EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD M. KENNEDY

Interview 25

December 9, 2007
Washington, D.C.

Interviewer
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In Attendance:
Victoria Reggie Kennedy

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TRANSCRIPT

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Young: This is an interview with Senator Kennedy, December 9, 2007, in Washington. Vicki [Reggie Kennedy] is with us. We're going to talk about war, with specific reference to the Middle Eastern conflicts: the short war in Iraq and some of its antecedents, Afghanistan, and the current ongoing war in Iraq.

Kennedy: To understand my view about the Iraq conflict and my hesitancy about the involvement of the United States, I think it's only fair to look at both the immediate and the historic background. Both are very important. The immediate background is the fact that it was Al Qaeda and the Taliban that attacked us on 9/11. They were the adversaries, and Iraq was a diversion that echoed and resonated with the American people as we were coming into the administration's rush to war with Iraq.

We have to understand that going to war is the most important decision a legislator makes. Clearly it is for a President, but certainly the votes we cast to bring a country to conflict, into war are the most important. I think even with this Iraq situation, it's important that we look at some of the experiences of the immediate and the historic past.

The past experience for me was not just Afghanistan, which I'll come to, but if you look back further, it was the Vietnam War and the great conflicts we faced in World War II—when everyone signed up and was aboard. We had been attacked, just like we were on 9/11. The other series of conflicts we've gotten into sprang from the tension we had with the Soviet Union in the post-World War II period—the anti-communist period, the surge by the communists to expand their influence, and the tensions that brought.

I've been a student of the anti-colonial period. It was a period President [John F.] Kennedy had been very much involved in, and it's something I watched very closely and learned from. I had been in law school, and he suggested I go down to see the Algerian conflict. This was after Morocco and Tunisia had freed themselves from the colonial powers; and Africa was moving away from the colonial powers.

President Kennedy looked at the great strife between the Soviet Union and the West as represented by India, which had freed itself from the British. Which way was India going to go? Were they going to go with democracy or were they going to go with communism? He was very active in supporting India for that reason. He thought, coming out of World War II, as these

countries were freeing themselves from colonialism, they were also open to the strife between communism and capitalism and Western democracy.

He had gone to Southeast Asia and had been there just before, or at the time of, Dien Bien Phu. He had watched the Algerian situation develop. So he had some sense—which I certainly observed, because it was something that was discussed—of the movement of people to free themselves from colonialism, and the strife that "occupiers" had to endure in some instances—the French in Algeria and in Southeast Asia, the British in Malaysia—to hold onto their countries, and the internal conflicts that were taking place. This obviously spilled over into Vietnam.

The Vietnam experience developed in the post-Dien Bien Phu period, where they had actually gotten a peace treaty. [Dwight] Eisenhower signed onto it, but the breakdown and deterioration of that agreement began because the communists and Viet Cong were pressing it, and the involvement of the United States began to escalate. I think we've gone over my own transformation in Vietnam.

So we've seen where the United States had gotten into the conflict in Vietnam with all the extraordinary misrepresentations, the lies, the loss of American lives, the billions of dollars spent, the failure to level with the American people about the impossible situation of westernizing Vietnam. So there's a resonance.

We've been involved in a lot of other conflicts that I took strong positions on—one with regard to Contra aid. That's a somewhat different phenomenon, but it's an important one, and we were very much involved and engaged working with Congressman [Edward P.] Boland trying to end that conflict. I played a role in that. Then we have other incidents of executive authority: Panama, Grenada, and a different situation, obviously, in Korea.

One has to be cautioned about the ability of the United States to resolve political conflicts with military solutions. I think there was a healthy kind of skepticism about that. But there was also a recognition that the United States had to be prepared to involve itself in areas where we had strong interests. We were slow in responding to Bosnia, though the Dayton Accords were a success. We didn't get into Rwanda, despite the killings that took place there. I think history will have to judge our unwillingness to do that. We were slow getting involved in Kosovo, which eventually, with American leadership, turned out in a satisfactory way.

We clearly have an interest in being involved abroad, but the emphasis should always lie in diplomacy first—the economic, social,political initiatives that can be made—and in a military approach last. That's still certainly something we're guided by now.

In the first Gulf War, I agreed with [George] Mitchell and Sam Nunn that we had not given economic sanctions available to the United States enough time to work to get Saddam [Hussein] out of Kuwait. I had seen sanctions work, and work very effectively, particularly in South Africa. Within four years of sanctions being imposed on South Africa, Nelson Mandela was out of jail and they had a change in the government there.

The reasons they worked is that they were comprehensive. All of Europe was involved in the economic sanctions, and when the United States got involved in it, it had a dramatic economic

impact on South Africa. It seemed to me that we ought to seek first to use sanctions to achieve our interests in that part of the world [Iraq] without getting into a military conflict. I thought it ought to be given a try, and it hadn't been. That was my reservation about it.

What we learned from the Gulf War is that [George H.W.] Bush I built international support for a military operation rather than taking unilateral action, and most importantly, understood the limitations of American forces going into and occupying Baghdad. That's been noted and discussed and debated. The neocons felt that they should have gone into Baghdad, but [Brent] Scowcroft and Bush I cleverly decided not to go in militarily to overthrow Saddam or to occupy Baghdad. They saw the dangers of trying to occupy the country and remembered how the British had been driven out in the 1920s when they tried to cobble together the Sunnis and the Shi'a and the Kurds into a country.

They made a wise judgment in terms of restraint and focused military objectives, and that was enormously important. The cooperation we had from the international community was evident by the 34 country coalition that included Arab states—even those who didn't join, like Germany and Japan contributed almost $17 billion dollars. So the important lessons learned were the limitations of military power and unilateral action, particularly with regard to the Middle East, and particularly with regard to Iraq. That was very important.

Young: There was also the fact that Kuwait had been invaded by another country, and so the limited U.S. objectives that Bush sought were to get Saddam out of Kuwait and restore Kuwait's sovereignty.

Kennedy: And that effectively happened. The Iraqis were not prepared to fight the American forces. They had a low morale, and all the rest that we've learned historically. Saddam Hussein claimed Kuwait as part of Iraq. However, Kuwaitis felt invaded and occupied. It's a dicey part of the world in terms of drafting various boundary lines through the whole region. They were really drafted during the colonial period, but nonetheless, that was the purpose and the reason for the conflict, and when the Iraqis withdrew from those areas, the United States ended its effective presence, although we maintained these zones—the northern zone and the southern zone.

Young: The no-fly.

Kennedy: The no-fly zones. Later, incidents of terrorism took place: the Khobar Towers and embassies in Africa blown up, and the bombing of the *USS Cole,* the Navy ship being refueled in Yemen. We had. We had acts of violence and terrorism taking place, and the limited response by President [William J.] Clinton, that's been pointed out historically.

Young: Was the period you're talking about now the time when terrorism first appeared on the radar screen? Saddam's invasion of another country was the impetus for the Gulf War. Was this the period when you and the government and others became aware that there was something else going on?

Kennedy: I think so. There were these series of different events in the early '90s, the [first] attack on the World Trade Center, and then the embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and then the *USS Cole* in Yemen. Those were the most dramatic and notorious events. Even though those

took place, I don't think there was much of an effort to tie them together and see it as growth and the dangers of terrorism.

Now as to 9/11, President [George W.] Bush wins the election—a controversial election. We have learned from [Ronald] Suskind's book on Paul O'Neill, President Bush's Secretary of Treasury, that from the earliest days of the administration, going into January of 2001—this is several months, obviously, before 9/11—the administration had been fascinated by Saddam Hussein, and was trying to build a case against him.

This was brought out by O'Neill and by Suskind, in the book, which addressed Cabinet meetings on the topic at that time. It was a theme reiterated by O'Neill and Suskind in that book, and it's been authenticated by others. The administration and President Bush, [Richard] Cheney, [Paul] Wolfowitz, and [Donald] Rumsfeld, all had their eye on Saddam Hussein and were looking for the opportunity to topple him. They believed it would be easy to bring changes that would be useful to spread the United States' interests in the Middle East. They scoffed at the diplomatic efforts made by President Clinton—which had been significant—towards the end of his terms, and they were very engaged in thinking about how they were going to topple and defeat Saddam Hussein in his own country. Planning had taken place.

Young: Looking back, how would you explain this—I don't know whether to call it an obsession or what. How should people understand what motivated the administration to adopt this goal?

Kennedy: I think the first evidence of it was the strong, strong dissent that was heard when President Bush decided not to go into Baghdad during the first Gulf War. That decision was strongly criticized by the neocons, [Richard] Perle and others outside of government, in the advisory capacity, who continued to raise it after the war. They were saying that this had been a very significant and great mistake, that the United States should have gone into Baghdad, and that it would have made a major difference in terms of our interests in the Middle East.

This argument was carried forward in public letters, documents and papers that were widely circulated. It became a rather acceptable concept in conservative circles that we should have taken the actions then, and that it would have changed the Middle East for the better. It was a theory that was out there—at least a theory that was held by the neocons—and it was discussed and debated among them and acceptable to them, although I don't think it had general support.

Many who shared this view came into government with Bush II in responsible positions, mostly in the Defense Department. In any event, that was the climate and atmosphere in the administration after January and through the summer, although I don't think people outside the administration had much sense about it.

Now we come to 9/11. I think I've described the drama of that with Mrs. [Laura] Bush.

Young: No, we have not.

Kennedy: On September 11, Mrs. Bush was coming up to testify on early education before our Education, Health, Labor Committee. We had been working with her on issues of literacy and

early education. We had a conference in Georgetown with her on early education. This was the idea that the earlier the intervention, the better it is for the children.

There was dispute and questions about the idea, how significant the impact was going to be, and also whether we were going to be able to get resources to do it. Mrs. Bush had been involved in reading programs, and I had attended reading programs with her. I do it with a reading program called Everyone Wins at the Brent School here in the District of Columbia. I've done it for 12 years or so. Mrs. Bush has been involved in reading programs, and we had attended programs together and had spoken at events. She agreed to come up to the Hill and testify in favor of early education on this particular day—9/11.

I was in my office. The hearing was at 10 o'clock. She was going to come in around 9:15 and meet me and Senator Judd Gregg [Ranking member of the Help Committee], and then, about 15 or 20 minutes later, the other members of the committee were going to come in and meet her. We were all going to go to the Senate Caucus Room from my office, which is on the third floor of the Russell Building, 318, opposite the Caucus Room, and she would testify at 10:00.

I arrived at the office probably around 8:30 or quarter to nine. We were preparing for the hearing and for Mrs. Bush when Beth [Hoagland] came in and said that Vicki was on the phone and that there had been a crash of a plane into one of the towers. It was very alarming. I think you were the first one to call in. I forget the time.

Mrs. Kennedy: 8:45, 8:50, something like that.

Kennedy: I was alerted, but I didn't believe this was a terrorist attack. It just didn't sink in. And then probably 20 or 25 minutes later, the second plane hit. Vicki had called in about that, and it was quite evident that something was happening, something was going on, some kind of attack.

This was the time Mrs. Bush was supposed to arrive. I went and spoke to the staff and said we'd better find out and cancel the hearing and notify Mrs. Bush. They said, "She's already left the car downstairs." So I went out of my office and to the car, and I saw her walking down. She was completely unaware; she was walking by herself. She had an aide behind her, and then behind her were the Secret Service. She was walking down rather elegantly, a poised person, completely unaware of what was happening at that time.

She came into the office. Judd Gregg had just arrived, and we filled her in as to what was happening. Then probably the security gave her some fill-in, although they were rather mystified by it all. They didn't really know what it all meant. They were in a holding pattern. I started going around the room, showing her different things in my office. I thought rather than just sitting there I ought to try to occupy her thoughts. She was interested and inquisitive. At some time in here, there was information that the Pentagon had been struck.

Mrs. Kennedy: I was involved; I was here on the phone, calling into the office, and I know at some point, you and Mrs. Bush had a press conference canceling. I had been calling your office, and then the office was evacuated, and then you called me, and I was very eager that you get out of there. But you wouldn't leave Mrs. Bush. You said, "No, I'm here with Mrs. Bush," and you felt an obligation to stay with her, very gentlemanly and very kind.

I was somewhat crazed, wanting you out of there. But you said, "The Secret Service is here; don't worry." I said, "Well, they can't stop a plane. They've hit the Pentagon." And you said, "Oh? Where did you hear that?" I said, "It's on CNN, and you can see the smoke from upstairs in our bedroom. You can see it coming across the river. So you'll have to get out of there."

You hung up to go talk to them, but the Secret Service was unaware—you all were unaware that the plane had hit the Pentagon, and there were other planes still in the air at that time.

Kennedy: Just at this time, we went over to the Caucus Room, and it was absolutely packed. I spoke about what was happening and then Mrs. Bush spoke, which she did very well. I have it written down, but I can't tell you exactly what I said at the time. The point was that there had been some conflict or attack, and we were not going to have the hearing. We would do it later on.

Then she talked briefly, and we went back into my office. The Secret Service were going to take her out. We walked down the corridor towards the east side of the building where there are some elevators. The Secret Service said, "We'd better hold." They were looking around to find an office to go into, and Judd Gregg's office was there, so we went into his office and stayed there. The Secret Service were outside.

At that time, they said that there were seven or eight other planes, and they didn't know where they were going, whether they were going to go to the Capitol or to office buildings, or what they were going to do. So they made a decision they weren't going to move her. That's when I suggested that she call the President. At that time, he had not called her, nor had she called him, nor had the Secret Service. She had not called her children. So she went into the room and we went out, and she tried to get him. It took a long, long time, 20 or 30 minutes before she was able to get him. But I'd say for an hour and a half there hadn't been any communication whatsoever between the two of them, or with the children, which I thought was rather interesting.

Young: He was out in the West, wasn't he?

Kennedy: He was in Florida, and then he went out to Arkansas.

Mrs. Kennedy: He was sent to Louisiana, and then up to Nebraska or somewhere.

Kennedy: Eventually he came back, but she was here.

Young: And Cheney was in charge?

Kennedy: I don't know.

Young: Apparently, from an undisclosed location.

Kennedy: She came out and said she had talked to the President and her daughters, and then the Secret Service took her and we came out. All the phones were down, and people were out on the grassy areas outside the Capitol. I got in the car to come home, and of course the roads were absolutely jammed. Everybody was trying to get their kids out of school, but the authorities said it was probably better to leave them in school where they could get information. They were located, they were safe and secure rather than being home. Some parents were home, but some

couldn't get home. They wouldn't be able to get in at some places. The idea that you drop the kids off at home was kind of interesting; people were adjusting to this. Your kids couldn't come home.

Mrs. Kennedy: Curran [Raclin] was a freshman at college, but Caroline [Raclin] was at school, and we had been talking a lot that morning. Teddy said, "I think it's safer for her to stay at school," and I agreed. Remember, you called me when you finally got in the car, and you said, "Traffic isn't moving, I'm going to get in the subway." I said, "No!" I was terrified of the idea of the subway, because who knew what was going on—there might be a bomb.

You stayed in the car, and it took you forever to get in, but then Caroline managed to get through on the phone, and she was hysterical. I said, "No, Teddy and I have discussed it, and you'll stay at school, and I'll get you when things are quiet." She said, "Come get me right now. I want to come home. I need you to come get me." I said, "Okay, but it's going to take me a while." She said, "That's okay." School is five minutes from here, and it did take a while, but I picked her up with a friend of hers who was there and couldn't get a parent to pick him up. I brought him here too. We waited and then Teddy got here. We kept the TV off so they wouldn't see it, but then when they finally did see it, it was just a pretty traumatic day, to say the least.

Young: And during this time, it wasn't known what else was on the way.

Kennedy: No.

Mrs. Kennedy: No. There were missing planes that were still in the air.

Kennedy: There were missing planes. They finally made the judgment—it was probably early afternoon—that there were no more planes. One was the Pennsylvania plane. It was going out west and then turned around, and they didn't know where that was going to go. They changed from seven or eight, and then after the Pentagon and that one in Pennsylvania, they realized they had all the planes down. That night, we went back into the Senate. It was 8 o'clock. I talked to [Thomas] Daschle, to urge him to go back in—to have the Senate go back into session. We all went back in and the House went back in—

Mrs. Kennedy: To show that terrorists weren't going to stop us.

Kennedy: Yes, they weren't going to stop the functioning of government. Then they had the anthrax scare that closed the Senate Hart Building. They didn't know how many people were being targeted, and whether we were about to be. This was coming at us through the mail. So we had these two very dramatic moments, and it was heightened, clearly for me, because of the fact that Mrs. Bush was there, the First Lady—her presence, and the drama of these horrific assaults and attacks on these buildings—the people going out those windows. That will remain in my memory forever. The horrific aspects of this were just emblazoned in people's minds—the smoke at the Pentagon. But through all this, people believed that Saddam Hussein was behind it. I think there's no question they did.

Young: Does this include your colleagues in the Senate?

Kennedy: Well, it was pretty broad, pretty widespread. I remember going to the briefing, that afternoon or the next morning, and they said it was Al Qaeda. The briefers said they believed that was it, but there was a good deal of skepticism. I remember telling Vicki they pretty much knew who these people were, but there was a lot of talk.

Young: They were mostly Saudis.

Kennedy: Yes, they were Saudis.

Young: The briefing was by whom?

Kennedy: The briefing was from CIA [Central Intelligence Agency].

Mrs. Kennedy: But they said it was [Osama] bin Laden, right?

Kennedy: Osama bin Laden, yes.

Young: Not Saddam.

Kennedy: Not Saddam. The American people certainly believed it was Saddam, and the political leadership let it go on. All the polls reflect that. You get it even now: half of the American people still think it was Saddam Hussein, even though it's been completely debunked. Certainly during all the debate and discussion, people thought it was Saddam, even though the members had been briefed. So, there was a universal condemnation of Osama bin Laden and the Taliban, and Al Qaeda, not only by everyone here in the United States or Congress, but also by the American people and the world. We were unified.

French newspapers said, "Today we're all Americans." It was just an overwhelming, complete, thoroughly unified response—assault and go after at Qaeda in Afghanistan, and we did. Americans came together, with a unified purpose, an understanding of the reasons for the commitment of American forces, and the establishment of a goal that was going to be achievable. That was when the United States went to war, and that was when it made sense in terms of bringing everyone together. Of course it brought Europeans together. Even the Iranians were helpful, when they get the—

Young: On the border.

Kennedy: On the border, and when they set up [Hamid] Karzai at the end, they had the Bonn Conference, and all the Muslim countries were very supportive. It was a worldwide, unified effort to deal with the challenge of the time. Of course, that dissipated almost overnight with the Iraq War. It's difficult to capture the dramatic, horrific and sobering reaction to 9/11 in terms of its impact on all of us as individuals, and also the country. This is really the Pearl Harbor in this geeration—that was an assault on military targets, and this was an assault on individuals and civilian targets. It was just incredibly powerful. The unified response now was Afghanistan.

Should we take a break for a minute?

Young: Yes.

[BREAK]

Kennedy: So, we're at the end of 2001. The Senate has passed a unanimous vote, 98-0, on the Afghanistan war, and we're moving into 2002. I think as history shows, there was increasing anxiety about the steps being taken by the administration that were divisive in terms of the country—the Patriot Act and the issue of civil liberties, the Axis of Evil speech, which was a condemnation not only of Iraq, but also Iran and North Korea. And there was the Cheney speech in August. So what you had is the increasing pressure and increasing loss of support worldwide, in terms of actions that were taken by the United States; cracking down on individual rights, the way we were dealing with these issues at home. Then there was, as we've seen, the move towards the conflict with Iraq in the fall of 2002.

Young: And there was also in there the announcement of the doctrine of preventive war or preemptive war. All of these things were coming head on heels.

Kennedy: You're absolutely right, and I made a statement on that at Harvard that it would be useful to have flagged here, in preparation for this debate. I was admitted to the faculty of arts and sciences at Harvard, and spoke about this. It was a brief speech, probably eight or ten minutes, but a very good one, about the difference between preemption and prevention. It was just at this time, at the beginning of the debate on the Iraq War.

Mrs. Kennedy: I think you made that speech in early September of 2002.

Kennedy: September, 2002. Now the drumbeat starts about the necessity of doing something about Iraq. We had the beginning of the escalation of rhetoric on Iraq. Over the course of the summer, when we were up in Massachusetts in August and early September, we had a sense that the administration was going to move towards opening up a front with Iraq.

I can remember talking with friends in Boston about the increasing likelihood that it was going to take place, and I was honest about it, but I indicated that I was going to wait until we had some hearings. We had an incredibly important and powerful hearing in the Armed Services Committee on September 23. We had General [John] Shalikashvili, Wes Clark, General [Joseph P.] Hoar of the Marines, General [William] Nash, who was a commander in Bosnia, and General [Thomas] McInerney.

A number of those had retired, but all are very distinguished military officers on a panel addressing the challenges of going to war in Iraq. They were virtually unanimous in cautioning against going to war with Iraq, and particularly going to war without the international community. General Hoar is from Massachusetts. He said that if we did go to war with Iraq, it would end up being an urban war. He pointed out that all the advantages the United States has in terms of technology, firepower and all the rest, would be lost because it would end up in a street fight, which would be just soldier versus soldier, and it would look like the last 15 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*.

It was a very powerful presentation, and we had the best of the best in terms of military leaders. All of them had seen a good deal of conflict in Vietnam and some in the Gulf War. They were virtually unanimous in cautioning against going to war, and that had a very important impact on me. I gave a speech in opposition to the war shortly thereafter at what's called the SAIS [School of Advanced International Studies] at Johns Hopkins.

The other very important hearing we had was an intelligence hearing. Rumsfeld had used these words in a public hearing. When he was asked where the weapons of mass destruction were, he said, "They're in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west of Sadr and north somewhat." I think he said about 127 different locations.

[Carl] Levin said, "Well, if they're there, why don't we send the inspectors in, point them out, and identify those eight or ten different areas?" Rumsfeld said, "The inspection teams are all penetrated, and if we do that, they'll move them."

Then Levin said, "Why can't we get cameras and watch them move them?" And Rumsfeld turned around to [George] Tenet and said, "Okay, we'll give them eight or ten locations." He told Levin, at different times, that they were continuously giving the locations of these centers to the inspection team, and then after the war got started, they got a report from the inspectors that they never got any of them. They never gave them any locations whatsoever. I thought the reluctance and resistance to give the inspection teams the locations was a rather fierce indictment that this wasn't for real. I thought this added up to the fact that we were just getting the drumbeat of harsh rhetoric.

Take that sense, and then add to it the rhetoric that was starting about the mushroom cloud. You had Cheney saying that without question Iraq did have weapons of mass destruction, and you had the President using similar kinds of words. There's a whole sequence of these kinds of hot-button words they were using that had been carefully designed to build public support for the invasion.

In the summertime (we're backing up to 2002), I had talked to President Clinton, who had spoken at a labor conference outside London. He indicated that he had noticed this rhetoric building up, but said we should not get all worked up about it. He told me this confidentially—because [Anthony] Blair had convinced Bush to go to the United Nations, and he thought the United Nations would put some common sense into the two of them. I remember that conversation. We took notes on it. I don't know where those notes are from that summer.

I also had Gordon Brown, who had been up at the Cape that summer, over for lunch. He didn't get into much of a discussion about the British position, but I got a very clear sense from our conversation that he knew Blair was aboard and that Blair had convinced the President that they ought to go to the UN before taking action. There was no question when we had the resolution in the Senate [in October of 2002]—and this is one of the most important historic points—that the administration wanted action and wanted it immediately. They had a faltering economy and faltering polls. Those were the realities. President Bush wanted to have the vote prior to the election, there's no question about it, particularly in contrast to his father, who waited until after the election to get the vote on the first Gulf War. There was a clear path he could have taken, but he didn't take that path. There was an absolute drive to get this done and get it done rapidly.

On the Friday before the vote, which I think ended up being on Wednesday or Thursday, Bob Byrd asked me to come down to his office, and we had a meeting with three or four Senators who were like-minded in opposition to war. We had figured out we had eight votes against it—although we said we had ten—and we thought we were increasing. But we had effectively eight votes against it.

Young: Against authorization?

Kennedy: Against authorization for going to war. Then on that Monday it opened up somewhat, and probably eight or ten Senators came on. Carl Levin was in that group, Barbara Boxer was in it, as was [Jon] Corzine. A number of people were with us on that Monday. It built a little bit. When we were going in to vote, we thought it was about 18 votes. I think we got up to 22 or 23.

Young: Twenty-three.

Kennedy: Twenty-three votes on it. I had a conversation with my colleague John Kerry. He was sort of torn about what to do, and I mentioned to him that he ought to vote against it. I think you vote the substance, then the politics of it. On the politics, I thought if he voted for the war and they had a great success, he wasn't going to get any credit for it, but if he voted against it and it didn't go right, he was going to get some credit. Besides, considering what I thought to be the substance of it, to vote the politics was bad.

Since I mentioned John, just historically, I was reminded that after 2005, I delivered another big speech on the war, and it was about getting out, setting the timeframe to get out of Iraq. John was on *Meet the Press*. Tim Russert said, "Do you agree with Kennedy that there should be a specific timetable of withdrawal for American troops?" He said no. I had forgotten about that.

In any event, historically, I think Senator Byrd deserves an enormous amount of credit. He was very eloquent through all of this, and right on the button about who brings a country to war. The nation has to be brought to war. It has to be a shared power, a shared responsibility. This was a unilateral action, and it was going to be a great mistake. Of course he was absolutely right on all points. It was a lonely position during that time. Those who took a different position were roundly criticized and condemned readily and repeatedly.

Young: For what?

Kennedy: For having a different position, for saying that the attack of 9/11 was by Osama bin Laden—not Saddam Hussein—and we ought to keep our eye on battling him. We ought to keep our eye on battling Al Qaeda. They were the threat to the United States. They were the ones who had attacked us. We were involved in diverting the resources from the battle against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. It had been demonstrated most basically and fundamentally that Iraq did not present a clear and present danger, an imminent threat to the United States. Nowhere could they demonstrate that Iraq was an imminent threat to the United States or to our national security—and this is ultimately the criterion that has to be used in deciding to use force to protect the United States. They failed to meet that criterion and that measurement. They took their eye off the ball in terms of who the perpetrators were on 9/11, and with this action, we saw the collapse of the support of the international community for the United States' position in fighting Al Qaeda and the Taliban and Osama bin Laden.

Young: The administration's argument was, by then, that Al Qaeda and Iraq were basically the same enemy.

Kennedy: That's right.

Young: That is, Iraq made the attacks possible. I thought they had two arguments: one was to justify the war on Iraq as a war against Al Qaeda. Didn't they try to do that?

Mrs. Kennedy: I thought they said we have the lessons of 9/11. They kept talking about the lessons of 9/11; we have to get them before they get us. We have to get Iraq, because we've learned the lesson of 9/11. And then they kept conflating it, to make it seem as though Iraq had been involved in 9/11.

Young: Yes, that's right.

Mrs. Kennedy: Without letting people think they hadn't been.

Kennedy: The President indicated that many meetings took place between Al Qaeda and the Iraqis, which was completely untrue. Cheney did the same thing. Then, in the State of the Union, the President talked about the yellowcake and the building of the nuclear weapons, which was also completely untrue.

Young: The British Government has learned—

Kennedy: —learned that the Iraqis were importing this material that could be used for the development of enriched uranium. There was no question that at the highest levels—Cheney, Rumsfeld, Condi [Condoleezza] Rice, and the President—there were distortions, misrepresentations, and mistruths. That was true with Tenet as well. And that all created a climate that built very broad support for going to war, which we did.

We went to war with a military that wasn't properly equipped to deal with the type of conflict they were going to face: our Humvees did not have proper armor, so our soldiers didn't have the right equipment. The Administration went to war without a plan to secure the peace and made repeated errors in terms of the administration of the war effort. They went to war without a plan about how to eventually get out of Iraq. They continued to mislead the American people. Wolfowitz stated that we would be treated as liberators, that we would be able to use Iraqi resources and money to offset costs and pay for the war.

And we were constantly given rosy scenarios, all the way through the conflict, right up to the very end—for four and a half years. We had this incredible mad search for weapons of mass destruction that weren't there. We spent hundreds of millions of dollars searching for them; the Administration kept saying they were there and were being hidden. We used American troops as police. They never made an effort to involve the Italian carabinieri, the Spanish police and British police—all highly professional and good at police work. Instead, they used American troops. This was a catastrophic failure. We were completely unprepared to deal with the kind of military threat we faced from the insurgency, including the blowing up of the Humvees by IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices].

I had raised the issue of the post-war humanitarian effort. We finally got John Warner, who was Chairman of the Armed Services Committee at the time, to have one hearing on it. It was the most pitiful hearing—certainly one of the most pitiful I've ever attended. It was basically all slogans and clichés about how different organizations were coordinating and working together, how they were going to deal with all the problems related to the flow of people and refugees in the post-war period. It was insulting in terms of its blandness and lack of substance.

Of course, when we saw the invasion, none of that was there initially, but it came later. We've taken the political heat for it with the growing escalation of hatred and distrust by the Iraqi people, and it's been enormously costly.

Young: Do you have any recollection, first of all, about when you fully realized that the die was cast—this is before the votes were taken—that the administration was determined to do this come what may? Second, when did you begin to realize that there was a lot of lying and deception practiced by the administration? In retrospect, the pattern becomes pretty clear, particularly now. But I wonder if you have any thoughts or any memories of when you—Was it that summer, for example, August of 2000, that you began to realize that Bush was going to do this regardless of the rationale?

Kennedy: I mentioned that it was in the summer of 2002 when my antennae really went up in terms of where we were, where the administration was leading us. Cheney spoke to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and I had given several speeches before we went to war. We had Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan. We also were not taking into consideration Iran, which was dangerous, and North Korea. North Korea has now dimmed, at least today, despite the fact that this administration almost got us in conflict there.

We weren't taking into consideration those two significant forces. We weren't finishing the job in Afghanistan; we were going into Iraq, and it made no sense. I don't know when I had the interview in Boston where I said this was a "fraud cooked up in Texas."

Mrs. Kennedy: That was later, after the invasion. It was September 2004.

Kennedy: By early summer, certainly, and then by September, early fall, it was increasingly clear. Bush gave a speech in Ohio in October 2002, before the war, where he overstated the case. They telegraphed all of this pretty well in a series of speeches by Bush and Cheney and others. They were telegraphing and escalating it fairly quickly.

This is a classic example of ideology over policy. The ideology and the viewpoint were from Gulf I and Bush I, when the neocons said they should have gone into Baghdad. Their view at that particular time remained a tenet of their Middle Eastern policy. Bush gets elected and puts these people into positions of responsibility. They've never forgotten that we didn't go into Baghdad, and they're working it tirelessly right from the very beginning, building and using 9/11 as an excuse to carry that forward. That's the scenario. It was an ideological view, rather than a public view.

They did this not only with an ideological view, but also with incredible incompetence. It was gross incompetence: a policy based on the ideology of rosy scenarios; blank checks provided for funding—with no accountability; distortions and misrepresentations; failure to accurately and

truthfully characterize the circumstances in Iraq; and denial that Iraq had slipped into a civil war. We had misrepresentations and distortions getting us into the war, existing while we're there, and continuing all the way through—including the fundamental mischaracterization that democratic institutions and values can be imposed from the top down rather than built from the bottom up.

This past week, I had a meeting with Reverend Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness. It was their first trip to the U.S. since they took power in Northern Ireland in May of last year. They sat in a room in the Capitol. We had probably eight or ten Senators—Lindsey Graham, Gordon Smith, Susan Collins, Dick Durbin, [Charles] Schumer, Jack Reed, [Patrick] Leahy—and they talked about economic development. They said there was no chance for them to go back to an earlier time of the bomb and the bullet.

Lindsey Graham came in at the tail end of the meeting and said, "I'm here to try and get lower golf fees at the golf course in Northern Ireland," whatever golf course is up there. I thought, *What kind of a comment is that?* But they laughed. Graham said "We're still going to be able to have peace in the north, so I can play golf." They laughed and I thought, *Oh my God, how did we get*—Then he said, "What was it, anyway, that let you two guys get together?" Ian Paisley picked it up—he never would have talked before—and said, "The recognition that you cannot impose it on us. You can't impose peace on us."

He said, "Blair—he's my friend and I admire and like him, and he's been a great help on this—never understood it until the very end. He always thought he knew how we could get peace, but he didn't. It was only when he showed enough respect for us to be able to negotiate this thing that we were able to do it."

And that was true with regard to Martin McGuinness as well. They said, "You just cannot put these benchmarks—like the benchmarks we have in Iraq—deadlines. It has to be on the local people. They have to be trusted. They have to be helped along the way, but they have to do it themselves, because otherwise it will never, never go."

As he listened, we transitioned to Iraq. You could hear what they were saying, and see how in conflict it was with the administration's policy. It was breathtaking, with Reverend Paisley and Martin McGuinness completely agreeing. Martin said he'd been up in Helsinki for four days and nights with the Shiites and the Sunnis, and he said he finally put one word out: leadership. He said leadership has to come locally, but you can't impose any of these conditions on the locals. He said, "It's never going to work."

This crowd, these neocons, had a policy and a zealousness about Iraq and Saddam Hussein and have basically undermined and destroyed, temporarily, America's standing in the world. They've pursued the war with an ideological commitment, incompetence, misrepresentation and distortion, rosy pictures, and open-endedness. They've failed to give the servicemen proper equipment and the support they need. In the meantime, look at what the lessons have been.

The lessons are that today the Taliban are stronger than ever, and Al Qaeda is growing. You have a greater recruitment for Al Qaeda than they ever had—since 9/11, Al Qaeda's ability to recruit and maintain and train people has grown. Iran's power has increased, and it poses more of a

threat now than it did prior to the Iraqi conflict. There are four million people displaced, both in Iraq and in the Middle East, and they are increasing instability in Jordan, in Lebanon, and in Syria. Our army has been stretched to the breaking point, and thirty-odd thousand wounded Americans are going to be reminders of this failed policy in a most dramatic way. It's cataclysmic in terms of its significance.

I addressed those issues in series of talks and speeches from the beginning. Now I am arguing for the closing down of this war, with a recognition that—at least I believe—for the Iraqis to be able to make a judgment and decision themselves, they have to be convinced that the United States is going to change and alter its policy and get out. That is still the key to getting them to make the decisions for reconciliation in the north. That's still what's necessary.

What you don't have, even with the surge today, is some military progress. Basically it's in areas that have been ethnically cleansed, for the most part, but you don't have the reconciliation. And you need reconciliation, because even as the military figures have said, you have to have the military, but you have to have reconciliation. My own view is that the Iraqi political leadership is effectively holding American military personnel hostage until they're going to have political reconciliation and settlement. We are spilling American blood and spilling resources over there, while they're dithering and refusing to make the tough judgments and decisions that have to be the basis for political reconciliation, as they did in Northern Ireland.

Young: Do you think we've passed the point of no return?

Kennedy: My own sense, from listening to people I respect over there, is that it's a very hard slog for these people to make the tough judgments and decisions. Hopefully they will, but it's very hard for the parties to be willing to make those kinds of judgments. It sure doesn't appear to be going on now.

Young: But as General [David] Petraeus used to say, you have to have pacification before you can get reconciliation in order not to have violence. It looks like it's the horns of a dilemma.

Kennedy: It is, but not for five years. They had a military budget of $4 billion. They had $4 billion. We now have $400 billion a year, and they're continuing to go to a country of 25 million that had been beaten ten years ago, completely militarily destroyed. At some time you have to say the military has done everything they can. I think after four and a half years, you say the military has done everything it can. They've gone and done everything they've been asked to do, and if this crowd isn't going to do it, then why are we going to continue at this?

They don't have large weapons, so what are they going to sweep through the whole Middle East, this military? They're all small arms. The other countries are so worked up about it that they're taking a pass on it. Destabilization in the Gulf. Those countries are all sitting back. Everyone's saying, "They're going to have chaos over there." Well, if they're going to have chaos, you'd think the countries in the region would be somewhat worried. Hello? What we're doing is continuing to see the loss of lives and deterioration. We need a big change.

Young: A change in the White House, you mean?

Kennedy: Well, we need change in the White House, but we need a change in policy. I think you can get other countries in on it. The U.S. *ought* to get other countries involved and have very aggressive policy changes. I'm all for that, but I just don't think that what's happening now, continuing along, is going to work.

Young: Has the time passed for diplomacy?

Kennedy: There are probably diplomats who can be helpful and useful, and who should be called on to do it. It's certainly worth it.

Young: With the majority of the American people apparently finding the course of action or the current state of affairs unacceptable, why the inability of their representatives in the Senate and Congress to do anything about it?

Kennedy: I think they're caught by two factors. One is that this new threat of terrorism is something they don't quite understand and they're very concerned about. Security is an inherent need people have; they react inherently to it. That's why we honor people who are so courageous, who risk their own security for others. We admire people who do things when they're not being called on, jump into rivers to save people, for example, when they're not in the military. What they're doing is noble, and we give great recognition to it. So security is number one. Secondly, Americans have bought into the politics that we have to support this war because we have to support our soldiers.

Young: Yes.

Kennedy: That's different from Vietnam. That was not there. It was a great mistake for Democrats to buy into the theory that we have to support our soldiers, and therefore we have to appropriate more money. That has slowed the whole process of ending this conflict. No one believes we're going to leave American servicemen without bullets to defend themselves. They don't really think so, but they're not sure about it, and when—

Young: And when the President says that's exactly what they're up to—

Kennedy: —exactly what they're up to, as he has misrepresented other things. People say, "You ought to be able to change the policy without risking my son over there." We were at the airport not long ago, and a captain of a U.S. airline came up and said, "Don't you ever vote for stopping the funding over there, so my boys over there are left not being able to defend themselves. Don't you ever do that."

Here's a well educated person who actually believes we would leave people over there to be butchered because we're not going to let them defend themselves. It's absolutely ridiculous, but the Republicans were very clever in getting that as a test, and Democrats bought into it. And once they bought into it, it slowed the effort to end the war in a very important and significant way. It's a big mistake. Now, all of our Democratic resolutions say we'll do whatever it takes to defend the boys.

Carl Levin says he's for a more sensible and responsible policy, but when he was asked on a television program last week, he said, "We're going to take care of the service members; you can

be sure. You've heard that from me; we're going to make sure they have what they need." And once you buy into that kind of thing, you're in a very different circumstance.

If you read back through the debates on Vietnam, that wasn't the case. It wasn't that we were ending the war and drawing down and therefore exposing our boys to more danger. That was not the argument we used. I think we've bought a pig in a poke on this one, and that has slowed this down incredibly.

Young: So it's disarmed the Democrats—

Kennedy: In a very important way. One of the things that I'm proudest of is the series of six or seven speeches I gave. They were major: I argued that before going to war the points we've outlined, that we've talked about here, should be addressed

One was we should internationalize the effort. I pointed out how the war was all cooked up by the administration and that we were being manipulated with the intelligence, how the intelligence was being used to distort it. I talked about how the war has made us less safe, which I think it has, and then about how we have to disengage so the Iraqis will stand up and take responsibility. That was in '05, and they still haven't taken responsibility.

And then finally, how the AUMF [Authorization for Use of Military Force] resolution no longer applies. And at the National Press Corps in January '07, on the issue of the surge, I said we ought to have a reauthorization of the conflict. Those are the major benchmarks.

Any consideration of this whole period of time—we haven't gotten into it much this morning—has to look into the detainees, what's happened with the detainees. This is an element of this whole Iraq situation, and it's not unrelated, obviously, to Afghanistan. But it has really come to an extraordinary moment in American history, where we find now, even while we're talking about this, reports in the national newspapers that the recordings of the torturing of certain individuals—and I guess filming aspects of it—have been destroyed.

We're told now that the President didn't know anything about that, and we're told that the President knew nothing about the national intelligence report that the Iranians' nuclear program was at a much slower rate than they anticipated in terms of driving towards nuclear weapons. He didn't know about that either.

This destruction of material is really something. The refusal of the administration to let witnesses come before the Judiciary and investigation committees is something. The threat that the administration has given the Intelligence Committee who said they're going to insist that the code that's been accepted by the Department of Defense for treatment of prisoners—which is consistent with the Geneva Accords—will also apply to the CIA. Now the President has indicated that he's going to veto that measure.

The President said 60 or 70 times that Congress had the same information he had in going to war. We've asked for the Presidential Daily Briefs to find out whether that's so. He made them available to the 9/11 Commission, but he won't make them available to the Intelligence Committee. The Administration said they'll veto that legislation I wrote requiring that the documents be shared, but we have to get those, of course.

This whole government secrecy is a monumental shift in terms of executive leadership. It's basically saying that he, as chief executive, has all power on war-related subject matter and that he will exercise it any way he wants to. It's an extraordinary byproduct of this whole period and something that's so inconsistent with the Constitution, the Founding Fathers' view about the shared power. That's very evident in the Founding Fathers' writing about war-making powers: the Commander in Chief is on the one side, and the ability to declare war is on the other, with Congress. They obviously wanted that as a shared power.

But this executive has usurped all power dealing with the war to itself. We've gone through—which we didn't get into today—the War Powers Act that came after the Vietnam War. What the country understood at that time, Republicans and Democrats, was that going to war is a shared responsibility. We're back to what we talked about at the opening: nothing is more important for a member of Congress to do than to cast a vote about war and peace.

We saw how the President ran off with that authority in the Vietnam War, and we needed the War Powers Act to try to reclaim it and have it a shared responsibility. We have not learned from history. We have the same experience now—we have the wars both in Iraq and Afghanistan. This President has usurped power for himself and to his administration—and he has a Supreme Court that's dangerously close to just rubber-stamping it.

Right now, while we're visiting, they're considering the case about whether those who have been held for six years in Guantanamo have any *habeas corpus* rights when they're absolutely contained by American forces. That's an interesting issue. Vicki and I had the opportunity to go to the Supreme Court and listen in to that discussion just this last week. It will be enormously interesting to see where they come out.

Young: Why do you suppose President Bush has not tried to bring the country and other countries together, when he was handed a unified country and a unified sympathetic world after 9/11? This is a real puzzle for future historians: why, with that enormous asset and benefit—which rarely comes to presidents in Cold War days and otherwise—why he has not built on that to try to keep the country together and build support for his views? It seems to me he's not done that with Congress, never tried to. Has he tried to do that with other countries?

Kennedy: I think he actually believes in a coalition of the willing. He actually believes they have an international coalition over there in Iraq. He keeps repeating it. He thinks they have the people—the British who are in with us—the 48 countries, including Fiji and Estonia and Latvia. He talks about it. We get 93% of the casualties, but he talks about the coalition of the willing.

Young: But he has much rhetoric that says we'll do it unilaterally. "You're for us or against us"—that was the opening speech. And we're prepared to do it unilaterally if we don't get support. The coalition his father built for the Gulf War was real.

Kennedy: That's right, but I think he feels he has the—What did he say, "I'm the decider"? I think he believes he has his coalition over there now, and he's very—

Young: Surely he doesn't think he has the country behind him on this.

Kennedy: No, but he thinks history will treat him right. I don't think I'm saying anything new. He's bullheaded, and he's certain in his viewpoint. He doesn't sweat alternatives or varying positions. I saw Zbigniew Brzezinski the other day at breakfast—four months or so ago—and he said Rumsfeld used to have him in every three months. He has a strong position in opposition to it, but he used to come in and listen to him. I don't think that President Bush has any of that kind of thing, none. There are some very good people who are very loyal to him—Scowcroft, for example, was incredibly loyal to his father, his best friend. He is very knowledgeable about defense, very smart, and could get two or three people together, give them a pathway, and get out of there.

But he's completely isolated, completely isolated.

Young: You haven't mentioned the Iraq study group.

Kennedy: I thought it was generally useful. There are different stories about it. Jim [James A. III] Baker was told that the President was going to buy into that, and that was the reason he stayed with it. And then they didn't, and he was all upset at the end of it. It reaffirmed the importance of internationalizing it, reaching out to these other countries, talking to countries. President Bush has a basic position that he's not going to speak to these countries—he refuses to speak to Syria. Jim Baker went to Syria 23 many times. And now you have an administration that won't talk to Syria, won't talk to Iran, and wouldn't talk to North Korea.

I had briefings prior to voting on the Iraq war with [William] Perry—who had been Secretary of Defense and did the negotiations on North Korea. He pointed out that the dangers North Korea poses are so much greater than those posed by Iraq, that North Korea was producing this rich uranium, and that the dangers of it going to terrorist countries are so real. How could we discount them? That thing was enormously significant and important.

Mrs. Kennedy: My timing might be off on this—but I don't think it is—North Korea apparently admitted in the summer of 2002 that they were producing a nuclear weapon, and the administration discussed it with Japan and countries in the region, but didn't reveal it publicly or to Congress until after the vote to go to Iraq.

Kennedy: Yes, that's right. This point is very important. If they had revealed that prior to the vote, people would have been more focused on North Korea. But they kept all that quiet so we wouldn't remain focused on where the real danger was, with Osama bin Laden and the North Koreans and the Iranians. That's the type of manipulation they were so much involved in.

Young: The Iraq study group offered this President a way out when he was up to here in trouble, a way to bail out. I think it's astonishing that he didn't avail himself in some way of that opening. I don't know how to interpret it. What about your personal relations with Bush in all this? I've seen some notes of Andy Card's visit to you, about going easier.

Kennedy: I had a call from at some time during this period of two or three years, a couple of years. I think there were two occasions. One was Andy Card's call, saying why didn't I let up on Bush and not be so tough. That was after I said "This is a fraud made up in Texas."

I said, "My general response is that this war is very tough and very important, and bad things are happening, and you have to expect people to talk. That was my response to Card. Then I went down to Texas.

Young: That was 2003.

Kennedy: Yes.

Young: When you got the award.

Kennedy: Then Bush Sr. wrote me, because he thought I was too tough. I don't know where that letter is. I thought a long time about whether I ought to write him back, and then I eventually called him. That was after I had been down in Texas. I remember calling him from the Cape; it was a reasonable conversation—I appreciated his letter. I could understand why he felt that way, and I'd certainly give it thought in the future. We talked about some other things, and that was about it.

Young: I think you also pointed out in one of these conversations your willingness to work with him on other issues like education. Were you saying it's not personal, it's principled?

Kennedy: Yes. I had worked with him on both education and immigration.

Young: He pulled the rug out from under you on education, didn't he?

Kennedy: He didn't do the funding. You can say that the standards-based education is a concept, so that "every child" makes some sense. There are all kinds of problems with the "No Child" concept, but the idea of every individual child being measured at least, and finding out what they need—what they now call standards based—is a worthwhile and valuable effort. We have our differences with "No Child." As I said, we're going to address a lot of these issues on the next go 'round.

Young: Do you want to say a little bit about your award from the Bush Foundation, and your visit down there with the family to receive the award, what that was like? I think some people on the other side were very much opposed to it, to put it mildly. I saw the film of it, by the way. It was very interesting, and it went largely unreported in the press.

Mrs. Kennedy: This was 2003. The war had started, but he wrote and asked you to receive this award.

Young: It was in February of 2003; then in March the invasion started.

Mrs. Kennedy: But then, after you accepted and set the time for October of 2003, you stepped up your criticism of the war and of President Bush 43. You offered not to go, but he said he wouldn't—no. I'm sure President Bush 41 was very hesitant, but he wouldn't think of your—I don't remember that exactly. Maybe somebody thought you shouldn't go. I don't remember.

Kennedy: That's right. He was nice enough to ask, and then I made two talks that were tough on the war. I believe I got hold of [Alan K.] Simpson and told him to check with him, and if he

wanted to let it go, we'd take a pass on it. Simpson called me back and said no, he wanted to go ahead with it.

I called him and told him we were looking forward to coming down. I went over to see Scowcroft about what he was most satisfied with in terms of his Presidency, and what we could talk about that he would be interested in. He was very helpful. I took a lot of his suggestions that were consistent with my thinking and put them in a context I was comfortable with and that fit in with where I was.

That made some difference, because I think Scowcroft called him up and said, "Kennedy's down here and wants to do this—do it right and do it well." That changed the atmosphere too. Then Scowcroft said, "Put on your armor, because you're going to get quite a reception down there, and I hope it's going to be all right." He warned us about how we were going to be treated down there. He was concerned about it, but it went very well. The President, Bush I, gave me an introduction that mentioned all the things I had said about him, which, of course, I'd forgotten—that I got up and walked off, you know. We played around with it.

Young: "Where's George?"

Kennedy: "Where's George?" He's very engaging and personable and interested in people, Bush I is more of a public figure than the other one.

Mrs. Kennedy: He and Mrs. Bush were very gracious to us. All of our children were there. Teddy's sisters were there, Ethel [Skakel Kennedy] was there, and I think Caroline Kennedy was there. My parents were there. So we had a big family contingent. My sister was there. It was a big Kennedy/Reggie family group there, and the Bushes could not have been more gracious. The reception was very good.

I remember there was a heckler or two in the audience. I was sitting next to Mrs. [Barbara] Bush, and she was just horrified. I said, "Don't worry. Teddy can handle that." She said, "We just don't do that here; that's really impolite. Our students are just not like that." So they took the person out, and it was enormously well received. President Bush was so funny, saying how Teddy had said, "Who does he think he is, King George?" He set the mood, teasing Teddy, and Teddy was very respectful—true to himself, but very gracious. It was very nice—politics at its best, I think.

Young: Yes, I thought so. An object lesson that's lost in the media today, that you can have all of these differences but also civility and recognition that you're not 100% right all the time.

Mrs. Kennedy: Exactly.

Young: I loved your stories about Bush saying that whenever he wanted to give the crowd some red meat, he'd bring your name into it. And your stories about some of the Texans who went after you were very good. I think this Iraq situation just has endless permutations.

Kennedy: Yes, that's right.

Young: And it will be a long time before history sorts everything out. But there are some things you've helped with here.

Kennedy: I think one of the moments was when I went up to Boston. I think it was in the late fall of probably 2002—

Mrs. Kennedy: I think it was probably '03, after the war began.

Kennedy: It was relatively short notice, and I said, "Are there any events going on I can go over?" Barbara Souliotis said, "The AP person always likes to talk to you." She meant a fellow named [Edward S.] Bell, a very good person up there. So I said, "Okay, why don't I put him on for a half an hour?" When I went over to talk to him, he said, "Rather than me asking you a lot of questions about Iraq, why don't you just tell me what's on your mind about it?"

So he leaned back, and I just talked, and boom! When I got out, I didn't even realize what I had said. I was in Framingham, at a press conference. I think it was on the base closings. My staff came up and said, "Oh, my God. It's all over the wire and all over this and all over that, what you've said. People are going to ask for your explanation and your rationale and the proof of all this." We were bobbing and weaving there for about two or three days. Then the Suskind book about Paul O'Neill came out in January, and I said, "Amen." And then there was the fellow who was head of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Young: Haass?

Kennedy: Yes, Richard Haass, who was quoted as saying that he ran into Condi Rice in August and she said, "Don't waste your breath; the decision [to invade Iraq] is made." They had cooked that thing up in Texas during his August recess. So I was right on the button, but I had eaten more bird feathers—

Mrs. Kennedy: Ted, I think this is important. I was in Washington watching CNN, and I saw a crawl, "Kennedy says that Iraq war is a fraud made up in Texas." I called Barbara Souliotis and said, "Barbara, have you eaten lunch? What is he saying?" She said, "Oh, this is really a big thing. They were supposed to talk about fishing rights. They were talking about fishing and suddenly it was about this."

That's when Andy Card called you. But what was really interesting about your response is that you didn't back down at all. You said no, that really is what it is. That impressed me enormously; you just kept going right at it. I think you said to Andy Card, who's a really good fellow, "Andy, show me why it wasn't. You talked about 'rolling out a product; you don't do it in August, you do it in September.'"

Kennedy: [Karl] Rove spoke to the Republican National Committee in February or March, out in Austin, out west, where he talked about the conflict in Iraq. That part was public, and the Haass thing was around. He had talked at a Republican Committee meeting, where Andy Card said, "You don't roll it out in August." Remember? So they knew.

What I knew at that time—I had read those papers that had the descriptions of Perle talking about going into Baghdad, differing with Bush I on the Gulf War. I had read all of that, and it was in my mind, that they were already cooking this thing up. So I knew this thing was going on. I would have had difficulty putting my finger right on it, but I knew this was going on. Although

it did come back at me pretty fast, with wanting evidence on it. It took a little while to get those pieces of evidence.

Also on this, it's tangential, but on this torture memorandum: we were very much involved in [Alberto] Gonzales, when he came up for Attorney General. At that time, there had been in effect what they called the Bybee Memorandum. The Bybee Memorandum had been in effect for two years, and this [Jay] Bybee is now on the Ninth Circuit. He was approved because none of us on the Judiciary had any idea that he had written a memorandum that permitted torture.

It said that unless a prosecutor could prove specific intent, that the person torturing the victim was interested primarily in hurting the person rather than gaining information, there would be no prosecution. The CIA was therefore immunized, because they were all in there to get information, not sadistically just trying to torture. You would have to demonstrate that the person was sadistically trying to hurt the person in order to prosecute the act. It gave all of them immunity. We had really blown that up, and an awful lot of that material we had gotten from the fellow from the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union]. Not the head but—

Mrs. Kennedy: Anthony Romero.

Kennedy: Romero. We led the fight on the Judiciary Committee, and Gonzales then repealed it and put out this other part that applied only to the Defense Department, not to the CIA. It permitted them to continue. The torture goes back—interest in torture, to the event that Vicki mentioned some time ago, a dinner we had at Jim Wolfensohn's house. Rumsfeld and his wife were there, Kofi Annan was there, and Chuck Hagel and Jay Rockefeller and their wives were there. That was in what, February or March?

Mrs. Kennedy: That was in either January or February of 2002. I remember because we had your 70th birthday party here, and I had invited the Rumsfelds. So this must have been February. Maybe ten days after that, they were here. Jim Wolfensohn had a dinner party for Kofi Annan, and he and his wife were there, and Rumsfeld and his wife, as you said, and a lot of press people like Jim Lehrer and his wife [Kate Lehrer]. Andrea Mitchell was there and some other people from the World Bank.

We were all at one big table in Wolfensohn's dining room, and Jim asked Kofi Annan and Don Rumsfeld, "What do you think is the biggest challenge facing our world right now?" Rumsfeld made a meaningless little quip, and then Kofi Annan said, "Well, I think the big problem is Afghanistan, and whether Afghanistan is going to be able to survive through June." Then he said, "I also worry about the image of the United States when the world"—exactly what you all were talking about earlier—"was with the United States after 9/11, but there's now a division."

Then he said, just hypothetically speaking, without being too direct—but he was very direct—"The issue of prisoners of war and the Geneva Conventions are very concerning to the world community." Rumsfeld stepped in suddenly, he was going to be serious, and he made some defense of why the Geneva Conventions didn't apply.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Kennedy: That continuing issue of treatment of prisoners and torture still resonates even now.

Young: And the worst is yet to come, probably, in terms of revelations.

Kennedy: I think that's right: rendition. What's very important during this period that we haven't gone through are each of those speeches. They really say what was on my mind at the time. There's no sense in going through those, but they—the speech before we got into the war, why we shouldn't get into the war, why the war was all cooked up, all the things. The importance of internationalizing and getting in were two very important speeches about how the war was cooked up and how intelligence was manipulated and how the world was less safe as a result. Three major speeches in those areas, and then about how we disengage, and also about how the President ought to come back for additional authority because the Constitution requires it. I think they lay things out about as well as I could.

Young: Those are an extraordinary series.

Kennedy: When you talk about the war and these conversations, you're talking about the framework for these speeches: the reasons I felt strongly about going into war, what the background was of going to war, and also about the implications. Also—which we didn't get into—the other issues about torture are certainly tangential to this whole process, but one enormously important in terms of where we are.

Young: But they're part of the costs.

Kennedy: Part of the whole cost.

Young: The collateral damage, the whole erosion of civil liberties.

Kennedy: It's interesting why there weren't more people. You saw that Contra memo?

Young: Yes.

Kennedy: It's interesting why we didn't have more opposition to the war. I was against it, but Byrd was really the very significant voice against it, and a rather lonely figure there for a while. There were only a few of us, a handful, who were against it. Why weren't there more against the war? On the other side, you had this massive public opinion. For any review of this period, people ought to get the polls to see where the public was, and the impending election. And of course the results were successful for the administration, because they diverted attention away from the economy and Bush's sliding poll numbers. People ought to have his numbers and where the economy was, and why they necessitated going through this, and then how his numbers came bubbling back up, and how they picked up a lot of seats in both the House and the Senate. They gained control of the Senate. So it paid off politically, and dynamically.

Then there is one last worthwhile point we haven't been able to hammer, although I think it's enormously interesting. I'm waiting for the opportunity to do it. That is, Bush's father—Bush I—said that he went to war with 52 votes in the Senate, effectively. I think it was 53-47 on a proposal and then the actual vote was 52-48. So a majority of 52-48 voted to go to war.

Now we had 53 votes to halt the war, to get the timetable, but Bush II said no, no, no. You need to have more than 60. So 52 votes was good enough for Bush I to go to war, and it was even good enough—they said he had the majority—but in order to halt the war now—or to get a timetable—this crowd is saying 53, a majority, isn't enough.

It was enough to take us to war. They say no, no, it's not enough to halt the war. They're saying that you have to have the other aspects, manipulating effectively, the rules of the Senate. They were prepared to play by one set of rules, but when it was going to work the other way, they weren't going to play by that set of rules.

Young: What's holding more Republicans back from getting on the right side of this issue and against the President?

Kennedy: It's what I mentioned earlier: we have to support the troops. We want to honor those people over there fighting who have been suffering, and we're not going to cut and run on those people. They've worked too hard, they've lost their colleagues, and we're going to honor the memory of those who have died before them, gallantly and bravely, we're going to honor them by continuing to give them the support they deserve.

And we say, we honor their memory best by getting the policy right. Listening to [Cong.] Duncan Hunter. [*laughs*] I just look across the waiver. They dropped our hate crimes proviso from our Defense Authorization Bill the other day because the pro-war Democrats were going to vote against the Defense Authorization Bill, even though we have the hate crimes in it, and the growth of hate crimes. We've been trying for years to get it approved.

They have another vehicle. They have the defense appropriations legislation, they can vote against the war, and moveon.org would give them a pass on it. But the liberal Democrats are going to vote against it. So Nancy Pelosi pulled the hate crimes out of it, and so I had to sit down there and I'm just like this with Duncan. I'm looking at this guy, having to listen to him talk about gays, and listening to him talk about the fence down there and talk about immigrants. It's almost too much but not quite. Okay. Let's get a picture.

Young: Okay, good.