

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Schieffer Series: Stabilizing Iraq: Lessons for the Next Chapter

Speakers:

**Dr. Kathleen Hicks,
Senior Vice President; Henry A. Kissinger Chair;
Director, International Security Program, CSIS**

**Stuart W. Bowen Jr.,
Former Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (2004-2013);
Senior Adviser, CSIS**

**Karen DeYoung,
Associate Editor and Senior National Security Correspondent,
The Washington Post**

Introduction:

**H. Andrew Schwartz,
Senior Vice President for External Relations,
CSIS**

Moderator:

**Bob Schieffer,
Chief Washington Correspondent, CBS News;
and Anchor, CBS News “Face the Nation”**

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H. ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Good evening – if everyone could please take their seats – good evening, and welcome to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I'm Andrew Schwartz here at CSIS, and I work in international relations – in external relations, excuse me, because we all work in international relations.

This evening we're focused on Iraq and its stability going forward. We're here to hear the perspectives of our panelists and of Bob Schieffer, who has generously offered his time and his expertise to CSIS for the past six years doing this.

My thanks go out to Bob and everyone at TCU's Bob Schieffer College of Communication for helping us put on this event. And in particular, our wishes go out to TCU, who – some of you might have picked up on – one of the – the young nurse who is being flown up to Bethesda, to NIH right now, is a TCU graduate. And so we're all praying for her and keeping her in our hearts and minds.

We'd also like to extend immense gratitude to the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, whose continuing support has made these dialogues possible.

I get asked all the time: Is there anybody better than Bob Schieffer? (Laughter.) Is there anybody better than Bob Schieffer? Can we give a hand to Mr. Schieffer? (Applause.) Thank you.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Is that it? (Laughter.) Anyone else want to say something? Thank you all for coming on behalf on TCU. It's really great to have you.

Well, not much good news today, I must say. So we're not going to talk about Ebola that much, but we're going to talk about the other place where there's a lot of trouble, and that is Iraq, and how did we get there, where are we now and all of that.

And we do have a great panel, if I do say so, to talk about it. Kath Hicks right here. She's the senior vice president, also Kissinger chair here at CSIS. From 2009 to 2013 she was a senior official in the Department of Defense. She was the principal deputy undersecretary advising on policy and strategy. She also served as deputy undersecretary for strategy, plans and forces. She developed plans for future force capability, overseas military posture and contingency and theater campaign plans. Career civil servant in the Office of the Secretary of Defense previously. Received many, many awards there. And she is now here with us at CSIS.

Stuart Bowen down there. Former special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction from 2004 to 2013. Senior adviser now as CSIS. He was a special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction, where his mission included auditing and investigating the use of taxpayer funds appropriated for the Iraq reconstruction effort. He managed the production of 390 audits producing financial benefits in excess of \$1.5 billion. That's no small deal there. So thank you for doing that.

STUART W. BOWEN JR.: Thank you.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And then my friend Karen DeYoung, who – associate editor, senior national security correspondent – you all know her byline – in The Washington Post. More than three decades at The Washington Post – I didn't realize that, Karen. I'm still ahead of you, though. (Laughter.) She has served as bureau chief in Latin America and London, correspondent covering the White House. She does U.S. foreign policy and the intelligence community. And I must say one of the most informed reporters I think in Washington on foreign policy. We're always glad to have her and get her analysis on Face the Nation.

I just want to throw this out for the three of you. How bad is the situation in Iraq right now? Kathy?

KATHLEEN HICKS: It's bad. There is no getting around that. The problems are fundamentally one about the nation itself of Iraq, how to galvanize the public there in support of their own government and the unity of that nation. That, in turn, can help galvanize the military inside Iraq. And then there is all the outside support pieces that need to fall into place. So I think it's – I think it's dire. I don't think that Baghdad is at risk of falling imminently. But they need a lot of support from the outside, and they have a lot of work to do internally. And we'll see how the new president is going to do with that.

MR. BOWEN: Well, I think Iraq is at this moment at the worst point in its history for at least the last hundred years. It is in extraordinarily dire circumstance. ISIL controls about 30 percent of the country. They wreaked havoc of – at a level that none of us imagined starting on June 10th. And they have inflicted countless horrendous humanitarian disasters across the north of Iraq.

The man with the toughest job in the world right now is Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. And he has six significant challenges he has to tackle: He has to engage in the war. He has to solve this enormous refugee crisis – 200,000 flowing out of Hit, which fell just this well. He's got to build reconciliation with the Sunnis and the Kurds. And he's got to resolve a budget crisis of unprecedented proportion: \$50 billion potential deficit facing the Iraqi government.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Karen, I guess what was about nine weeks, two months ago, we started the airstrikes.

KAREN DEYOUNG: Right.

MR. SCHIEFFER: We hit obviously a turning point for the administration. Has that helped so far?

MS. DEYOUNG: I think it's – hasn't helped a whole lot. I think that they have kept – their first objective was to keep the Islamic State from moving eastward into

Kurdistan, which they seem to have succeeded in doing. It has not prevented them from taking over Anbar, which they largely have done now and have gotten quite close to Baghdad, although I would agree with Stuart it's not in imminent danger of falling, although they have artillery that can reach as far as the airport, and in fact, there have been rounds that have fallen inside of the Green Zone, not in the past few weeks but for – when this – several weeks ago.

You know, one of the problems is – one of many problems is that everybody I think has a pretty accurate prescription of what needs to be done, but none of it is actually being done right now. The reconciliation inside Iraq – it's really – you know, the pieces are there, but it's not really happening yet. The rebuilding of the – of the Iraqi armed forces everybody agrees it has to be done, but it's not really happening. I mean, they have some units around Baghdad and a few other places that they think are pretty competent right now, but they're a long, long way from getting to where they need to be. So all of these things and some of the things that Stuart talked about are all – everybody says, yeah, we have to do this. Right now they have to fight this war. And I think that inevitably, as Chairman Dempsey has said, the United States will get more and more involved, will get involved on the ground, at least in terms of being forward with Iraqi units.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Kathleen, you said you do not think that Baghdad is in danger right now.

MS. HICKS: In imminent threat of falling, that's correct.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Imminent. Why?

MS. HICKS: Well, I don't – I just don't think there is a coalescence of sufficient IS forces in and around Baghdad at this point. They certainly are threatening Abu Ghraib in particular, where Shia militia have created an atmosphere wherein there is a – there is an ability for ISIL to take hold more than we would certainly like. But again, they don't have the wherewithal right now to go far into Baghdad, and there are sufficient Iraqi forces and support there. So that's where we are right now. Now, I think – I think that situation obviously is subject to change, and that's what among many things we're very concerned about here.

MS. DEYOUNG: Yeah. I think that – the Pentagon, in fact, said today that they're watching very carefully to see if troops are massing, to do – actually start moving toward Baghdad. Obviously, they are on the outskirts of Abu Ghraib, which is, what, 15 miles away? So they're very close. But they do have the ability not only to fire some of these longer-range weapons, but they also are – there is a lot of bombing inside Baghdad. You saw this week a real uptick and efforts to kind of build up the sectarian divide inside Baghdad itself, going back to where we were in '07 and '08 of neighborhoods being hit by suicide bombs, by car bombs. And that's increased a great deal.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do any of you get the sense that we're about to bump it up again here, that the president may be getting ready to authorize more, maybe more – not combat troops, the 1st Airborne or anything like that, but more advisers that we can put in on the ground? I just kind of get the sense that something else may be about to happen here. And maybe it's just me, but I –

MS. HICKS: I don't have that sense right now, that there is a major, notable step up about to occur. I think the coalition-building work is probably the biggest area of emphasis right now in terms of building force numbers and capability numbers. So that's about leveraging, you know, others to join with the U.S.

I definitely think over time you will see some increases as you start to refine what exactly is it that's needed, you know, what is that – you know, once you have those advisers on the ground, they start sensing and pulsing and determining what else is needed. So I do think you will see more, but I don't see it as a step function that's likely to happen to soon.

MS. DEYOUNG: I think – and Chairman Dempsey talked about this a little bit last week too, said that, you know, they were getting the – the turning point would come when the Iraqi military was ready to go on the offensive, around Mosul in particular. And at that point, he said it wouldn't surprise him if they would – the advisers on the ground again would say, yes, there is a need for more of us to be with forward units, whether as spotters or to actually be more involved in actual operations, not fighting, but directing them on the ground. But they're not ready yet to do that, I think.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Stuart.

MR. BOWEN: Well, I think – you know, just look at the evolution that's unfolding. It's more of a punctuated equilibrium than a rapid evolution. And by that I mean we're doing things today that we wouldn't dream we would be doing three months ago. And therefore, it's plausible to anticipate that three months from today, we may be – have to move further down the evolutionary road than we are now.

But there are – there are three issues, really, that Haider al-Abadi, as prime minister of Iraq, that – must address to begin to move the fight forward against ISIL. And one is to appoint a minister of defense. How can you manage a strategy against an enemy if you don't have the most senior person in charge of your defense strategy in place? They were supposed to vote on it today. It got postponed again. That's critical. Second, he's got to do something about the reality that the Iraqi Army, as a senior Iraqi official from Iraq told me today, is a blank sheet of paper. And third, he's got to crack down on the fighting that's ongoing between the Shia militia, this newfound force called forth by Prime Minister Maliki, that really hasn't effective management over top of it, and the Iraqi Army itself. Really, the only effective force we've seen has been a combination of the Peshmerga and U.S. airpower. Took Mosul Dam back. Took 25 towns and villages back. Saved Irbil from falling. But that's not enough. The mission is enormous.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, just in the short term, can we defend that airport right now? I'd just like to see what each of you think about that. Do we have forces on the ground now? How are we – how are we defending that airport? Because it seems to me the United States cannot let that airport fall. We cannot let that fall into ISIL hands.

MS. DEYOUNG: Yeah, I forget what the numbers are, but there were a number of troops that were sent specifically to defend the airport very early, I think in August, second week in August or something. So – a number of hundreds; I don't remember the exact number. There are Apaches. There is – you know, there is a sufficient force there. I don't think anyone would like it to get that far where they're actually fighting over the runways.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Mmm hmm. Well, what is our main line of defense there? The Apaches? Is that –

MR. BOWEN: That's right. And the Apaches provide the bulwark and the deterrent to ensure that the airport will not fall for now. But the fact that we have to deploy Apaches to Baghdad International Airport speaks for itself. The instability is rife throughout Baghdad – a hundred people killed across the city in the last three days. The security situation, as Karen pointed out, is reminiscent in that capital of what we saw in the worst moments of 2007. And there are bands of Sunni terrorists, if you will, weaved through the city districts. And guess what's happening now: 200,000 Sunni refugees are streaming toward Baghdad from Hit. These are extraordinary challenges that Prime Minister al-Abadi has in front of him.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Someone gave me a question here, and I thought it was a good question. I always think the best questions are the obvious questions, and I always try to ask those, and I thought this was a very obvious question. And here is a question – I'd just like to get your take on it. Are we – the Americans, the United States – are we to blame for the problems in Iraq, and is it our responsibility to fix them?

MS. HICKS: I'll go first. There are many, many fathers, if you will, to the problems in Iraq. The United States I think hasn't helped in terms of paying far less attention than it should have over the past few years to the situation. But the – and there are many other outside actors that have responsibility, Iran being prime among those, and certainly, in the case of ISIL, the Assad regime. It doesn't stop there, but I'll pause there just for brevity.

The main problems are internal to Iraq, and that's where the main solutions have to come. In your last question, you asked, you know, can the United States – the United States can't let the airport fall. The Iraqis can't let the airport fall. The Iraqis can't let Baghdad fall.

We have some responsibility. We have a responsibility in terms of our investment, in terms of the money that Stuart has tracked over time, in terms of the blood

that Americans and coalition forces have spilled in Iraq and in terms of our desire to help the Iraqi people. But fundamentally, it's the Iraqi people who have to come together as a nation and get this government underway, have the prime minister, you know, pull together all these issues, from petroleum to the forces inside Iraq, military and the security forces, internal security forces, and get the population together to believe that they have a united country to defend.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Stuart?

MR. BOWEN: We are not to blame, no. Short answer to the question. But could we have done more? Yes, absolutely. But it's important to look at that question from a strategic concept. We have been engaged in Iraq since the fall of the Soviet Union more than we have from a national security perspective than any other country in the world. More bloodshed there – more bloodshed there, more money spent, Operations Desert Shield, Operation Desert Storm, the 2003 invasion – in between it's seven years of a no-fly zone – and then a 10-year war after that. Look, 25 years of American commitment to the – to this country is not going to end over a blame game. We are – we are there now because the president rightly identified the situation demanded our significant engagement. Will that engagement expand? I think it has to. You can't win this war just from the air. How it will expand will be seen in the – in the months to come. But it's a desperate situation, and it will be in the months to come.

MR. SCHIEFFER: You have any thoughts on that, Karen?

MS. DEYOUNG: You know, I always think that with a lot of these situations, you can – you can always go back to who you want to blame. You know, you can say it was the Obama administration's fault because they allowed this compromise to arise in 2010 that allowed Maliki to stay there. They tried to impose certain rules and then didn't follow up on them. You could go back to Jerry Bremer and say, you know, de-Baathification and dismantling the Iraqi Army is the basic reason why the Iraqi Army is semi-nonexistent now. You could go back to the invasion itself. You could go back to Desert Storm and say they should have gone and gotten Saddam Hussein. You could go back to the – to the Brits and say, you know, they shouldn't have drawn these lines. It is true there's been a whole lot of Western interference, a whole lot of bad decisions. But ultimately, you have Iraq in 2010 and before in a situation where they could've – they could've made a lot of different decisions. They could have figured out how to make this work in a way that I think would have – who knows if you could've prevented it, but certainly have put themselves in a much better position now than –

MR. SCHIEFFER: I would like to talk a little about the most recent decision, because Leon Panetta has raised this recently. He says we could have and should have made a stronger case for leaving a residual force there, a small force there. And, you know, I guess that's "if" – what I call "if" history – if we'd done this or that, just what you're talking about. But Kathleen, do you think, if we had left, say, 10,000 troops there, that it would've made a difference in the recent developments we've seen? Would that have made a difference and might they have been avoided?

MS. HICKS: I think having – yeah, I think having trainers on the ground and having some amount of greater intelligence, which could have been in the form of U.S. forces, but more investment on the ground in Iraq, would certainly have helped. It would have helped give the warning signs more amplification than they did. It would have helped in terms of seeing the degradation of the Iraqi military more clearly. So I think, sure, that I think those things could've helped. And as Karen sort of pointed out, there are a lot of ways to frame up depending on your viewpoint how that decision went down, if you will. But I think the important thing is, yeah, you know, in hindsight, certainly, it sure seems like a better idea to have known more about what was happening inside Iraq.

MR. SCHIEFFER: But couldn't – do you think that the administration, if they had leaned – was there a way to lean on Maliki and make him accept such a deal to keep those troops there?

MR. BOWEN: Bob, I think there was, and I think that we could've probably kept 10,000. It would have been a tough parliamentary battle, and indeed, Prime Minister Maliki ultimately said he wasn't willing to fight that battle. But there is some reporting that's because the number of troops proposed was de minimis at that point.

What we know is that the training mission was not complete when we left. We know that their logistical capacity was extremely weak. We reported on that. We know that the command-and-control capacity was deficient. And we know that they didn't have an intelligence capacity, or an air force, for that matter – all things that we could've spent the next several years strengthening and perhaps then had an army in Mosul on June 10th that didn't cut and run.

MS. DEYOUNG: I mean, I agree that there is little point in kind of playing the blame game now, and there are lots of perspectives to look at this from, as Kath said. I – you know, I remember covering it at the time, and you obviously were participating in it at the time. I'm not so sure. It's absolutely true that the Obama administration wanted to get out. It's also absolutely true that the Iraqis didn't want us to stay. You know, you can look at – look at the police training program, which was one of the programs that stayed there. We were supposed to have 500 trainers, dozens of facilities around the country. In very short order, that was reduced to nothing because the – you know, you can argue that the program, which was under State Department control, was not very efficient, but the fact is that the Iraqis didn't want it there, and they made sure that it didn't work.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you, I thought this a very interesting story in The New York Times recently that American soldiers were exposed to chemical weapons when they were dismantling Iraqi weapons. I guess there are a couple of questions here. Why are we just now finding out about this? And the other question I would have – and I think I know the answer to this, but you all are the experts – did the discovery of these weapons mean that he did have chemical weapons after all, or were these just antiques, basically? Explain that to me, Kathy.

MS. HICKS: Well, I have not delved into this greatly since it's come out in the last day or so. My best understanding is they were antiques, and, you know, it was unsurprising to find chemical munitions inside Iraq.

MR. SCHIEFFER: So these were the weapons that left – were left over when he was using them against his own people, I assume.

MS. HICKS: Well, or had buried them again for – you know, for unclean disposal, if you will – you know, not the way they would handle it.

Why we're only find out now, I can't comment on. I – it's not an issue I certainly was never aware of inside the Pentagon. It's sad but not unlike what has happened in the past in terms of exposure, taking time to produce results and tying that back together in the medical community to understand, you know, why certain symptoms are happening. But beyond that, I don't know.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Were you aware of anything like this, Stuart?

MR. BOWEN: I heard rumors about that – those kinds of discoveries, but just rumors. I think we didn't know about it until now because it was classified and compartmented and controlled, for one reason, and second, it was relatively small in the scope. But I think the article raises more questions than it answers, and we'll have to wait and see what more investigative digging shows us.

MS. DEYOUNG: I think these are largely weapons from pre-1991. They're weapons that were used in the Iran-Iraq war.

I think one of the most troubling things about these articles was that these weapons were supplied to a large extent with equipment and precursors that came from us, that came from the Europeans. We were definitely backing Saddam Hussein during that war. They used it against the Iranians. There was congressional testimony by the Pentagon in 2006, in 2008, in 2009 where they did talk about the existence of these weapons. There is some dispute over whether they downplayed it or not. But it certainly wasn't a secret. Nobody really picked up on it very much.

The other interesting thing about the story is that when these soldiers who were dealing with the weapons started to show symptoms of nerve agent exposure, chemical weapons exposure, that they were told reportedly either that they were mistaken, this wasn't what it was, or told by their commanders on the ground there to shut up about it and that they weren't given proper treatment and that the actual fact that people had been – not only that these weapons had been found, which was kind of known, but that people had been affected by it was not put out.

MR. SCHIEFFER: I'd like to talk a little bit about this force, ISIS, and who they are and how different they are and how sophisticated in some ways that they are. I mean,

they seem to have – you know, they really seem to have a knack for social media, as it were. And where is this coming from, Kathleen, and how do we combat this? Because they're obviously recruiting Americans on social media and Europeans and –

MS. HICKS: Right. Well, first of all –

MR. SCHIEFFER: What is it they're doing here?

MS. HICKS: Yeah, I think first of all, it – I will put myself of the age that I also consider that sophistication, but I suspect the average 18-year-old doesn't think that, you know, having a Twitter handle and being able to, you know, put YouTube videos out is very sophisticated. So in many ways, I think it's about our mindset as Americans and certainly our establishment – and I include myself in that – and how we think about threats for the future with ISIS being, you know, a very clear case of that. It's not – it does not take a lot in today's day and age to put together the kind of media campaign they have. It certainly takes a strategic mindset, and I do credit them, if you will, for having that strategic mindset and using that as a recruitment tool. But I'm not sure I consider that, you know, the most sophisticated challenge. Same with their financial strategy, which is bank robbing, largely, and that's – and oil – you know, black market oil, things of that sort. You know, very creative hybrid, as we like to say a lot in the military community. Important to think about these combinations of sort of low-skill and high-end effects. And that's the kind of thing, frankly, that we should anticipate is not going to just be about ISIS in the future. There are going to be others who think creatively.

MR. SCHIEFFER: It is sophisticated for me.

MS. HICKS: Yeah, me too. That's why – trust me –

MR. SCHIEFFER: I mean, you know, I have to get my grandchildren to turn on the television, I mean, that's – (laughter) –

MS. HICKS: No, I'm with you.

MR. SCHIEFFER: I need help with all this stuff.

MS. HICKS: And I think it tells you something about – exactly – about this movement. I mean, you are talking largely about people who are, you know, 18, probably younger, to 25 years old, and it's a completely different approach than we are used to and trained to deal with, for the most part.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Are we – are we doing a good job of combating this? I mean, what do we need to be doing here that we're not doing?

MR. BOWEN: That's a great question because of the enormity of the – of the challenge that ISIS presents. I think that what really distinguishes them, if I may continue that point, is they took an army of 15,000, defeated an Iraqi Army 10 to 15 times

their size. Why? Because they spent three years in the smoke of Syria's gruesome and grotesque civil war becoming battle-hardened. And secondly, they are extremely wealthy.

So that's where I want to take your point, Bob, which is we need to fight on the financial front. This is the wealthiest terrorist organization in the world right now. They are loaded. They're selling oil. They're stealing money, as Kath pointed out. And they are purchasing weapons. These are pipelines, choke points that we got to shut down because every weapon they're firing that they didn't steal, they bought. And they're able to buy –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Where do they buy them?

MR. BOWEN: Well, that's where we're not quite on target yet. We need – this is the battle we need to engage in. We need to shut down their capacity to grow as a fighting force. And that means more than just killing them. It means cutting off their supply lines, their logistics capacity. The one that is so grievously weak on the Iraqi side is certainly sufficient to empower this relatively small army to its shocking success this summer.

MS. DEYOUNG: You know, that's a very good question, where are they getting resupplied from. And I don't – I don't actually know the answer. I don't know the – how much they got from taking the arsenals in Mosul, from – you know, they captured a lot of Assad's bases in Syria. You know, is that enough? Are they buying stuff from the black market? I don't know the answer to that.

But on the – on the social media thing, you know, I think that we're just, as a bureaucracy, just really not capable of being agile enough of responding. There is a huge effort in the State Department and the intelligence community to respond to this on its own terms, and it just I think doesn't work very well. You know, the State Department put together this video some of you may have seen of what's actually showed – most of, not up to the crucial point – of beheading, and said: Is this what you want? Is this what you want to see? You know, these are – how brutal these people are. And yet that, in the view of many people, actually became a recruiting tool for them because the people, the kids out there who are watching this, who for whatever reason, you know, are seeing this as a symbol of power, it was just another video of this powerful force thumbing its nose at this enormously powerful military behemoth of the United States and its allies. So I don't think we really know how to combat that yet. There is a big effort devoted to it, but I'm not sure it's working too well.

MS. HICKS: And I think Karen's right. I think that's very fair. It's very hard to galvanize the entire U.S., let alone international community, you know, into a response against an organization. We saw this with al-Qaida. They can move much more easily, in this case can operate at a cellular level, let's just say.

I think – to your question about what more can be done, I think the basic pieces of what needs to be done have been laid out pretty clearly and I think pretty well in terms of Iraq. But getting there, the implementation is very hard.

I think the biggest problem is we haven't cracked the Syria piece, and you can't solve the problem without cracking the Syria piece. And for now, what the administration's approach generally is is we're going to put primacy on dealing with Iraq, and we'll figure Syria out. And I just don't think that's going to work, for purposes of the arms, for instance, the fighters, the impetus, the – you know, that which motivates people is in part about Syria. And we're going to have to have an approach that is equally, as we are doing in Iraq, international, diplomatic and development-related – and there is certainly a lot of money – I don't want to mislead – there is a lot of humanitarian assistance going on there – but also the military piece and getting – you know, we're starting from scratch on training and equipping in Syria, and that's completely understandable. It's regrettable, but it's understandable that that's where we are today. But that piece has to move to solve this problem.

MR. SCHIEFFER: So are you saying we need to direct – attack Assad directly as part of this?

MS. HICKS: I didn't say that. I – (chuckles) – I would not take such a thing off the table. I think certainly, you know, there are – we can build that case in certain ways. At this point in time I don't think we have to give up on removing the Assad regime in order to deal with ISIS. And in fact, what I hope we can do is demonstrate, to the extent that we can be successful as a coalition inside Syria in terms of building up that opposition force and having it be successful, is that – show those who might otherwise be loyal to Assad that there is alternative to Assad that can beat ISIS. And I think that's our best play. It's not an easy play. It doesn't mean defeat, if you will, for ISIS, or defeat for Assad, but what it means is shifting the political landscape enough using military power, in addition to other things, to get, you know, a negotiated approach and way ahead in Syria. That's what I think is most likely.

I don't think a military, U.S.-led military defeat of the Assad regime is likely at this point. And I think the administration at this point in time is right that that's not what the American people are looking for in terms of massive boots on the ground. Again, I think that can change over time. We've already seen, as Stuart pointed out, we've seen shifts over three months of time and another three months of time. I think since the red line discussion of last summer, there has been let's just call the regret factor, perhaps, among Americans. And so I think we'll have to see where that plays out. But I don't think you have to go there now. I think you can pursue for now the train-and-equip pieces, the humanitarian response pieces and look to what else you want to do to help solve the humanitarian issues on the ground that help to bring support away from ISIS, away from the regime and towards the moderate opposition.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Where are the ground forces going to come from? I'm not going to use the term "boots on the grounds." I mean, I just – it's used so much, I mean. Where – but where are the ground forces going to come from, Stuart?

MR. BOWEN: Bob, that's a great question and has to be answered this way: Victory over ISIS will only come in a multilateral fashion. The coalition must be strong enough to engage regionally, using our NATO allies, a combination of training and support on the ground that gets that Iraqi Army, that piece of paper, as it was described, up off its back and engaged. And it's not ready.

MR. SCHIEFFER: How close – how close is the Iraqi Army to being able to take on ISIS with American air support?

MR. BOWEN: Six months. You know, three to six months. This is a – this is a – this is an army that's been victimized by a number of events since 2011. One is the failure to appoint a minister of defense at all. There hasn't been one for four years. Second was the appointment of leadership within the army that was based more on loyalty, perhaps, rather than competence. And third was the failure to address it – the many weaknesses that we observed, that we knew about when we left by Prime Minister Maliki's regime. And part of that is neglect; part of that is corruption, something we haven't discussed today. Corruption is a cancer in Iraq. It's a – it's a cancer that's been metastasizing for 10 years. And its effects are seen in a broken rule of law system, and a broken rule of law system breeds terrorism.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Karen, do you foresee any other country in that region putting ground troops in there, especially after the United States has said, not us?

MS. DEYOUNG: No. I mean, I think that – just to go back to your earlier question, I think the Pentagon assessment at this point is that at best, somewhere slightly shy of half the Iraqi Army is actually capable of fighting at this point. And you're talking about several hundred thousand people. Similarly with the – with the Interior Ministry forces, so law enforcement forces there.

One of the problems with all of this is that you – you know, the Americans have been boasting of having a coalition of more than 60 countries, but there is a lot of different little sub-coalitions there and a lot of differing goals and a lot of – a lot of differing willingnesses to participate and objectives. So if you're talking about Syria and attacking Assad, that – would the Turks like that? Turks would love that, you know, that would be great. Would the Iraqis like it? Oh no. The Iranians wouldn't like it. And we are not coordinating with the Iranians, but in fact, the Iranians are helping in Iraq. You've got the Gulf states that have among them many different goals. You've got the Europeans who have different goals and different objectives and different political imperatives about what they're likely to do. So in a sense, it's sort of like herding cats if the Americans want to be in charge of this coalition. You've got a lot of countries who have very differing objectives about what they want to happen there and what they're willing to do.

Also, in Syria, you know, Assad has kept his air defenses turned off to allow U.S. and coalition airstrikes against ISIL. The assumption is he's not going to do that if we start attacking him. Now, if that happens, then we'll attack his air defenses, and then we're in a very big war in Syria.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Kathleen, is – are the Russians doing anything? Could they do anything?

MS. HICKS: They could do, yes, they could. In particular, obviously, they can put pressure on the Assad regime. Their stance to date has been we told you you guys would screw this up, and look what you did. So I think they share a counterterrorism goal with the United States and many other members of the coalition. I think they will be helpful in terms of foreign fighter flows from Russian territory in – which is very possible and likely. They can be helpful in trying to help shut that off. But I don't see them giving way on the larger point about Assad's regime and the necessity to kind of keep Syria intact under the Assad regime. And I don't see them doing much beyond that, certainly with regard to Iraq – I think they view that as our problem.

MR. SCHIEFFER: We have heard instances about continued violence in Iraq being an indicator that U.S. forces should never have pulled out and that Iraq is simply not capable of stably standing by on its own. Is it – is this just something that impossible for Iraq to do?

MR. BOWEN: Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has the biggest challenge confronting any world leader at this moment. Thirty percent of his country is controlled by an invading force, a malignant, vicious invading force that slaughters innocents – 12,000 Iraqi innocents killed this year, double the number killed the whole of last year. Violence pervades Baghdad and the northwest.

It seems impossible, to answer your question. But it's not, if the prime minister takes decisive action. I spent an hour and a half with him a year ago and found him to be bright, well-educated, speaks fluent English, spent 20 years in Manchester with my friend Lukman Faily, ambassador from Iraq, who's here tonight – thank you, Excellency, for coming. And what we have in him is someone who is – who is willing to actually push conceptually forward an inclusive government that departs from its Iranian influences and revives an Iraqi nationalism.

What we don't have is meaningful action yet that demonstrates what I believe is his personal commitment. Why? The politics of Baghdad are so incredibly divisive and difficult, even at this moment when there's an existential threat to the country itself.

What can he do now? He can appoint a minister of defense, appoint a minister of interior, and – revolutionary step – go to Riyadh.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Go to Riyadh?

MR. BOWEN: Yes. There has been no visit from a head of state of Iraq to Saudi Arabia, and it's –

MR. SCHIEFFER: And what would – what would that be about?

MR. BOWEN: The coalition is critical to success of the fight against ISIL. And if a good-faith effort is made to begin to build bridges across the Gulf, then we might see that coalition come to life and actually do something.

MR. SCHIEFFER: What would a – what would a stable Iraq government look like?

MS. HICKS: Want me to start? I can start? No, I'm happy to start.

I think the key to Iraq in terms of the political establishment is that – a balance between the centralization of Baghdad – this is not unusual; we can say this about some other countries too – but the stabilization of a central government in Baghdad and essentially the decentralization of power down into the – to the states, the provinces. That is within the bounds of the Iraqi constitution. There is room there for more decentralization. But you don't want to decentralize to the point where it falls apart. And certainly here, we can think of our own history as a nation and how important it was that – you know, we had an Articles of Confederation, and how important it was for those states to decide they wanted to band together, even though they kept most of the power at the state. So I think a state with – the first and most important piece for a stable Iraq – Stuart's pointed out some of the key pieces of it; another is the petroleum laws – is to figure out that balance where Baghdad – there is a sense of vested interest from all ethnic parties in Baghdad and trust – some degree of trust in that central government and a degree of power out in the provinces, in the states so that they feel like they have some control over the money they are sending into Baghdad, that they have a sense of their own welfare, whatever that might be, economy, education, health, that that is being protected by this combination of power at the state level and power in Baghdad. That's the magic formula that will be very difficult for them to achieve.

MR. SCHIEFFER: I want to go to questions now from the audience. And I thought since the Iraqi ambassador is here, we'd give him the first shot here. Mr. Ambassador, would you like to say something? Question? Comment?

Q: Anyway, thank you, Bob, for such an important event, and I also would like to thank you for raising Iraq again and again and making everybody aware of the situation.

The key issue we have here is – I mean, you talked about the historical perspective and what should have taken place or what – also, what can take place. The key question is if inaction take place or if Iraq is left to its own dynamics, will that benefit the region and the globe? I think the question everybody is saying is no. What can take place, what we saw two days ago at the Andrews base, which I was there, in

regard to the coalition and formation of it, is our very strong indication that the people are recognizing the danger of ISIS.

And I think what we all have to agree now is, moving forward, what is a success story. And to us, in Iraq, the success story is a stable region in which terrorism is defeated as a narrative. That I think has to be a lot of soul-searching going on. In Iraq, we are doing that. The formation of the government with harsh decision being taken is the result of that. I think players in the region, and I will say even partners in the coalition, have to do a bit of soul-searching and to look into a more positive narrative and defeat of terrorism rather than just ISIS phenomenon.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Would anyone like to comment on that or respond to that?

MR. BOWEN: Yeah, I think the ambassador is exactly right. He's talking about a coalition effort that doesn't just bomb and destroy ISIL but also begins to diplomatically and socially engage with the causes of that kind of evil within the region. And that's a generational challenge. We have martial challenges, and they're immediate, that we must address first.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right. Right here.

Q: I'm Peter Humphrey, an intelligence analyst.

I feel we're living in la-la land expecting the Baghdad government to get its act together in time for us to actually take on ISIS. It's crazy not to devastate – not degrade; I keep hearing that word “degrade” – but devastate this organization. Why is the administration living in la-la land? Am I alone in believing this?

And second, the Kurds have their best chance at independence right now, their best chance in hundreds of years. Why aren't they grabbing it?

MR. SCHIEFFER: Would you like to take it?

MS. DEYOUNG: Well, on the second question, I think one of the reasons is because the administration is pushing them very, very hard to not take that opportunity. You had Tony Blinken, the deputy national security adviser, was there this week. There have been endless conversations about it, promises about how hard the Americans will push the Iraqi government once this threat is finished. I think the focus now is on convincing them, and so far, they've done it, that if – that this has to be the immediate concern of everybody and that if Iraq is divided – I think before the Kurds saw the ISIL forces heading toward Kurdistan, they were ready to jump, and they got very scared when they saw that – when they saw that happening. And the Peshmerga, having performed better than the Iraqi Army, did not perform as well as they thought they were going to.

Q: Is there a threat? If you don't – if you declare independence, we're not going to help you in the fight against ISIS?

MS. DEYOUNG: I don't – I don't think they talk that way. I don't think there is a threat. But that's – convincing them that it would be very difficult for them to survive as a – as a – as an independent state.

And to your first question about, you know, why haven't we gone all out, I mean, that's a – it's an interesting question. The administration would say, look, we take our targets when we find them. I think Tony Cordesman had a – had a piece just this week looking at the comparison of numbers of airstrikes in previous confrontations even in Iraq and said, this is nothing; you know, it seems like a lot, but it's basically nothing. They would argue, well, you know, we're looking for targets. It's been very hard to find them. We're very concerned about hitting civilians. But there is – there certainly is more that they could be doing, yeah.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right. Thank you. You, sir.

Q: Thank you very much. My name is Paolo von Schirach, editor of the Schirach Report.

Back to basics – and you said, you know, the obvious questions. The obvious question is this: In 1999 we had an air war against Serbia. No boots on the ground. Thirty-eight thousand sorties. Eleven thousand strikes in 78 days. Now, this doesn't even remotely compare in terms of level of effort and engagement. Now, is this a result of the fact that this is not a target-rich environment because the ISIL forces are dispersed and we – essentially, what we read is one strike, one vehicle, one strike, one machine gun position. This is really pitiful. I'm sorry if I say this way. Is this a result, again, of the tactical situation and the lack of targets? Or is this just because we're not committed? In other words, are we really as committed as President Clinton was in bending the will of Slobodan Milosevic at the time of the – of the 1999 war? Or is there something else? Because one doesn't get the impression that there is this level of commitment. You all talked about the war as it is this is sort of a foregone conclusion: We are in it to win; now the question is whether we will be able to or not. My question is, really, is there such a commitment? There is definitely an engagement, but the level of engagement is so small that I wonder whether, again, also, in terms of the message that is sent to the coalition and to the Iraqis themselves is, are we really in it?

And second and last point is, you mentioned the \$50 billion shortfall that the Iraqi government is facing. Could you elaborate on that and the sources of that problem, in consideration also of the oil revenue that Iraq still gets, I imagine? Thank you.

MR. SCHIEFFER: You know, I think this is a very good question. And, I mean, the part – because I continue to read about this. You know, these are very expensive bombs that we're dropping over there, and when you're taking out one pickup with a machine gun, that seems like a pretty high price to pay to take out one pickup truck, basically. So is it – is it there are just no targets? Is that the situation? Or is it more that

we're just not that interested? And I kind of lean that there's no targets, but I'm interested in what you all say.

MS. HICKS: Well, you know, I don't think I could fall cleanly on one side of the other, but I will say it's a very different target environment than Serbia. I think Serbia is a very hard comparison to this. This isn't a regime that you can target assets they hold dear, like you can in a country. Serbia was sort of a classical state-based – you can go after command and control. You can go after media outlets. You can, you know – and whatnot. I'll just leave it at that – troop concentrations, things of that sort. This is definitely, you know, a 21st-century set of targets we're dealing with. And I don't think you can get them all from the air.

Now, could you do more than we're doing today? I'm not going to second-guess that, frankly. I have great faith in the American military and in the coalition allies and the degree of intelligence they're able to get and the refinement of the targeting process, having been involved in it. But that – so I'm not going to say that piece of it. But I will say I think it's a different environment.

I do think there is a question about degree of commitment – and I think there should be. I think that's an open debate for the American public, and again, for coalition allies and partners. As Karen pointed out, they all have different goals and purposes in why they're engaging.

And the president was right in saying this is a long-term strategy. If there is one thing I could leave people with, it's that. This is not a 30-day bombing campaign. That's not going to work here. Didn't work against al-Qaida. We're still fighting al-Qaida all over the world. And it's not going to work here against ISIS. It's going to take building up the forces on the ground, the Peshmerga, the Sunnis and the new Anbar Awakening kind of approaches, the Iraqi Army, getting the moderates in Syria up and running. That will alone will take time, let alone the targeted bombing approach. So I just think it's a harder problem.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Stuart, what's your take on that?

MR. BOWEN: Well, I think Kath is exactly right. This is – this is asymmetrical warfare that we saw for 10 years in Iraq. We did not succeed in 2007 with airpower. We succeeded in a multifaceted strategy that was strongly committed driven by a unique program, the Sons of Iraq program. We put \$350 million U.S. tax dollars into the charge of Sunni sheiks in these very provinces we're talking about and said, fight with us, and taking advantage of the awakening movement that Chairman Warner recognized and supported our efforts in reporting on that – on that money.

And the reality is, is that Haider al-Abadi should take that idea – it's called the national guard idea – and see if can morph it into something asymmetrical to his own advantage. The bombing's important, and we should do more of it, no doubt about that.

That's a point well-taken. Karen pointed that out. But we're evolving rapidly. And when we talk about an evolution in engagement, that's what you'll see.

MS. HICKS: Can I add just one thing?

MR. SCHIEFFER: Absolutely.

MS. HICKS: And all this happens against a backdrop of sequestered defense spending in the United States. Now, there is an outlet called overseas contingency operations. That will fund what we have to have done. But we're still in this completely nebulous space in the United States in terms of what it is we even want our military to accomplish, taking how much money to do it and how we're going to pay for it as a society, whether it comes out of OCO or out of the base budget. And that is not an insignificant background point behind all this, that and Afghanistan continues.

MR. SCHIEFFER: I think that's a very good point. I'm sorry we run out of time. You know, I just want to close by saying I'm always impressed with the audience that shows up for these things. I think if you are doing demographic – one of those demographic things, we do attract the opinion makers. And I note that my old friend John Warner is here today, and I'd just like for everybody to know that he's right here. And Senator, you may ask a question. (Laughter.)

Q: I may be a little old and feeble, but I've watched generations of American G.I.s respond to the call of their country and to fight with our allies in places of the world, World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Gulf wars, and I could go on. Those men and a few women came from high schools at ages 17, 18, 19, and within 120 days, many of them were in combat situations and fighting. We spent four years, and you and I worked together as partners. It's why I came here; I wanted to put this to you.

MR. BOWEN: Yes, sir. (Laughter.)

Q: You and I worked as partners as to figure out, were we wisely expending our money where we did it. And you did a good job.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you.

Q: And in the course of your services, you studied the culture of that nation.

MR. BOWEN: Yes, sir.

Q: Today an ISIS fighter comes from basically the same background as the former troops in the Iraqi Army. Yet one is motivated to fight and give his life for what he believes in, albeit a lot of false ideas, but nevertheless fight, and the other drops his arms and runs. So you're drawing on the same base of manpower. And if we've got to go forward and follow through on the strategy that's been laid by the president at some in time, a number of ground troops have been needed. Whether they're coming through

allies, I had questioned that. I think it falls again on the Iraqi Army. Are you prepared to make a case now to the people of this country, while we've failed in four years of training to create an army, can we now do it in another 120 days using the basic same raw material, drawn from the same source, to go against a brother fighter in the ISIS ranks? Does he simply have fire in the belly to match the ISIS?

MR. BOWEN: Well, thank you, Chairman Warner, and –

Q: That's a simple question.

MR. BOWEN: Yes, sir, it is. (Laughter.) And the answer is, is right now, no. But let me also answer the other points you made, that your championing of the Iraq Security Forces Fund, and the \$26 billion, almost half our reconstruction money, that went into building that army and that police force and to unprecedented levels was well-spent at the time. Matter of fact, our last report, "Learning from Iraq," out just over a year, reached that conclusion.

So begs the question, then what happened? Why? And I think there was a cultural element that's missing from the direct training and support, the equipping. And that cultural element a senior Iraqi official told me, Shia troops don't want to die in Sunni provinces, and Sunni populations don't want to see Shia troops in their cities. The Shia chief – mostly Shia divisions that were in Mosul on June 10th were hated by the residents of Mosul because they were – they were seen as apostate. This is – this is a deep cultural issue that, frankly, we didn't grasp 10 years ago when we entered Iraq, and it is an issue that is right at the surface now, and it fundamentally acts as an obstacle.

What's the – what's the answer, though? That's got – we got to have an answer for this. And the answer is a revived Iraqi nationalism, one that brings Kurd, Shia, Sunni back together. That's an enormous challenge. But it can be done. It happened in 2007 through programs like the Sons of Iraq. But it's going to – it's going to require the – Haider al-Abadi to draw upon the core trait of democracy, and that is consensus-based leadership. Everybody gets something, everybody gives something up. And we haven't seen that enough in Iraq.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right. I think – very good question, Senator. Thank you all for coming on behalf of TCU and CSIS. (Applause.)

(END)