Secretary Armitage, welcome again. And I know

the burdens you bear, and I just want to thank you for giving so

much, because I know it is really hard. And you and I have differences,

but we are friends, and that is important to me.

I want to report to you, again, having gone home

again, that the people of my State are very anxious, and they are

anxious about the economy, they are anxious about Iraq, they are

anxious about North Korea, and then the horrible tragedy where

we all saw the faces of the best and the brightest, and we worry,

and we think, God, are we going to see more of this? And it is a tough time.

I want to go back a little bit to a year ago, when the President

made his very strong, in a way, angry speech about the ‘‘axis of

evil.’’ Because I am thinking, as I sit here today, that that was a

mistake, and I want to talk to you about it.

You know about North Korea’s history—isolation, a little paranoia,

mistrustful, and the rest—and you are sitting in North Korea,

and the President of the only superpower in the world lists three

countries, and you are the second one on the list, and the first one

is about to be invaded—and certainly some of us hope we can avoid

this, but it certainly looks that way—in an attack that probably we

have not seen in recent memory. Now, he is sitting there, and we

know he is already isolated. He has got horrible economic problems

and the rest. And he is thinking, ‘‘I’m probably next.’’

Now, he then is trying to escape this, what he considers, perhaps,

inevitable tragedy for his people, as he sees it, and, of course,

himself and his legacy, as he sees it. And so he turns to this idea

of getting the attention of the United States and trying to avert this situation.

And I am just curious. Before the President put North Korea into

the ‘‘axis of evil,’’ did he bring everyone in from the State Department?

Did he say—because, you know, in diplomacy, everything

you say has a reaction. Did he talk about this, what would be the

impact? And, if so, what was the advice, if you can tell it to us? Yes.

Now, on the State of the Union Speech, the way we do it in this

administration is, the top echelons of the Defense Department and

the State Department do see the State of the Union Speech. Secretary

Powell and I sat in his office last year, had several comments

over the State of the Union Speech. Both of us—I hesitate

to tell you—both of us thought ‘‘axis of evil’’ was a fitting comment.

And the reason we thought it was because the states abused—the

three named, abused their own populations, they were implacable

foes of the United States, and implacable foes of allies of ours—

South Korea, on the one hand, and Israel, in the case of Iraq and

Iran—and, finally, that we felt they, all three, were striving, and

had strived, historically, for weapons of mass destruction.

So I hesitate to report to you, but the Secretary and I—— That’s all right.

Well, let me just say to you, I am not arguing

whether it is fitting, and I could fit some other dictators in that list

myself. That is not the point I am making. I am asking if you discussed

what reaction there might have been to it, not that it was

fitting. But, in diplomacy, there are a lot of things we all want to

say, and yet, you know, you have got to think about how it sounds

and how people take it.

But you just felt it was fitting, and you did not really get into

the reaction. OK, thank you.