THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

THE EVOLUTION OF JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AND THE PURSUIT OF AL QAEDA IN IRAQ

A CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL STANLEY A. McCHRYSTAL

Washington, D.C.

Monday, January 28, 2013

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Brookings. Thank you very much for coming out on this particular day, although it's an unusual treat even at a place where we have such amazing events to have General Stan McChrystal here today.

I'm Mike O'Hanlon, one of the members of the 21st Century Center for Security and Intelligence. We are hosting this event with Bruce Riedel, who runs the Intelligence Project within our center. And today's topic, as you know, is General McChrystal's experience particularly at the Joint Special Operations Command where for five years he essentially lived in Iraq most of the time and built up an organization that was already an impressive organization into what was the state-of-the-art capability that ultimately led not only to our topic of today -- the tracking and ultimate killing of the al Qaeda terrorist Zarqawi, but even to many of the procedures that ultimately led to the finding and killing of bin Laden a couple of years later. So the success of Joint Special Operations Command is one of the most important stories in the broader War on Terror and we're just honored that Bruce Riedel will be interviewing General McChrystal about this this morning.

And, of course, this is based on General McChrystal's recent book, which I hope you will all purchase and which we're all very proud to be discussing as well today, *My Share of the Task*, which comes, I think, from the Ranger Creed and describes the role not only of his own command but of the many soldiers and other American military personnel and international personnel that he worked with.

Just a couple of more words about each of our panelists today. Bruce was a 30-year CIA veteran before joining Brookings in 2006. At the CIA, he did a number of things, including working at the NSC on detail, at NATO headquarters, broad in the

Middle East and at the Pentagon. He was advisor to four presidents. President Obama asked him to lead his Afghanistan-Pakistan Policy Review in early 2009, and he did that for a couple of months before, happily for us, returning to Brookings. Bruce has written already two books in the time he's been here; actually, a third is about to come out and I'll mention that in just a second. But the first two were about al Qaeda and then about the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, *The Deadly Embrace*. So *The Search for al Qaeda* and T*he Deadly Embrace*. His new book coming out next month is *Avoiding Armageddon*, and it's a story about the U.S.-Pakistan relationship and crisis management over the last half century or so.

General Stan McChrystal is a 1976 graduate of West Point. He spent 34 years in the U.S. Army, retiring as a 4-star general in the summer of 2010. He had been commander in Afghanistan. He was the director of the Joint Staff, but perhaps in military circles, most of all, as I mentioned, this five-year period at Joint Special Operations Command makes him memorable and historic. General Casey, at his retirement ceremony in 2010, said of General Stan that the reality is that Stan has done more to carry the fight to al Qaeda since 2001 than any other person in this department and possibly in the country. And after that Bob Gates got up and the secretary of defense called him "one of the finest men at arms this country has ever produced." And then continued, "Over the past decade, no single American has inflicted more fear and more loss of life on our country's most vicious and violent enemies than Stan McChrystal."

But before I allow him to talk about this fight, I also want to underscore, because that makes Stan sound pretty scary, that while he was certainly scary to our enemies, he's an amazing American who's done so much in a positive way to reach out and help build here at home working with veterans, but in Afghanistan. I just want to share a very brief vignette which is that his emphasis on reducing civilian causalities was

one of, I think, the most important aspects of the strategic initiatives that he brought to bear when commander there. And I had the honor of seeing President Karzai in the spring of 2011, a few months after Stan had come home, and I said I would be seeing General Stan soon thereafter. And President Karzai said to me -- he just pumped my hand and he said, "Please tell Stan McChrystal that we so appreciate his service. That he is such a friend of the Afghan people. That I always appreciated the concern he had for the Afghan people as he did his job as a general dealing as well with a vicious enemy.

So without further adieu, please join me in welcoming General Stan McChrystal to Brookings.

(Applause)

MR. RIEDEL: I thank all of you. Thank you, General McChrystal, for coming as well. It's an honor and a privilege to be on the platform with you. Thank you, Mike, for that very generous introduction.

What we're going to do is have a conversation up here for the first half or so of the hour and half we have. I'm going to ask the General a bunch of questions, and then about 10:45 or maybe a little bit later we're going to open up to questions from you.

It's particularly an honor to have you here today because this is also the maiden voyage of the Brookings Intelligence Project. The Brookings Intelligence Project is a new effort to try to resolve the riddle of intelligence, successes, and failures or the enigma of why intelligence is sometimes brilliantly successful and many other times, and much more publicly spectacularly a failure. There's no better case study of intelligence, success, and failure, I think, than the counter terrorism effort over the last decade and one of the great successes of that period is the hunt for Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Now, some of you will say here's Brookings stuck in the past. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed six years ago. Why should we care about a dead

Jordanian? The answer is because Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's legacy unfortunately remains with us today. The terrorists who this month attacked a natural gas facility in Algeria, al Qaeda and the Islamic Maghreb glorify, indeed almost worship, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. We know that because several hostages which have been captured by this group in the past report he is the most popular icon of that al-Qaeda group, even more popular than Osama bin Laden.

Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who carried out and planned the attack in Algeria, is a self-described devotee of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. He seems himself as very much an acolyte of the late Zarqawi. And Zarqawi's organization, al Qaeda in Iraq has today produced an off-shoot, the al-Nusra in Syria, which promises, I think, to be one of the most dangerous al Qaeda fronts we've ever seen. He may be dead but his legacy is still with us.

So I'd like to start the conversation, General, by asking you for your impression of Zarqawi looking back now. How serious and dangerous a figure he was half a decade ago; and why he was at the top of the list of people to go after during the war in Iraq.

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Bruce, thanks. It's a pleasure -- well, let me just first thank Mike O'Hanlon. I'm a devotee of Mike O'Hanlon and a friend for a long time. And thanks for being here. And it's great, Bruce, to see you. He's one of my heroes in terms of intelligence. And to be interrogated by the CIA this morning -- (Laughter) -- I'll try not to break.

Yeah, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was a relatively young Jordanian from a lower -- or upper -- lower upper class background or lower middle class background I guess you'd say -- upper lower class -- who became radicalized while in prison and then became associated with al Qaeda right near the end of the Mujahedeen period in

Afghanistan. He then later, when he appeared after the invasion of Iraq, he had been there before but he appeared really on our radar screen at the end of 2003. He had already started to build an al Qaeda in Iraq infrastructure that leveraged Sunni fear.

Now, it's pretty important to view how we saw it. I took over in the fall of 2003 and I went to Iraq and I got there in October and immediately it was obvious to me that the situation in Iraq was much worse than it had appeared from afar. I was coming out of the Pentagon and it was clearly unsettled, but it looked much worse than we had thought.

The first hope was that if we would get Saddam Hussein and the former regime extremists, that that was going to solve the problem. And so we made an effort to do that. In December, we picked up Saddam. But it also became pretty obvious that as one of my guys described a bunch of former regime guys, really weren't running that -- the beginning of the resistance there, at the beginning of the insurgency.

And instead, what it was was Zarqawi had started to build a network that took trained people, Iraqi Sunnis who had been essentially dislocated from their position in society, sometimes position in government, sometimes position in the military in Iraq, and they were terrified of the Shia plurality, which was going to clearly be dominant in Iraq in the future.

So you had this combination of factors that was fear of the future, frustration against foreign invaders, and then not as much religious extremism as is sometimes perceived. It wasn't really an al Qaeda religious movement; it was a political movement, but it got leveraged by some very clever work by people like Abu Musab al Zarqawi fairly early. At the beginning of 2004 is when we were sure he was there.

We started to track his work. And, of course, in the spring of 2004, when Fallujah essentially highlighted the meltdown of Iraq, you had violence all around the

country but Fallujah became the first spot in the country where they held ground. They actually -- al Qaeda and the Sunni elements that were working with them at that point held at bay coalition and Iraqi forces from the city of Fallujah for a number of months. At that point it was clear that what they had built not only was fairly passionate, but it was also extensive. The network worked around most of the country.

And Zarqawi was an interesting role to get really to the heart of Bruce's question. There was a question about -- there was an issue about did he really matter? And the answer is yes, he did. He mattered in a big way because Zarqawi became an organizational leader. He also became an iconic leader. He leveraged both very well. At one point we would watch him move around the country and deal with groups and he was very low key, a very charismatic leader, not blusterous. He was an effective in-your-face leader in terms of in a positive sense, but he also would leverage the ability to use mass media. He'd put out these radio or internet talk where he would praise groups around the country.

I remember one time we captured one of these and he's praised in different groups to the lions of Samarra, to the brave heroes or so-and-so. And essentially, he was going geographic area to geographic area and pumping up the morale of each of those areas. And it was pretty powerful because, one, it made him look like he was controlling them all, which he was indirectly doing, but it was also very motivational. It made them feel like they were part of a bigger entity. And he'd lash them to that very, very effectively.

And so he started to become the actual operational leader and the moral leader. And that increased over time. His goal was to create a civil war. His strategy was to get a Sunni-Shia schism to erupt into a civil war. And arguably, he succeeded before we, in fact, killed him with the bombing of a Samarra mosque in the spring of

2006. That was the fuse that actually started what looked and felt up close like a civil war. So he became hugely powerful. And although we killed him that June, what he had done carried on after that.

MR. RIEDEL: You just described it as you do in the book, that he created a network or a network of networks. And in the book you lay out how your task force then had to create a network to go after the network. This -- your network was a classic example of the intelligence cycle at work. Collecting information, analyzing information, exploiting. Can you give us kind of a sense of how that network worked? How it evolved? What the pieces of it were? And ultimately, the speed with which you were turning things around from collection to exploitation?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Sure. I had grown up in an era when we thought of terrorist groups as fairly bounded, narrowly focused entities with a certain number of people in them, and that if you were able to attrib those people or to decapitate it, that you would essentially cause the problem to stop.

At the beginning of the war against al Qaeda, as Bruce knows very well, we started with a decapitation strategy. We actually had a strategy and it was called 2+7, and that was Osama bin Laden, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the next seven. And if we could decapitate those the organization would collapse. In reality, that doesn't usually happen. As I tongue-in-cheek tell people, if you take out the top two people in any organization we're a part of, does it actually collapse? In some cases I'd argue it gets stronger.

I used to say that in the Pentagon --

MR. RIEDEL: It's not a recommendation.

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: I used to say that in the Pentagon and of course, everybody would head nod.

But the reality is if you have a very bounded organization of X number of

people, you go after them and just sort of a deck of cards idea, you take them off and you eliminate them. Problem solved. That doesn't apply to a networked enemy. And if you think of what a big organization, a network terrorist group has to do, if you see a car bomb go off in Baghdad against a target, somebody had to have chosen the target. Some had to have built the car bomb. Somebody had to assemble all the components to the car bomb. Somebody had to find somebody to place the car bomb, and if it was going to be driven, it had to find a suicide bomber. Somebody had to then make that car bomb worthwhile. And so what I mean by worthwhile is typically they would film it and they would immediately put that film out so that they got much greater value of the explosion.

So if you start to think of all these you're talking about leadership at the top; command and control, communications; fairly rapid; logistics, sometimes, very significant amount of logistics. When you have 14 car bombs a day going off in Baghdad, it's a big logistic chain. You're talking about recruiting, assessing, training, and moving people into position, so you've got a human resources part of this thing. You're talking about security elements that are doing your counter intelligence work to make sure you're not penetrating. I mean, it's a big organization that's got all the functions of a very complex organism.

To do that it becomes this living organization that has to operate, but it becomes extraordinarily effective because there's a reach everywhere. And so to defeat that, if you think, well, all I've got to do is get Mr. Big, you missed the point. You're just not going to have the effect you think. Nor can you just say, well, I'm just going to stop car bombs or I'm going to do this because no single part of it -- we actually went back and looked at the strategic bombing survey of Germany after World War II because there was an attempt there to figure a critical note. If we just get the ball bearings, if we just get

the fuel. And what we came to the conclusion is there's no single thing. You can't just stop this and stop this problem. Instead, what you've got to do is destroy the enemy's network, which meant for us you had to go not at the very top but you had to go down to people who actually do work. In the military equivalent it would be field grade officers and senior NCOs, and you had to claw that out, destroy that, and then let the network collapse.

Now, to do that you've got to have a network, essentially that layers on top of that. We don't naturally do that in U.S. organizations. We have a tendency to be more stove pipe. There's intelligence agencies of different types. There's military organizations, special operations. There's conventional forces. There's political parts. There's public affairs. And we tend to be fairly bounded. The special operations part traditionally never did public affairs, so we would never talk about what we did.

So unlike al Qaeda, who would do an action and then leverage that action to influence people's thinking, we sort of don't do that naturally. We like not to talk about it. And so sometimes we don't get the value of that. Similarly, parts of the intelligence community who gather information and know about it were loathed to share that with the other parts of the force who actually do in the operations because the idea is we've got to protect sources, methods, and what not. And instead, we'll just give people enough information to go do something.

What we found is you can't do it that way. You can't have the blind man looking at the elephant and one person on the tail, one on the trunk, one on the tusk, and get a sense of how to beat it. So we had to build a network that was not only wide enough to have all the different capabilities we need, different types of capabilities had to be geographically sped. And then we learned it had to be lightning fast. When we started, when I became involved in 2003, and I write this in the book at a fair amount of

decode because it's so important to me.

I went to visit our elements on the battlefield and we had like 14 or 15 locations and we had a big headquarters at Baghdad International Airport. They would be out -- little teams -- great guys, fifteen or so operators, one intel guy and a tax at radio. And the problem was they'd be out there getting information, getting a sense of the battle, but their physical pipe, their bandwidth back to us was pretty limited. They could send e-mail, they could make phone calls, but when it came time to send imagery, send big documents, it just was painfully slow, so they didn't.

Similarly, when they tried to draw on those things from our headquarters, you really couldn't. And we might have one intel person for it and they're so busy they don't have time to leverage all the information at the headquarters intelligence that's being built, nor do they have time to send it. And so as a consequence, you have these two elements that are basically spinning on their own without really being joined into the fight. And then we would have things like you'd go out and an element would do a raid and they'd capture Joe Bag-o-donuts, whoever, and they'd get phone, computer, documents and whatnot, and those would be put in a bag, either a sandbag, one of the burlap sandbags or a plastic garbage bag and they'd be sent back to the headquarters with a little on them that says "here's stuff we captured." And the problem is by the time it got back to the headquarters it'd be taken into where we did that and it would be stacked up and it would be exploited -- as we call read, translated -- when we got to it.

When I first took over I went around and I went in one room and there's stacks of these plastic bags. I mean, there might have been a map in there that says this is where Zarqawi is today, but we wouldn't have known because we weren't reading those things until literally weeks later and a lot probably never got read. And our ability to exploit computers went painfully slow and we had to send them to someone else.

So as a consequence, everything you got is delayed. So speed became the relevance. If you couldn't do it fast, there was almost no point in doing it. If you couldn't interrogate someone you captured from a target effectively, there was no point in doing a raid. You're better just to wait until you can interrogate because it's all about intelligence. And I always hated to admit it to admit it to people because as an operator you always learn that a successful mission is an operational stroke of genius. Anything that fails is an intelligence failure. (Laughter)

But JSOC became 80 percent intelligence. We got up in the morning thinking about intelligence. That's what I worked on. That's what the focus became. Operations were something we did to get more intelligence. And intelligence is what -- I would say that intelligence operatives is what our operators became. People who are traditional shooters, by 2005 and 2006, they thought of themselves as intelligence people that carried a gun. It was an amazing difference.

MR. RIEDEL: You describe it with a formula at one point -- find, fix, finish, exploit, and analyze. Can you explain how that cycle works?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Sure. If I were to describe that in a sequence, you have to find a target, know about it. You have to fix it in real time. You have to get it at a certain place now. You have to finish -- capture or kill that target. You have to exploit whatever you get from it, and you have to analyze what you've gotten. It's sort of like a progressive assembly line idea. And it makes sense because you start with it and then whatever you get, the analysis, if you draw it in a circle, that takes you back to the find and you go.

The problem that we found is that's a targeting cycle that's been used. It's a problem-solving cycle. One version rather is used in a lot of cases. But what we found was if you take each of those elements and they are performed by different

organizations, if the find element is done by some human intelligence and some signals intelligence by different agencies and then it is passed to the people who are going to fix it, which is often done by aerial platforms -- predators and things like that -- or we send agents out to see it, if they're done by different agencies, by the time this one gets it the way they want it -- because everybody wants to give a perfect finished product -- they pass it to the next one, it's slow, and there's a cultural difference in the way it's passed so it's not -- you don't get 100 percent clarity of information -- then you've fixed it in real time and then they say, "Okay, now I'm going to pass it to the finish force," you've got this, what we call, "blinks" in the system. And they are time delays but they're also information delays or information loss.

So the finish force theoretically is this group of big shouldered brave buys who sit in a room. Somebody kicks a door open and they go, "Number 10 North Street." They don't know anything about Number 10 North Street except they ought to go there. And so when they go there to do it, and they may be told "pick up this guy," they go pick up this guy but they don't have the context, they don't have the understanding. One, their heart is not as much in it, and two, they don't exactly know what they're looking for.

So what we learned to do is we learned that actually, the most important part of the operation was exploit and analysis. It's what you get out of it. It's what you know. What I'll tell everybody, the people who win the next war are not going to be the people with the most of anything except who knows the most. It's who understands fastest. It's going to be a fight for knowledge and that's who can do that quickest. And that's essentially what Iraq became -- a fight for knowledge.

Our finish forces were the best in the world when we started. I mean, we are just amazingly good already at that. We could go anywhere, win any firefight, hit any

target, extraordinary, but that turned out not to be the problem. The problem was understanding what we got and driving that into more targets. So we learned that first you can't have a truncated system with different organizations controlling parts of it -- one, because nobody's completely responsible. Hey, I'm doing a great job of finding; must be somebody else's problem. You have to have a holistic thing which is all contained with somebody who is driving it, plus a sense that everybody is responsible and everybody gets credit. Now, that's harder to do but that became the core of making our network work. That became the cycle. When we started, it might take us -- if we hit a target on day one, it might take us two weeks to get that information digested and get to a second follow-on target. By 2006, we were doing three turns a night off the intelligence from the first target. The second two targets we would know nothing about, but we would have grabbed information, digested that information, turned that into an opportunity and moved. That became the big revolution for us.

MR. RIEDEL: You not only had to, of course, do this all in the field, but you also had to work with the great enemy, Washington, and all the different agencies of the United States government involved in intelligence collection and analysis. In the book you talk about the CIA and you have a great sentence in which you say, "The CIA was your most productive partner but also the most infuriating partner you dealt with." After 30 years, I can endorse that, especially the infuriating part. But I'd like you to explain what you meant by "productive and infuriating" with regard to the CIA.

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Sure. I start off with sort of the thesis that nobody's either irrational or evil. There are a few people who challenge that thesis but for the most part everybody I've dealt with, they operate rationally.

Now, if you look at the War on Terror, it is an exercise in collaboration, integration, and synchronization. That's all it is. That's why 9/11 happened and we

weren't able to stop it. All the information existed. We weren't able to pull it together. And that's what makes all of these other operations hard. There are several levels to it. First, there's organizational cultures. Every organization has its own culture. The military has many cultures inside it and different tribes, but if you put that all together you say there's a general DoD culture. It's sort of big. It's sort of kinetic. It's a little bit like a big puppy with big paws in intelligence work, not as refined as other intelligence agencies.

You have the CIA, which is more refined, more professional intelligence. A bit secretive, which is understandable. Doesn't play well with others, which is understandable. And there are cultural equities to be protected, not just to protect credit but also because there's a worry that if we spread these things and we bring other elements in what's going to happen is we'll lose some of our effectiveness. We will lose our ability to do exactly what it is we have to do.

So as a consequence you had this constant cultural tension between the CIA in that case and Joint Special Operations Command that you have to deal with. You're trying to pull these elements together because they need each other. I would tell you the raid to Abbottabad in 2010 couldn't have happened in 2004. Couldn't happen culturally. Could have had the information; could never have gotten close enough to have the trust to say, okay, we think JSOC -- and of course, it was a -- reportedly, it was a CIA command and control operation. All the pieces were there in 2004 but we didn't have the cultural break to that.

So what we had to do was start to pull task forces together that had all the elements in them, and you start by bringing people forward and operating in a single location, and that's far from D.C., which is good, and the young people -- typically young people forward, they tend to meld, but they're always getting pulled by their home offices. And not just the CIA but every different participant. We had some participants that would

come and we'd form this Joint Interagency Task Force and who they had sent to contribute were who they wanted out of their offices wherever they were. I mean, literally. There was some pretty amazingly poor talent.

On the other hand, other agencies would send superstars. Some agencies would send people and say, "Whatever you do, don't give any of our information or don't negotiate our equities away." Well, the thing about forming a real team is everybody's got to give away some of their equities. You've got to open up and you've got to build this. It was a multi-year process for us breaking down walls. And of course, they get rebuilt really quickly. And we had to build a lot of personal relationships. Some of my closest friends in the world now are people that I started this process with that it just took us a long time to develop bonds of trust. What worries me about peace time, is obviously what we want, is you sort of all go back to your own corners. There's not the forcing function. There's not the burning platform that says we've got to cooperate. You all believe generally in the idea of cooperation but it's not something you believe in; it's an active thing you do. It's not magnets that come together; it's magnets and opposition, and it takes people to hold them together. And I think that will always be the case but that's the big challenge.

MR. RIEDEL: Just as a footnote, over 30 years I saw time and time again how the creation of a new entity in the CIA was always the place where anyone who didn't work out was immediately shipped off to that vitally important new entity which started with the D team instead of the A team.

Let me turn to some of the specific weapons or aspects of this intelligence struggle. One, of course, is the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, more popularly known as drones in the United States. The drone program in Afghanistan and Pakistan is becoming increasingly controversial. One of the things I think your book

really does well is help us orient. I understand it started really in Iraq and that's where we began using the drone as a reconnaissance mechanism. Can you talk a little bit about how important the UAV became for your operations, and especially the operation to find Zarqawi in the end?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Absolutely. And Bruce knows the background. Of course, the Predator -- and I'll describe that but I will refer to a whole bunch of different aircraft, some manned, some not -- gave us full time or full motion video. Let us watch something essentially with a TV camera from above for long periods. When I first got there in 2003 there weren't many assets at all, so you'd have a certain number of hours in a day and there's a big fight over who would get them. And we weren't quite sure how to use them because early you would try to go cover an operation. And the beauty of covering an operation where you're going to do a raid is if you traditionally did a raid you needed let's say 120 people because 20 were actually going to go on the target, in the target, 100 were going to provide security, support, command and control around the target.

When we could see around the target with clarity all the time, suddenly we realized we didn't need those 100. We could accept that risk and just put 20 on the target, which allowed us to use fewer aircraft, fewer people, which allowed us instead of hitting one target with 120, to hit six targets. Huge change. So that knowledge, that situational awareness was a huge difference for us.

The second thing it did was we learned very rapidly looking at the operation was important but setting up the operation was more important. Target development is really what we started to learn, and we didn't know that initially or we didn't perfect that for a time.

There was an operation in Fallujah in the summer of 2004. We had been

doing operations or whatnot but because al Qaeda and the Sunnis that were in Fallujah essentially were besieged there, the only way we could get inside effectively was to watch it from above. There was a little bit of signals intelligence, a little bit of human, but nothing very impressive. But we started the process of very focused target development on places to learn pattern of life. We'd watch the same house or the same vehicle move. We'd chart this down and we'd start to build an understanding of what happened as though you're above watching your neighborhood all the time. Suddenly, you know who hangs out together, you know where they go, you know the relationships.

We had an operation called Big Ben that I cover in a lot of detail in the book because we captured a truck of ammunition and weapons as it left Fallujah and went towards Baghdad where, of course, they were being used for car bombs and whatnot, and we were able to basically follow that back through information to a house inside Fallujah. We watched that house. We watched the comings and goings, and we became convinced that it was a cache of weapons, all of which were being used. And so we said -- and this is one of the first times we'd identified the target with that kind of precision just from aerial observation.

So we nominated it for us to do a raid, a ground raid there. Put some of our Delta Force operatives and others on the target. At a point the decision was made not to do that because the firefight likely to ensue, but we were given authority to do a precision weapons strike, a bombing raid on the target. So this was really the first proof of principle for us in this kind of environment. We made the decision in the morning. It was well after light. We conducted a strike on the house, and when it hit the target, I mean, we're literally watching. I'm sitting there. My stomach is in knots because not only is it important to take out the weaponry, it was really important to prove what we could do. And of course, you're worried about collateral damage, civilians and whatnot. We got the

explosion from the bomb and there's two or three seconds of nothing. And we're just sitting there, and then suddenly secondaries go off. And they go off for about 20 minutes. It's extraordinary what we had hit in that place.

That was almost the validation of what we were doing because eventually what we learned is we could use a combination of things, most notably the full motion video but also a number of moving target indicators to develop pattern of life; follow people, vehicles, and things; identify targets to hit, so increasingly our precision went up. When we went to a place, the percentage of time at which we found and captured or killed our target was extraordinarily high and it went up the whole war.

In August of 2004, my force did 18 raids in all of Iraq, which we thought was just breakneck pace. I mean, every other night we were doing a raid. Two years later, in August of 2006, same month, we did 300 raids in the month -- 10 a night. And yet our percentage of effectiveness on targets went up. The accuracy of our intelligence was higher and the effectiveness on the force on the targets was higher. It was a fascinating correlation. And the more full motion video we got -- at one point I got with General Casey and General Ablisay and I said, "If you double the amount of full motion video on manned aerial vehicles we get" -- and we were, of course, in competition with other organizations for this -- "we will more than double our effectiveness against the enemy. They did and we did. We went up more than twice when we doubled it. So it just shows the effectiveness of those particular systems.

MR. RIEDEL: You were, of course fighting a great cultural war. An unmanned vehicle by definition has no pilot to give a medal to. How do you make sure that the guy who is coming up with the precision plan to make sure that the right drone is in the right place at the right time gets as much credit as the soldier who actually pulls the or the pilot who drops the bomb?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Yeah. You hit a cultural point that was really key.

Most of the UAVs were flown from the United States, the actual people on the stick. And whether they are good people or not, they are a long way from you. And after the operation they're not in the mess hall with you; they're not, you know, you're not getting that cultural touch. And so at the beginning of the war we had quite a disconnect. At one point we're watching this target and suddenly the UAV turns around and leaves. Of course, I'm losing my mind and I would have choked the guy but he was thousands of miles away. (Laughter)

So we asked, "What are you doing?" He says, "Well, weather is coming in and I don't want to risk this unmanned aerial vehicle." And I go, "I don't give a shit about the unmanned vehicle. Let it crash. Stay on this target." But it was a cultural difference. He'd been given one set of criteria. He'd been one set of what's important. Good person making good decisions; absolutely wrong decision for what we needed. It would have been better to fly that thing until it crashed if it accomplished our mission.

What we found we had to do was pull them in together. We started putting our liaison right sitting next to them wherever they were flying from in the United States. We started doing video teleconferences. We had them visit us. Essentially what you're doing, knitting them together both mission-wise and culturally. And they have to know what they're looking for and at. They have to have a context, and they have to get credit. If they do a good job, they've got to understand they were part of the operation that did it.

I went to England -- I think it was about 2007 -- and I went to their NSA equivalent -- their signals equivalent. And I sat across from a young female analyst, and she described her part in an individual we'd successfully targeted in Afghanistan. And

her eyes were burning like embers. I have not seen such passion and such pride. She felt like she was central to this thing as if she had stood over his dead body. But she had been that central, and it was really important to me to know that cultural reach, understand that everybody is responsible for success, and of course, for failure as well.

MR. RIEDEL: I like to remind people that as brilliant as the UAV drone system is, at the end of the day there has to be someone who tells it where to fly, which in many cases -- not all cases -- is usually a human source. In the hunt for Zarqawi, it's clear that the debriefing of a detainee was vitally important to the outcome, and we know from certain movies floating around now that detainee interrogation is a very important issue. And of course, that raises the question of how you interrogate detainees. In the book, you are about as clear as anyone I've ever seen. You say "Torture is 'self-defeating.'" You describe the very elaborate steps you took to make sure that any detainee in your chain of command was not abused and was housed in a facility that was -- well, it wasn't a 5-star Hilton but it was an appropriate facility. And at one point you said to your troops that anyone who was involved in detainee abuse would be court-martialed and expelled from the task force. Why did you feel or why do you feel that torture and how you handle detainees appropriately is so important to winning this conflict?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Yeah. That's a great question, Bruce.

Let me first give -- you know, people talk about the issue of whether torture works in getting people to talk, and that's almost an academic argument. I'm sure that sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't. I don't know. But you really want people to cooperate because they have some reason to cooperate, not just the aversion to physical pain or fear. When a person is first captured they're frightened. And particularly we found in Iraq or Afghanistan they're disoriented. And you do want to use

that. You don't want them to feel particularly comfortable or sure about their future. At the same time, you do want them to come to a conclusion that they want to provide information.

The individual who ultimately helped us locate the spiritual advisor for Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, it took weeks of us talking to him day after day after day, but we were working on his sense of his family. We were working on his shame at being a part of something that was as destructive as al Qaeda in Iraq killing so many innocent Iraqis. We were working on a lot of emotions, but we weren't threatening him or abusing him. And I'm very convinced that that was the right mode. Because once you get somebody to cooperate for the reason that they think is good, that's important.

But why don't you torture if it does work? It's because it works two ways. It works on the torturer. First, I think it corrodes an individual's sense of values. Whether or not you believe that the end justifies the means, once you cross a line to torturing unarmed detainees, it's difficult to see yourself as morally right. It is difficult to hold yourself to the set of values that you have to have. And so it starts to corrode individuals.

I also think it starts to corrode the force. The force starts to believe that certain things are okay. Now, understand there's a great pressure on forces pulling you toward both killing people and potentially mistreating detainees. It's easy for us to sit in Washington, D.C. and say we'd never do that, but when you are covered in blood; when you go into torture chambers and see what some of these guys have done to each other and to captives; when you see your partners who have sometimes been tortured and executed, it is harder to stay away from that pull. So let's make sure we're not too theoretical about this. But you have to because it corrodes the force.

The other thing -- and look at the French in Algeria, look at previous times -- it starts you down a path I don't think you can come back from. The other thing,

of course, is the most damaging thing that happened to us in the entire War on Terror was Abu Ghraib. And what happened was the perception in much of the Islamic world was that this was proof positive that all the negative things said about America were, in fact, now hard, you know, hard and fast in photographs. Although we know it to have been an aberration by a bunch of casually brutal prison guards that I think were not effectively supervised, that's what we believe -- that's what I believe -- it validated a lot of the impression and the propaganda that al Qaeda won out. I can't tell you how many foreign fighters came to fight in Iraq because of Abu Ghraib. That was their stated reason. And they were suicide bombers, foreign fighters, and what not. And once they came and they were jazzed up, essentially they were -- most of them had to be killed. But they used Abu Ghraib to light the fire on that.

So if you're doing that or even if you're perceived as doing that, I think it's extraordinarily damaging to your cause long term. And you've got to think long term on all of these. You can't think what feels best today.

MR. RIEDEL: One of the great things about -- many great things about your book is you tell us the historical figures that influenced your thinking. And I was really struck by one. Here you are fighting in the middle of the desert in the 21st century and you looked for inspiration and leadership to Horatio Nelson, a naval commander two centuries before. But you say in the book that his leadership style became the leadership style that made your network succeed. Can you explain why Horatio Nelson is so important to us 205 years after the Battle of Trafalgar?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Absolutely. And I've always been interested in him. But the more I read about him the more I understood the similarity. Unlike some of its competitive navies, the French or Spanish Navy, in the British Navy a British Naval officer, a ship's captain, had to start as a midshipman, had to be able to do everything on

the ship. I mean, literally had to be able to every job, had to be able to navigate, had to do everything as they worked themselves up. They were not the aristocracy given commands to command ships of war. They were middle class people who became highly professional and competent, and their crews were built on being highly professional and competent. As you know, to a degree, crews benefitted when they captured or destroyed enemy ships. They captured it because it was prize money. And to a degree, they became entrepreneurs. As one author, Nicholson said, "They became entrepreneurs of battle. And what Nelson understood was they were self-motivated and extraordinarily competent entities. And what he had to do was move them into position where those motivations and those talents could be put in position. He didn't have to fight the fight for them. He didn't have to micromanage what they did. He had to build them into confident, competent, capable, self-contained crews and leaders; maneuver them into position where they could have the effect that he wanted and do it.

That was very similar to where I found myself. Although we have a great communications infrastructure now and there's this temptation to micromanage because actually I could watch every one of our operations simultaneously because we had all these screens up, and we had the ability over our radio system to put all of our radios into our computer network -- our top secret computer network. So technically I could talk down to squad level in any force we had -- even when we had 19 strike forces operating -- on any target so I could watch it and I could talk down to the most junior leader. I never did that but technically I could do it.

But what I found was that's not the way to succeed. It's not even the way to succeed to tell them exactly what to do. In the normal hierarchical background that I've been brought up is information goes up and the great person makes decisions and then the junior people implement them. Sometimes you know why; sometimes you

don't. But that was too slow for what we had to do and I could never understand the situation as well as they did.

So what we did was we turned that upside down so that my function was to provide context to them. Make them understand the bigger fight. Make them understand what's important. And then tell them generally what I wanted to have happen. And then at their level two things happen. One, they were much more effective because they could adjust to the battle. I didn't tell them what targets to hit. I didn't tell them when to hit them. If they were going to go on the target, they ought to have that decision. But in the process they also owned it. Because you think about it. If somebody tells you exactly how to do something, you just go do it. But if someone says I want you to solve this problem, you become wedded to how you're doing it because it's your solution and you have a certain amount of pride in wanting your solution to come out right. And so I think Nelson did that and I think I learned a lot from studying him.

MR. RIEDEL: Okay. One more question before I open it up to the audience.

You've already said it but you say it also in the book. "In many ways we may have gotten Zarqawi too late. He'd already set the trap and ignited the fuse." Looking back, and hindsight is always 20/20, what could we have done better in 2003 and in 2004 at the opening gate that would have kept us from ending up in the nightmare that Iraq became by 2006 and 2007? This is not to be critical but to be learning from experience.

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: There was much we could have and should have done better. The first is when we went to Iraq we didn't know enough. We didn't understand the forces at work. We didn't understand the situation. Saddam Hussein had this thing held together with chewing gum and baling wire- he economy, the oil industry,

the electricity and different things. So when those things were unhinged, not only did sectarian frustrations come up, but they weren't a civil war waiting to happen. They weren't as strong as that. But when you cut everything else, you suddenly cause things to happen. If you think about it, you're a civil servant who lives in Baghdad and you've got a job in the government and you're in the Ba'ath Party or something like that and you lose your job, either because you're a Ba'athist or because things happen and you lose your job. Now you're living in Baghdad and you don't have electricity and it's 125 in the summer. Now, live in a place where it's 125 degrees. You have no job. You've got a wife, several children. Several things have happened. One, you didn't like Saddam Hussein but you had a job, you could take care of your family, and you didn't have foreigners driving around looking as though they are occupiers whether they are or not.

So you get all the negatives of seeing a foreign opposing power and none of the positives of having Saddam Hussein overthrown. Life got worse. So as resistance started to come up and violence occurred, you couldn't be protected from that and the worse it got, you now had all of these physical and economic problems, and life is unsafe. At least under Saddam, if you didn't oppose the government you had a certain guarantee to your life.

So we took away the positives, the few positives that Saddam Hussein gave. We introduced a number of negatives. We allowed other negatives to sort of rise up that were waiting to rise up, and we didn't offer clear hope. In the spring of 2003, we had a certain period of support from the Iraqi people because they had an expectation. There was going to be this period after the war but then things were going to get better. They started in the late summer or early fall of 2003 not to believe- that it was going to get worse. And therefore, people started to do what I would say was rational behavior. They started to do things with the Sunni resistance or to join Shia militia or whatever their

particular position was because it looked like it was going to batten down for a fight.

We could have done a number of things to try to do that better. We could have put a much more professional effort in working with the government. And the government, as you know, didn't exist in the spring of 2000, so we had to help build that. But we could have put more security in place. The worst thing about putting any kind of occupying foreign force somewhere, if you're going to put any, you better put enough because if you put enough to create the negatives and don't create the positives, you know, they would have liked order in the summer of 2003 and fall -- summer and fall of 2003.

So there were a number of things. And then it all circles back to we didn't know enough, and we didn't send enough people to language school, and we didn't take it seriously enough early. When this thing started to get ugly, we didn't -- we, the military; we, the intelligence agencies -- didn't stop and say we've got a long war here. What are we going to need to do? We're going to have to speak Arabic. We're going to have to develop relationships. We're going to have to have professionals who know how to deal with this over time, not people going in for one tour and never really gaining the expertise.

The Army didn't really get a lot better at it until about 2006 and you had repetitive tours from people. Two things happened. One, a lot of time on the ground; and two, people saying we can't continue this way. We've got to do it better.

MR. RIEDEL: Time for your questions. Please identify yourself. Right here. We have a microphone coming.

MR. NICHOLSON: George Nicholson with the NDIA Executive Board. First, a great deal of thanks for everything that you and Annie have done and are continuing to do for the country.

One of the things you alluded to was the problem with tribes. And we've seen one of the things that you were a key implementer of, breaking down the tribes within special operations, black and white (inaudible). And along the same lines, the breakdown of the tribes between conventional forces and special operations forces. What Admiral McRaven is trying to do right now – which is one of his huge initiatives, is the balance between direct and indirect support and the enhancement of the theater Special Operations Command where the theater commanders will see that as a huge enabler. Any comments, sir?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Yeah. And I think Bill McRaven is doing exactly the right azimuth which, of course, doesn't surprise me about Bill.

The tribal part is so much more powerful and dangerous than we think because you have all these great organizations that are very good at what they do and what they want to do, but that doesn't mean they fit together. We would do -- early in the war we would do these wonderful special operations raids into an area where conventional force had responsibility. We'd hit this target. We'd do it great. We'd come back. We'd be very happy with ourselves, but the impact in that neighborhood and area had to be dealt with by the conventional force. And because we weren't closely enough allied, we would cause them more problems than the problem we solved, at least arguably. And so what happened is -- and if they didn't understand the context of what we were doing, the bigger picture, they see it as all negative. We think that we're on a mission from the president and therefore, what we do is more important than what they do. Until we started to marry those together we didn't get synergy. And it took quite a while. And part of that was just pride. Part of that was cultural background, all these different things. My community was very secretive and we were very proud of that, and then over time we found out that doing things in secret sometimes is worse than opening

up quite a bit. So that was part of it.

How you break down those is very, very interesting. People have got to believe it's in their interest to do that. At one point inside my organization I forced our very secretive, highly trained organizations to do exchanges. Take a shooter, an NCO from one, put him in the other for six months and I was told initially that just can't work. It'll kill people. We work together for years and years. You can't bring a SEAL to work with Army guys or whatever. But we went ahead with it. And at one point we had a friendly fire incident in combat where an individual was shot and lost one of his legs. And I thought, "Oh, my God. Here we go. That's going to be proof positive it doesn't work."

But what happened was he'd been with that team long enough where they said, "Hey, that happens. That could happen." There was no -- there was nothing because he was from a different organization. He'd become one of them culturally and it helped us get over the hump. What we had to do with other agencies was trade hostages as we called it and build relationships over time. It's about relationships at the end of the day. Thanks, George.

MR. CHANDLER: Gerald Chandler. I'd like to follow on your last question.

Would we have saved American money and lives if right from the start we hadn't disbanded the Iraqi Army, we'd taken all the young men and somehow really occupied them by paying them?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Of course, you can never prove a counterfactual, but my impression is absolutely. Had we kept the Iraqi Army on payroll, you would have solved a couple problems. One, you probably could have taken that Army and remolded it into what you wanted. There would have to be some work done but two, when we flooded all these trained and now frustrated people back into the labor

market in which there was no labor, you produce someone who is dissatisfied, unemployed, and had their pride hurt. And so I think that was a significant mistake on our part.

MR. RIEDEL: Let's go over to this side. The lady right over there.

MS. HAIM: Laura Haim, French TV. Thank you, General, for doing that.

What's your perception about at this moment the U.S. Army dealing on the field with terrorists while living inside the civilian population?

And second question is how do you see al Qaeda in North Africa at this moment specifically regarding what happened last week in Algeria with three American hostages killed?

Thank you.

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Sure. I think that if you are going to get insurgents out of a population, the only people that can really do that are the population. The population has to be unwilling to support the insurgents or terrorists, however you want to call them, because there's a fine line between the two. So you've got to convince the population it's in their interest.

I go back to rational behavior. It's not about -- people don't do things that are irrational very often. And so if people feel that they are coerced by insurgents or if they feel that the government won't meet their needs, then they're much more apt to allow the insurgents in.

One of the challenges with foreign counterinsurgents -- French, American, whoever -- to go into an area is there's that cultural divide. You have a very difficult time connecting with the people, and that has got to be the big hurdle that you jump over. And it's inconvenient for counterinsurgent forces to do that. You'd rather not. You'd rather be doing what feels comfortable militarily. You'd rather be in your bases.

You'd rather have units that are just French or just American or just Canadian because it's more comfortable. The problem is it's not effective. You've got to get close to the population. They've got to not fear you. They've got to believe that you're in their interest.

If you think about a Western soldier -- and we arm Western soldiers well -- and they're in their combat uniform. They have body armor on. They have a helmet on. They typically have a radio with a boom mic. They have eye protection. They have a big weapon. If they're big, now they look huge. And they come into your village or your home at midnight and they don't speak your language. Suddenly, it looks like a Martian and it's very frightening. And you can't explain, no, no, that the population can. You might have an interpreter along which we typically did, but even that's difficult. So suddenly you're trying to connect with a population when in fact you can look terrifying to them. They've got to believe that the power you have is in their interest so I think that's the key thing.

If you go back to what happened in Algeria recently and what is happening in Mali, that's going to be an interesting problem. The northern part of Mali is right adjacent to Niger, Mauritania, Algeria, all areas that are very important to France and important to the West. And I think so what is a relatively unpopulated area of northern Mali has some geographical importance. And so somebody has got to control it that is not an absolute safe haven.

I think people were surprised by the Algerian response; I wasn't. In my mind, the Algerians fought a very bitter counterinsurgency of their own -- a very bloody counterinsurgency. And the Algerians have no interest in showing to potential terrorists that they need western help and that they are willing to be weak. In fact -- and I certainly wouldn't say the government of Algeria was happy to have hostages die, but I think they

sent a very clear message to terrorist groups that they are not going to negotiate. They are not going to play games. That they are capable of doing this. Whether that's the perfect approach or not depends upon who you are, but I think the government of Algeria wants to make sure people know that Algeria is not a place where terrorist incidents are going to pay off. And they send Mokhtar Belmokhtar a pretty clear message I think.

MR. RIEDEL: Right here in front.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much, General.

I have two questions. The first is going back to Iraq and Afghanistan, clearly you came out of Iraq with a lot of useful lessons, but what are also things that you say in retrospect actually hindered you doing things there? This is a very different environment.

Second question is following up on the previous one. *The Economist* had a cover this past week saying Africanistan. Again, do you have a comment on that? It's a difficult thing for you to comment on probably because it's current.

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Sure. Sure.

I think the first part is my role in Iraq was largely with the special operating task force that I had focused on destroying al Qaeda in Iraq. So we were very much there to dismantle that network. Now, as I mentioned, we did it for a number of years. And I remember at one point, I think it was Max Boot who came to visit us, and we were hitting targets and we were really getting good at what we did. And he said, "You know, you're getting great at what you do but it strategically irrelevant." And of course, I had my feelings hurt at the time. (Laughter)

But, you know, Max was largely right. And what he was saying is you can do this forever and you are tamping down, you are holding al Qaeda in Iraq from being as effective as they can be or could be, but we're not going to succeed unless it is

married with an effective wider campaign, conventional and other parts of it. And that was absolutely right.

What really happened when the surge was implemented is a number of factors came together. There was the exhaustion of the Sunnis. There was the effect of our operation. There was the rise of the Awakening. There was additional coalition forces, and there was a reinvigorated counterinsurgency effort. Those things came together and suddenly the operations that we were doing not only remained as tactically effective as they were; suddenly, they started to have strategic impact because when we produced an effect it didn't erode immediately in an area. And suddenly, our marriage with conventional forces, with the intelligence community and whatnot, was more effective.

So when I went to Afghanistan, I came into that believing that at the end of the day you have to win the population. There's no other sustainable long-term outcome that can work. So you have to win the support of the population. To do that you've got to protect the population. You've got to do things that convince them to support their government, and indirectly, the NATO ISAF forces. You needed to do a lot of strike missions, and we quadrupled the number of special operations forces while I was there and we more than quadrupled the number of missions, but not just to pound on the enemy but because we had to. It's like erosion; you have to plant things to stop soil from eroding. And I became convinced that that was the right solution there. And so I was informed by my previous experience or impacted by my previous experience there.

What was the other question, sir?

SPEAKER: The second question was on Mali, essentially, and *The Economist* calling it Africanistan and its parallels. Are there or are there not?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: I don't -- I'm not prepared to say they're

quite the same. What I am prepared to say is it's a big piece of ground with multiple organizations currently operating in it or arguing over it. I think the fear is that it becomes another Somalia and it becomes ungoverned territory in which bad things can happen. And I think there's some potential there. I don't even think it's exactly Somalia either. The idea that under governed areas -- bad things can happen, particularly because there are a lot of al Qaeda and other extremists who have learned the same sort of lesson -- give us a place where we can train and operate and we'll be able to do a lot. And I think what we've got to do is establish enough governance there so they don't have that ability.

MR. RIEDEL: I can't help but comment here. *The Economist* title is the classic military mistake of fighting the last war over again. What I think we're seeing is our enemy, al Qaeda is showing remarkable adaptability and they are adapting to a new environment which is the Arab Spring and taking advantage of it to create what I've called the Third Generation of al Qaeda or al Qaeda 3.0. And if you want to read more about that, go to our website.

So let me go back to taking questions now that I've advertised for myself. Right here.

MS. VARGAS: Hi. Christine Vargas, recent graduate of Johns Hopkins SAIS.

My question has to do with PRT teams and their interaction with troops with engagement teams. To address the Martian problem, you want to put a civilian with a group of men and women like that to maybe soften them up. And I know there were attempts, specifically in Afghanistan, to do just that. Have there been any highly successful programs of that nature aside from the efforts that some very brave PRT team members did that are being discussed for future engagements should the U.S. population have the appetite to go into another country and try to connect with a community like that

again?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Yeah, great question.

There is a tendency right now to want to wipe the whiteboard clean. There is a certain move afoot that says counterinsurgency doesn't work and therefore, we will wipe the whiteboard and we will turn to something else. A little bit like couldn't reach the grapes so they must have been sour. And my view is that's not the way we ought to go. My view is because it's hard in Afghanistan doesn't mean counterinsurgency doesn't work. It's always hard. That's why there's an insurgency in an area because there's problems.

But you always do counterinsurgency. Every war has got counterinsurgency. Everybody likes to point back to World War II. That was clean. It was good. We crushed Europe and we came home. We crushed Nazi Germany and came home. No, we didn't. We did the Marshall Plan and that was counterinsurgency for years to make it so that it wouldn't erode and return to fascias and Communism. Look at the Civil War. We did the reconstruction and that was problematic, too, but you still have to do something to make the society have some staying power. And so counterinsurgency is going to be key.

Now, the question is when you want to do counterinsurgency you have to know what you're doing because it is by definition a nuanced effort. What the insurgent wants you to do is overreact. It's just like a matador with a bull. The insurgent goes to an area and waves the cape by doing typically violent activities. And what they want the security forces to come do is to bomb the area or to go surround the whole block and search everybody's house. And if you bomb it, you frustrate all the people. If you search everybody's houses, 95 percent are innocent, but nobody likes to have their house searched. So now everybody is more irritated. So the insurgent wants you to do that

until you've lost credibility and you've proven you either can't stop the insurgency or you've created so many antibodies in the people that it's bad. So it's hard. It's nuanced. It takes a long time and it takes people who understand. What America has not been good at is being willing to invest in those things that take a long time.

I remember before I went to Afghanistan I read book called *Soldier Sahibs,* and that's about the East India Company and at that time Northwest India, later Pakistan area, but in the early 19th century. And when they would put -- they sprinkled these young men out there to establish bases and build units. And their first tour of duty was 10 years and they had to learn what they called Hindustani first, the language. And then they stayed 10 years. And then they got leave and they went home to England for a year or so. They got married and then they typically came back.

If you're going to have people who deal effectively in an area you've got to think that way. You have to have -- you have to put people -- everyone says Lawrence of Arabia. T. E. Lawrence was this brilliant guy who went out and dealt with the Arabs. There's different views of his effectiveness but the point is he was an expert in the area before the war started. He'd been an archaeologist. He traveled. He spoke Arabic. He knew what he was dealing with. And if you parachute somebody in from Milwaukie, who doesn't speak the language and is going to be there six months and bought themselves an Orvis shirt and a pair of workpants and is going to punch their ticket and then come back and be effective, not often.

So the idea that we're going to do this is going to take real dedication of people. You're going to have to create a cadre of civilians who are willing to do it. A cadre of people who are willing to accept risk, because you can't protect everybody. And the reason it's done so much by the military now is because we've skewed funding and we've skewed other things, and so the military has had the capacity. We need to have a

wider capacity in U.S. business, U.S. (inaudible). Are we willing to do it? I don't know. I'm not yet seeing it. I see some talk about it but I'm not yet seeing that on the ground, although there are some great exceptions. I mean, there's a number of people I did work with who just do it brilliantly but they're too few in number.

MR. WEBBER: My name is Fred Webber. I'm a former Marine and would have welcomed the opportunity to serve under you, General.

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Semper Fi, sir.

MR. WEBBER: Semper Fi.

Bing West, another Marine, wrote a book called *The Wrong War*, all about Afghanistan. I'm halfway through it. It's painful. It's a very painful read. And my pessimism increases because it looks like we're just shoveling sand against the tide. You may have read that book. I'm sure you know of Bing West. Do you have any comment about this? I think it goes to that endurance issue that you just addressed. I think the premise of the book really is we're not thinking long term. We don't have the fortitude to stick with it.

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Yeah. Thanks for your comment.

I do know Bing West. I have not read that book. I know -- I've been told generally what it says. I agree with part of what he says and I disagree with part of what he says. The long-term willingness to stick with anything is what's key.

In the region now, Afghanistan and Pakistan, what they want to know is is America going to stick there? They don't want to know how many troops we're going to have on the ground. That's not their measure. Their measure is will we do what we did in '89; turn our back and walk away. I believe both Afghanistan and Pakistan want us to stay there but they're not sure that we will. The strategic partnership we've talked about has to be real. If they believe that, I think all their calculus is different, and I think

that's the key part. The problem is we don't like the idea of saying we're going to be here a long time even if it's small numbers of people. What President Karzai -- I remember one day I said, "How many Americans do you want here? What do you want?" He said, "I want American business and I want you here to make a profit. Because if you make a profit here, you're not going to want our stability to go bad so you're going to have a long-term relationship." Very perceptive thinking. So I think that's key.

Where I disagreed with Mr. West was -- and when I was there he was sort of, you know, banging the drum saying we're not taking the gloves off, we're not, you know, pounding on the Taliban hard enough. And I disagreed with that because, one, the Soviets killed 1.2 million Afghans out of 24 million people. So mathematically how many do we have to kill? It doesn't work that way in that kind of war.

The other thing is because of the nature of counterinsurgency, when you go more kinetic you start producing second and third order effects. You start destroying people's houses. You know, if the Taliban comes into your house and shoots at us, we have legal law of arm conflict right to level that house. And what I was telling the force was if you have to to survive; do it. If you don't and you can back away and not do it and we'll figure out another time to get them, that's what I want you to do. And people said we're being soft. But if I blow up that house, even if the Taliban are in it, the people who own that house, if they're lucky enough not to be in there when I blow it up, still don't feel liberated afterwards. (Laughter) They go -- Afghans used to tell me there were three outcomes. Either you win, the Taliban wins, or we get stuck in this protracted war. And they've been at war 34 years now. They said we would like you to win but our second best is the Taliban wins because the one we can't stand is the war going on forever. Because getting killed is the worst of all. Pretty interesting rational behavior.

And so I think that's what -- I don't think Afghanistan is impossible. I

don't ever think it's been impossible. I think it's really hard but I think we need to understand exactly what we want out of Afghanistan. We need to have very clear geostrategic objectives for what we, the U.S., want. And don't think of Afghanistan as Bruce has written about so eloquently. Think the region. Because once we're gone, the region is still going to be there. And we're worried about Northern Mali now and the whole region has a potential to have issues for the world as we go on as it has in the past. Thank you, sir.

MR. RIEDEL: Let's go to the back just to give you exercise. Over there in the corner.

MR. WINGER: Fred Winger, GardaWorld Security

General, what's your opinion on the U.S. drone strike campaign against al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen? Is it on the right track or is it going towards the decapitation strategy you talked about earlier?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Yeah. I'm not an expert on it now. I have an opinion sort of from afar. I'll give you that upfront.

I think that you do have a positive effect. You can have positive effects in striking enemy using drones or whatever you do; kinetic strikes like that because you can disrupt the organization. You can take out key leaders. I've never seen it where it is decisive. I've never seen where you can do enough drone strikes to destroy an entire network or decapitate it enough so that new leaders don't rise. So I hope that that's not the hope. I think it has got to be a supporting effort for other activities, hopefully by the government of Yemen.

What we have to understand about drone strikes is for every action there's an equal and opposite reaction. And every time you shoot inside a country there are some people who are happy about it and there are some people who are not happy

about it. Often the people who are not happy about it are not directly affected by it. If you look in Pakistan right now, the people who are most opposed to American drone strikes are not Waziris; they're not people close to the strikes. They are people in other parts who are outraged by the idea of sovereignty being violated. That's something we've got to think about every time we do something because you're always -- there's always a day after. You're always going to deal with the long-term impacts of what you do. So I don't believe we should not have that as a tool in the arsenal in the capacity we have, but I think we have to have a very, very mature policy and very thoughtful long-term policy on what happens day after everything we do. I think that applies anywhere in the world.

I just remind people how would we feel if the Mexicans came north and took a drone strike in Texas, even though they were going after a drug leader who we didn't like that we thought was evil? Part of us would say, well, it's good that they got him but there would be a sense of outrage that said, "Wait a minute. If you needed him gotten, why didn't you just tell us?" You know, I think we've got to understand we're dealing with people's minds.

MR. RIEDEL: Down here in the front.

MAJOR LOVE: General, Major Love, currently studying at National Defense University.

As you've said, we didn't know enough and we don't understand enough. Can you explain what you envisioned when you implemented the AFPAK Hands Program -- The Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program -- and how you would envision that being adapted to other parts, other regions as we move into the Pacific Rim, Africa, or wherever we may go next?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Yeah, thanks. I will -- I became convinced

my first tour in Afghanistan in 2002 that we didn't know enough; that we were clueless and we were trying to sort out this extraordinarily complex thing. Then in all the years in Iraq, and I spent part of every year in Afghanistan as well, and then in the fall of 2008 I'd come back from my Special Operations Command and I was director of the Joint Staff, I'd been reading about the area. I understood, despite all the time I was there, how little I understood. And I like to read history. And I became convinced that unless we had a cadre of people who understood the area and had long-term relationships with people it was going to be difficult to be effective.

So around the whiteboard in my office Mike Flynn, now the director of CIA and Major General Scott Miller and I said we have got to create a cadre of people who speak the language, have repetitive tours, have relationships, and can actually tell us what's going on and also influence things. The term "Afghan Hands" came from the old China hands idea -- people who had been there a long time. So we came up with this plan to have people that were involved for at least five years, about at least a significant part of that in theater but also fluent and whatnot. We got the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Mike Mullen, to agree to support it, and we go the Secretary of Defense to support it.

So we've got a great plan and it's going to take a while to implement. We ran right into service bureaucracy. What we ran into was people going, "Wow, if I put a guy or a gal into that program they're going to be tied up for five years. They're not going to be competitive. They're not going to be good Marines or Air Force officers or whatever. So we can't put talent in that program." I said, "Well, you've got to put talent in that program." "Well once this war is over then they'll be lost because they will have wasted five years of their lives and this war is not going to last that long." Here we were in the ninth year at that point. And so we ran it against personnel resistance in every one

of the services. They very grudgingly identified a certain number of people and then they started putting people in the program. And the program was managed, and I was managing the Afghan end of it and had people working for me, but I was responsible. And we only did it okay. We tried but we didn't implement it as well as we should have. It was going to get better over time. But a certain part of the people who came over to be Afghan Hands weren't volunteers. They'd been voluntold. (Laughter)

And so as a consequence, this is something -- you know, T. E. Lawrence did well because he had a passion and he was willing to do it. We were trying to create a bunch of people who had that passion and had that staying power and were willing to do it. And a percentage of them did but a percentage didn't. A percentage couldn't learn the language either because they didn't try or they weren't smart enough. But as a consequence, the program had difficulty. It still exists. It's still moving, but I would argue it's almost exactly to your question about the civilian part; we have to be willing to make the investment. We have to be willing to say it's worth this long-term investment. Because if not, you just operate ineffectively. You just can't go in with people who don't know the language, aren't going to be there long, and don't have a long-term commitment to the outcome of an area and expect a really good effect.

MR. RIEDEL: We have time for one last question. Right here. In the blue. Yeah.

SPEAKER: General McChrystal, thanks for being here. I'm a current SAIS student and also the author of a book on the first 100 days of the war in Afghanistan.

I wanted to ask you about how the wars are going to end. So we see that the United States doesn't have an enduring presence in Iraq and it's going to develop one now for Afghanistan. What is the appropriate mission for that? Is it

necessary and what are the resources that we need for it?

GENERAL McCHRYSTAL: Yeah. What do we want? I mean, that's the first thing I'd ask U.S. policymakers. What is our geostrategic objective in that region? You know, if we can't articulate that, and I think just saying we don't want al Qaeda there is probably not broad enough. I think we need to be able to identify for ourselves what we want and then we have to see whether it is aligned with what we are willing to pay. Pay in terms of people, pay in terms of money, pay in terms of paying I guess we'd say.

I'm not 100 percent sure we know that. You know, there's some discussion about it but I'm not sure that we know it. That's going to define what happens. We have said that we want a stable Afghanistan. We said we want, you know, stable Pakistan with a reasonable relationship between the two, and we want no al Qaeda in the region and whatnot. But the question is going to be are the resources we're willing to commit long term? And part of that is just interest, focus. It's not necessarily numbers of troops or money but it's how engaged are we willing to be is going to determine that.

I think that the Afghans are doing a calculation right now. And I mentioned that they're so scared of 2014; not because there's been no progress but because there has been and they sense they could lose it. I don't think the average Afghan is as scared of a Taliban takeover as they are of just a return to civil war and a return to the rise of warlords and whatnot.

I think -- my personal opinion -- it's in our interest to work for stability in that region and to work pretty seriously for stability in that region. But I might have a different willingness of commitment than the nation has. So the policymakers have got to get together and make that decision. I think the Afghans can protect their sovereignty now if they have the confidence to do it. They've got an Army. They've got a police force. It's got all the problems in the world but they're not facing a huge army. They're

facing a Taliban which is fragmented and whatnot. So it's a different challenge. Their problem is confidence. People want, you know, when you don't trust things and you don't trust the future, you take very rational actions to protect you and your own. You send money to Dubai. You do things like that, when in reality to make an organization or country work everybody has got to let go of the side of the pool and make a commitment to we'll all do this together. And it's the confidence thing that scares me more than anything.

If they have a peaceful transfer of power in 2014, which they're capable of, and they have a government that appears as though they're improving -- it doesn't have to be great, they just believe it's going to be better next year than this year and that sort of thing -- then I think there's every chance that we'll come out well. If they don't, that's going to be the determinant in my view.

MR. RIEDEL: Thank you, General McChrystal. Thank you for your service. Thank you for coming to Brookings today.

My Share of the Task; if you haven't been convinced that you ought to go out and buy it, I don't know how much more we could do. Thanks again.

(Applause)

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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