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Larry King Live

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Senator Lugar & William Colby/Persian Gulf War

PRESIDENT BUSH: I am very pleased with the people that are running the war. They have my full confidence. We are going to take whatever time is necessary to sort out when a next stage might begin.

ANNOUNDER: ...Tonight, week four of war. Top advisers brief the President on giving it to Saddam from the sky and in the sand....

LARRY KING: ...General Powell and Secretary Cheney gave their military assessment in a private meeting with the President today. The President emerged intent on continuing the air campaign and unclear about when ground action might begin.

Joining us from Indianapolis is Senator Richard Lugar. He is a member of the formidable Foreign Relations Committee, indeed former Chairman of that Committee; and William Colby, here at our studios in Washington former Director of the CIA.

We'll start with Senator Lugar in Indianapolis.

Is it true, Senator Lugar, are you saying that you want

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all aid to Jordan discontinued, based on the statements of King Hussein?

SENATOR RICHARD LUGAR: Yes. I think that debate will come up, and my vote will be negative. It seems to me that America has to have constancy of friendship. King Hussein really knows better than the testimony he gave in support of Iraq. His neutrality was somewhat suspect, but President Bush had been very tolerant. And King Hussein has stepped over the bounds. And it appears, for the time being, that we ought not to vote more aid to Jordan.

KING: Can you put yourself in his shoes, as seeing himself more threatened by them than by us?

SENATOR LUGAR: Of course he feels more threatened by his own people, from time to time, than he does by us. His tenure has been very, very difficult. And we understand that.

When he came over to the United States, the President, I thought, was very thoughtful and considerate and tolerant of what apparently have been breaches of the embargo by Jordan. But it was another thing to give a long and deliberate speech at this time in the war.

Obviously, Hussein is going to be on the losing side. Why he would choose to make that overt comment at this time really, I think, escapes everybody.

KING: Bill Colby, you know that territory pretty well. Why do you think he did that?

WILLIAM COLBY: Oh, I think he's responding to the attitude of his people, who are primarily Palestinians. There are some Bedouins among them, but many of them are Palestinians. And they consider this whole war a war between Arabs and the rest of the world, in the oldest tradition.

So, in order to stay in power -- he is a great survivor. He's survived all sorts of problems over the years -- he's tilting, to use a word, tilting in the direction of Saddam.

KING: That was more than tilting, though, don't you think? That was tilted.

COLBY: It's essentially tilting.

I think that the Senator is absolutely right when he says that no more aid, maybe. But that doesn't mean hostility. There is something between full aid and full hostility.

KING: We should not be hostile.

COLBY: And I think that's where we ought to be.

KING: Do you agree, Senator Lugar, we should not be fully hostile to Jordan?

SENATOR LUGAR: Yeah. I think that's a good distinction. And I think President Bush the other day left the door wide open for a conference in which Jordan will be a party, because they're in the area. And secure borders with Jordan, recognition of Jordan, of the other states, and particularly a relationship with Israel would be very useful.

KING: And is it true, Bill Colby, that you favor the

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assassination of Saddam Hussein?

COLBY: I don't favor the assassination. But I do say that when one country's young men and women are shooting another country's young men and women, the leaders of those operations are not immune. I would have cheerfully helped carry the bomb into Hitler's bunker in 1944. That's not assassination. It's an act of war.

KING: In other words, in war, if you -- if a commando got in and killed him, that would be an act of war, not an assassination.

COLBY: Perfectly legitimate. Yes.

KING: And you would favor that.

COLBY: Certainly.

KING: Do you think there are any plans, contingently?

COLBY: I have no idea. And I don't want to know, because I'm not in on secrets these days.

KING: This is a need-to-know, and you don't need to know.

COLBY: I don't need to know and it's none of my business.

KING: This for both of you. We'll start with Senator Lugar.

How goes this action till now? Obviously, it goes well. Does it go about as expected? Anything surprising you, Dick?

SENATOR LUGAR: Well, clearly the lack of response by

the Iraqis is surprising.

Now, for those who are our military commanders or our people in the field, perhaps it's not surprising, as they understand how they've knocked out the antiaircraft and how they've suppressed the air and the sea might of Iraq so easily. But clearly this is a war now in which apparently there's almost no ground activity in the Kuwait area. The Iraqis are burrowed down. They're operating underground, even carrying their equipment down there with them, are just simply accepting a pounding. And that, for the fourth-largest army in the world, is a surprise.

KING: This is like a hockey game, William, in which the six players on one team, the goalie and the five others, have lined up in front of the net, and the other team is just shooting the puck.

COLBY: No. What this is is a deliberate application of a strategy. First, clean out the air. Second, clean out the air defense. Third...

KING: This is our strategy.

COLBY: Yes.

Third, put your air power, your artillery power, everything on the enemy defenses. Then begin to move forward slowly, not rapidly, because rapidly brings you high casualties. Slowly.

Saddam has said that he doesn't think the Americans can

handle 10,000 dead in a single battle. He's wrong. We have done so, in Normandy.

What the Americans won't handle is high casualties and no apparent progress. What they can handle very well is gradual progress and low casualties.

KING: What is Saddam's strategy?

COLBY: Saddam's strategy: He thinks that if he can just blood the Americans enough, they'll quit and go home. And he's wrong. He's been wrong about a lot of things.

KING: But he does what he says, usually. Right?

COLBY: Oh, sure.

KING: Senator Lugar, do you buy the concept, said in many Sunday op-ed pages, that he could lose the war and win the political victory?

SENATOR LUGAR: I think that's nonsense. You know, everybody's attempting to find a new angle with which to cover the war because many people in the press are bored with two or three thousand sorties a day pounding the Iraqis. They want land action. They want protests in the United States. They want political difficulty around the world. Something, at least, to rev up the situation. And the fact is that Saddam has not been politically effective.

It takes no skill whatever to show Palestinians in Amman protesting, or even Moroccans in Marrakesh, or a few Tunisians. These situations have been relatively constant, as far as I can

tell, for the last four or five weeks.

What is important is that a majority of Arabs, a majority of Arab League states, as well as a majority of Arabs, period, population-wise, have supported the coalition effort. They know they're on the winning side. They're going to stay there. And the coalition has been remarkably sound.

We're winning the political victory because we have the people.

KING: You agree?

COLBY: I'm not so sure. I think we are going to have trouble with fundamentalism in the future. I had thought that fundamentalism had begun to peak and go down, as a result of the rise of Rafsanjani in Iran to replace the ayatollahs. But with a defeat of Saddam Hussein, you will once again raise the Arab concern: "We are being beat up by these terrible Westerners." It's a favorite Arab song, refrain. And I think you're going to have some troubles with it in the future. Not something we ought to stop doing what we need to do because of, but we just have to realize that the fundamentalists will be out there running in the next few years.

KING: We'll get a break and come right back.

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KING: One other thing I want to check from both of you.

Is this beyond Kuwait now, Senator Lugar, as some have

said, that this is all the way into the capital, and the extermination of the leader, this is total victory?

SENATOR LUGAR: Well, that's not what President Bush has said and that's not what the U.N. resolutions say. It seems to me that many of us have said -- I've said, for one, that I believe that this all must end -- and by that I mean both the war and the peace situation -- with Saddam out of leadership. Not necessarily killed or assassinated, but out of leadership, disconnected from the juggernaut of authority that Iraq has had. It is inconceivable that he would have the ability to prey upon the neighbors again.

But that's a private view.

KING: What if he leaves Kuwait? What if he does -- what if he presents a "Where did you go right?" situation? What if tonight he announces that he meets all four concepts of the U.N. mandate?

SENATOR LUGAR: Well, that's always a difficulty. And he might do that. And that would be...

KING: But that would be what you want.

SENATOR LUGAR: Well, we would have to continue to negotiate his future. And, hopefully with our coalition forces, we would do that successfully, applying the economic sanctions and other diplomatic pressure, so that there's still a disconnect.

KING: Do you agree, Bill, he has to go, even if he were to do that tonight?

COLBY: Not necessarily. If he agreed to leave Kuwait, if he agreed, we would then demand some reassurances against a repetition of this. Which means United Nations observers in Iraq, a reduction of Iraq's forces, a reduction of their weapons of mass destruction, all of that sort of thing. If he would buy all that and actually leave Kuwait -- we're not going to have a cease-fire before he's out of Kuwait -- then he could stay there.

KING: Assuming he doesn't do that, how does this end?

COLBY: Don't you and I worry about that. The Iraqis will take care of it in the traditional form of change of government in Iraq, which is that the successor shoots the predecessor. That's how Saddam got in power. That's how his predecessor got in power. And that's now someday his successor will get in power.

KING: In other words, there have to be guys there now, tonight, in Baghdad talking about that.

COLBY: It's a dead issue. They're afraid, but it's a dead issue.

KING: Cincinnati for Senator Richard Lugar and William Colby...

MAN: ...Do you think that the passenger planes from Iraq that recently went to Algiers could be part of a terrorist

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plot? And also, do you think the CIA is monitoring their movement?

KING: Richard?

SENATOR LUGAR: Well, I would hope that the intelligence forces of our country, or our allies, have information about these aircraft and what they're doing. I have no idea about their mission.

I would say that we've been rigorous -- that is, the United States and our partners in this enterprise -- in rounding up Iraqis, getting them out of our country, out of other countries. The disruption of their movements may have been helpful, in a counterintelligence way. But I have no information about these specific persons.

KING: Bill?

COLBY: Saddam has been running an image campaign: Scuds, which have no effect; oil, which has no effect; the threat of gas, which will have very little effect. A few people get killed, but nothing really happens that changes the course of events. The same of terrorism. He may run a terrorist attack here and there just in order to catch the headlines, to get the media excited. But it isn't going to have any effect.

KING: Why? Why doesn't it work?

COLBY: Because it's not going to change the basic balance of power between ourselves and Iraq. We are going to move ahead. He is going to face the end very shortly.

KING: Phoenix, Arizona....

MAN: My question is, why hasn't the bombing been more successful? It seems with all these sorties and millions of tons of bombs that we've dropped on them, you know, what's protecting these guys? You know, there's only -- Iraq's only half the size of Texas. Right?

KING: It's about the size of California, isn't it?

COLBY: Yes.

KING: Why aren't they all dead?

COLBY: Well, because bombs don't hit everything. And secondly, our bombs have been rather carefully targeted on military objectives.

The Iraqis announced that 490 civilians have been killed. If anybody has any memory of World War II, that's an infinitesimal number of civilians in collateral damage. Because when we ran a bombing raid over Berlin or Dresden, or someplace, tens of thousands were killed. This is a remarkably targeted operation.

And that's why you say, "Oh, the whole place isn't destroyed." But a lot of things have been destroyed, military objectives.

KING: Senator, do you agree?

SENATOR LUGAR: I agree. And furthermore, we have conducted these raids in a way which minimized American casualties. That's a very important point, in addition to minimizing

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Iraqi civilian casualties. There could have been more comprehensive a bombing and more careless bombing, and perhaps it might have been effective. But we've taken our time, we've done it the right way.

KING: What are our casualties to date?

SENATOR LUGAR: Thirteen killed, at this point.

COLBY: And about 15 or so missing.

KING: That's one every two days.

COLBY: Well, this is only the air war. We're going to have more. But watch that word casualty. It's a very dangerous word. The word casualty means dead, wounded and missing. And with modern medicine, the number of wounded who survive is enormous. So the percentage who are actually dead, out of the word casualty, is a tiny percentage.

KING: It has a finalty sound to it.

COLBY: I know. I know. But...

KING: You're saying it's not.

COLBY: ...if you talk seriously, talk about the number killed, which is an important number. Each life is important.

KING: We have killed 13.

COLBY: On our side. Yes.

KING: William Colby and Senator Richard Lugar are our guests.

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KING: Gaithersburg, Maryland....

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MAN: Larry, would you think that it will be possible for the Soviet Union to be bribed into this conflict?

KING: Bribed? You mean we bribe them into arming into the conflict?

MAN: Or Iraq and Syria and Iran together, maybe a coalition against us.

KING: Richard?

SENATOR LUGAR: I don't think there's any need to bribe them. The Soviets know their own interests. And they are insinuating, I believe, through Gorbachev's newest thoughts, that they're a player. They want to remind us they're still a superpower. They plan to be around at the peace table, and probably with a presence in Iraq and the Persian Gulf area afterwards. So that they're fully primed.

For the moment, they've decided they don't want to commit military forces. They have problems enough of their own. But they are hovering in the wings, and we're going to have our hands full managing that relationship.

COLBY: Agree. They've got too many troubles at home to get involved in foreign adventures at this point.

KING: They appear to sincerely want this ended, though.

COLBY: Oh, sure they do. I mean because it's destabilizing. And they want the world attention to come back on the lifting of the Soviet Union out of the disaster into which it's fallen.

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KING: Washington. Hello.

WOMAN: ...Can the President of the United States be assassinated, since plans are being made to assassinate Saddam Hussein?

KING: Well, we don't know that plans are being made.

You say that in war...

COLBY: American Presidents have been assassinated in the past. Obviously. No question about it. It's a terrible thing. We protect them as well as we can. But it's a danger.

KING: Sunrise, Florida. Hello.

MAN: I just want to ask anyone who cares to answer. I've heard several correspondents, from CNN specifically, state that this has been a clean, surgical type war thus far. And they threaten the American public: "Wait till we show the blood and guts. Wait till we show the body bags."

I mean they sound like propagandists for Iraqis.

KING: Now hold on. What CNN person said, "Wait till you see the body bags"?

MAN: Two gentlemen on about three or four nights ago. And there was a woman correspondent specifically said, "This is an antiseptical type war. We're not seeing what's really happening. Wait till we show the blood and guts."

COLBY: The government has from the outset said that this will not be an easy war, that it will be a bloody war. They've, if anything, downplayed it.

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They've learned the lesson of Vietnam: Don't be too optimistic. Warn the people that things are tough. If they turn out to be less tough, so much the better.

KING: Caller, why are you angered?

MAN: Well, I'm angry because, I mean, I'm an ex-Navy man. I know what war's all about. And I mean I don't think the American public are that soft. We're not going to raise the white flag. We expect casualties. But the media keeps...

KING: Well, then what's wrong with telling you?

MAN: I think we know it. Don't you think the American public knows that in a war people get killed?

KING: Well, then why would you be upset at hearing it?

MAN: Because they keep putting it out, putting it out. Maybe they will influence some people. Maybe it gives aid and comfort to the enemy.

KING: Okay.

Senator, what do you think?

SENATOR LUGAR: I think there is tension between the Department of Defense and most of the press, presently, over the rules. That tension and the arguments are likely to continue. But I side with the Pentagon on this issue. It seems to me, in terms of the security of our people over there, as well as what we really need to know play-by-play, we're going to know enough generally, as American citizens, to know how the war is being fought.

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Now, in due course, all of what occurs, bad and good, will be a matter of history, and some of it fairly soon, I suspect. But for the moment, it seems to me the rules are reasonable.

KING: Bethesda, Maryland. Hello.

MAN: Senator Lugar and Mr. Colby, I'd like to know how you feel about Senator Moynihan's proposal to fuse the CIA with the State Department.

And also, Senator Lugar especially, how do you feel about Senator Moynihan's appointments, liberal appointments, to the House Intelligence Committee.

KING: Senator Moynihan can't appoint to the House committee. Speaker Foley appoints.

Well, let's take first things first, on the merger.

Bill?

COLBY: Well, I told Senator Moynihan the other day that we disbanded intelligence after World War I, and then found out we needed it. We disbanded intelligence after World War II, and then found out we needed it. I don't think we ought to go through that again.

KING: Now, what did you think of Mr. Foley's appointments, Richard?

SENATOR LUGAR: Well, those are his judgment. He's made a political compromise among the House Democrats. I'm a Republican. My own views are that, obviously, people that we appoint as

Republicans to the Intelligence Committee ought to be sound people. But I trust the Speaker's doing the best he can with his party.

KING: Do you think Ron Dellums is less an American than a conservative congressman?

SENATOR LUGAR: No. He's an American congressman and a very able one. And all I'm saying is Tom Foley has a problem within his caucus. He has a lot of very liberal people. He may or may not be as liberal as they are, but he's tried to draw a balance. And he has a chairman of the committee that clearly is not a liberal Democrat. And that perhaps gave him a problem, carrying over that commitment from Jim Wright.

COLBY: I testified before Mr. Dellums a couple of times when he was on an investigating committee into CIA. It was difficult from time to time. But he is a representative of the Congress, and you have to deal with him as such.

KING: I thank you, both, very much.