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BOB SCHIEFFER: Today on FACE THE NATION, the president strikes back. He orders a Tomahawk missile attack on the Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad because, he says, the Iraqi government was behind an unsuccessful plot to kill former President Bush.

(Footage of aftermath of Iraqi attack)

SCHIEFFER: (Voiceover) These pictures are from Iraqi television. The Iraqis say the attack left six civilians dead and a dozen injured. They won't say more. But the president left no doubt last night why he ordered this attack.

President BILL CLINTON: We will combat terrorism. We will deter aggression. We will protect our people.

(Footage of Iraq)

SCHIEFFER: (Voiceover) Today we'll get the latest details on this and what's behind the strategy from Vice President Al Gore. And we'll talk to two congressional defense experts, Republican Senator Dan Coats of Indiana and Democratic Congresswoman Pat Schroeder of Colorado.

(Theme music)

Unidentified Announcer: FACE THE NATION, with chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now, from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

And welcome again. It was the president himself who confirmed the attack last night just after 7:30 Eastern time.

(Footage of Iraqi damage)

SCHIEFFER: (Voiceover) Just a minute ago, we got the first pictures from independent sources of some of the damage. These pictures come from the Roiter News Service and they show some of the rubble. We have very little hard information to go with the pictures, but the president said last night this attack was ordered in retaliation for the unsuccessful plot last month to assassinate former President Bush. By this morning, the Pentagon was calling this a successful raid, but Pentagon spokesmen concede there were some civilian casualties. How many we just can't confirm at this point.

We're going to talk to the vice president, Al Gore, who will have more details on all of this for us in just a minute. But before we do that, we want to make a last-minute check out at the Pentagon and go to Pentagon correspondent David Martin.

David, what can you tell us?

DAVID MARTIN reporting:

Well, Bob, General Colin Powell says that of the 23 missiles that were fired at the Iraqi intelligence headquarters three missed their target and are undoubtedly responsible for the civilian casualties that are now being reported. Of the remaining 20 missiles, all landed within the intelligence compound and most of them hit the headquarters building, which was the target for this raid, which was a one-time-only raid. Now, General Powell says that the building was pretty much destroyed, so I think if that is the case, then you could call this operation a military success. The question obviously will be whether it is also a political success. And last night, Defense Secretary

Aspin said that they hoped by this raid to convince Iraqi officials that serving Saddam Hussein can be dangerous to Your health. But, as we've learned from watching Saddam Hussein over the years, for any Iraqi official to cross Saddam Hussein is also very dangerous to his health. So whether this achieves the political objective of getting people to rise up and finally overthrow Saddam Hussein obviously is--is still very much problematic.

SCHIEFFER: When will the Pentagon be able to make an analysis of just how much damage was done? Was, in fact--was the Iraqi intelligence capability reduced because of this attack?

MARTIN: Well, they've had a period of daylight now in Iraq and time for satellites to make their passes overhead and get the kind of pictures that will tell you that and time for the photo analysts to do their work on these photos. And at 12:30 today, we are going to get a briefing from a senior officer on the Joint Chiefs who will probably give us some more of this detail.

But, you know, this building has been, quote-unquote, "Pretty much destroyed" before and the Iraqis can rebuild it. I mean, they can always, given time, reconstitute most of the things that you destroy, so you're not going to put Saddam Hussein permanently out of the terrorism business with this one attack. Hopefully, you might make him think twice before he tries it again because now he knows there's going to be a--a price to pay.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Thank You very much, David.

In a minute, we'll come back and talk to the vice president about all this in a minute. (Theme music)

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Joining us now, the vice president. Mr. Vice President, thank you very much for coming. What detail can you give us about this attack? Exactly what happened here?

Vice President AL GORE: Well, it was very successful i--in taking out the headquarters unit of the Iraqi intelligence service where this plot to assassinate former President Bush was--was planned. The entire complex is a huge complex, almost as large as our Pentagon, but the one wing of it where the headquarters operation is located was the part of the complex that was targeted, and that whole row of--of headquarters complex was destroyed.

SCHIEFFER: Well, what--what was destroyed? Computers? Analysis banks? What--what actually was lost?

Vice Pres. GORE: The facilities where plots like this are hatched and planned and where the instructions are given, where the top people have all of their computers and their paperwork and all of their facilities. Their--their ability to carry out plots like this in the future has been severely damaged, and more importantly, they have received the message that this kind of activity is simply unacceptable.

SCHIEFFER: Wa--was that the point here? Was this--the point really to send a message not to destroy an intelligence facility, Mr. Vice President?

Vice Pres. GORE: Well, the--the point of it was not to--to--to convince the Iraqi people to rise up and overthrow Saddam. We would like that to happen, but we fully recognize that this response was more limited in nature by design because it was intended to be proportionate to what they tried to do and to hit the part of their government that planned and tried to execute this attempted assassination.

SCHIEFFER: Do you have any indication from the Iraqis? Has there been any response from the Iraqi government or Saddam Hussein?

Vice Pres. GORE: Well, President Clinton has asked for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council this afternoon, and I'm sure that we will hear from them at that time or will have--they will communicate to the United Nations. They are typically predictably saying that they had nothing to do with the attempted

assassination of former President Bush, but they did. When--as soon as President Clinton got the definitive reports from the FBI and the CIA on Thursday, as commander in chief, he gave the order to attack the facilities that planned that attempted assassination and the military carried out the president's orders extremely skillfully.

SCHIEFFER: Is there--is there any particular piece of evidence that the president saw that convinced him that this is what needed to be done? What--what was the--what was the smoking gun here?

Vice Pres. GORE: Well, there were--there's so much evidence based on analysis of the explosive devices that are of a kind known to originate only in Iraq. The statements of the individuals who were caught and who said they were ordered by Iraqi intelligence to try to assassinate former President Bush. They even said that if the car bomb, which would, incidentally, have killed thousands and thousands of innocent people in Kuwait--if that failed, they were supposed to put on a--a belt, a bomb device, and charge up to former President Bush.

SCHIEFFER: Can You give us some information, Mr. Vice President, on how this decision was reached? Obviously, there must have been talk. Was the president reluctant to do this? Did he have to be talked into it?

Vice Pres. GORE: Oh, no. The president was very decisive. He gathered the facts, analyzed them, said, 'This is a--a clear case. Com--the evidence is compelling.' I would say it's even stronger than that. But that's--tha--that's the least you can say about it. And then he said, 'This--this is what our response will be.' He gave the orders to General Powell, and General Powell then conveyed them down the chain of command.

SCHIEFFER: Is the United States now in any kind of heightened state of alert? For example, have our embassies been notified to go on alert? Do we expect that there might be some retaliation?

Vice Pres. GORE: Well, any retaliation by the government of Iraq would be most unwise. Obviously, in a situation like this, counterterrorism units are advised of the changing circumstances, and without going into much detail, let me just say that precautions have been taken.

SCHIEFFER: Mr. Vice President, is there any connection between the timing of this attack and the plot that was uncovered this week in New York, where you had a group of fundamentalist Muslims who apparently were trying to blow up some landmarks in New York?

Vice Pres. GORE: No, there's no connection. The timing of this really was driven by the completion of the FBI and CIA investigations. You remember last April, the Kuwaitis said they suspected at the time that this was an Iraqi government plot. And we then initiated--our country then initiated an intensive investigation to satisfy ourselves that that is what it was or maybe it was something else. The FBI and the CIA ha--have spent a great deal of time carefully going over all of the evidence, interviewing all of the individuals involved and putting together the compelling case that, indeed, this was ordered by the Iraqi intelligence services and it's the kind of thing, of course, that can only occur if it's approved at the highest levels of the Iraqi government.

SCHIEFFER: As--as you're aware, I'm sure, the government of Iran this morning is condemning this in the strongest terms and saying the United States should be held responsible. Could this in any way produce a detente between Iran and Iraq?

Vice Pres. GORE: Well, for quite some time, that relationship has been changing away from the total confrontation that characterized the eight-year war between them, and trade and commerce has increase a little bit between them. There are certain issues that continue to divide them...

SCHIEFFER: Well--well, I guess what...

Vice Pres. GORE: ...and will continue to divide them.

SCHIEFFER: ...I'm driving at i--are you concerned that, perhaps, they may unite together...



Vice Pres. GORE: No.

SCHIEFFER: ...against the United States?

Vice Pres. GORE: No, but Iran is not known for its good judgment under its current regime and has itself been conducting a lot of activities that are not acceptable by world standards, but...

SCHIEFFER: Well, is this a signal to them, too?

Vice Pres. GORE: This is a signal to--to any nation that would contemplate the kind of activity that was initiated by Iraq, in this case, that the United States will respond. We will protect our people. As President Clinton said to the nation and the World last night, 'Don't do this kind of thing,' and, as Secretary Aspin said, 'It's not good for your health.'

SCHIEFFER: I guess an obvious question that a lot of people would be asking this morning: Why not just go after Saddam Hussein once and for all? Why--why--why bomb a facility here or take a strike there?

Vice Pres. GORE: Well, our national policy embodied in our law i--is not--i--is to--to not target foreign leaders. That's a law that's had bipartisan support for quite a long time. It's the law of the land. Secondly, even if that were not the case, setting an objective of finding one person in a nation of millions is--would be an unwise strategy in--in any event.

SCHIEFFER: How--how strong do you consider Saddam Hussein at this point? You said at the top of this interview, 'We hope the Iraqi people Will rise up and overthrow him.' Do you think he's stronger now than he was at the beginning of the Gulf War?

Vice Pres. GORE: Well, no, I do not. All the talk about him reconstituting all his forces is a little bit overstated. But there's no question about the fact that he and his Baathist regime in Iraq rule by terror and atrocity, and they have intimidated the people of Iraq by imposing such suffering upon them to let him remain in power. He--he tortures people, kills people a--and so he has remained in power a--and that's--that's unfortunate, but we have to acknowledge that there are a lot of things around the world that we don't like and can't necessarily change. We would like to see Iraq change its regime and come back into the community of civilized...

SCHIEFFER: Well, do you think...

Vice Pres. GORE: ...nations in the world.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think he's on the way out and should the United States do anything to encourage that?

Vice Pres. GORE: Well, we're doing quite a bit to encourage that. The sanctions against Iraq are still in place, we're enforcing them vigorously and the effects on Iraq are quite pronounced and they know that the way to come back into the community of civilized nations and regain their ability to trade freely and sell their products and all that depends upon them complying with all of the relevant United Nations resolutions, which would result necessarily in the collapse of Saddam's regime.

We're also working with the dissident groups inside Iraq--the Shiites in the south, the Kurds in the north, the Sunnis and others in the center of the country--and have helped them as they have coalesced into a united opposition front inside Iraq. We have no illusions about the strength of Saddam and his apparatus of terror there, but we are continuing with the rest of the world community to enforce these sanctions and the UN resolutions in hopes that, over time, they will lead to the fall of Saddam's regime.

SCHIEFFER: Do you have any information on civilian casualties at this point?

Vice Pres. GORE: The Iraqis themselves are claiming that up to five to six civilians were killed. We do not have confirmation of that.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you this: Why did you strike at night rather than during the day? You said this is to keep these plots from hatching. Obviously, the key thing in any plot is the people who are the plotters. Why not strike during the day when the plotters were all home?

Vice Pres. GORE: Well, we wanted to minimize the number of civilian casualties, and in the middle of the night, when the fewest number of people were around, was the time when the target itself could be destroyed and the message could be delivered while, at the same time, minimizing the chance of civilian casualties. This was intended to be a proportionate response at the place where this plot was hatched and implemented. It--it was militarily successful. I think it was extremely successful in delivering the message that this kind of activity that Iraq initiated is simply unacceptable.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Mr. Vice President we have to leave it there. Thank you very much for joining us.

In a minute, we'll come back and we'll have a round table of military experts from Capitol Hill to see what they think about it in just a second.

(Theme music)

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Joining us now to talk about all of this, Senator Dan Coats of Indiana, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Congresswoman Pat Schroeder of Colorado, a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

I would take it that this will be very well received on Capitol Hill, but I guess the question I would ask: Has the president done enough here, Congresswoman?

Representative PAT SCHROEDER (Armed Services Committee): I suppose that's where the debate's going to center. I certainly think he has. I think he's shown how difficult this balance is, as we're dealing with terrorism, and that's the new real challenge in this post-Cold War period. You really want to make sure that we don't turn off a lot of our allies that we started to build connections to during the Gulf War. And to show how very balanced this was and how sensitive he was to try and to send Saddam a message but not just go off on some great trip to see how much of--of Iraq he could level I think will bring more of our allies to us and get Jordan back and--and keep isolating Iraq, which, I think, has got to be our policy.

SCHIEFFER: Senator Coats.

Senator DAN COATS (Republican, Indiana): Well, I clearly think there'll be bipartisan support for this and I think it was a proportional response to the incident with the bombing--potential bombing of the president while he was in Kuwait. However, I think that the president has a long way to go before he reassures our--our allies and the world that he fully has a grasp of foreign affairs and can conduct himself in such a way that--that he'll be looked to as the leader in the world in terms of directing foreign affairs.

SCHIEFFER: Well--well, now, what do you mean by that? Do you mean we should have done more? He should have launched a stronger and a bigger attack?

Sen. COATS: No, not--I don't think he can use this as a n--as a means of--of restoring all that credibility and experience that he needs to demonstrate to the world in terms of his grasp of foreign affairs and grasp of how to deal in these situations. I think his response in this situation was the appropriate response. But there'll be more tests and there are some existing out there now and I think there'll probably even be some responses from Iraq.

Rep. SCHROEDER: It's really become a capital city with an attitude, hasn't

it, about the president? No matter what he does--and this may be OK, but, we--we hope he goofs up later. I--I don't think he will. I mean, I think I--look, let's be really--let's really look at this. George Bush--and I've been a critic of George Bush, but George Bush did one thing in Kuwait and that was he made sure we held the allies to what we said we were going to do: get Iraq out of Kuwait and then stop, and he took a lot of criticism for people from do--for doing that. But I think he understood we had to start breaking down this--the--the Muslim world so it didn't become one huge new monolith and another kind of curtain goes up, and--and I think this is a follow-on of that policy--that balanced policy that he put in place. I think we had to do this. If we hadn't done this, we would have looked like a jellyfish.

SCHIEFFER: Are we--should this country start to refocus its military resources? Should--should the Pentagon start now turning more toward defending, I guess would be the question, against terrorism rather than some of the other things it's been doing?

Sen. COATS: Well, I think it needs to include that because clearly, we're looking at a different world today than we looked at even just two or three years ago. And one of the components of what our military and what the Pentagon's going to have to do--and I don't think that final decision is made as to how they do it, but one of the components is: How do we deal with terrorism--in this case, the state-ordered terrorism?

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you this: Do you see any connection between this attack and what happened in New York this week? Could it have possibly been that perhaps in the Arab world the word got out that you could--you could take some action against the United States, like trying to assassinate a former president, and you'd get a free pass, that there would be no response? Do you see any connection, Congresswoman?

Rep. SCHROEDER: There's always a possible connection. The--the thing that I thought was so important about our being decisive here is we could tie this terrorism to state-supported terrorism. We've not been able to tie the New Jersey incidents to state-supported terrorism yet. But it is perfectly possible. And secondly, there's become this attitude, too, that the United States, because we're the only real leader left or the--or the major superpower, it's the one everybody loves to kick sand in their face. So we really have seen terrorism break out here and it's got to become a very difficult concern, we've got to approach it properly so that we don't break the world into two new forces where it's them and us.

SCHIEFFER: Senator.

Sen. COATS: Well, we're facing, I think, problems coming from Iraq as long as Saddam Hussein is in power, number one. I don't think we should think that this signal last evening is going to suddenly cause Saddam Hussein to change his ways. As long as he is in power, we're going to see, I believe, some type of state-ordered or state-involved terrorism or--or mischief.

SCHIEFFER: Should we--what else could the United States do to--to get rid of Saddam Hussein? The vice president says it's against the law to try to assassinate him.

Sen. COATS: Well, it is against the law, and until that law is changed--and I'm not advocating it should--but it is against the law and therefore we are limited. We have to keep the pressure on Iraq to the point where the Iraqi people say, 'We cannot go forward as a nation, either economically or politically, militarily, as long as Saddam Hussein and his people are in power.' Now, that's very difficult. We're asking people to take very courageous steps and many have lost their lives in trying to do that, but the--we have to keep the pressure on. We cannot as a World, let alone the United States, allow people like Saddam Hussein to use his state to collectively terrorize both the neighbors and its neighbors and people around the world.

Rep. SCHROEDER: And part of it, though, I think we're on the right path

and--and that's--we've got to look at this in a little longer-term light. To have King Hussein here last week--and remember, Jordan was very actively aligned with Iraq and starting to make all new noises. That's a very good



sign, and the more we can isolate Saddam Hussein and the more economic sanctions that come around, the more we really throttle him, I think.

SCHIEFFER: All right. We have to leave it there. I want to thank both of you for coming in on a moment's notice this morning to add some perspective on this.

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

We'll continue to cover this story all through the day on CBS. Russ Mitchell will have the latest tonight on the "CBS Sunday Evening News." We'll see you next Sunday. I'm Bob Schieffer in Washington.