Military, political leaders discuss terrorism solutions

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Under heavy security, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and retired US General Norman H. Schwarzkopf discussed "The Threat of Global Terrorism" on Saturday at a day-long conference at the Tang Center. The topic was chosen in July.

The Sloan School of Management and the School of Engineering played host to the second annual Siebel Scholars Conference. The audience included the current and previous year's Siebel Scholars.

Netanyahu, who was prime minister of Israel from 1996-99, warned that the war on terrorism must be won in the next two to three years, before Iran and Iraq develop nuclear weapons and "wreak havoc."

Netanyahu, an MIT alumnus (S.B. 1975 in architecture, S.M. 1976 in management), said the short-term goal to end terrorism must be accompanied by a long-term campaign to introduce democracy to countries with oppressive regimes.

"There can be no acceptance" of terrorist tactics, he said. Prolonged open and free discussion of differences "can change the mindset" of people, he said, using the demise of the Soviet Union as an example.

"Global peace is only possible through the education of today's students who will be tomorrow's leaders," he said.

Schwarzkopf, the architect of Operation Desert Storm in 1991, predicted that Osama bin Laden and his followers would have to choose between warmth and security during the severe Afghanistan winter.

As a result of training in Alaska, Schwarzkopf said he learned that the only way to survive a severe winter in mountain caves is to light a fire. Once the terrorists do that, he said, modern technology will detect the heat and reveal their whereabouts.

William Gavin, former assistant director of the New York office of the FBI, also participated in the discussion. TV personality Charlie Rose was the moderator.

Gavin told the Associated Press after the conference that the scholars did not ask "stereotypical rehearsed questions--they were the kind you can't prepare for." In particular, he said panelists and scholars discussed the merits of allowing the government to have the "keys" to encrypted e-mail as a weapon in the fight against terrorism. "There were passionate responses on both sides," he said. "There was not a lot of feeling in the middle."

A morning panel, also moderated by Rose, discussed "Crisis Management." Participants were Jerry Linenger, who spent five months aboard Russia's Mir space station; Scott O'Grady, who was shot down over Bosnia while helping to enforce the NATO no-fly zone; Kurt Muse, the only American hostage ever rescued from the infamous Modelo Prison in Panama; and Denny Fitch, the United Airlines pilot and trainer who helped crash-land a DC-10 in a cornfield in Iowa in 1989.

In addition to a large contingent of MIT Campus Police, security was provided by the Massachusetts State Police, the Cambridge Police Department, Middlesex County sheriffs, US government agencies and private guards. There were no incidents.

DEANS' WELCOME

Acting as hosts, Deans Richard Schmalensee of the Sloan School and Thomas Magnanti of the School of Engineering welcomed participants to the conference.

"The [Siebel] scholarships are endowed for graduate students with merit and are the most highly prestigious sought by graduate schools," said Schmalensee. "Any organization that recognizes and invests in students and faculty at graduate schools is investing in the future. The annual Siebel conference is a way to build this network and bring outstanding panelists such as we have today to interact with Siebel Scholars."

"The Siebel Scholars program represents the best of two partnerships--one between universities and the outside world of government, industry and individuals, and the other between engineers and managers, engineering schools and management schools," said Magnanti. "We are delighted to participate in the Siebel Scholar program and help in fostering these partnerships and we have been delighted to participate in this wonderful event."

The scholarship program, established by Siebel Systems Inc. in 2000, awards $25,000 apiece to outstanding students at the world's

leading graduate schools of business and computer science based on academic merit and leadership excellence. In two years, 110 scholarships have been awarded.