that I've gotten older, I don't say that anymore. And the reason is that I'm thoroughly enjoying life and there are so many things I still have to do before I pass into the mystery beyond.

The most urgent of these is to get our troops out of a war that we never should have entered; a hellhole, if I may use that phrase, created by the policies of President Bush and Vice President Cheney in Iraq; an area that has long been called the cradle of civilization. It's even believed that it's in that area, between the Tigris and

Euphrates Rivers, that the Garden of Eden lay.

Mentioning the neo-conservatists -- conservatives that are said to be the brain trust behind this policy, because Walter Lippman's observance, there is nothing so dangerous as a belligerent professor. I say that as a former professor that honors that profession.

One of the things I miss about my long years in the United States Senate are the great stories of the old southern Democrats. I didn't always vote with them, but I always admired the technique they had when confronted with a difficult question of saying "that reminds me of an old story." That occurred one day in a Democratic caucus, when the late Senator Sam Irvin of North Carolina was proposing some new project and Mike Mansfield said to him, "Sam, you know, we thought that we dealt with that problem of yours in the last session of the Congress, and you said if we provided the funding the project would be completed. How come you're back here now, a year later?" Senator Irvin said, "You know, Mr. Leader, that question reminds me of the story of the old Baptist clergyman in my hometown who was teaching a class of young boys the creation story -- God created Adam and Eve, from this union came Cain and Abel, and the human race evolved from that. A boy in the back of the room: 'Reverend, where did Cain and Abel get their wives?' The old preacher (scowered ?) for a while. He said, 'You know, young man, it's impertinent questions like that that's hurtin' religion.'" (Laughter.)

Well, President Bush, I have a few pertinent questions for you. (Laughter.)

When reporter Bob Woodward asked you had you consulted with your father before sending the American Army into Iraq, you said no, he's not the father you call on in a decision like this; "I called on my Father above." My question, Mr. President, is this: If God told you to bomb Iraq, invade the country and occupy it for four years, why did He send just the opposite message to the pope, whose credentials above are probably as good as the president's? (Laughter.) I say that as a non-Catholic.

But my fellow Methodist, Mr. Bush, did you not know, Mr. President, that your father's secretary of State, James Baker, his national security advisor, General Scowcroft were all opposed to your invasion of Iraq? And wouldn't you yourself, our troops and the American people and the Iraqi people been off if you had listened to your elders, including your father? Instead of blaming God for this awful catastrophe you have unleashed in Iraq, wouldn't it have been less self-righteous if you had fallen back on that oft-quoted explanation of wrongdoing -- "the devil made me do it"? (Laughter.)

And Mr. President, after the 9/11 hit against the Twin Towers in New York and the side of Pentagon, which actually gained the American people the sympathy and support of the entire world, why did you then use that emotional state in the country to invade Iraq, which had nothing to do -- nothing whatsoever to do -- with the 9/11 attack? Are you aware that your actions in doing so has destroyed that great reservoir of goodwill that existed towards the United States?

Why, Mr. President, did you pressure the CIA and other

intelligence agencies to distort the reality of what was going on and even suggest that Iraq was in the midst of producing nuclear weapons that were an imminent threat to us?

And when you ordered your Secretary of State, Colin Powell, to go to the United Nations and display the convincing evidence that we had of what Iraq was up to, are you aware that after delivering that statement, General Powell, then-Secretary of State Powell, told a top aide that was with him that the evidence he had presented of nuclear capabilities in Iraq was, in his eloquent phrase, "bullshit"? (Laughter.)

Is it reasonable to you, President Bush, that Colin Powell told you near the end of his first term as secretary of State that he would not be a part of the second Bush administration? What decent person could survive two full terms of forced lying and deceit? And Mr. President, how do you enjoy your leisure time and how do you sleep at night knowing that 3,014 young Americans have died in a war you mistakenly ordered?

What do you say about the 48,000 young Americans, some of them crippled for life, wounded in other ways by this war? And what is your reaction to the conclusion of the leading British medical journal that estimates that 600,000 Iraqi men, women and children have been killed since the invasion of their country by our forces? And what do you think about the destruction of the Iraqi homes, their electrical systems, their water systems, their roads and bridges and so on?

And Mr. Bush -- and I would add Mr. Cheney -- while neither of you has ever experienced military combat, surely you must have read about the war in Vietnam and its lessons. Do you realize that another Texas president declined to seek a second term after previously winning a landslide because of the credibility gap that had developed around him? Do you know this recent history, in which 58,000 young Americans were killed, to say nothing of 2 million Vietnamese people?

During the long years between 1963, when I first came to the Senate, and 1975, I fought during those years to end the American war in Vietnam. One night, my four daughters ganged up on me. They said, "Dad, why don't you give up the struggle? You've battled against this war since we were little kids, and nothing has happened except more troops are there. You ran for president and were knocked down by President Nixon." Well, I said, trying to see the hopeful side of this, that "Sometimes in history, even a tragic mistake can produce something good."

And I said the good that might come out of Vietnam is that it is such an obvious tragedy that we'll never go down that road again.

Mr. President, we're going down that road again. There are, of course, differences between a jungle and a desert, but the assumptions are the same.

So what do I now tell my daughters? What do you tell your daughters? Do you tell them, as you did on Wednesday, that we made mistakes in Iraq, but those can be corrected by sending another 21,500 young Americans to Iraq and, perhaps, another \$10 billion to finance

it?

Mr. President, I don't speak here today as a pacifist, although one can make a spiritual case that that's what Jesus Christ taught and other biblical prophets. I don't speak in that capacity. I speak as one who, after the attack on Pearl Harbor and with Hitler gobbling up one country after another across Europe -- we ourselves were attacked at Pearl Harbor. I was then 19, a college sophomore, and I signed up voluntarily for service to train as a bomber pilot in that conflict. Every American that I ever knew was in support of that war. I have no regrets whatsoever about my role in a war that I believed was essential to our survival. Mr. President, are you missing the intellectual and moral and historical sense to know the difference between an essential war and one that is based on folly and mistakes, as was the case in Iraq?

It was a little belated, but I admire Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, one of the chief architects of the Vietnam War, who wrote a book some years later confessing that the whole thing not only was a mistake, but a tragic mistake. Public opinion polls indicate that two-thirds of the American people now think that the war in Iraq was a mistake.

It is widely believed that this war was the central reason Democrats took over both the House and the Senate last November 7th. Polls among the people of Iraq show that an even higher percentage think the war and our occupation was a mistake. I even heard a debate some months ago between Richard Perle, one of the brainstormers behind this (polity ?), and he was debating Howard Dean, the Democratic national chairman, in Seattle. And he said, well, we did make one major mistake in Iraq; we should have come home after we toppled Saddam Hussein. So I give you that on the authority of Richard Perle.

Considering these surveys, public opinion surveys in both Iraq and the United States where overwhelmingly the people want us to leave Iraq, what is your view of the long-honored American (bastion ?) of self-determination of people? And wonder of wonders, Mr. President, after such needless death and destruction, first in the Vietnamese jungle and now in the Arabian Desert, how can you possibly think you're going to improve the situation by adding another 21,000 American troops? Are you aware that that's the same thing we did every time things started going sour in Vietnam? More troops, more troops till we finally had 550,000 American soldiers in that tiny little country. It makes me shudder as an aging bomber pilot to realize that we dropped more bombs on that little strip of jungle territory than were dropped on all the countries of the world by all the air forces of the world in the Second World War. What have we to say of this?

In your initial campaign for the presidency, Mr. Bush, you described yourself as a "compassionate conservative."

How is it compassionate to have been the architect of this almost barbaric war in Iraq, an unnecessary war? And how is it conservatism for you to borrow the money to do that from China, from Japan, from Germany, from Britain and other countries, and run the American national debt through the sky? Do you realize that the interest on

that debt -- now hovering around \$9 trillion -- is \$760,000 every day? Not conservatism in my way of thinking.

Perhaps, Mr. President, it is time, when your most-respected generals have concluded that the chaos and the conflict in Iraq is not going to be resolved by more American troops or more billions of American dollars, and at a time when our own society here at home burdened with anxiety and concern about the future -- it is time I think to hear the words of a genuine American conservative, General of the Armies President Dwight Eisenhower, who wrote every gun that is made, every war ship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed.

Every American -- every patriotic American -- wants this country to be well-defended in a military sense. But listen to these further words, Mr. President, at a time when it's doubtful that you have kept your constitutional oath, which is to uphold the Constitution. When you're sworn in in his country, you don't pledge to uphold your platform. A lot of people are hoping you don't carry out your platform.

You swore an oath to only one thing, and that's to uphold the Constitution of the United States. But when you consider all the violations of the Bill of Rights in which this war has served as the excuse, have you, Mr. President, kept that oath?

Now, many Americans are now saying, well, we agree with you that the war in Iraq has become a mess. We know that we have one revolutionary insurgency against the American forces remaining there, and over here we have a civil war between the Shi'ite Muslims -- who are now in the majority -- and the Sunni Muslims. And it's under those conditions that Professor Polk -- who sits to my left here and whom I regard as one of our most able experts on the Middle East, and especially Iraq on which he has concentrated. We've written this little book, "Out of Iraq: A Practical Plan for Withdrawal Now." It only costs 15 bucks because it's a paperback, and it's only 135 pages long.

I feel awkward about endorsing my own book, so I'm going to turn to Anna Quinlan, the former New York Times Journalist now with Newsweek Magazine. Here's what she told Charlie Rose on his excellent television program. Quote, "There is a wonderful book I am recommending to everyone. It's a very small, readable book by George McGovern and William Polk called 'Out of Iraq,' and it just very quickly runs you through the history of that country, the makeup of the country, how we got in, the arguments for getting in -- many of which don't withstand scrutiny -- and how we can get out. It's like a little primer. I think the entire nation should read it and then we will be united." So I can't say those things, but Anna Quinlan can.

Professor Polk -- and I'm going to conclude now -- is a descendent, as I said, of President Polk and brother of the noted and assassinated journalist George Polk -- is here from his home in southern France, and he's going to join me at the podium as I conclude this entirely impartial interrogation of President Bush. (Laughter.) And now, members of the National Press Club and your guests, it's your

turn to cross-examine Bill Polk and me in, of course, an equally impartial manner.

Thanks so much for hearing me out today. (Applause.)

Shall we bring Bill Polk up here?

Thank so much for hearing me out today. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: Thank you very much.

As a reminder, if you have questions for our speaker, please write them on the card provided on the table and pass them up to me and I will ask as many as we can.

Senator McGovern, let me begin with you. After Vietnam, did you expect to be speaking out against another war?

MR. MCGOVERN: No. As I told my daughters, I thought the one good thing coming out of that tragedy in Vietnam is that never again would this great country of ours -- I thought then and I still think today that we're the greatest country on the earth -- I thought our leaders would have some sense of history, some knowledge of the past, and that we would not go down that road again. I'm sorry to say I was wrong in that judgment.

We must be the greatest country on earth, because we make these horrendous mistakes and we still survive.

MR. SALANT: If the U.S. withdraws from Iraq, as you propose, what's to prevent Iran and Syria from creating more havoc and sectarian violence?

MR. MCGOVERN: Well, we're not doing very much to convince the Syrians and the Iranians that we have good feelings towards them and that we'd like to have some influence there. I think we should be talking to the Iranians and the Syrians. They have their faults, like most nations, but they are important players in the Middle East.

During the 1980s, when Saddam Hussein and Iraq went to war against Iran, we unofficially backed Iraq. Why? Because we thought they were less of a menace to the Gulf and our strategic interests than the Iraqis. Even when Saddam Hussein talked about going into Kuwait, he first asked the American ambassador in Iraq if the United States would object to that. And the ambassador was instructed to tell him that we would not get involved in a border dispute between two Arab countries. We didn't know he was going to try to takeover all of Iraq, but I'm sure he interpreted that as the green light he needed to move in there.

But we'll continue to have problems in the Middle East. I think every problem we have with the countries of the Middle East have been worsened by what we've done in getting bogged down Iraq and the havoc we have been responsible for in that country. Bill Polk, I'm sure, is going to tell you, as an expert on Iraq, that whether we leave or stay, there's going to be a lot of problems in Iraq. We can't

guarantee you peace and happiness in Iraq when our troops leave. We can say that we'll be removing the major cause of the insurgencies there, the uproar against our troops, but nobody has an answer to this civil war that's now raging between Shi'ites and Sunnis.

It is a fact that bad as he was, Saddam Hussein kept a lid on all of this. He wouldn't permit civil war like this. His view was that I'm in charge of killing. I'm in charge of torture. I'm running the show. And in his own barbaric word, he kept the -- the way he kept the lid on things. Much as another dictator, President Tito, did in Yugoslavia. He was our dictator because he was hostile to the Soviet Union. Once he died, all hell broke loose in Yugoslavia and we finally to go in to stop the genocide in that country.

So these dictators may be terrible people, but sometimes we lack the knowledge and the wisdom to know which ones we dump and which ones we should leave alone.

MR. SALANT: There are a couple of questions about the impact of withdrawal.

The first President Bush did not want to send troops to Baghdad, according to this questioner, because then the United States would be responsible for Iraq. Whether you agree we should have gone in or not, do we not now have a moral obligation not to abandon the country to civil war?

MR. MCGOVERN: I'll answer just one more question, then I hope there'll some directed to Bill Polk. You're going to find out that he's the real brain on Iraq, not George McGovern.

Yes, I think it would have been a good thing. If the president was too young to remember what his father did after the Gulf War, which was to refuse to go into Iraq, he should have at least read his father's memoirs in which he said the reason he didn't do that is that the whole coalition would have fallen apart.

Keep in mind, before he put one soldier in Iraq, President Bush, Sr. got the approval of the United Nations. He got the approval of the European Union. He got the approval even of the Arab League, or practically all of them. He said, "If we'd have tried to march into Baghdad, that whole coalition would have evaporated. And secondly, we'd have been bogged down in an endless war." He didn't say we'd lose 3,014 men and spend \$500 billion, but he implied he was worried about those possibilities.

George Bush, Jr. should have read that memoir before he violated his father's guidelines. He should have talked to Jim Baker or General Scowcroft or some of these other elders. I have formed a

council of elders -- it's got 35 people on it now, about half Republicans and half Democrats. They're very prominent. When you see the names you'll be amazed at all the people who are on it. I did that because I think us old guys should not be entirely thrown on the scrap heap. Once in a while we might remember some experience or some historical parable or something else that could be helpful to the country.

I wish with all of my heart that we had somebody with the wisdom of George Bush, Sr. running the White House now, instead of George Bush the younger -- some people would say George Bush the lesser. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: President Bush has argued that for the U.S. to withdraw now from Iraq would embolden terrorists. How do you respond?

MR. POLK: I think the best way to respond to this is to look at what has happened in all the other insurgencies that we know anything about since World War II.

I have just gone back to my roots in Washington, too, like Senator McGovern. I was a member of the Policy Planning Council years ago. And among other things I was in charge of was the American attempt to help the French get out of the Algerian war. And I got very concerned at that time about the fact that we didn't really know anything about insurgency in the American government.

I was reading everything that all the intelligence agencies and the diplomats and so forth were able to find out. And there was never a consistent definition, much less a plan, about what guerrilla warfare was. And so I have gone back now and studied 11 different major guerrilla wars since World War II and before -- actually, before, I started with the American Revolution. And it was very clear from these that the -- there is a kind of pattern in the guerrilla wars in that we need to understand what that pattern is if we really want to try to live amongst them or cope with them.

If we look at our own revolution, we find the thing that triggered it was foreign troops. It was the British troops in Boston that really started the Revolution. We looked then later at the Spanish war against Napoleon -- the same thing. One after another, these major insurgencies have all been focused on getting rid of the foreigners. And we know now, as Senator McGovern mentioned, that an overwhelming proportion -- said to be roughly 90 percent -- of the Iraqis all agree on one thing: they want us out.

Then the question is, what happens when we get out? What I saw in Algeria, have seen in Greece, and various other studies that I've done, and a number of these wars that I've been a close observer of, including Vietnam, was there was a period of chaos immediately following the withdrawal of the foreigners. But there's chaos now. The chaos is not probably going to be any worse than it is today.

We have not been able to stop it with upwards of 150,000 troops and 50,000 mercenaries in Iraq. We're certainly not going to be able to stop it by putting another 10(,000) or 11,000 troops in and spending another \$10 or \$15 or \$100 billion to do that.

But what Senator McGovern and I have done is to come up with a concrete, carefully timed, carefully phased, costed-out analysis of what the steps are that we can do to make this less dangerous, less costly, less painful during this period of transition. And we have an interesting sidelight on that. Years ago in the 1930s -- in fact, in 1937 -- that great practitioner of guerrilla warfare, Mao Tse Tung,

came up with an interesting analysis of guerrilla war -- a very simple thing. He said, "The population in the guerrilla war is like the water and the insurgents, the combatants, are like fish. And when the population stops supporting the insurgents, they either die or they join the government, or they stop doing what they were doing."

What I think is very clear in every guerrilla war that we know anything about -- Ireland, for example, Yugoslavia, Greece, Algeria and so forth, the Philippians, Vietnam, even Afghanistan -- was as soon as the foreigners leave, the population is tired. They don't want to fight this war anymore. They've made enough sacrifices. They don't want to have anything more to do with it. They stop the insurgency. We can't do it. It's their job to stop it and they're the only ones who can.

And I think the answer of this is that we really had not taken the trouble, as a people or as a government, to figure out what we're really talking about. We're not really any better than I think we were in Vietnam. As I say, when I saw all the materials of our government in the early 1960s, there was no analysis of what guerrilla warfare or insurgency amounted to. What was involved in it? What were the people trying to do? How could it stop? How did it keep going? How is it paid for? All these kinds of questions.

And if we take those now, and go back and look at where we are, the idea that it's going to suddenly stop is not feasible. The idea that it's going to get worse is also not likely. What we can see is a process. And in that process, we can come out much better than we are today.

MR. SALANT: This one is addressed straight to you, professor.

If we withdraw soon, what do you predict will happen there in terms of the conflict between the Shi'ites and the Sunnis, as well as the Kurds' hope for autonomy?

MR. POLK: The problem, or one of the major problems of guerrilla warfare is that the longer it goes on, the more brutalized both the participants and the outsiders become. I'm very worried about this process all the way along. I lived in Iraq years ago. I've never lived in a place where the people were more kind and hospitable and welcoming to me as a foreigner than I was in Baghdad. If I went there today, of course I'd probably be shot or be bombed.

Guerrilla warfare and insurgency are brutalizing processes. There's going to be a very difficult period. The people have now been played against one another. You all have heard that we pulled off a marvelous thing by having an election in 2005 where the voting was something like 70 percent. This was a great triumph of democracy. Unfortunately, the way the election was carried out was it solidified the differences between the Sunnis and the Shi'as and the Kurds and the Arabs.

It's also ironic that we in the earlier days of Vietnam, we had an election that produced 85 percent, I think it was, of the turnout of the population. And unfortunately, that didn't help us very much

either there. But there is a deep-seated bitterness now -- particularly as there always is in a guerrilla war -- between those people who were thought to have collaborated with the foreigners, and those people who were fighting against them. And these tensions have built up.

But I think if they are sensible, and the Iraqis in my background have always seemed to be ultimately sensible, each group will recognize that as bad as the current situation is, and as unhappy as they may be with one another, the other alternative -- to split up -- is far more dangerous. If you start with Kurdistan in the north, most of the Kurds live outside of Iraq. A lot of them live in Turkey. The Turks believe that Iraq is the source of the insurgency against Turkey. And the Turks have made no secret of the fact that if the situation arises that Kurdistan becomes independent, and in fact breaks off of Iraq, that the Turks will probably invade the country.

The same kind of thing may happen, although less likely, I think, in the south where the Shi'a community is primarily involved. But practically every village or every town in Iraq is divided amongst different populations. So that what is happening that is so particularly tragic today under our watch on the ship is that there is an ethnic cleansing going on where even in Baghdad, for example, whole areas of the city, one community is chasing the other community out.

But if you look at the map that is frequently published in the newspapers, it shows the Kurds in the north and the Sunnis in the center and the Shi'ias in the south, that's not the real reality.

The reality is that every city is a combination of all these people. And they have to learn somehow to cope with that problem. They used to be able to cope with it. They're going through the worst of all possible situations today with great hatred and hostilities amongst themselves. But that's a problem we can't solve. We do think, however, Senator McGovern and I, that in our plan, which is sketched out in this book, you'll find that we have a series of things that we believe can help it. For example, in most of Iraq today there's a 50 percent unemployment rate. No society can survive as a society with a 50 percent unemployment rate. We've got to do something about that.

We're talking about building a new army. We're spending \$2.2 billion right now on building a new Iraqi army. Iraq needs a new army about as much as I do. What it needs is something like our Corps of Engineers that can help the get the country back into shape again. And then it needs help to -- what we call the stabilization force, hopefully drawn from other Arabic speaking or Muslim countries that work for the Iraqi government and not for us, with no Americans in it.

We think this force won't fight, or should not fight, the insurgency, but should provide minimum stability with hospitals, schools, bridges, roads, factories, et cetera, as a police force. And that's where we think we have to begin. But we have a series, as I say, of very specific, detailed, costed-out programs, which in total would say the American government something like \$350 billion that otherwise we're going to spend.

MR. SALANT: Senator McGovern, this one's for you. According to this questioner, doesn't your plan reinforce Americans' perception that Democrats are weak on defense and anti-military?

MR. MCGOVERN: Well, of course that's been the battle cry for 50 years, that we Democrats are weak on defense, notwithstanding the fact that President Truman staked out the main guidelines of American foreign and national security policy that every other president followed for the next half century. Democrats, I think, are turning against this war not because they're weak on defense, but because many of them now have the common sense to see that we're weakening the country by dissipating our Army, our armed forces and our federal budget on a hopeless cause.

I don't feel any more secure today in this country of ours than when we first invaded Iraq four years ago; I feel less secure. I think terrorism has gained ground in Iraq and throughout the Middle East because of the reaction against this heavy-handed, foolish, military intervention. I can tell you in all honesty there's never been a day in my adult life when I would not have volunteered to defend this country in a time of emergency. But I hope, also, there have been few times when I endorsed a military adventure that dissipated our military strength, that wasted our tax funds and that, perhaps most costly of all, reduced the good name of the United States in the eyes of the world.

I remember -- I guess the first political campaign I can remember was Wendell Wilkie running against President Roosevelt in 1940. I was then a senior in high school. Mr. Wilkie came to our hometown, Mitchell. I thought he was great. I should tell you my mother and father lived and died as conservative Republicans, just as the parents of my bipartisan friend, Bob Dole, lived and died as liberal Democrats.

In any event, after Roosevelt won that third presidential election, he asked Mr. Wilkie to go around the world and report back on what he found to be the attitudes everywhere towards the United States. He took the publisher of the Coles papers, the Des Moines Register, the Minneapolis Tribune, with him. And they wrote a little book called, "One World" -- which was their report to President Roosevelt but which became the most published book in World War II -- in which he said, everywhere we went, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America, in the Middle East, we found that the greatest source of American power and influence in the world was the attitude of goodwill and confidence that people everywhere held about the good motives and the good ideals of the United States.

I hate to see that great strength dissipated in a mistaken war. I think it's fair to say World War II enhanced all of those things. And here we are cutting to pieces what Wendell Wilkie said was the greatest source of our international strength.

MR. SALANT: What should congressional Democrats, now in the majority in both Houses, do on the Iraq war? What should the congressional Democrats do with the Iraq war?

MR. MCGOVERN: Well, I met with many of them this morning. I

think we had a bigger attendance in the Cannon Caucus Room, which is a big room, than they're ever seen there. The room was packed. There were probably 20 to 25 members of Congress there. Bill Polk and General -- pardon?

(Off mike.)

MR. : Odom.

MR. MCGOVERN: General --

MR. : Odom.

MR. MCGOVERN: You've got to say that clearly.

MR. : Odom.

MR. MCGOVERN: General Odom. The three of us, along with Congressman Murtha of Pennsylvania, were the witnesses. And we were cross-examined by these 20 or 25 Congress members. And it was a great session. And what we could see they're moving towards is that nothing else works, a rather early cut-off of any further funding for military operations in Iraq, except the money necessary for a safe and orderly withdrawal of our forces.

Our book says this can all be done in six months. That's important, because every additional month you add, the way things are now going, every month we add on to that, another 110 young Americans will come home in a body bag and more billions of dollars will be spent

I must say, as a liberal, I worry about this incredible open-ended deficit spending that's going on under the present administration. And Congress has to tighten up on the purse strings, probably in the last analysis, to force an end to this war.

MR. SALANT: Before I ask our last question, I wanted to offer you the official National Press Club coffee mug -- (laughter) -- and of course, this certificate of appreciation for appearing here today. Thank you very much.

MR. MCGOVERN: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. SALANT: A generation of young people went "Clean for Gene" in 1968, working on the McCarthy campaign, and then turned 18 and gave their first vote to you for president. What is your advice to the next generation of young people who are interested in public service?

MR. MCGOVERN: Well, there's still a lot of young people out there who are interested in public affairs, in public issues. They've always been in a minority of any generation. But I don't lose faith in the young of this country. I find them signing on to worthy causes. I find that many of them want their lives to make a difference, not only in terms of their own personal gain, but what they can do for other people.

So I would urge young people to continue following public issues as closely as they can, to think -- get all the education that they can, to listen sometimes to the McGovern Council of Elders, which contain such names as Howard Baker and Al Simpson, former Senator

Culver, and many other people. Gloria Steinem's on there, offset by Henry Hyde. So we've covered the whole spectrum -- and I think young people and older people have a lot in common.

We need to pull together the old and the young if we're ever going to get comprehensive healthcare in this country. And maybe that's the best way to cause our leaders to be a little more cautious about committing the young to warfare.

If I could just close by quoting one more illustrious conservative, Edmund Burke, the 19th century English parliamentarian, a Tory, who said, "a conscientious man would be cautious how he dealt in blood." I think that's a good sober warning from a genuine conservative. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SALANT: I'd like to thank Senator McGovern and Professor Polk. I'd like to thank everyone for coming today. Finally, a personal note. This is the last luncheon I will preside over as president of the National Press Club. Jerry Zremski, the Washington bureau chief of the Buffalo News, is our incoming president, and he will now be the one standing behind the podium. Hosting these luncheons has been the highlight of my year as president. We could not have put together so many luncheons without the help of the club members who volunteer their time on our speaker's committee.

Special thanks go to the committee chair, John Hughes, my colleague at Bloomberg News, and to the vice chair, Angela Griling (ph) Kean (sp), who is soon to be my colleague at Bloomberg. Behind the scenes, the press club staff works to make sure the luncheons go off without a hitch. I don't bang the gavel until directed to do so. I read some of their names at the end of each program. But I want to recognize everyone who has made these events a success this year. John Bloom, our club manager, David Kean (sp), the clubhouse manager, Belinda Cook, assistant to the president, Howard Rothman, our A.V. director, David Dean, the banquets manager, Joann Booz, who manages the front desk, Pat Nelson, who takes the luncheon reservations, and the wonderful service who brings us lunch.

And there's no way I could write the introductions without the research from the Eric Friedheim national journalism library at the National Press Club, headed by director Tom Glad (sp), and research librarian Barbara van Wikam (ph). I'd also like to thank C-SPAN for televising all of our luncheons; American Public Media, which broadcasts many of them as part of its weekly "Word for Word" program; and XM Satellite Radio, where our weekly Saturday night program, "From the National Press Club," often features these luncheons.

So, for the last time as president, good afternoon. We're adjourned.

(Gavel down.)

(Applause.)

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