



CNN LARRY KING LIVE

Analysis of Colin Powell's Speech Before the U.N.

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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

COLIN POWELL, SECRETARY OF STATE: Saddam Hussein has chemical weapons. Saddam Hussein is determined to get his hands on a nuclear bomb.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LARRY KING, HOST: Today, high drama at the U.N. as Secretary of State Colin Powell made the case against Iraq. Did he make the case for war? tonight we'll ask National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, making a rare, live, prime time television appearance.

Also joining us from the House of Representatives, Republican Chris Shays, chairman of the Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security. And Democrat Jane Harman, a member of the Select Intelligence Committee and ranking member of the Terrorism and Homeland Security Subcommittee.

And then, legendary journalist Bob Woodward. He broke the story of U.S. intelligence about Iraqi deceptions a week ago. and his best- seller, "Bush at War" portrays Condoleezza Rice as perhaps the president's closest and most trusted adviser.

They're all next on LARRY KING LIVE.

We begin with Dr. Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser. She likes to be called Condi, and with due respect, we'll call her that. Where were you when Colin Powell delivered his remarks today?

CONDOLEEZZA RICE, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER: I watched the remarks of the secretary at the U.N. with the president in the back room of the Oval Office and it was wonderful experience because I think the secretary did a fine job of making the case. The case that Saddam Hussein is not disarming and that he continues to try to deceive the international community.

KING: Had you seen his remarks before he made them?

RICE: Oh, yes. In fact, the president had seen his remarks and we'd all worked through them with him, but the secretary put this together and it's been a very busy time for all of us. But he did a wonderful job today at the U.N.

KING: You think he left no doubt about the case he made?

RICE: Oh, I think it's very hard to make the argument that Saddam Hussein is disarming, that he is complying with Resolution 1441.

When you have evidence of deception on the scale that Saddam Hussein has been practicing, a committee that is expressly charged with deceiving the inspectors under the tutelage of the vice president of the country, it's a little hard to make the argument that 1441, the very important U.N. resolution of the Security Council is being observed.

So, yes, I think the secretary made a very compelling case.

KING: What did the president think of his remarks and how he delivered them? He knew what he was going to say. What did he think of the setting?

RICE: Well, we all thought that the setting was appropriate at the United Nations, because after all, the president had taken the case to the United Nations on September 12 of last year to challenge the Security Council to live up to its responsibilities, to deal with Saddam Hussein who is a serial abuser of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

And so the U.N. was the right setting. The president felt that the secretary delivered the remarks very well, that it was the right setting and that it was only fitting to take this back to the Security Council at this point in time.

KING: In your opinion, Condi, how's this military man doing as a diplomat?

RICE: Colin Powell is every bit as good a diplomat as he was chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, or for that matter, national security adviser at one points in his career. This is a very distinguished man whose had a distinguished career, he's a

terrific public servant, loves America and is a trusted adviser of this president and a remarkable secretary of state.

I think if you talked to any of the diplomats around the world, he is trusted. They believe him and they know that he has the best interest of the United States at heart. But that he also cares a great deal about world peace and security.

KING: Since things seem inevitable, it's appropriate to ask, what can Saddam Hussein, other than seeking refuge somewhere else, what can he do tonight, right now to change the situation to your satisfaction? What can he -- other than just saying, what can he do?

RICE: Saddam Hussein has known for a long time what he needed to do. This didn't start three months ago. This began 12 years ago when, to get himself out of the pickle that he'd gotten into by launching a war of aggression against his neighbor, he signed on to a series of obligations and he's not lived up to them, not really to a single one of them. So he knows what he needs to do. He would need to come completely clean in the way that countries like South Africa has led inspectors to their weapons programs, have not tried to conceal them, but have rather said, Here's everything that we have. Come and inspect.

Saddam Hussein has taken this last opportunity and thrown it away. And so I think the world will now be very skeptical of any 11th-hour efforts that he makes to pretend that he is complying.

KING: So if he had a change of heart it would have to be literally a confessional and then open sesame?

RICE: Well, it would have to show that this is a very different regime than it has been for its entire time in control of Iraq and certainly a different regime that it has been in the 12 years since he started violating the Security Council obligations on to which he signed.

After all, the problem isn't just the weapons of mass destruction. The problem is not just the cavorting with terrorists. The problem isn't just the human rights abuses. The problem isn't just this ambitious man megalomaniacal man in the middle of this very volatile regime. It's that all of that goes together to paint a very dangerous picture for the future if Saddam Hussein and his regime are not dealt with.

KING: How is it determined, Condi, on what intelligence information would be released?

RICE: This was a very intensive process that we went through with the intelligence community. George Tenet, the director of Central Intelligence was not just actively engaged, of course, he managed the entire thing because we did

want to be very certain that we did not compromise important sources, relating to Iraq or important sources and methods that might relate to places other than Iraq.

And so the director of Central Intelligence was the final clearing house, the final say on what could be used. It was a collaborative effort in which the intelligence community really led in bringing the intelligence information to the policymakers to put together the presentation.

KING: Senator Ted Kennedy said today that it's clear Saddam only has -- has only final chance to comply and disarm and this is his final chance. But he also said if there is war, the president should clearly explain the costs in blood and money. Do you agree with that?

RICE: The president has said to the American people that he would never undertake a decision to send Americans, men and women, into war lightly. He understands the cost. As he's said many, many times, he doesn't want to send men and women into war because he will be the one who has to console the widows and the orphans. It is a lonely job for the president of the United States to decide that he must ask the ultimate sacrifice of Americans. But when we talk about cost, we have to talk about the cost of inaction. We have to talk about the continued presence of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Saddam Hussein. We have to talk about the kind of connections that we -- that Colin Powell talk about today between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. We have to ask about the costs of a possible attack like 9/11, but this time with weapons of mass destruction so that we're not talking about the deaths of 3,000 Americans, but the deaths perhaps of tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands or more.

Those are the costs that have to be weighed against the cost of inaction. The president has been very clear with the American people that this would not be easy. It would not be cost-free, but he's also been clear that the cost of inaction could be higher.

KING: What's it like for you to be the recommender?

RICE: Well, the principal's committee, as we call it, the Vice President Cheney, Secretary Powell, Secretary Rumsfeld, George Tenet, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Myers and myself, simply try to get to this president the best advice that we possibly can.

But all of us understand that in the final analysis, we can give him advice, we can give him recommendations, we can lay the fact out before him, but he was elected president of the United States by the American people and it is really his decision.

It's a decision that he would not take lightly, but it is a decision that he is fully prepared to take because he understands that you can't afford to let this condition continue.

KING: We'll take a break. Be back with more moments with Dr. Rice and then we'll meet our other panelists. This is LARRY KING LIVE. Don't go away.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

POWELL: Today Iraq still poses a threat and Iraq still remains in material breach. Indeed, by its failure to seize on its one last opportunity to come clean and disarm, Iraq has put itself in deeper material breach and closer to the day when it will face serious consequences for its continued defiance of this council.

My colleagues, we have an obligation to our citizens, we have an obligation to this body to see that our resolutions are complied with.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We're back with National Security Adviser Dr. Condoleezza Rice.

Condi, you and Arms Chief Inspector Hans Blix -- he's due for another report at the U.N. Security Council on February 14, Valentine's Day, if that's a little awkward. Is that D-Day?

RICE: I wouldn't call it D-Day, but it is further along in this process that really now should unfold in weeks, not months.

Clearly, the report of Hans Blix will be important. It will be important again in determining once again whether Saddam Hussein is trying to comply with the resolution -- with resolution 1441. But we really have to recognize now that what Saddam Hussein has done is to take this last opportunity and to once again flaunt the will of the international community.

That cannot continue for very long if the Security Council is to have any relevance, if the Security Council is to have any credibility. Again, this is not something that began three months ago. This began 12 years ago, and so, sooner or later, and we believe much sooner, we are going to have to go to the international community, go to the Security Council and say, Now it's time to deal with the fact that we told Iraq...

KING: And...

RICE: ...that serious consequences would follow the next time it didn't comply.

KING: And will you need another resolution or is 1441 OK?

RICE: Well, the United States believes that 1441 and the other resolutions relating to Iraq constitute plenty of authority for the member states to act or for the international community to act.

But we are, of course, listening to our partners. We are in a diplomatic phase here in which we want to hear from others and I think we are open to the idea that the international community may wish to express itself again. But it would need, this time, to express that this is the time for action to be taken, for serious consequences. This cannot be another delaying tactic.

KING: Are you angry? Disappointed? What? About Germany and France.

RICE: We are still in a diplomatic phase here. We are certainly hopeful that our longtime allies are going to now join what is a growing international consensus that Iraq is in violation of Security Council resolution 1441, that Iraq is not disarming.

A number of nations have spoken out on this, a number of European nations have spoken out on this and we hope that our longtime allies will recognize how important it is the Security Council remain united....

KING: But...

RICE: ...but that it remain united and resolute and ready to defend the resolution that it passed.

KING: But have you been hurt by the fact that they are -- if they come around late in coming around?

RICE: I -- we are still in a diplomatic phase here and we understand that countries have different views. But it's very hard after Secretary Powell's presentation today to come to any other conclusion than that Iraq is not complying, never intended to comply.

The day before inspectors actually went into Iraq to begin the process of inspections, you have Iraqi officers in the field talking about hiding prohibited vehicles. So if you listened to that presentation and you listened to the links to terrorism and you listened to the way that he has concealed but continued his weapons of mass destruction programs, if you look at this declaration that they filed in December, which is really a joke. It didn't even take seriously the charge to file a full and complete declaration, you can only come to one conclusion. And that is that Iraq is again in material breach of its obligations to the U.N. Security Council.

And the people who unanimously voted for that Security Council resolution knew at the time that the resolution said that when Iraq was again in material breach, serious consequences would have to follow.

KING: Is there any question in your mind about the al Qaeda connection? Did Powell totally convince people today in that area?

RICE: There is no question in my mind about the al Qaeda connection. It is a connection that has unfolded, that we're learning more about as we are able to take the testimony of detainees, people who were high up in the al Qaeda organization.

And what emerges is a picture of a Saddam Hussein who became impressed with what al Qaeda did after it bombed our embassies in 1998 in Kenya and Tanzania, began to give them assistance in chemical and biological weapons, something that they were having trouble achieving on their own, that harbored a terrorist network under this man Zarqawi, despite the fact that Saddam Hussein was told that Zarqawi was there.

And by the way, if anyone really believes that Saddam Hussein doesn't track terrorists in his own country, in this closed, totalitarian society, I just don't understand it. He clearly knew that this network and knows that this network is there. This is a network that not only is responsible for the killing of an American citizen, Mr. Foley, the U.S. aid worker in Jordan, but also a network that is spreading poisons throughout Europe, that is harboring terrorism and it's a serious charge.

And the most important thing for Americans and for the entire world to remember is that the potential marriage of weapons of mass destruction with terrorism is everyone's worst nightmare and you have, with Saddam Hussein, both a terrorist link and an insistence on having weapons of mass destruction which he could easily transfer at any time to one of his terrorist associations.

KING: Doctor, thanks so much for sharing this time with us. I know how busy you are, coming in at night. We appreciate it. We look forward to seeing you again soon, in person next time.

RICE: Thank you, Larry. It was very good to be with you.

KING: Dr. Condoleezza Rice, national security adviser.

When we come back, Congressman Christopher Shays and Congresswoman Jane Harmon. Then Bob Woodward.

Don't go away.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

POWELL: Should we take the risk that he will not some day use these weapons at a time and a place and in a manner of his choosing, at a time when the world is in a much weaker position to respond? The United States will not and cannot run that risk with the American people. Leaving Saddam Hussein in possession of weapons of mass destruction for a few more months or years is not an option. Not in a post-September 11 world.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Joining us now in Washington Congressman Christopher Shays, Republican of Connecticut, chairman of the government Reform Subcommittee on National Security, International Relations and Veterans Affairs. And Congresswomen Jane Harman, Democrat of California, ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee.

Congressman Shays, did Colin Powell make the case?

REP. CHRISTOPHER SHAYS (R-CT), CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE NATIONAL SECURITY: He made the case, but this isn't a trial. This isn't about evidence. This is intelligence gathering. And he's asking Americans, he's asking the world to apply their common sense to the intelligence that he provided.

KING: And did he do it successfully Congresswoman Harman this.

REP. JANE HARMAN (D-CA), RANKING MEMBER, HOUSE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE: I thought he did great today, it wasn't just the message, it was the messenger. Here is an African-American who is worried about the underprivileged, a four-star general with an amazing history. I don't think they could have field a better player.

And addition to that, I think he did make the case and frankly, I think the administration spent too many months using cowboy rhetoric and not enough months putting the facts out. Now the facts are out. The legal brief is there and I think he changed hearts and minds today and that's the right way to go at this. That's the right way to build support hopefully for peaceful disarmament in Iraq.

KING: Congressman Shays, without a smoking gun, though, right?

SHAYS: I mean, what don't you know about this guy? I mean, he had a viable program before the war in the Gulf. He had one after the war in the Gulf. And then he kicked out the inspectors when we started to talk to -- when we started to talk to the people who were making these weapons of mass destruction.

Saddam Hussein has not abided by any agreement he's made since the cease-fires, since 1991. and I disagree with Jane's basic characteristic of cowboy attitude on the part of the administration. I think they've been methodical. I think they've been soft-spoken. I think they've been very direct and they're just waiting for people around the world to wake up.

KING: Jane?

HARMAN: Not quite. I mean, I agree with the outcome but I think after the president's impressive speech to the U.N. on September 12, a lot of time was

lost. I think people did not understand until last week when Colin Powell spoke to the world economic forum in Davos, I happened to be there, that the point of these inspections is to monitor disarmament, not to play cat and mouse.

I just don't think that case was made well at all and we've lost time. There is time to make up, though. I agree with that and I think Valentine's Day is an important day. I think in two weeks we will know if Saddam Hussein is ever going to disarm voluntarily and if not, I think a lot more of the world because a lot more people of the world will be persuaded that we have to act.

KING: Congressman Shays, do you think Colin Powell will change the polls today? The polls of the American public is about 58-42 against going to war.

SHAYS: I hope so. We had a wake-up call on September 11. I think Republican his a message to care more about the world. I think Democrats had a message to care more about national security and defense. I think his message was awesome. It was understated, but it's stuff that both Jane and I have known for a long time. Some of which we couldn't share and he just did it in a very methodical way.

KING: I asked Condoleezza Rice this, I'll ask you Congresswoman Harman, what can Saddam Hussein do to avert war other than exile?

HARMAN: Well, he still has a choice. He's got about 10 days until the 14th to disarm peacefully. I think it's highly unlikely, but what he is supposed to do is to take the hundred-plus inspectors and show them places where he still stores and I believe this is true, chemical and biological weapons, where he's building his nuclear capability, and then show them how he is going to disable all of this material and get rid of it.

I again, think that's highly unlikely but he has that choice. He's that choice for a long time. Also, let me just say, Larry, this, I think Americans are very worried about more threats to our homeland. And I think during this period, it is critically important for the administration to explain how we're going to accelerate funding for homeland security and put maximum protection in place for Americans at home. KING: Congressman Shays, is war inevitable?

SHAYS: You know, it may be, particularly if Saddam Hussein misjudges us. If he had known beyond a shadow of a doubt that we would not allow him to stay in Kuwait, 293 Americans would not have lost their lives. And the bottom line for me, more than any other issue today is that Saddam Hussein needs to know that the American people are behind the president, Congress is behind the president and requiring him to abide by the agreements he's made. And if he doesn't we will be forced to go in. And we will go in and he shouldn't underestimate that.

KING: Congresswoman Harman, inevitable?

HARMAN: I don't think so yet. There are three ways out, Larry. One is voluntary disarmament, the second is exile and the third is a coup in his own country. And I think if people see his days are numbered, frankly, as I think he sees his days are numbered, one of the other options may happen.

I think the threat of use of force is a good thing. I think it -- and the fact that we are now trying to persuade the hearts and minds of the people of the world. Those two things put together give us the maximum chance for peaceful disarmament. And we must disarm this country. Doing nothing is the worst option at this point.

KING: Thank you both very much. We'll be seeing a lot of you in the days ahead.

Congressman Christopher Shays of Connecticut, Republican.

Congresswoman Jane Harman of California, Democrat.

When we come back assistant manager editor, and Pulitzer Prize winner, author of the runaway best-seller "Bush at war." Bob Woodruff, joins us and we'll take calls from Bob too.

We'll be right back.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

POWELL: The issue before us is not how much time we are willing to give the inspectors to be frustrated by Iraqi obstruction. But how much longer are we willing to put up with Iraq's noncompliance before we as a council, we as the United Nations say enough, enough.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We return now with Bob Woodward. Frequent guest. We'll be take your calls for Robert, shortly. Assistant managing editor for "The Washington Post," best selling author, Pulitzer prize-winning journalist. His latest "New York Times" runaway best-seller, probably his best selling book ever, "Bush at War."

Hi, Bob. What did you make of Colin Powell's appearance today and what Condoleezza Rice had to say tonight?

BOB WOODWARD, "WASHINGTON POST": Well, first about Powell's presentation, it obviously was very strong. It's real strength, oddly enough, was that it wasn't perfect. It wasn't a presentation like you would see in a spy movie where everything is neat and clear. In fact, the information he presented was the way they live with it. You get glimpses, fragments and intercepted phone conversations, the satellite photo, a human source.

But when you put it all together the accumulation was profound. It makes it very, very clear in all of the areas they are talking about to one degree or another, it is not just a defiance of the U.N., it is ignoring the U.N., absolutely across the board.

And as Powell said, was there no smoking gun. My assistant who looked at it, who's a lot younger said, Maybe no smoking gun, but there're shell casings all over the floor. And I think that is exactly the case.

KING: And Mrs. -- Dr. Rice tonight certainly made it seem like after February 14, this is just pick the day.

WOODWARD: Yes. I mean, I think it's very clear. You talk to anyone who has dealt with Bush ,recently in the interviews I did with him, there's something about his eyes where he just says, I'm going to fix this. I'm going to solve this problem. It is not going to go away.

And the music in the background on all of this again is 9/11. That they are going to take care of threats early. And this clearly, when you lay it all out, something is going on. There is a kind of deception. Some of it is frightening, just to take the discussion of the development in Iraq by some sort of unmanned aerial vehicle, these light planes that have no pilot that go around and the discussion that in fact, it could go 500 miles.

I understand there's some intelligence which Powell did not present, probably quite wisely, because it's not conclusive that maybe there's some indications Saddam would want to send one of these with some sort of weapon to the United States. It's all a very, very frightening and chilling portrait.

KING: This was historic today, presenting audio intelligence intercepts, right? When have we seen that before publicly?

WOODWARD: Not for about 20 years. I think they actually played some intercepts when the Soviets shot down the Korean airliner KAL- 007. Remember the target? It was destroyed.

KING: Yes, but it certainly was quite a day. Do you think it will change the polls?

WOODWARD: You know, I don't know. Again, because there was no smoking gun, because if you were a defense lawyer -- someone said if Johnnie Cochran got a hold of this and said, Where are the holes in the argument? There are some holes. It does not come neatly tied up. What is interesting, again, just to get into the detail of it, Powell talked about the house cleaning in 30 sites where we know from intelligence that the Iraqis are making or hiding chemical or biological weapons. I understand, in many of those cases, there're at least two sources indicating that this is a site that is highly suspect.

You get into the specifics of it as Powell did in one case and said, Well, there was one satellite photo in May of 2000 and it showed lots of activity at this site. And then in July of 2000, interestingly enough, they brought in bulldozers and covered it up and taken the crust off the earth and regraded it.

Now if you're Johnnie Cochran, you say, Well, at least maybe somebody will come forward and argue say we got rid of the chemical or biological weapons at this facility and we were just -- this was an environmental cleanup.

But if you look at what happened in the disclosure by Iraq in December, that 12,000-page document, there's no reference to this. There's no -- even the best argument, even though they might be lies are not presented.

So all of this goes unanswered and you string it together it's quite compelling.

KING: You have a lot of privy insight and Dr. Rice said tonight when I asked her who determined what was released, what was not released. She said that was under the aegis of George Tenet, a Clinton appointee, surprisingly enough. That surprised you though, right?

WOODWARD: Right, he has that authority and what they did on lots of these little pieces of intelligence, particularly the communications intercepts, they did a risk assessment. And they said, If we disclose this then the Iraqis will know we're listening to this channel. What price do we pay?

And it turns out that some of the best stuff that they had that would have taken this to a higher level, instead of just colonels and captains and brigadier generals talking, you would move up the line and the feeling was to disclose anything along these lines with compromised specific sources and methods. So in a sense, the best was not presented.

KING: Let's listen to an example of what was presented -- an audio intercept. Listen.

(BEGIN AUDIO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): Sir.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): There is a directive of the (Republican) Guard Chief of Staff at the conference today. UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): They are intercepting the ammunition you have...

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): ... for the possibility there is forbidden ammo.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): Yes?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): For the possibility there is by chance, forbidden ammo.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): And we sent you a message to inspect the scrap areas and the abandoned areas.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): After you have carried out what is contained in the message, destroy the message.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): Because I don't want anyone to see this message.

(END AUDIO CLIP)

KING: That's pretty good intercepting.

WOODWARD: It's clear. Now, my video was not on and I don't speak the language, so which one was that?

KING: Where the guy was agreeing with hiding the -- I couldn't see it clearly on my monitor.

WOODWARD: The nerve agent?

KING: Yes. We had the message to hide it.

WOODWARD: Exactly. And there are -- there is the language of deception or keep this reference to nerve agent out of any wireless instructions that are set out.

Now if you just pull back a little bit and look at that and say, Why are they talking about nerve agents? They claim they don't have any. Nerve agents are very serious weapons.

So, again, from my point of view, it seems to me that there was no point where Powell overstated the case. I mean, something like this, the tendency often is we'll throw something in. It's pretty good. Always the weakest link will be attacked. I'm not sure whether there was each a weak link in this long presentation.

KING: We'll get a break, come back, include phone calls for Bob Woodward on this historic day in American foreign policy history. Don't go away.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

POWELL: Here you see 15 munitions bunkers in yellow and red outlines. The four that are in red squares represent active, chemical munitions bunkers. How do I know that? How can I say that? Let me give you a closer look. Look at the image on the left. On the left is a close-up of one of the four chemical bunkers. The two arrows indicate the presence of sure signs that the bunkers are storing chemical munitions.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: By the way, I might personally recommend "Bush at War." to you, Bob Woodward's new book and it really is a terrific read, insightful and especially pointed to events of the day.

Hanover Park, Illinois for about Bob Woodward, hello.

CALLER: Hi, Larry. Hi, Bob.

WOODWARD: HI.

KING: Speak up. Hello.

CALLER: In my opinion, I don't think that Colin Powell produced any new evidence that we didn't already know from the inspector. But I'd like to know, if he did what did you think it was?

KING: What was new to you today, Bob?

WOODWARD: There was an abundance of new evidence there. The three intercepts that were actually played, the audio, the satellite photos and then if you go through his whole presentation, you see how reliant it was on human sources, defectors, people who, perhaps are even in the Iraqi government who are secretly supplying information and the intelligence people will always tell you that a good human source who will tell you what's going on is much better than anything, because they can assess the motive and sift through all kinds of information and say this is what is significant.

I was attempting to go through Powell's presentation and add up the numbers. I mean, there are just number after number, estimates, conservative estimates, Powell said, of a hundred to 500 tons of chemical agents in the country when they claim they have zero.

So I think basically, was there a foundation based on what the inspectors had said in the declarations in the past, but there was an abundance of new data.

KING: Santa Rosa, California for Bob Woodward, hello?

CALLER: Hello, Mr. Woodward, how are you?

Hello, Larry.

KING: Fine.

CALLER: Yes.

After Mr. Powell's compelling presentation today, I'm curious as to why Russia and France both seem reluctant to move forward and continue to think that something can actually be accomplished by continuing inspection.

WOODWARD: Well, they've stated their position and there is another side on all of this and that is you keep the diplomatic pressure on, you increase the diplomatic pressure and as the military buildup goes on, as the economic sanctions continue, maybe Saddam Hussein will be overthrown, maybe somebody will kill him, maybe, though I think this is highly unlikely, he would go in to exile.

So pressure works. In this sort of situation, you want to work from maximum strength and the strength of the United Nations has only gone up in the last month...

So they're saying let's wait a little longer and have some more weapons inspections. My read on Bush and his team, and I think what Powell was saying today is, Hey, look. We are convinced. The president's convinced. The war Cabinet's convinced. We're living with this every day. The patience is about running out and Dr. Rice just said it as the president has said, it's a matter of weeks, not months.

KING: Miami, Florida, hello.

CALLER: Good evening, gentlemen.

KING: Hi.

CALLER: I'd like to ask a question and I'd like to make a comment after my question, if it's possible.

KING: Go ahead.

CALLER: What happens if we go to war against Iraq and we knock them right out and we find no weapons of mass destruction? That's my question.

My answer to Mr. Powell -- he had -- everything was going fine until he tied al Qaeda to Saddam Hussein. They're mortal enemies. Islamic fundamentalists and secular Muslims. That's oil and water. That lost me.

KING: All right. Bob?

WOODWARD: OK. That's a good point and it was at the end of his presentation and he said, again, what was interesting, the language was so careful.

This tie is potentially more sinister than the weapons of mass destruction and he laid out a series of intelligence, some intelligence information about connections, but he didn't overstate. He said potentially more serious.

On your question about suppose we go to war and go into Iraq and there are no weapons of mass destruction. I think the chance of that happening is about zero. There's just too much there.

If you look at the history of inspections, if you look at the history of weapons inspectors in Iraq, what's really interesting -- it took them four years after the Gulf War, after Saddam Hussein agreed to an inspections regime, four whole years of going around to smoke out a lot of the biological and chemical weapons that he had, that had been concealed from us, had been concealed from the coalition, discovered the nature and extent of his nuclear weapons program.

So this is really hard and once you get in, the rule is you always find much more significant magnitude more than you ever suspected from the fragments of intelligence, you can.

KING: We'll be right back with the leading moments with Bob Woodward.

Don't go away.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

POWELL: Saddam Hussein's intentions have never changed. He is not developing the missiles for self-defense. These are missiles that Iraq wants in order to project power, to threaten and to deliver chemical, biological and if we let him, nuclear warheads.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Another couple of calls for Bob Woodward.

Summerside, Prince Edward, Canada, hello.

CALLER: Good evening, gentlemen, how are you?

KING: Fine.

CALLER: Two quick points. In the Gulf War, the end game, I thought, was curtailed or actually the end game that should have transpired did not take place. In other words, Saddam was left in place.

KING: Right.

CALLER: The second point for freedom and liberty there is a price that must be paid, and I'm confident that the planet has the stomach to pay the price. KING: What's the question?

CALLER: The question is had (UNINTELLIGIBLE) in '91 taken Hussein out at that point, where would we be now in do dealing with Iraq?

KING: Well, impossible answer, isn't it, Bob?

WOODWARD: Yes. It is, but there's a kind of myth about the Gulf War that some how it was unfinished business. The U.N. Resolution at the time authorized all necessary means, and the use of force to get Saddam Hussein and his army out of Kuwait which he invaded and taken over. That was the limit of the resolution. It did not say march to Baghdad and throw him out. So, you know, if we -- if we had done that, I don't think we -- it was even seriously considered at the time.

KING: Dallas, Texas, hello.

CALLER: Hello. Good evening, Mr. King and Mr. Woodward. My question is why should the you said make a preemptive strike against Iraq, and at the same time ignore the nuclear threat which North Korea poses. It seems the logic doesn't work for me.

WOODWARD: There are a great number of people who agree with you on that. What has happened, Iraq came back on the screen first and the reality is that -- when you look around the world, Saddam Hussein has a history of invading his neighbors, of using these weapons. There is the mountain of intelligence.

When I talked to President Bush in the summer about -- and he raised the question of North Korea, again, his eyes lit up and there was a sense of I'm going to get to that. So, obviously, it's not two things you can deal with. How they might get to North Korea, maybe there can be some sort of negotiation there. The leader Kim Jong Il all despite all of his many defects, he's not like Saddam. Saddam has invaded his neighbors. The leader of North Korea has not yet.

KING: Bob, we've got about a minute. Is war inevitable? I've asked that of the other guests. (UNINTELLIGIBLE)

WOODWARD: It's really close. Hans Blix was saying it's five minutes to midnight, I think you can argue that it's 15 seconds to midnight when it comes to the war here. You know there's -- pardon?

KING: About when? We only have less than a minute. About when?

WOODWARD: You know, all kinds of names -- dates thrown around. Soon. I wouldn't recommend a long vacation for people in our business in March. Next month looks possible. But again, nothing is inevitable here. And the president has delivered on his promise to give the U.N. a chance. Condi Rice was just telling you earlier we're on. We're still in a diplomatic phase on this and that is not over.

KING: Bob, as always, thank you very much.

WOODWARD: Thank you.

KING: Bob Woodward, the assistant managing editor of the "Washington Post." Best selling author, Pulitzer Prize winner and the new book "Bush at War," a major best-seller.

We'll be right back right after these words.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: I taped an interview today with Priscilla Presley. It's going to air one week from tonight, next Wednesday night. I hope you'll make plans to tune in. An extraordinary look at the late Elvis Presley and her daughter Lisa Marie and Priscilla herself.

And before we go, don't forget to log on to my new sports column. "Sports a la King" on CNN/"Sports Illustrated" on the web. Remember, every Wednesday log on and read me at cnnsi.com/larryking. And "Sports a la King" is interactive so send me your e-mails and I'll answer them in the "Sports a la King" mailbag. That Web address is cnnsi.com/larryking and a new column is posted every Wednesday.

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