Wilson Center

HISTORY AND PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM

Researching the Middle East

Event Transcript
June 10, 2014

Researching the Middle East
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
10 June 2014, 6th Floor Moynihan Board Room, 2:00PM-4:00PM

Trudy Huskamp Peterson:
Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Trudy Peterson. You're at a session called Researching the Middle East. We're going to talk about current research activities. We're going to talk about issues involving archives, issues involving captured records. I told [HAPP Catalog Specialist] Laura [Deal] we should've had this yesterday. Yesterday was International Archives Day. Archives around the world should have marked the day with some sort of event. So we're marking it a day late, but we're still there. We have four people to talk with us today.

First is Kevin Woods. He's a historian and defense analyst with the Institute for Defense Analyses. Over the past decade, he worked extensively in and published on the Saddam Hussein-era captured records in Iraq. His most recent work, of which he's a co-author, is *The Iran-Iraq War: A Military and Strategic History*, which is coming out from Cambridge this August.

David Palkki is currently the Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He also is co-editor of *The Saddam Tapes: The Inner Working of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*. David previously worked for the Institute for Defense Analysis, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the US House of Representatives Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee.

Number three is Gregory Koblentz. By the way, Koblentz is the name of the town in Germany where the German federal archives is, so again, it's really appropriate.

He's the Associate Professor in the Department of Public and International Affairs, and the Deputy Director of the Biodefense Graduate Program at George Mason University. He's currently working on a project that examines the impact of regime security on the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction by authoritarian governments, including Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Bashar al-Assad's Syria. He's author of *Living Weapons: Biological Warfare and International Security*, which is from Cornell University Press in 2009.

Batting cleanup, if you will, is Michael Eisenstadt. He's a Senior Fellow, Director of the Military and Security Studies Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He's a specialist in Persian Gulf and Arab-Israeli security affairs. He's published widely on irregular and conventional warfare and nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East. His most recent publication is "Not by Sanctions Alone: Using Military and Other Means to Bolster Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran," which was published by the Washington Institute last year.

That's our panel. So let's begin with Kevin Woods.

Kevin M. Woods:
Thank you very much. I was asked to briefly provide some remarks based on a series of questions, I'm just going to rather simplistically go down the list here. Just some introductory remarks, I want to provide a historical context to the records that I'm most familiar with, and I think it might provide one of the streams of discussions possible on the historical research on the Middle East, and that's the captured records from the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the collapse of the Ba'ath government in Iraq.

My involvement in this project started as a lessons learned project. And so, I'm going to tie this to kind of the history of the collection and use of capture Nazi documents in World War II. These activities start as a military operation. I was asked to be part of a lessons learned team, actually looking at US operations during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. At the completion of the analysis of how did the US military system perform, we had a lot of open questions from very senior people. One of the simple questions that gave rise to the research was: if we were briefing our own lessons, the US's lessons of this campaign to the Iraqi General Staff, would they agree with the findings? In other words, did the adversaries see the war the same way the US saw the war, regardless of the politics and how things worked out, and just as military professionals sitting across a table, would they agree that both sides were looking at the same game?

It's an obvious question for any historian to want to tackle, so we assembled a team, went back, and we started working with the US military and US government as they collected the state records of the Ba'ath regime. Now obviously, in the context of a war, and I think Trudy's an expert on this, , there's all kinds of issues associated with state records, what is a state record, what's not a state record. But suffice to say, there were a lot of security interests in collecting the records of the Ba'ath regime, immediate security interests. There was the Iraq Survey Group trying to discover where the WMD was and all those issues. So there's a lot of interest in what the regime of Saddam Hussein said about itself in its own records.

So we use that as a baseline to start thinking about the military questions, in other words, how did the Iraqi regime plan to defend itself? What were its assumptions? What did it understand about itself in the adversaries it was getting ready to face? That's the birth of what we call the Iraqi Perspectives Project, which was a series of studies initiated by what used to be known as the US Joint Forces Command, but it's been funded over time by various government agencies in OSD and in the intelligence community to ask broader historical questions about the records.

In addition to the campaign in 2003, we went back and looked at the regime records that relate to the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, and the subsequent 1991 Coalition War to eject Iraq from Kuwait. There's a lot of questions about Saddam and terrorism as one of the arguments for the original 2003 campaign, but it tended to focus on a very narrow question associated with al-Qaeda. There actually was quite an interesting set of records dealing with how the regime dealt with non-state actors more broadly. As with a lot of totalitarian regimes in the Middle East, they have an interesting set of relationships with state and non-state actors, both in the "revolutionary" category, and in what would be more broadly accepted as a terrorist category.

So we looked at the records and tried to understand not culpability in a legalistic sense, but to understand how does a state deal with these non-state actors? It's a little bit like playing with fire. You don't want to get too close to these groups and those kinds of issues. So we used the records to help understand that. I want to say a couple of things about the records themselves. You know, the nature of captured records: you capture them in the middle of chaos. So this isn't going to an archive, where standards of archival science are laid out where you can find the records and the records are kept as they were created as broadly as possible. There's a logic to the record storage as it was, the record was created, and you can trace the lineage and provenance of all the records, which would be the optimal system. These were records that were captured in the battlefield context. So they were in offices, some were hidden in caches, some were attempted to be destroyed but found and retrieved, some were in private collections where senior government officials took the records from their Ba'ath offices and put them in their homes and the like. So it's just a complete, as they used to say, dog's breakfast of material – it's just all over the map.

So that comes with some limitations, and we can discuss that as the panel goes through, limitations of working with these kind of records and the obvious one is the one I just laid out. You're never really sure, at the very beginning, what it is you're working with, which leads to my last comment about the kind of the direction of this material, because after we came back and we started doing, in support of the Department of Defense, these historical studies on the broader strategic questions about what did Iraq understand, how did they understand it, and those kind of things.

It became very obvious to those of us working on it there are a lot more questions that should be asked of this material. There's a much broader community of experts and scholars that should look at this material. So we proposed creating something called the Conflict Records Research Center, which David will talk about here in a minute, which was the idea that, as a government-sanctioned researcher, I had access to these records.

But I, for example, could not make them available to Michael, who has a lot of expertise in the Middle East. I couldn't do that, it was not part of the rules. So we went to the government and proposed doing something akin to what was done after World War II, which was to create a hybrid organization, a relationship between the government, which possesses the captured records of another state, and an academic or civic organization that can make those records available to the broader academic community and the broader scholarly community to try to get more information and more understanding – historical, cultural, or otherwise – out of the records.

And out of that grew the Conflict Records Research Center, which was a kind of a hybrid organization where we could take as many of the records as possible, as fast as possible, and it's still an ongoing effort, and make them available in a – I would not call it an archive, because it's not qualified, but it's a digital database, where the records can be screened and examined by scholars from whatever background, from whatever country, wherever they want to see them, they can have access to the records and start to develop an understanding and actually broaden our understanding of these questions. And I think I've covered my mandatory questions, and I'll be happy to do a follow-up on anything in the Q&A.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson:
Okay, David.

David Palkki:
Great, it's great to be here. I'll point out I'm going to have to leave a few minutes early to catch a flight. So when I walk out, it's not that I'm not interested in my colleagues' presentations. It's to catch a flight.

I've also been working with these records for a number of years, first with Kevin, and then at the CRRC. As was mentioned, I co-edited a book, I published a couple of journal articles dealing with strategic questions, Saddam's views of the US, a bunch of stuff dealing with WMD, book chapter on sanctions. I recently finished my dissertation based largely on these records. I've been working with these for some time. I currently have a couple of journal articles I'm working on as well, one dealing with Iraq's nuclear program, and Israel's attack on the reactor, how that affected it and so on.

I'm also going to go largely through the same questions for continuity. But some of the questions, such as which archives have I used in the past and how would they compare in terms of difficulty, the CRRC is the only Middle Eastern archive or database, collection of records that I've used extensively. I've conducted research looking at the flip side as I've looked at US-Iraqi interactions at the various presidential libraries, the Dole Institute

library, a couple of archives in Europe, one in the UK I went to the Stazi Archive, and a few others.

Of these archives, I'll have to admit the CRRC is probably the most difficult to get access to, because there is an institutional review board requirement, which is kind of unusual but I think appropriate as well. This was set up based on humanitarian considerations to protect personally-identifiable information on individuals. There was fear that in the screening process that a name of someone who may have been spied on, that type of thing, could make it into the archive.

I'll give one example of something I found not long before I left full-time employment with the CRRC about a year ago was we found an audio file that was in our database this scholar's had access to. Sometimes the translations are great, sometimes they're awful, it's Iraqi-Arabic dialect on a tape from 20 years ago in some instances or longer. We cleaned up the translation before putting it online, and in the process, found a whole blurb where Saddam and his advisors were talking about a rape victim by name. It's good that we put a lot of money into improving this translation, and it's not cheap, it's probably $1,000 to really get the translation to where it needs to be to put it online. And in that process of improving the translation, we found this very sensitive information which would have been awful to have put online.

So, the quality of the translations in the researcher database varies. Sometimes it's phenomenal, sometimes they're awful. And when they're awful, of course, we provide Arabic versions as well so researchers can go back to the Arabic. And we warn people, , don't trust the translation. Given the primary source is the original, it's the audio file itself. But that explains, one of the hurdles coming to the CRRC. Once at the CRRC, once you get your IRB approval from your home institution, from a university if you're affiliated with a university, then we would automatically accept that. The Center never turned anyone away who had IRB approval, just to protect individuals. You can come, you can use the records and there's no pre-publication review.

Let's see here, are there records I was completely unable to access, which is another question. No, I had the privilege – I was an employee of the CRRC, so of course not only could I see the records in the researcher database, but I actually could peek behind the curtain at the restrictive US government database from which we pulled records. We went into this restricted government database and pulled unclassified and unclassified for official use only records, but then through a rigorous screening process to confirm that there actually was no classified information in these records, and then made them available to scholars and researchers.

So, there are a couple of questions that I think this question was really trying to get out, which is how can bias be introduced into the database, and what should researchers know about? I think there are a couple of things researchers should be aware of. One, were there records I was unable to see? Sure. You know, you have a huge government. Sometimes things are compartmentalized.

In the Saddam tapes, we mentioned one audio recording specifically that we didn't have access to in the Saddam tapes book. I have no real reason to doubt that that audio recording exists. We pulled it from the Iraq Survey Group Report. But, of course, not everything was in the source database from which we pulled. So I only know what I know. The Iraqis, of course, systematically destroyed certain types of records. So before US forces went in there, for well over a decade, the Iraqis were destroying every record they could find dealing with WMD.

Everyone here has done research at one level or another using CRRC records dealing with WMD, which poses some difficulties. You know, absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence. If you can't find it in a document, it doesn't mean it didn't happen. It doesn't mean it didn't exist. The Iraqis were destroying a lot of things for a long time, and not only on WMD. That's only one example. That's not to say there are not phenomenal insights on that topic, but it's something to be aware of.

There are questions about how bias could be introduced in terms of the CRRC staff's selection of records that we pulled from the source database. There are a few things I think people should be aware of there. By far the greatest limiting factor, in terms of the types of records that we could pull dealt with translations. The Center has only been around for a couple of years, and we began by going after the low-hanging fruit, what are the easiest and most valuable records to make available. And invariably, they were the records that were already translated, meaning that one US government agency or another thought that these records were valuable enough to translate them, and to put the translation back into the common database from which we pulled.

So what this means is there's relatively abundant documents and translations on certain topics that were of interest to someone in one place or another within the US government, either the FBI as they were preparing or helping the Iraqis prepare war crime trials, the CIA and others as they were doing the Iraq Survey Group Report, Kevin and his team doing the studies that they worked on, or others. Some topics weren't of as high a value, or at least I'm not aware of studies based on like, Kurdish internal issues within Iraq. As a result of that, there aren't a lot of translations, and it becomes very expensive very quickly to make those records available with full translations.

So that's, in my view, by far the greatest limiting factor of moving certain types of documents into the researcher database. So just because you don't see a certain type of document very frequently in the database doesn't mean it's not in the larger source database. It could mean that it wasn't of interest to people within US government for studies enough to translate them. For that reason, it hasn't been prioritized yet.

In terms of the screening, I can only think of one audio file out of I think 230 or so that the CRRC has screened that didn't pass. And even that one, we didn't necessarily fail it. We kind of put it on hold while we sorted some things out. So, in terms of the audio files that we used, the rate of the documents passing is extremely high. Virtually none have failed. So, there's not a lot of selection effect going in there in terms of the CRRC.

Now we've talked a lot about the Iraqi records. This CRRC research database also has an al-Qaeda collection of al-Qaeda records, which it's been working hard to build. These are records captured largely in Afghanistan at al-Qaeda training camps, and not only al-Qaeda records, but al-Qaeda-affiliated movements. One limitation, especially for much of the CRRC's history, was that we were only allowed to add records from al-Qaeda that were captured prior to January 1st, 2003.

So that date restriction was lifted, but it was lifted after our staff had been largely decimated, so the date restriction now is, I think, January 1st, 2010, which adds a whole lot of new records that we could make available in terms of permissions. But right now, at the CRRC, there is one part-time person who is leaving shortly because funding basically went away, everyone was laid off, and then they brought new money in after they let everyone go. So the Center's future is very unstable right now. But there is great potential with those al-Qaeda records.

I'll add that there a couple of other restrictions in the type of records that the CRRC can make available. It doesn't make available records that contain scientific and technical information. I don't have the capacity to know a nuclear trigger device – design when I see it, and nor did the staff I worked with. So we didn't make those things available. One you started seeing the lengthy equations, it just wasn't happening, at least in the CRRC's early history. So we didn't focus on those to the great consternation of some of my colleagues and friends in the WMD community who really, really, wanted to see some of that stuff.

We don't make available suspected forgeries, for, I think, obvious reasons. I think the problem of forgeries in the captured records has been greatly exaggerated. It's a real problem, but it's been greatly exaggerated. And we can talk about that more in Q&A if people want. I was at the Center really from the very beginning. I was the first person

hired. I came over from the Institute for Defense Analyses. I literally showed up. I realized that there was the annual conference of the American Political Science Association a few days later. I took the chairs from my kitchen table, ordered a booth. We went and set it up and began our outreach to academics. So I mean, that's literally kind of how things started. Of course I did a lot of great work. But, you know – and I'm saying this to give you a sense that a lot of work went into it before it was created, but it was still an evolving being.

We tried to solicit expert advice in terms of – and we did solicit expert advice. We had a series of round tables with al-Qaeda experts asking them for help and which types of documents to target, which questions to prioritize. This involved civilian scholars, people within government and others. We did it a little more informally and ad hoc with the Iraqi records. If the Center is to survive much longer, I definitely recommend a more formalized procedure for outside input assistance and maybe even some oversight.

One of the questions we're asked to address was how much success we had using FOIA. I never FOIA'd an Iraqi record. I had access to them. Please do not FOIA CRRC records. There's one person who works them part-time, and she would be overwhelmed immediately if you began doing that. So, I don't think that's the appropriate approach to take right now. I've had great success FOIA'ing records from the American presidential libraries, looking at the American end of some of the interactions with the Iraqis. And you get some really interesting perspectives comparing the two. So I had a lot of fun with that.

Let's see, a couple of others questions: potential for new records becoming available. If the CRRC retains funding, if it gets new funding beyond September, I think it's very, very high. The CRRC currently has about 63,000 pages of records that it makes available. That includes the al-Qaeda and Iraqi records. But this is about 1 percent of what US forces captured in Iraq. It's probably much less than that, actually. So there's enormous potential to grow the collection. With al-Qaeda also, there's amazing potential. When US forces went in and killed Osama bin Laden, they stole a bunch of thumb drives, which is what very senior officials, in fact it was Tom Donilon, former National Security Advisor, who described the size of the collection. He said if you printed off these, the information on these thumb drives from floor to ceiling, they constitute a small library, an enormous amount of documents.

Some of these, of course, are important for tactical reasons, and people went through them for targeting data and things like that. Those will remain restricted obviously, and not put in the public sphere. Some of them are appropriately classified, but a large number of them aren't. And senior intelligence officials have said this on the record that

a large number of them are. They're important to understanding broader strategic issues, understanding theological motivations for al-Qaeda fighters, historical questions dealing with Afghanistan and elsewhere. They're of enormous importance, and this is an area where I think there is a lot of potential as well. Today only 17 records of those thousands and thousands have been made available.

I'll close with just a couple of comments. One is there was an article very recently in the "Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence," by a scholar named Marc Sageman. He's a former CIA Case Officer. TPV is the leading terrorism journal. He made a very interesting and, I think, powerful argument. And he says the field of terrorism research has been stagnant for over a decade. So the US government has put enormous amounts of money into this field, and we still can't answer the basic questions better than we could a decade ago, really basic questions like what motivates someone to become a terrorist.

He says, the problem is you have people in the intel community, you have great documents, and you don't have the time to address the bigger strategic issues or don't have the academic training and tools. And you have people in the academic and think-tank community who have the time and the inclination and the tools, but don't have the documents. He says the obvious solution here is, in one way or another, to facilitate access to documents, to enable people beyond the confines of rooms with no windows down in basements with security clearances to look at this stuff that should appropriately be unclassified. No one's talking about making classified documents available, but about making important historical records available.

Such is what I referred to before. There is some interest in this on the Hill. Representative [Devin] Nunes [R-CA22] from California, who's likely to become the new Director of the House Intel Community, has been applying a lot of pressure including, in a recent mark of legislation, requiring the Director of National Intelligence to very specifically say, what are you going to do to release these records that were captured in the raid on Osama bin Laden's compound? I want this within 120 days. How are you going to go about this, so on and so forth?

So there is pressure. I don't know what this will lead to, I don't know whether it will lead to new documents becoming made available. My personal view, and of course I'm extremely biased, is that the CRRC is the right place to do this. I think we've been [doing] it responsibly for several years. There have been no instances of classified documents making their way to researchers, or of researchers releasing PII in their studies. It's worked very well, the procedures have worked well. I think there's been a lot of bang for the buck for the government, dozens and dozens of journal articles and scores of books drawing on these captured records that produces value for the

government, and also enables a lot of scholarship that would otherwise not be possible. Thanks.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson:
Okay, Greg.

Gregory Koblentz:
I have a little bit of a different perspective since I'm a user, not a generator of these documents. And my focus has been on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and US intelligence on proliferation. I'll describe three projects that I've either worked on or am working on now, and then tell you a little bit about how I got the documents I used in those projects. So there will be some overlap with what you're heard already about the CRRC, but there's some new stuff as well.

From my book, *Living Weapons*, one of my case studies was looking at Iraq's biological warfare program, and looking at UNSCOM the UN Special Commission's efforts to uncover and destroy that program, and in addition to evaluating how good US intelligence was on the Iraqi program. So what I was able to do was through a combination of sources, get at US intelligence assessments of what did we think Iraq had in terms of biologic weapons from 1988 through 2003. And then, through a combination of different sources, what was the ground truth? What do we now know that Iraq had, and then I could see where's the gap and figure out, okay, why did we get it wrong, why did we get it right, and derive lessons from that.

On the US intel side, there were a couple of online sources that are easily accessible, the Digital National Security Archives, the Declassified Document Reference Service, and the CIA has an electronic reading room where you can get declassified intel documents, as long as you have an Internet connection, you can get access to it.

A slightly more hard to get at asset is something called CREST – the CIA Records Search Tool. This is a depository of declassified CIA documents that are only available at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, and they have their own dedicated computer terminal, their own printer. You go in there, you type in your search terms, and you can print out as much stuff as you want. It's completely free, but the one downside is you actually have to go to College Park and do it. So it's accessible but it's a little bit inconvenient and those documents tend to be at least 25 years old, so you're not going to get anything on Iraq and WMD in the 1990s, but you can get stuff from the 1970s and maybe even the early 1980s.

I also have been a very active user of FOIA, probably much the annoyance of people in the government. FOIA can be a great tool, but you have to use it very carefully. You really have to plan ahead, because when you send in FOIA requests to government, A, you have to send it to the right agency, so you have to figure out who owns this document. B, it helps if you actually know the title – as much as you know about the document as possible, title, author, ID number, whatever you have – to make it as easy as possible for the receiving agency to go actually find the document. If you go on fishing expeditions and say, I want everything on X, you're likely to get actually very little. You're going to get much more return on your investment if you actually target specific documents.

You also have to be very persistent. FOIA is a great system in theory, but in practice, is extremely slow and cumbersome and you can waste a lot of time on it. There will be payoffs, but, to get that payoff, you need to be very patient. I am still waiting for a FOIA request I submitted 10 years ago or more. So, you have to plan ahead, which doesn't always work out, but every now and then you get a payoff in the time frame when it's actually useable. You shouldn't expect, that if you're writing a research paper in a semester, you're not going to get a timely response. But if you are working on a PhD, a dissertation, you submit a request early on, you might get a response in time for it to be of use. So, it is something that requires some strategy for how you use it, but it can be very rewarding.

Interestingly enough, I've actually found the CIA to be one of the most responsive agencies. Most of the time they'll tell you, "We don't have it," or "We have it but you can't see it," but at least they give you an answer. The State Department will not respond to me for years. They won't even tell me they don't have it. So contrary to belief, some of the intelligence community agencies actually are fairly responsive, even if they're not the most revealing. But last year they actually sent me four documents in a moderate redacted form. I actually got documents that were useable in a timely way. So, again, if you do it right and you have a specific request, it can be a very useful tool.

Building up my picture of what US intelligence knew about Iraq's bioweapons [BW] program, you know, in the '80s and '90s and beyond. I was able to use some sources to kind of get at the ground truth and for that I looked at reports from the U.N. Special Commission, from UNSCOM's successor UNMOVIC, and then also from the Iraq Survey Group. Much of their work was based on primary documents that they got ahold of. Much wound up at CRRC. Others did not. But those are primary documents of their own, so these UN inspection teams were on the ground in Iraq making observations, taking notes, finding Iraqi documents, and these UN reports – some of them are extremely detailed. Right before UNMOVIC went out of business, they published a

compendium which is about 1,400 pages long that entails basically the entire history of Iraq's chemical, biological, and missile programs with lots and lots of details and much of it they will cite the Iraqi document that they got the details from. So great resource for kind of getting at, you know, what was Iraq actually doing in all these programs.

Another project I worked on was looking at Iraq's use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in the late 1980s. For that I relied heavily on the CRRC documents which were incredibly valuable. Again, you have to know what you're looking for. You can enter search terms but, the Iraqis don't take about chemical weapons, they talk about "special weapons." So you have to know what to look for in the documents and then when you get the documents, you need to put them in context. You need to understand who are the people writing the document, what is going on when they're writing it, so you have to be able to know what else is going on in Iraq at the time in order to understand the significance of the documents, but being able to look at a fairly narrow time window on this particular topic, I was basically able to build up a kind of chain of command of how and why Iraq decided to use chemical weapons against the Kurds in the 1980s. You can see the flow of papers from the military intelligence directorate to Saddam, Saddam approving stuff and then going back out to the military, telling them how to implement the attack, and then seeing the damage assessment reports coming back from military intelligence about how successful different chemical attacks were against the Kurds.

By putting together the documents, you develop a fairly, I think, good picture of what was the Iraqi thought process for how and why they decided to use these weapons in this way.

There's also a little-known source of documents that came out of the trial of Saddam Hussein and his cohort. There were actually a couple – there's one big book and there's a bunch of online stuff. That is the transcripts of the trial, including testimony for witnesses, Iraqi documents are entered into evidence that provide, again, another source of primary documents on Iraqi decision-making under Saddam.

I actually tried to get US intelligence documents on what we knew about use of chemical weapons against the Kurds and because I didn't have any good leads, I just did a fishing expedition and I just said, "Send me what you have on this topic." I've gotten very little, so it just proves my point that you have to be very determined in what you look for.

David mentioned that CRRC is not the most accessible archive because you have to get IRB approval. I actually didn't find that to be a big deal. IRB's the institutional review board. If you're doing medical experiments on people, it's very rigorous and a very tough process to go through, but there is an expedited approval process if you're doing

things that don't involve experimentation on humans and psychological testing or whatever. It was actually very easy for me to get it from a university, so don't let the IRB stuff be a deterrent. You will hear lots of horror stories about IRB that usually involves when you have to go and interview people directly or do research that it's a problem. If you're doing archival stuff, as long as you put in place certain precautions that you will not release private information, that you will protect the documents that you get – I personally at my institution did not have a problem getting IRB approval and in very short order. And my RA got IRB approval as well, so don't let that be a deterrent. It's actually not – it's unusual but it's not actually that hard to do.

For a third project that I'm kind of in the middle of now, I'm looking at the relationship between Iraq and UNSCOM because UNSCOM was in the process of trying to find Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. They started investigating how Iraq concealed their WMD program, and this got them very closely looking at Iraq's regime security apparatus – the Special Republican Guard, the Special Security Organization, some of their intelligence agencies – and so I got very interested in understanding that dynamic because from my perspective the Iraqis were actually more worried about UNSCOM finding out about their Regime Security Apparatus and how they protected Saddam. That is what led them to be so confrontational with UNSCOM in the late '90s. They weren't hiding WMD at that point, they were reacting to UNSCOM's very intrusive inspections. The documents didn't have a lot of direct evidence on that, in part because this topic is so sensitive they probably didn't write down a lot of this, and we know from interviews and debriefings that, for the most sensitive topics, Saddam would tell people don't write stuff down. Just this is an oral order that you have to carry out.

But there is one document I found which was, for my purposes, pretty much a smoking gun in this case where there's a very high-ranking official who wrote a very detailed memo about Iraqi's WMD program that was never meant for external eyes. Right? It was not designed to give to UNSCOM. It was from Hossam Amin, who was running the Iraqi National Monitoring Directorate. A letter he wrote to Hussein after the defection of Hussein Kamel. And it was basically a damage assessment memo, "Okay, here's what Hussein Kamel could have told the Americans and Mossad and UNSCOM about what we're hiding."

That documentation its own was important but then if you put that in the context – based on what we know about what Hussein Kamel did tell the inspectors, based on what we know that Iraq unilaterally then declared to UNSCOM shortly thereafter – it creates this mosaic, this picture that we get a much better understanding of what the Iraqis were hiding and kind of why they decided to give it up.

And what was also interesting about just looking at – reading these documents also was fascinating because this damage limitation memo – the first half is very technical and it's all about WMD. The second half of the memo is – because Hossam Amin briefed Hussein Kamel right before he defected. And so he had to worry that he might be viewed as a co-conspirator or he might be viewed as someone who was plotting with Hussein Kamel when he defected, so he spent the second half of this memo denouncing Hussein Kamel and then for good measure denouncing everyone else he could think of in order to basically save to save himself.

It was the very kind of Stalin-esque, denunciatory letter and really give you a flavor of what it's like to live in a totalitarian regime. Even though he was part of the inner circle of the regime, he clearly was scared for his life. Reading the actual document, just in that broader context was just fascinating.

A lot of the documents I've used for that project – especially the audio files – many of the audio files are not dated, and if there's a rough date: 1995. But if you know enough about what was going on with UNSCOM or with the world events at the time, you can usually narrow the timeframe down to within a week. And sometimes I can do it by the day because you know that so-and-so just briefed the Security Council. You know Rolf Akais – UNSCOM had just been in Baghdad and so you can actually narrow down the window much more considerably. Again, it takes having a broader background in that time period to be able to use the documents most effectively, I've found. That's not true with the speakers. Many of the speakers in the audio files aren't identified. A couple of the big names are. A lot of them are not. But again, you can tease out with some level of confidence who the other speakers were. It's not always ideal, but again if you can use some of the cues and clues embedded in what they're saying and how they're saying it and who they're talking to, you can get a little bit more out of the documents than just what is on the paper.

And so, an incredibly valuable resource and particularly the ability to triangulate between Iraqi documents, audio files, and then what we know from either US intelligence reports or the UNSCOM/UNMOVIC reporting lets you kind of triangulate and have some level of confirmation that what you're reading is fairly accurate or where you think that there are things with Iraqis. They're saying stuff and you have reason to believe that they are being misleading for one reason or another. So it helps to have multiple sources to check against and again that's part of the reason why I use a lot of the different sources to get US intelligence documents. In part you want to get as much as you can but in part you also find that even documents the US government releases will release a heavily redacted version one day and then six months later will send out a version that's lightly redacted to

another researcher and only if you have both copies can you actually put them together and get almost the entire document.

So having multiple sources for these things is really important. And just because you see the title of the document and say, "Oh, yes, I had that same document." Well, you have a different version of that document so it always helps to get multiple copies of these things.

I didn't really follow the timeline here or the question format, but if there are any other questions I didn't get to, I'm happy to discuss during the Q&A.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson:
Thank you. Michael?

Michael Eisenstadt:
Thank you. Let me just start off my comments by saying that first of all I'm a policy analyst working in a think-tank and not a historian at a university and that influences my perspective and approach to this topic which is first of all very much utilitarian. I'm very interested in not doing kind of academic historical research which tries to achieve the best possible reconstruction of events, but try to learn from history by using what's available in the open sources and, when possible, in archives to get a, for lack of better terms and I don't mean to sound glib, but good enough kind of understanding of what happened or what we used to say in government "good enough for government work" kind of approach.

If you want to rely only on archives and historical documents, then you are forced to restrict your research to a certain number of issues, such as related to Iraqi WMD and the like, and which there is a treasure trove of documents available or the internal workings of the Ba'ath regime and the like.

But as a policy analyst, I'm not able to restrict myself to just to those narrow areas. I write about Iran and their WMD programs and events in Syria and the like. So, as a result, I've had to become kind of creative in using publically available sources in order to do the historical research that I engage in. Actually, I found that if you cast your net very wide and are able to work in sometimes in several languages and if you can speak to people, you actually are able to do some quite useful research. Even if you don't have access to archives or there aren't archives available on the subject.

I'd like to just start my comments by also mentioning that in the areas that I look at – military insecurity affairs – there are really very few archives that are open and available

to researchers in the Middle East on this topic. These, in all the countries in the region, are considered, as they are here to a certain extent, considered to be state secrets. So the only time you get access to these kinds of archives is when there's a war, unfortunately. So, opportunities for doing archival research on military insecurity topics are really very rare and few and far between.

I'd like to just actually step back and look at kind of the work that has been done in the field in general before talking about my own research. There have, nonetheless, still been some very important pieces of research that have been done that have benefitted from our access to archives or captured documents in the past. And I want to mention first of all Hanna Batatu's *History of Iraq: The Old Social Classes & the Revolutionary Movements*. It's a very interesting story. He did field research in Iraq in the 1950s and was able to get access to police records of members of the Communist Party, which was a major focus of his research, and also to meet jailed members of the Communist Party in doing his research. This is very unique and as a result, his history of Iraq is, really a major achievement that is unique in – if you look at, histories on Middle Eastern countries, it's really unique because of its access to police files. So it is possible, but it's extremely rare.

Secondly, Avner Cohen's *History of Israel's Nuclear Weapons Program*, although it's really more a history of Israel's policy of opacity. If you look at his book, he says, at first he really didn't intend to write a book, but in the course of doing his research and looking at the Israeli State Archives, they have a 30-year rule in the foreign ministry there to declassify documents and he was actually finding a lot more stuff than he thought he would find about the evolution of Israel's policy of nuclear opacity. Then when he went to various other institutions in Israel and talked to people who made available their private document collections, people who had been previously important decision-makers, and then he did research here. Let's keep in mind opacity was a joint US-Israeli kind of policy, in a way. He was able to do a very important, kind of path-breaking piece of historical research on one of the most sensitive security issues of any country – Israel's nuclear program. So it is possible to do archival research and I'll just mention a few other examples. There are a number of very good studies done by Israeli scholars based on documents captured from Jordan in '67 about political parties active in the West Bank between, '48, '49, and '67. Avner Cohen's study is notable in this regard. Itamar Rabinovich did his study on the Ba'ath in Syria based in part on captured documents that were recovered by Israel when they took the Golan in '67.

I worked on the Gulf War Air Power Survey, and I'll talk about this a little bit more in a minute, which we were able to have access to documents that were captured as a result of Operation Desert Storm. There were also documents captured in '91 in northern Iraq

which were from the Iraqi Security Services which provided insights into how the Iraqi Security Services operated in the north as well. Finally you have the documents captured that the colleagues Kevin and David talked about after 2003 including al Qaeda-related records in the Sinjar cache related to foreign fighters and volunteers involved in the fight against the United States forces in Iraq.

So there are some notable and very important pieces of research that have been done but they are very narrow in focus and very often if you're focusing on military insecurity issues you're not willing to just focus on topics related to documents that are available. You have to be very creative and cast your net far and wide, and again I'll talk about that more in a minute.

The first example of that will be a paper I wrote with Joe Bermudez in the 1980s which actually is – it's about the only thing that I've written and never published. It's not a unit history; it's kind of a unit profile of Syria's defense companies which was a unit that was commanded by Rifaat al-Assad who is the brother of then President Hafez al-Assad. Joe had done some FOIAs of some US intelligence documents on the Syrian army, in which there were documents about the defense company so we're able to kind of buildup information about the order of battle – or the table of organization of the defense companies from that.

But also very important was literature published by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood opposition and there were a couple of books I picked up – actually, I think I picked them up in Egypt. That were published by Dar al Tassam [spelled phonetically] which I think is a Muslim Brotherhood related publishing company. I don't know if it exists anymore, I couldn't find it when I Googled it. This is one of them [holds up book]: *The Hama Massacre* and you can see, blood-drenched Hafez al-Assad.

There was another book which actually I leant out to somebody who's doing research which had actually very, very, fine-grained details about the operation around Hama in 1982. Which military units were involved and which units at the defense companies in particular were involved, who were the commanders, how many tanks and the like. And comparing that information to a lot of other information that appeared in open sources as well as the FOIAs documents, it matched up very well which kind of gave us confidence in the reliability of the published accounts at least with regard when it came to like an order of battle and kind of the accounts of the battle for Hama.

But also in writing this study, I also was able to rely on, again, very simple, open source kind of stuff. Al-Fursan which was a magazine that was published by this organization that Rifaat set up to kind of promote himself as an intellectual and in each issue they

always had profiles of soldiers from the defense companies and interviews with commanders and the like. So there was a lot of very useful information that I was able to derive from back issues of Al-Fursan about the unit and the like. As well as Syrian accounts of the '73 war because a unit from an element from the defense companies fought on the Golan.

Even Israeli accounts. There was a really great Israeli article about speaking to Israeli interrogators. This was in the Israeli weekly popular military magazine "Bamahane" and it was about the experience of the interrogators dealing with Syrians who were captured. And one of the things they noted had to do with interactions, social interactions and the social hierarchy among the Syrian POWs and one thing they noted was the guys from this unit were always, even junior officers, were accorded greater respect than even the most senior ranking officers from the regular formation.

So finally I found an especially useful series of interviews with retired French intelligence officials who had left the service in the mid-'80s and were very upset, I believe, with French policy towards Syria and Lebanon at the time. You have to realize, guys from the defense companies were involved in an attempted kidnapping of the French ambassador in Lebanon which was bungled and it ended up in his murder as well as attacks on other incidents involving the French. So these guys in open interviews in the media spilled the beans about the involvement of this unit.

So anyhow, bottom line is I was able to put together I think a pretty good profile just based on open sources on a very sensitive topic but by casting the web far and wide because these guys had made a lot of enemies and a lot of these enemies were talking.

The second thing that I had been involved in that I wanted to talk about was the Gulf War Air Power Survey which was put together by the Secretary of the Air Force after the '91 Gulf War in order to determine the role of air power in the American victory. I wrote a chapter in the Gulf War Air Power Survey volume on the bond devoted to pre-war planning which had to do with Iraqi planning for the war. So I was looking at the other side of the hill, so to speak – looking at Iraqi planning.

Now, a lot of the captured documents, though, from the war really weren't applicable to my chapter because they were tactical. They were, documents captured from units and as a result they were very useful to the guys writing the chapters about the effects of air power because there were diaries that they captured which kind of shed light on the morale effect of the American bombing, but for what I was writing it wasn't really that useful.

What was very useful was a report that was done by the Army based on the debriefing of 12 Iraqi generals who had been captured during the war. I'm not sure the title of this document is public domain. I'm not sure if it was ever declassified. But it's basically an Iraqi general officers' perspective on the war was under the title. It was published March 11th, '91 so it was done only just very shortly after the war ended. It was kind of a rush job. It's not really a proper historical document, but it provided invaluable insight into the assumptions that I at least have seen in military officers regarding the war and what it would entail, and that was a very valuable for what I was doing in the Gulf War Air Power Survey study.

Basically a lot of what I did for that study, which was again because I had access to the captured documents but it wasn't very useful for what I was doing, based on open sources. One of the things that I think has become clear as a result of what the CRRC and Kevin and David have done is that basically the Iraqi version of events that we get from published sources matches very closely with the view of reality. We get more resolution and more detail from the classified stuff that's now available or the formerly classified Iraqi documents that are available. But basically the general picture we got from the open sources based on Saddam's speeches and the like that was carried by the Iraqi media enabled you to get kind of an 80 percent solution back in '91, I think. I think it's fair to say. And please tell me if you disagree. I'd be interested to hear during the discussion.

The final thing I just wanted to talk about was actually a paper that I did at my day job at the think-tank a couple of months ago, and actually this is the most recent thing that I published titled "What Iran's Chemical Past Tells Us about Its Nuclear Future." What I tried to do is look at Iran's experience with chemical weapons in the '80s and see if it could provide any insights into their approach to their nuclear program today. With the assumption that a lot of these same decision-makers in key positions today had key positions in the '80s, perhaps in some ways their approach might or may not be informed by their past experiences in the '80s.

One of the things I found is at even 30 years later now, looking at this issue about Iran's chemical weapons program during the Iran-Iraq War and the issue of whether Iran did or didn't use chemical weapons is how much we still don't know on this particular topic. And part of the problem is that Iran has joined the Chemical Weapons Convention. They joined in, I think, '97 or '98 and they did provide a declaration but by OPCW rules – Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons which is the international organization which kind of oversees the destruction of chemical weapons in member states around the world – they have a confidentiality rule. So basically Iran's declaration – we don't have access to it. Maybe someday the archives of the international

organizations like OPCW will be available to researchers, but a major potential useful source of information is not available to researchers at this point because of the way they operate and actually for good reason that they had the confidentiality rule.

But one thing that I did use from the CRRC in this document was an Iraqi intelligence report which was internal – and let me just say, there's still a debate about whether Iran did use chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War in response to Iraq's use. Part of the problem was if they did have a capability by the end of the war, it came very late in the war, it may have been too late for them to use or they may have used very small quantities. If they did use it, it was in very small quantities. And there is a small number of documents – Iraqi intelligence documents – reporting on or that claim to report Iranian use of CW which are actually very important data points. I won't say they're conclusive and this is one, this that's important, when dealing with documents.

While documents have the appeal of being something very tangible and black and white that you can hold in your hand, it's just one more data point. Rarely should you consider documents as conclusive, for reasons I'll discuss in a moment in closing comments. But it provides a very important data point that an internal Iraqi document which was meant for internal use makes a claim that Iran used a CW. Maybe they did or maybe it was a contrived document that was put together by Iraqi officers in order to hide the fact that their own chemical weapons had blown back on their troops and therefore they're blaming it on the Iranians. That's one thing you have to consider as a possibility.

You're entering a wilderness of mirrors here and when you're dealing with captured documents, you rarely have access to the people who were responsible for producing the documents or who were present in the situations that the documents described to compare the information. And that's one of the problems.

Let me conclude my comments, just about archives. Again, doing research on military insecurity-related topics, you're very limited to archives on a very few, narrow topics. If you have the luck to have access to them and to be able to use them, it's very important. But it doesn't necessarily preclude useful work if you have an approach of casting a wide net and the like.

I would argue that actually today there are, more than ever before, sources that we didn't have in the past that are extremely useful in this regard. First of all, you have commercial satellite imagery which is potentially very, very useful for this kind of stuff. You have social media, YouTube. We don't have pictures of Egyptian chemical attacks in Yemen in the '60s or even Iraqi chemical weapon attacks during the Iran-Iraq War. We do have them at least for the alleged chlorine attacks, you actually have pictures of the chlorine

gas, of people fleeing from – you can see in the video the chlorine gas. Now, there are all kinds of problems with these videos in terms of provenance and the like and whether date stamps can be altered and the like, but we have things that we didn't have in the past.

And then there's also the imaginative use of traditional sources such as obituaries which have been used for decades and which are being used by people who look at the jihadists and where they're from and their motivation to get very useful tidbits about who's volunteering to fight.

So let me conclude with a final few comments just based on my government service as an Army Reservist. When I served on active duty, I always looked at things from the point of view of a potential researcher of how we operated and how it could affect research in the future and I'll just say a few things.

First of all, PowerPoint. Actually, I'm not one of those who are viscerally anti-PowerPoint, but if you go onto any hard drive on the government and you're looking for a certain briefing, there are probably 50 versions of any given briefing with different dates. Now, which one was the one that was briefed to the Commander of CENTCOM on a certain date because there's several of them from that day that were probably changed at the last minute and we don't know – unless you have the e-mail sending it to him prior to the brief or you know from – you talk to somebody and they could tell you which brief, it's not clear which briefing was used and I know this is actually in GWACs. This is one of the problems we had.

Secondly, track change provides you with the ability, if they will release it in FOIA, not just the final document but the track changes leading up to it, you could create a forensic reconstruction of who weighed in when and you could actually get destruct how a document or how, an official document or a policy statement came about. Again, I'm not sure the FOIA rules. I don't know. Has anybody FOIA'ed in the track change the prior, documents as well? So that offers possibilities we didn't have in the past. Also, let me just say documents marked "draft" are not necessarily that and that people play all kinds of games in bureaucracies in order to deal with bureaucratic rivals and the like or knowing that things are going to be FOIA'ed. So, keep in mind that things are not necessarily what they are in the face value when you get a document, even if it gets released.

Finally, the technology we have today allows for the instantaneous destruction and elimination of massive amount of data. Units redeploying from the field often would clear out their hard drives when getting back to the States because they need to use the hard drives because they don't have the budget to buy more hard drives. You can save the

hard drive but then there's no place to send it to and people don't want to hold onto it. It's classified in many cases, so they erase the hard drive, so a lot of stuff gets lost and I know after Vietnam we had a problem with paper archives being destroyed because they didn't have space to save a lot of stuff. Without going into details, I know this has happened more recently with other stuff related to more recent engagements in that simply they don't have the place to store the stuff so the stuff gets shredded and important documents get lost. There will be gaps in our ability to do historical research as a result.

I'll conclude on that and I look forward to the discussion after.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson:
Thank you all.

[applause]

Let me say just a couple of words and then I'll open it up to the floor. I've just come from a meeting of the Department of State's Historical Advisory Panel which I sit on and one of the things we talked about is a new Freedom of Information Act Review Group that has been established by the government. It has a two-year term to take a look at the US Freedom of Information Act. Ten people have been appointed by the archivist of the United States, ten public members. Ten people have been appointed by the President and those who told our government members. Lee White, who is the National History Coordinator whose office is at the American Historical Association, is one of those people who has been appointed as is, I believe, the Council at the National Security Archive. The private group.

They are collecting complaints, suggestions, and so forth from everybody on your experiences with FOIA and how to make it work better. I saw Lee yesterday, and [he said] that most of the comments are coming in and saying "It's a mess. It doesn't work. It's terrible." That's not helpful, folks. You need specific kinds of examples, but this is a real opportunity. Whether it will lead to regulatory or legislative changes is unknown at this point, but it is being established right now and you do have a real opportunity to weigh in on what you think of FOIA.

As far as draft, let me say another little piece. The National Security Archive, the private group, filed a Freedom of Information Act request for the fifth volume of the study of the US invasion of Cuba in the Bay of Pigs and why it failed. This has never been published. It exists in draft. Now, it's one of those final drafts that Michael's talking about, but it is technically draft. It was never published.

The National Security Archive lost at the initial court level, district court level. They appealed and within the past couple of weeks, the Court of Appeals has ruled against them saying a draft is a draft is a draft. It is pre-decisional and the government does not have to release it.

There are two possible routes for further appeal. Obviously I have no idea what the National Security Archive plans to do with this. The Justice Department's current advice is that a draft is not a reason to deny a Freedom of Information Act request, but the court of appeals says at least for this circuit it is, and that's a real problem. Tom Blanton, who runs the National Security Archive [at George Washington University], was quoted in the New York Times as saying, "This decision would close half of the National Archives," and it really would. So we have to worry that this 2:1 decision, it was not a unanimous decision, it was a 2:1 decision in the Court of Appeals goes on.

Finally, I'd make a comment – this is a personal plug – on probative value and I think all four speakers have emphasized that you've got to know something about a document in order to really analyze it, particularly when they come out of very stressful kinds of situations. [Available] for free on the Swiss Peace website is something I published this year on the probative value of archival documents. I'm not a lawyer. It does not give a legal analysis of a document but it gives you some common sense things to think about when you try to use one of these documents from an unknown source.

Okay. What I'd like to do right now, then, is to ask these four people if they have any responses, anything they that thought about while someone else was talking. I'll go right down the row and then we'll open it up. David, anything you want to add or comment on?

David Palkki:
Sure, one or two things I'll add really briefly. The first thing is you may have noticed we've all made use, in one way or another, of the CRRC records. There are other collections of captured Iraqi records as well. Sometimes they get conflated and they shouldn't. There are differences. There's a massive collection of Ba'ath Party records at the Hoover Institution at Stanford. There's a sizeable collection of Kurdish records that the Kurds captured during the uprising in the '90s, and those are available at University of Colorado at Boulder. Each of the three collections is largely unique. They each have different protocols for accessing the records and that type of thing. My comments, and I think all of our comments, have been limited to the CRRC records.

I'll totally agree with Greg. The IRB approvals usually aren't a big deal. A lot of historians complain to me. They go jump through some hoops and a few hours of work on their end and then a waiting period of a couple weeks and they get it from their university. So I don't think anyone's been denied an IRB from their university. I don't think that's ever been a problem.

Also, I said the CRRC records may be the hardest to get access to. I'll add once there, they're all searchable electronically. It's like doing a Lexus Nexus search. If you've done research at any American Presidential Library, this is infinitely better.

[laughter]

It's so easy with quite robust retrieval protocols, so I didn't mean to speak too poorly of my old workplace [laughs].

Finally, one other comment that occurs to me that I meant to mention in my comments is one problem I think with the lack of records from Middle Eastern archives and from elsewhere in the world, dealing with national security records means that you often get a very American-centric analysis on a whole slew of issues. I have one colleague – she's Pakistani and is writing a book on Pakistan's nuclear program – all of her documents are from American Presidential Libraries. She [was] furious about this, but that obviously flavors in some ways the type of data that she has and I see this repeated with Iraq as you look at the historiography. The US is always at the center of the story.

And I don't think it's because we always really are. Certainly not from Saddam's perspective, especially going back in time in the '80s and elsewhere. But this is a common mistake that researchers make because the documents are American or US records that have been made available so their stories get this very heavy American flavor where it probably shouldn't be. Hopefully as more records become available from other countries you'll see less and less of this.

Trudy Haskamp Peterson:
I think also – just to break in here. I think it will be impossible to write the history of the late part of the 20th century without using UN records. The UN Archives in New York, like all archives, is starved for money but if you go online and you look at the list of records they have on topics ranging from nuclear material, lots of nuclear material, law of the sea, a lot of early environmental stuff. You're just not going to be able to write these histories without using UN records and records of agencies like the High Commissioner for Refugees, where I used to work, which has extraordinary records about refugee

situations as a result of conflict and because of that also [contains] reporting about the conflict.

They are spending huge amounts of money now in the High Commissioner for Refugees. They're planning to harvest all their records out of the camps for Syrians. It will be a mass[ive] quantity. I was there when we brought in all the records out of Yugoslavia, Kosovo, and Rwanda. These are just extraordinary. You shouldn't miss them if you're interested.

Gregory D. Koblentz:
The only thing I would add and David kind of stole my thunder because I was going to make the point about the dominance and the relative availability of US records and our political culture and think-tank culture that surrounds Washington. We do tend to frame things. We – I mean, I think the academic community tends to frame things from an American perspective and while in some cases that might be the appropriate way to frame it if you're looking at it from an American policy analysis perspective, if you're looking at lessons for temporary American policy-makers. They think that the problem is just where they live. That is not the way, in the case of my research on Saddam, he was framing the problem.

So it does lead a very skewed view of history and I think these records have at least the potential not to resettle it because you will never have access to the kind of material you could have access to in the US in this way, but at least there will be something else on the table. I would add to that, and I agree with Michael, that I think – I can't remember who said it now, but there's a famous quote. "Nothing lies like a document." Right? It is what it is and you have to think about all the different perspectives on the document, and so most of this kind of research requires a significant amount of additional research into other available sources. Really a significant amount of historical research to try to frame this as broadly as you can before you dive into and start measuring the document.

I would back that up [by saying] what we've been trying to do over the last few years is really go back and do interviews with principals – Iraqis who were there, Iraqi core commanders who receive the orders – so we can try to understand the context in which the orders were understood in their time, in the context of that campaign, which in many cases has changed the way you think about the documents. So, actually, it's the same document, nothing changed, but now I have the human connection of "Well, those kinds of orders didn't mean anything to me because I operated off this premise. And those were documented for another reason." And it really does help change things so you've got to be very careful about how you're using the term.

Michael Eisenstadt:
Another point I wanted to make about the PowerPoint is that actually it's more important than just the plethora of drafts on the hard drive. It's actually more important is that most PowerPoint briefings are very telegraphic and it's really cryptic. Whereas in the past you would have had a memo, a decision memo, where everything is spelled out in prose, here very often things are just bullet points with just very cryptic comments and unless you knew the context or you could go back to talk to the person who was involved in the production of that document and knew what the document's referring to it's really very frustrating.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson:
Okay.

Male Speaker:
Yes. Thank you. [unintelligible] at Georgetown University. Thank you, I'm glad you're looking into archives and documents about weapons of mass destruction and Iraq. Michael, you mentioned the Office for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Hague. That's an important source and you mentioned the confidentiality rule but maybe you can also talk to the form at hand of the organization who was removed before the War in Iraq, an interesting story, I believe.

But my question is this, really. I can't imagine [with] the work you're doing now you're going to do without a hypothesis. A theory, if you want to. And here's my question – George Tenet has written an important book about the time of difficult decisions on difficult assumptions. His theory is, you will know this, the groupthink theory. We couldn't imagine that someone who didn't have nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destructions acted as if he had. Can you tell us a little more about your assumptions or your hypotheses with which you're doing this research? Because you have to have one otherwise you wouldn't know where to go, right? So can you comment on that, please? Thank you. And then take Tenet's point, please, if you don't mind.

Michael Eisenstadt:
Sure. This relates directly to one of the projects I mentioned. Right, so the assumption being that Iraq was obstructing UNSCOM inspectors in the '90s because they're hiding WMD, and the inspectors were getting too close to materials or stocks or documents and so Iraq was delaying, denying, obstructing, and what have you. But if you go back and you look at what happened in '95 when Hussein Kamel defected, that really was a turning point and because of this memo that I got out of the CRRC, the memo was all the things that the traitor Hussein Kamel knew about but we hadn't told the UN yet and within a week, the Iraqis had told the UN basically everything on that list. They basically said

"Here's all the stuff we've been hiding from you." So at that point, that is pretty strong evidence that the Iraqis weren't actually hiding any significant WMD-related programs materials after August 1995.

And yet Iraq keeps obstructing UNSCOM. That's where the hypothesis comes in because at the point at which I said, "Well, maybe this isn't about WMD. Maybe this is about the places that UNSCOM inspected." So there's a theory I put forward called "regime security" that authoritarian regimes are making decisions about WMD in terms of acquisition and use, disarmament in the context of how does this protect the regime from internal challenges? And when you look at Iraq's behavior in that context, it makes a lot more sense because UNSCOM's trying to get into the most sensitive parts of the Iraqi regime security apparatus. The Iraqi equivalent of FBI, CIA, DHS, the Secret Service.

When you think about it in that context, for Iraq to stonewall these inspectors this way makes a lot of sense because the inspectors are trying to get into the exact same organizations that used to conceal WMD but now their job was strictly guarding Saddam and the fear that these inspectors who, they wore a blue helmet but they're Americans, they're British, right? Who's to say they're not telling the CIA, "Here's the coordinates of the barracks of, you know, Saddam's bodyguards." Or "here's the exactly GPS coordinates of Saddam's guest house where he stays, you know, we think he stays." The Iraqis were paranoid, Saddam was paranoid – but he had good reason to be paranoid. So when you start looking at what was going through Saddam's mind from his perspective, his attitude towards UNSCOM makes a lot more sense because from our perspectives, well, if they don't have WMD why don't they just open up everything and prove it?

Well, because their ultimate objective is not to prove they don't have WMD. Their ultimate objective is to keep Saddam Hussein in power and they couldn't have both things at once. That's the tension that inevitably led to the collapse of UNSCOM and the lingering belief after '98 that they still had WMD and led to ultimately the invasion in '03. There was evidence from audio files of Saddam saying that, UNSCOM inspectors were dangerous because the Americans have cruise missiles that can target me if inspectors give them my whereabouts. Right? I haven't found a smoking gun where he says, "Therefore we will deny them access to A or Z" but if you look at, again, if you look at where UNSCOM tried to go, where they got obstructed, it was all revolved around these regime security units that were vital to keeping Saddam in power.

I have an article that David has seen and I think some other folks here have seen, that hopefully will see the light of day soon where I lay this out more. But anyway, it's a different set of hypotheses and theories about what's driving Saddam's calculations and

it's not the Western national security mindset that we mirror imaged him on. He had a totally different set of calculations about what are his priorities and that was what was driving his behavior in the '90s and up through '03.

David Palkki:
Sure. The focus of my research has been more on Iraqi decision-making and perspectives than US. But I'm not sure that Tenet's exactly right. I've seen a document – I wish I had it on me now, it's from 1998, I believe – where senior US officials are talking about various reasons why the regime might be behaving the way it is. They entertain the possibility, does he not have WMD, could it be for another reason? It's entertained. So it's not exactly for lack, and Madeline Albright, as I recall, was in the meeting, and others were as well.

So historically, I'm not sure that's entirely the case. Theoretically, I have some concerns about that argument as well, when you go back and you look at the theoretical literature on groupthink, it's not at all what people have used to describe the 2003 war. It's different things. They used the word "groupthink," but they're not talking about it the way that the psychologists who first wrote about groupthink described it and defined it. So there are some issues there as well.

In terms of how I go about addressing alternative hypotheses, gosh, I'm a kid in a candy store. You have all these unresolved questions and all these conventional wisdoms backed up by shoddy evidence. It's phenomenal. Personally, I think a lot of the conventional wisdoms are awful, the idea that we were buddy-buddy with Saddam, and this led him to think he could get away with invading Kuwait. I've written on this, I have a draft article on the April Glaspie meeting, and that was a blip on Saddam's radar, barely a blip. It had no influence on his decision to invade Kuwait.

You look at some of these unresolved strategic questions from the 1990s, how effective were the airstrikes in effecting Saddam's decision-making? How about the economic sanctions? You go back and you look at the secondary literature, and people have argued about these issues, all kinds of issues like this. And you just find the debates and bring evidence to the floor and it's very fun. Other people have largely come up with hypotheses already on the question of strategic ambiguity – of whether Saddam was trying to bluff.

I think there are a variety of various alternative explanations and Greg's written on this – I've written on it, too, a book chapter where I touched on this, hopefully Kevin's written on it, a bunch of people have, and there are various ideas out there. So, there's no

shortage of hypotheses to explore with. But the cool thing is the data that we can bring to the table.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson:
[affirmative]

Gregory D. Koblentz:
If I could just say two things, there are some things when I researched – and I'm going with my own informal kind of hypotheses that I want to prove or disprove. There are some things that go in with a blank slate, as best as I can as a human being.

I want to research an issue, but without having any kind of – so you don't have to go in with a hypothesis. You have to go in with maybe a research agenda in terms of you want to answer certain questions. But you don't necessarily have to have a hypothesis in terms of what you're trying to prove or disprove.

Now, on the WMD thing, let me just say, as best I can recall – and let me just say human memory is very fallible – but from what I recall where I was at the time, I actually thought it was possible that Saddam had functionally disarmed because of fear of getting caught, but had retained a startup capability. And in the lead up to the war, I thought that, with war clouds gathering on the horizon, he almost certainly, if not would certainly, resume production of CW because of the role that CW played in the Iran-Iraq War, and that we knew already. They felt it was their kind of strategic trump card against Iran that they would want to ramp up production.

So I thought almost certainly in the run-up to 2003, maybe he had at one point functionally disarmed, but he would be ramping up again, because we know that, according to the UNSCOM reports, and UNMOVIC reports, they had a residual production capability, very limited, but that they would try to ramp up. That turned out to be wrong, in part, I think, because I don't think he expected us to go to Baghdad.

He looked at – and you guys tell me based on your own research on this, because I actually haven't systematically, compared with the work you've done on this – but we were basically planning to invade with four division equivalents. From his point of view, we really wanted his oil, and oil is in the north and the south. It's not in Baghdad. Why would we want to take control of a country with, you know, 24/25 million unruly Iraqis that he had trouble keeping lids on?

So from his point of view, we had limited goals, and Ahmed Chalabi's idea was, with General Downing's plan, take over the south, and use the oil income to fund an

insurgency against the regime. So from his point of view, there was no need for CW to deal with a limited threat like that. So there was no need to ramp up. Again, I don't know if you guys have found in your research, any evidence to prove or disprove that –

Kevin M. Woods:
Not on the CW question, but on his belief as late as the 27th of March, 2003, that he would remain in leadership of Iraq. That's almost 10 days into the campaign. He had no conception, and senior meetings, 27 March, we went into the country on 20 March, that he would be out of power, or that the US was intending to come all the way to Baghdad –

Gregory D. Koblentz:
I think that was the big mistake was we were planning to invade with four divisions. He had 26 divisions or so in his army. He barely could hang on to the country, and parts of the country had already, in the north, ceded control to the Kurds. The south was [the location of] ongoing counterinsurgency operations. So four divisions obviously were not going to Baghdad. We're just going to bide off the oil and that's why we really want, but only after the fact did.

Kevin M. Woods:
The other advantage, just so we have some historical markers – and we've been so wrong on so many things related to Iraq. I say we, the international community and more specifically the US, have been really wrong on a lot of things on Iraq. There's a lot of complicated reasons why, but it makes for an interesting way to do the research because I have a start point. He did not have a WMD in 2003.

We proved it to ourselves in 2004. The research was done, they scoured the country, UNSCOM's reports were validated in a broad sense [about] the things they've been reporting on that period. So knowing that from the Iraqi documentation perspective, I think Greg's hypothesis is dead on. So what were they concerned about, that we were reading as WMD hiding capabilities? It's certainly after ‘94, ‘95. What were they doing, why?

So that gives you a start point to go in and think about what the Saddam tapes are talking about, how they're framing the argument. That's where we're coming up with what their view of the world on these very specific points because we have a start point.

Another one I brought up in an earlier piece of research is why, given the run-up to the start of the ‘91 ground campaign, did Saddam not make – because there were several initiatives from the January 15th deadline that was put out by the coalition, Bush's

deadline, to the start of the ground campaign on the 4th of February, 1991 – there were several issues where he could have made certain declarations. The French were involved, and King Assad was involved, and the Russians were involved and offered different things.

It comes down to a matter of timing. Saddam had decided that he was going to have to pull out of Kuwait. He wanted to do it on his terms for all kinds of political reasons and everything else. But he had put in place military orders that if the US initiated the invasion and you did not hear from Baghdad, you were to light off all the oil wells. The US had made assumptions that's what Iraq would do, they would destroy Kuwait before they'd give it up. And so part of the US presumption was we weren't going to let that happen. So when the phone call came to President Bush, and President Bush is on the phone with Gorbachev and said we can't accept any agreement with Iraqis right now because they've already started to destroy Kuwait.

Well, Saddam didn't give the order to destroy Kuwait at that particular point. It was a contingency order. The soldiers in the field interpreting the events as soldiers will in the field, said, "It's starting. It's time to light the oil wells off." And so, this issue about what Saddam was thinking and when he was thinking, you don't have Saddam here to interview, and if he was even going to be honest in his interviews. But you do have these interesting moments in time that you can prepare to fix points.

We know when the invasion started. We still don't know why Saddam didn't set these other views, but now we have some evidence about how Saddam was framing the argument, and what he was trying to accomplish. These black swan events, these things you can't control in the chaos of events step in and drive things in a different direction. So, I don't know if it directly answered your question about theory, but I don't start with the theory. I have an amazing list of things that we still don't know why they occurred and try to use the Iraqi evidence to help me say, what is the alternative hypothesis, because obviously we were wrong. I have one major data point, and we were obviously wrong on that point.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson:
Okay, another question? Yes, here's one.

Male Speaker:
The other claim that was made by the US government was that Saddam tried to have Bush, Sr., killed, I think it was in the mid-1990s, assassination attempt. Has anything been found [in] the CRRC records, anything at all or has there even been a search for –?

Kevin M. Woods:
I personally looked extensively for Iraqi evidence on that and found none. Again, it's the same problem, there's a category of records that you just – you can't know what you don't know. Records were destroyed. When I was in Bagdad, I went to various record depositories of the various ministries, a lot of them [were] firebombed. So there's huge sections of records that aren't there. Whether or not that [assassination attempt] occurred, the only evidence I've ever seen is the evidence that came out of the Kuwaiti trial of the accused.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson:
Okay. Other questions? I don't know whether you are able to answer this in public, Kevin, but what has happened to the paper records that were scanned to create the background database from which CRRC draws?

Kevin M. Woods:
As to my understanding, those records are still in the possession of the US government and the determination of returning them to Iraq is a matter of diplomatic negotiations as all captured records have been since World War I essentially. There have been negotiations between the US and Iraq, and I don't know if there's anything new on that question, typical diplomatic negotiations, how that unfolds, but –

Male Speaker:
Can I ask a follow on, on that? I mean, do you know if, to what degree have humanitarian considerations played a role in terms of fear of retribution against, perhaps named individuals in the document who are, kind of former, mid-level people who might still be living on Iraq today and –?

Kevin M. Woods:
In my personal opinion, the overwhelming concern is the humanitarian concern. Captured records have a strange life in international law and history to practice. Since then it's kind of a gray area. It depends on who's making the case, and it depends on from what perspective, whether it's a sovereignty perspective, a humanitarian perspective or archival perspective.

But the actual paper documents themselves, as far as I know, are still in that diplomatic limbo. And I think, at least, in talking to government officials that I've talked to, that the biggest concern is the instability in Iraq, the sectarian nature of some of the issues that are still going on in Iraq – that these records unfettered could cause more problems than they can solve, especially lacking any truth and reconciliation venues that other countries have attempted to do with these kind of things. But those venues tend to take place in slightly

more stable environments for obvious reasons, and Trudy has written on it and a scholar out in Colorado, Bruce Montgomery has written on it. There's some scholarship on how to think about those records in terms of fractured states or former totalitarian states, and there are a lot of serious challenges to it. So I'm not sure it's going to be resolved in the near-term, let's put it that way.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson:
[affirmative], yes.

Female Speaker:
I'm sorry, I came in late and so he may have addressed it, or maybe not, but given Halabja [chemical attack] and given Iran, what happened to the WMD? Did possibly they end up in Syria?

Kevin M. Woods:
I believe that, all my reading of it, it is generally what the UNSCOM and UNMOVIC conclusions and the CIA's led ISG [Iraq Study Group] report said. By the early '90s, it was gone. It had been destroyed. It had been destroyed by the Iraqis, or it was destroyed by UNSCOM.

Gregory D. Koblentz:
But, I mean, the turning point was the defection of Hussein Kamel in 1995, because he had been involved with Iraq's WMD programs for about 10 years by that point. He went and talked to [unintelligible], who was the former head of the nuclear program, he talked to Hossam Amin, who was head of the National Monitoring Directorate, and basically got updates from them, okay, what are we hiding from the UN in terms of missiles, chemical, biological, nuclear? And a week later, he defects. He goes to Jordan, and the US and the Brits go and talk to him, UNSCOM, IAEA go talk to him. And he said, "Here's the stuff that Iraq is hiding," and Iraq at the same time called in Rolf Ekéus and the head of the IAEA said, okay, here's a new declaration. Basically, here's all the stuff that Hussein Kamel was hiding from all of us. This is the famous chicken farm, where they took the inspectors to a chicken farm, and said, "Oh, look. Here are the 500 crates of documents and materials that we didn't know were here." That basically was the turning point, and at that point, Iraq basically gave up everything they had been holding onto, because they had seen Kamel blow their concealment mechanism. They had no way to credibly conceal their materials anymore. Little bits and pieces pop up over the next couple of years, but, nothing of any significance, and –

Kevin M. Woods:
And even at that point, there wasn't much on significance.

Gregory D. Koblentz:
Well, they turned over tons of maraging steel for centrifuges. They turned over lots of documentation. There were no chemical materials, there were no biological agents, but there was some nuclear-related material they were turning over. But that was really the end of their concealment, and there were just little bits and pieces afterwards. They were not able to openly discuss the role of the regime security in concealing that material up until that point, and UNSCOM's unending desire to get inside those units and see for themselves that really led to this history of confrontation between UNSCOM and Iraq from '95, '96, up through '98. So, by the time we got there in '03 there was nothing. Iraq, UNSCOM destroyed a bunch of it, and Iraqis destroyed the rest of it on their own.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson:
Okay. Other questions? No? Well, join me in thanking the panelists and have a good afternoon.

[applause]

[end of transcript]

Panelists

Trudy Huskamp Peterson is an archival consultant and certified archivist. She holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Iowa. She spent twenty-four years with the U.S. National Archives, including more than two years as Acting Archivist of the United States, and is now an archival consultant specializing in archives related to justice and human rights issues.

David Palkki is a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He also is coeditor of *The Saddam Tapes: The Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*. Mr. Palkki previously worked for the Institute for Defense Analyses, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the House Ways and Means trade subcommittee.

Gregory D. Koblentz is an Associate Professor in the Department of Public and International Affairs and Deputy Director of the Biodefense Graduate Program at George Mason University. He is currently working on a project that examines the impact of regime security on the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction by authoritarian governments, including Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Bashar al-Assad's Syria. Dr. Koblentz is the author of *Living Weapons: Biological Warfare and International Security* (Cornell University Press, 2009).

Michael Eisenstadt is a senior fellow, and director of the Military and Security Studies Program at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. A specialist in Persian Gulf and Arab-Israeli security affairs, he has published widely on irregular and conventional warfare and nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East. His most recent publication is *Not by Sanctions Alone: Using Military and Other Means to Bolster Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran* (The Washington Institute, 2013).

Kevin M. Woods is a historian and defense analyst with the Institute for Defense Analyses. Over the past decade he worked extensively in and published on the Saddam Hussein era records captured in Iraq. His most recent work, co-authored with Williamson Murray, is *The Iran-Iraq War: A Military and Strategic History* (Cambridge University Press - August 2014).