Thank you. I hope so, too. Thank you very

much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your

questions as well as yours, Senator Ashcroft. I look forward to outlining

the administration’s policy. I think we have a very good, very

coordinated, cohesive strategy for dealing with a very difficult problem,

a very difficult situation, and one that is as of great concern

to us as it is to you.

I would like to go through where we are, I think, in Iraq, starting

with the effort that was under way with Desert Fox in December

to degrade Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction and,

more importantly, his delivery systems. That also had the effect of

weakening his regime, which speaks in particular to both parts of

our policy, both containment of Saddam Hussein and regime

change.

As you outlined, Mr. Chairman, a number of things have occurred

which are indications of the extent to which the effort that

is under way by the United States has succeeded in weakening

Saddam Hussein’s regime. In particular we noted this with his

Army Day speech in which he called for the overthrow of Arab governments,

which backfired very seriously against him. We saw it

again when his foreign minister walked out of the Arab League

meeting, demonstrating yet again to the Arab governments the

weakness of Saddam Hussein’s regime.

He has repeated threats to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey,

which just reconfirms them in their resolve to stand with us in confronting

Saddam Hussein and his regime. And he has talked repeatedly

again of the illegitimacy of the Kuwait border, which reconfirms

the coalition in its stand with us starting with the Gulf

war.

We also have anecdotal information that we are getting from

quite a number of the contacts that we have inside Iraq, those who

report to us on what is happening inside. Ever since the December

air strikes, the government offices in Baghdad have been dispersed;

the government is unable to function with the efficiency that it has

in the past. More importantly, the Republican Guard has been dispersed

and is unable to take advantage of the relative comforts of

Baghdad. They are out in the field, which is not something that

they particularly look forward to.

In particular, Saddam Hussein failed in his primary strategy

through the fall, which was to get sanctions lifted and to gain control

of the money from the sale of oil and from the lifting of sanctions.

He has, more importantly, challenged us in the no-fly zones.

The no-fly zones, as you know, were established some time ago

through the Security Council in order to protect the people of Iraq

from him, from the depredations of his regime, both in the south

and in parts of the north.

Although the air strikes that we undertake because of the challenges

to our forces, to our pilots in the no-fly zones, are meant to

protect the pilots and to protect our airplanes, they also have a collateral

effect on the regime. The result of that in particular has

been increasing reports of trouble in the south. There are some reports

that ‘‘Chemical Ali,’’ the most infamous of Saddam’s generals,

may have been assassinated or there may have been an assassination

attempt on him yesterday. We do not know the full story yet.

There has been a considerable amount of unrest that resulted

from the assassination of one of the senior Shia clerics, as you

mentioned, Sadr, and his two sons. The unrest in the south was

quelled in part by shelling in Nassiriyah. There were armed clashes

in Karbala, and there is some discussion that there will be increased

unrest in the south as the 40th day of mourning approaches

for Sadr and his two sons. In addition, there are very

credible reports that General Jenabi, the second in command in the

south, was executed by the regime.

The important thing, though, as you both mention, is what it is

that we are doing to influence events in the south and what we are

doing in order to fill out the administration’s policy of containment

and regime change. Frank Ricciardone, who has been named as the

Special Coordinator for Transition in Iraq, was in London last week

talking with many of the opposition groups, in particular those

named, those designated for receipt of equipment under the ILA.

He is working to try to put together an executive committee meeting

of the leadership to try to get the Iraqi groups to work together

in a way that is more credible, in a way that actually can affect

a regime change.

All of that needs U.S. support. It has U.S. support, and that is

a very intensive effort that he has under way right now, and he

will go back to that next week as well. Right now he is in Ankara

talking with the Turkish Government and getting ready for the

visit of Assistant Secretary Martin Indyk, who is due there in a

couple of days to talk to the Turkish Government and to visit

Incirlik to work even more intensively on Operation Northern

Watch and to seek further Turkish support for our policies of containment

and regime change.

We are very pleased with Radio Free Iraq. More importantly, the

Iraqis, the Iraqis on the ground, are pleased with the reporting

that they are getting from Radio Free Iraq. There is other media

outreach that we are working on. That is very important, we heard

over and over again when we visited the north, in order to embolden

people inside the country on the kinds of things that may

be going on to effect regime change.

On the ILA itself, as the act requires, we have designated seven

groups that would be eligible to receive assistance under the act.

We are working more intensively with those groups as well as others

in order to ensure that we can use the act in an effective and

appropriate way with them. We will of course look seriously at proposals

that we get from them on how they may use equipment that

might be provided to them under the act.

In addition, we have quite a number of other tools that we very

fortunately have been given by Congress to shore up the resistance

inside Iraq and to broadcast within the international community

more broadly the kinds of depredations that the Iraqi regime has

perpetrated against its own people. We have been able to move

about a half a million dollars to INDICT. They will start their very

important work after considerable work with us to develop much

more effective financial controls and programming ability in order

to carry out their very important work.

We are looking forward to funding Dr. Gosden very soon in field

studies to followup on the work that she has already begun in

Halabja following the chemical attacks on the Kurdish peoples in

Halabja 10 years ago. We are hoping to work further on reconciliation

of the Kurdish groups that I worked on when I was last in

Iraq 6 weeks ago and as recently as yesterday and today in conversations

with the Kurdish leaders. But, going beyond that, to try

to use some of the money that we have been given through ESF

for election training and election work inside northern Iraq to develop

elections for the regional assembly.

We have quite a number of other proposals that have been given

to us that could be—that we could fund using the money that Congress

has very kindly given us, and those we hope we will be able

to fund very soon. One of the anomalies that we are finding is that

we have a lot of new organizations, new NGO’s, that are working

inside Iraq, that would like to work inside Iraq or on Iraqi issues,

that are not quite used to working with the U.S. Government and

with U.S. Government money. So we have been finding ways to

make sure that the money that we disburse to them is accounted

for and used in a way that is appropriate and that Congress would

support.

I look forward to responding to your specific questions, and I

know you have many. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I appreciate this opportunity to update you on events inside Iraq

and the steps the Administration is taking to try to influence them.

We believe Operation ‘‘Desert Fox’’ accomplished its goal of degrading Saddam’s

capacity to develop and deliver weapons of mass destruction and his ability to

threaten his neighbors.

It also appears that the regime has been weakened.

Saddam’s January Army Day speech calling for the overthrow of Arab governments,

the walk-out by his Foreign Minister from the January Arab League meeting,

repeated Iraqi threats to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Turkey and repeated allusions

by Iraqi officials to the illegitimacy of the Kuwait border underscore Saddam’s

weakness and isolation.

Anecdotally, we have heard that over half the civilian government offices in Baghdad

were dispersed to residential areas during the December air strikes and have

not yet returned to their original locations. Moreover, long-term dispersal of Republican

Guard units to the field is reported to be taking a toll on morale among the

RG officer corps, which no longer enjoys a privileged lifestyle in Baghdad.

Perhaps just as important, Saddam has been unable to achieve what he announced

as his chief goal for 1998: the lifting of sanctions and restoration of his control over Iraq’s billions of dollars in oil revenue. Instead, his defiance of the international

community has prolonged sanctions even further and compelled the coalition

to respond militarily in December. Sanctions remain in place. The UN controls

his oil revenue and provides for the Iraqi people and it is clear that there can be

no short cut to lifting sanctions.

Since the end of Desert Fox, Saddam has chosen to challenge the No-Fly zones

in both the north and south on an almost daily basis. The coalition response has

been to strike at his integrated air defense system. The net effect of his challenges

has been to degrade his weapons capability further and frustrate his efforts to

achieve even a pyrrhic victory.

One recent strike appears to have affected communication for the oil pipeline to

Turkey. Fortunately, repairs were made within 48 hours with no serious effect on

oil flow essential to maintaining the humanitarian program. We will continue to

make every effort to avoid hitting such dual-use targets.

Internally, there have been signs of strain and unrest since Desert Fox. On February

19, Ayatollah Muhammed al-Sadr, the senior Shia cleric appointed by Saddam,

was assassinated. Al-Sadr is the third senior cleric killed in less than a year.

Over the past several months, he reportedly had been warned against leading Friday

prayers and was interrogated and threatened by security forces. He was shot,

along with his two sons, after attending Friday prayers at the shrine of the Imam

Ali in Najaf. The Government refused to allow a funeral ceremony.

Al-Sadr’s assassination came at a time when Saddam appears to be having increasing

difficulty maintaining control over security in southern Iraq. In an effort

to repress unrest in the south, Saddam last fall named Ali Hasan al-Majid as Commander

for the Southern Regions an appointment that probably was meant to intimidate

the local population. Ali Hasan is known as ‘‘Chemical Ali’’ for his use of

chemical weapons against Kurdish civilians when he was in charge of security in

northern Iraq.

Demonstrations erupted in several of Baghdad’s predominantly Shia neighborhoods

shortly after news of the killing got out. The regime moved quickly to quell

the unrest. All roads leading into Baghdad were reportedly cut off and, according

to opposition sources, 25 demonstrators were killed, 50 injured, and 250 arrested,

including 15 religious scholars. Others reported even higher numbers.

Similar, short-lived protests reportedly occurred in many other cities. The regime

allegedly responded to demonstrators who occupied the town hall in Nassiriyah by

shelling the town and killing 18 people. There were light arms clashes in Karbala.

The opposition also reported that disturbances took place in areas with a large

Sunni population. For example, in predominantly Sunni Ramadi province, nine people,

including a former governor, were said to have been executed following unrest.

The situation appears to have calmed for now. However, the traditional 40 days

of mourning for the assassinated cleric will end in late March, near the Islamic

Feast of the Sacrifice which marks the end of the Pilgrimage. We will be paying

particular attention to popular demonstrations that might mark the end of the

mourning period and to regime tactics either to forestall or quell them.

In an incident that may have been unrelated to the popular unrest, the second

in command in the southern Iraq security district and two staff officers reportedly

were executed sometime in late January or February. Staff Lt. General Kamil Sachet

al-Janabi, a former Corps commander, Gulf War hero and the senior deputy

in the south to Ali Hassan al-Majid was accused of plotting to overthrow the regime.

Whatever the real reason for his execution, the regime evidently intends it as a

warning to others while at the same time alerting Iraqis to high-level fear of coups

and overthrow.

What is the U.S. doing to influence events?

First, we continue to contain Saddam, working with the UN to reestablish disarmament

and monitoring activities while at the same time ensuring that the basic

needs of the Iraqi people are met. Second we are helping to isolate Saddam diplomatically,

where the Arab world, in particular, is incensed by his behavior and

threats. Third, we are working with Iraqis who want to see Iraq restored to its

rightful place in the region, with Iraqis who, like us, believe such a future is possible

only under a new regime.

Frank Ricciardone, the new Special Coordinator for Transition in Iraq, took up

his activities full-time on March 1. He was in London last week for another round

of meetings with a wide range of Iraqis there. Among other influential Iraqis, he

met with Ahmed Chalabi, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Iraqi National

Congress. Dr. Chalabi, as you know, has called for a meeting of the INC this

spring. We are working with him and other INC leaders to lay the groundwork for

a successful meeting, through close consultation with constituent groups and careful

planning. Ricciardone is encouraging the INC Executive Committee members to

hold an informal meeting next week and to follow it with a formal meeting of the

INC Executive Committee that could pave the way for a productive General Assembly

meeting.

This week, Assistant Secretary Martin Indyk will travel to Turkey, Jordan and

Syria to continue our consultations with regional governments regarding our policy.

After joining Martin in Ankara, Ricciardone, will stop again in London to continue

his important consultations with key Iraqi exiles. As soon as he is back in Washington,

he will resume his close consultations with members and staff regarding our

shared goals and ways to work more closely together to achieve them.

We are also very sensitive to the need to get information to and from Iraqis inside

Iraq. We are pleased that Radio Free Iraq, which is an independent station, has

been heard inside Iraq since October. We are also stepping up coordination with

USIA, looking at ways to make other media outreach more effective.

In early February, the President formally designated seven opposition groups

under the Iraq Liberation Act as eligible to receive assistance under the Act. We

are intensifying our contacts with Iraqi groups and will consider how we can help

them more effectively oppose Saddam’s rule and help Iraqis to achieve the kind of

government they deserve and desire. We will evaluate carefully the capabilities of

these groups, their strengths and their weaknesses, giving due consideration to any

proposals they may wish to present regarding possible receipt of assistance under

the Act. We will also try to resolve other practical issues, such as securing still more

support from neighboring countries, as would be needed in such scenarios.

We have also taken concrete steps to ensure that funding reaches groups and initiatives

that meet our common goals. For example, we have worked over the past

several months with the chairman and board of the INDICT organization to ensure

that INDICT can become a major focal point of Iraqi war crimes accountability activity.

The board has agreed to an initial grant of $500,000, and has welcomed our

suggestion that funding be made available also for developing effective management

and accounting expertise and for program development. We expect to receive a program

plan and follow-on grant requests in the near future.

We are also working with Dr. Christine Gosden to provide a grant for a field

study of the effects of Saddam’s 1988 attacks on the people of Halabja.

As you know, I am personally involved in our efforts to help reconcile the Kurdish

parties in northern Iraq. I traveled to the region in January to encourage them in

their efforts to unify the regional government apparatus and to care more equitably

for the needs of the people in the region. As part of this process, we are exploring

ways for NGO’s to provide election process training and assistance prior to elections

in northern Iraq that could be held late this year.

We are also looking at ways to provide assistance to:

leadership confidence building seminars and organizational meetings;

Iraqis who will make their case before international organizations such as

UN agencies;

and seminars that explore ‘‘the day after’’ and such topics as constitutional

modeling, debt restructuring and rebuilding a health care network.

A more detailed report on this activity is in clearance. We look forward to working

with Congress as we pursue these efforts at strengthening the ability of Iraqis to

work for a better future.

INDICT.

That is right.

We have the money that has been transferred

to INDICT, although that comes under the ESF rather than

the Iraq Liberation Act. And we have spent money on the Halabja

conference and November, which was about $67,000.

Under the ILA itself, we want very much to disburse the equipment

that is authorized under the ILA, but we believe we need to

do it in a very responsible way, in ways that the groups themselves

can use. We do not think that they are in a situation yet to receive

that equipment until there is a greater coalition among them as to

what they would do and how they would do it.

That is right.

No, we do look forward to working very aggressively

on this. As I say, the effort is very much under way to

work with the specific groups to ensure that we can evaluate their

abilities to work inside Iraq. The effort at the moment that is

under way is to get together an executive committee meeting of the

INC, the Iraqi National Congress, to work with them on how they

might actually do this kind of thing inside Iraq.

It is—regime change is what the administration

is working actively and aggressively to cause to happen. That

is absolutely right. We have quite a number of tools that we are

employing to do that. The ILA is one. The money that has been

given to us under ESF is the other, using the kinds of NGO’s, INDICT,

et cetera, to do that.

We think that there are quite a number of pieces that need to

be pulled together in order to accomplish this. It is very important,

however, in our view, that this be an Iraqi effort that we very

much support. The administration does not feel comfortable, does

not think it is appropriate, dictating to the Iraqi people what the

regime change would be.

That is the reason that we are working so intensively with the

Iraqi exile groups. That is the reason that I am working on Kurdish

reconciliation specifically, in order to help them come to agreement

on what that regime change would be, in order to put meat

on the bones of what we say when we talk about representative

government, when we talk about an Iraq whose territorial integrity

is maintained, whose sovereignty is maintained, and a government

that would adhere to international norms.

That it constitutes a legal response to Iraqi

provocations?

Absolutely, yes.

The mission that the United States military

and the British military have been given is to patrol the no-fly

zones, to protect the no-fly zones, and by extension therefore the

Iraqi people in the south and the Iraqi people in the north as far

down as the no-fly zone extends in the north. But the mission is

focused on the no-fly zones.

So if the challenges to the pilots were to cease, that would be the

case, yes.

No, I would disagree actually, Mr. Chairman,

because all of the other policies that we have in place that

we are working very intensively on are also directed at regime

change. As you say, I completely agree with you that containment

and regime change do work hand in hand.

Containment is something that we are working on maintaining

and shoring up in the Security Council and with our allies in the

Gulf and in Turkey. Regime change goes beyond containment and

it is what we are working on with the kinds of tools that we have

been discussing already this afternoon.

That is right.

The ILA, as you mention. The ESF that we

have in the programs that we are working on in order to help the

Iraqis, both the exile groups and those who may be inside, particularly

in the north, first of all think about the kinds of things that

they would like to see in a new government—so some of the money

we hope to spend on day-after kinds of seminars to let Iraqis talk

about and come to some conclusions about what we mean or what

they mean by representative government.

INDICT I think is a very important program in order to publicize

for Iraqis and by Iraqis the human rights concerns and the war

crime activities that Saddam Hussein and those close to him have

undertaken.

All of these, as well as the kinds of election training and development

of systems inside northern Iraq for Kurdish reconciliation to

occur along the lines that were agreed in the Washington Agreement,

all of this we believe seriously emboldens those inside and

the exile groups to think that regime change is a genuine possibility.

The more that we can demonstrate to Saddam Hussein their

coalition and their cohesiveness, the more people inside will believe

that a new Iraq is possible for them in the near future.

Certainly inside they do. We believe they do,

absolutely.

They could, they could. However, there are

other ways that we can work on to assist them in that, but that

is probably not something that we can talk about in this forum.

I would not—I would not want to give you

a date, no. But at the same time, I think it is very, very possible

that we can build the kind of, as I said, cohesiveness and common

sense of purpose among the Iraqi opposition groups, the Iraqi exile

groups, that we are working on now.

One of the difficulties that we have been facing is a very disparate

set of groups, whose differences have been more—have been

more of a subject than their agreements. It is the agreement among

them that we are trying to foster. I think that is the most important,

the most important political aspect of this that we can work

on.

Once the political aspect of this is more apparent and is more

agreed, that makes it much easier for us to use the ILA as the Congress

intended and as we intend to implement it.

For now the mission, as I said, is to maintain

the no-fly zones and to protect the pilots who are challenged

as they undertake this mission. The rules of engagement are defined

as allowing the pilots to go after any of the air defense systems

in Iraq that might, that might harm or put any of our pilots

or planes at risk.

The principals, the administration, has decided to maintain the

mission at that level at this point.

I think probably my colleagues at the Pentagon

are better placed to answer that question, but maybe I can put

it in a broader regional and political context as well for now.

We are working very hard to maintain several sets of coalitions,

several coalitions. One I would describe as being the consensus and

coalition in the Security Council that we need in order to maintain

the sanctions on Iraq, which we consider to be very important.

The other is to maintain the coalition in the Gulf and the agreements

with Turkey that permit us to fly from bases in those countries

and permit us to fly to protect the no-fly zones.

There is also what we call the MIF in the Gulf that is another

coalition. Our goal at this point is to maintain all of those coalitions

in a way that allows us to continue our policy of containment

and to go beyond that to the policy of regime change.

Well, the decision that has been taken by

the administration is that the way to go about regime change as

aggressively as we possibly can is to do it through the tools that

have been given us, the ILA, through ESF, through using and shoring

up and persuading and convincing Iraqi groups, Iraqi exile

groups and Iraqis inside the country, to work for it in the form that

they decide for themselves.

Well, I actually believe that we are very well

placed. We are being very aggressive on the political side. We are

in very close touch with our colleagues in the Gulf and in Turkey.

They tell us that they are completely with us in the way that this

is being pursued.

I cannot tell you—you are right, I cannot tell you by what date

a change may take place. But we are very encouraged and more

encouraged almost every day by the kind of effect that we see that

our actions, the actions of U.S. forces and U.S. political efforts, the

effect that they are having inside the country.

I think it is entirely possible, yes. I hear

this—like I say, I hear it myself from my conversations with people

in the north that I have had just in the last couple of days.

No, not patience. It is a tremendous amount

of talking, cajoling, meetings, traveling around to make sure we get

the right people in the meetings, bringing Iraqis together who have

not talked to each other for quite a long time, bringing Iraqis together

who have not worked together, creating a genuine coalition

among the Iraqis, who do not naturally necessarily come together.

We think it is very important, as probably is evident from the

groups that we designated in the ILA, for there to be a very broad

group of Iraqis, Iraqis in exile and Iraqis inside the country, to

work together so that we do not influence events in Iraq in a

skewed fashion. We think it is very important for the Kurds to participate,

for the Shia to participate, for Sunni groups to participate,

for tribal organizations to participate, Turkomen, Assyrians. Any of

the groups that one can imagine we are reaching out to really

work extremely hard on them, really put a strong-arm on them, if

you will, to get them to work together and to come together in discussions

to really come up with a very clear sense of purpose and

a very steadfast focus on what is most important, which is regime

change, rather than on some of the—on some of the past that has

gotten in their way up until now.

Absolutely. I appreciate your comments, Mr.

Chairman, and we are working on it very hard.