THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY

BUILDING THE GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM NETWORK

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MATTHEW LEVITT: I am very pleased to have with us this afternoon Assistant Secretary Michael Vickers, assistant secretary for Special Operations and low-intensity conflict at the DOD. In this capacity, he is the senior civilian advisor to both the secretary and the deputy secretary of defense on the operational employment of future capabilities of Special Operations Forces, strategic forces, and conventional forces. In 1973 through 1986, he served as an Army Special Forces noncommissioned officer, Special Forces officer, and CIA operations officer and during the mid-1980s, Mr. Vickers was the principle strategist for the largest covert action program in the CIA's history – the paramilitary operation that drove the Soviet army out of Afghanistan. We are very pleased to have him here today to speak on building the global counterterrorism network in what I believe is the tenth in our senior counterterrorism official speaker series here at the Washington Institute.

Please welcome Assistant Secretary Vickers.

(Applause.)

MICHAEL VICKERS: Well, thank you. It's a – and thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the strategies and capabilities I believe we will need to win the war on terror. It is indeed a pleasure to be with you hear today and following the footsteps of many of my close friends in the U.S. counterterrorism community who've come before me here, Mike Leiter at the National Counterterrorism Center, Juan Zarate at the National Security Council, Ambassador Dell Dailey, our ambassador for counterterrorism at the State Department, and of course, Charlie Allen, our undersecretary for intelligence at the Department of Homeland Security. It's also nice to be here to see many old friends – personal friends as well in the audience and so I hope you'll find my remarks stimulating and entertaining.

What I'd like to do here today is to provide a brief assessment of where I think we are in the war on terror. Now, others, I think previous speakers have covered that better than I can but really, to set the backdrop for my remarks on strategies and capabilities, on which I'll focus the bulk of my time, which really gets to the essence of what I think we need to do to deal with this current and future environment. And I promise I'll leave ample time for questions and discussion.

Now, to the set the stage for my remarks and the discussion to follow, just to put everything on the table, I want to give you a little sense of what my day job is at the Pentagon as – it's got this awful name – assistant secretary of defense – that's the good part, but Special Operations, low-intensity conflict, and interdependent capabilities, which some say means Special Operations Forces and lots of other stuff. If you pronounce it as an acronym, as the Pentagon wants to do, SOLICIC, it sounds even worse – (laughter) – than when you spell it out. But there you have it.

Several previous jobs, about four were combined into this and expanded. It has lots of diverse duties but basically, it divides into two parts, oversight of – from a senior civilian policy perspective of our operations overseas and then our future military operational capabilities. In those two broad portfolio areas, I divide my time about 80 percent these days on operations and about 20 percent on capabilities. Most of these operations involve sensitive activities that I can't talk about. I'll try to talk in general terms here today.

On the oversight of operational capabilities, that's really the Special Ops plus the interdependent capabilities that ranges from our nuclear forces, our conventional long-range strike forces, our space, our cyber, our missile defense, our conventional forces, and of course, our Special Operations Forces. So it gives you a sense of what I'm prepared to talk about if those are of interest to you.

I'd like to start now with the topic of prepared remarks, which is building the global counterterrorism network and before I do that, I'd like to talk a little bit about where we've been since the 9/11 attacks. The first point I'd like to make, of course, is obvious to many of you, but America didn't choose the war on terror, however it's named. Al Qaeda targeted America, they had a strategic debate, as I think my intelligence colleagues have told you about, about near and far enemy, of what's the best way to catalyze a broad uprising within the Muslim world, and then to change the international balance of power.

The problem, pre-9/11, wasn't just the Afghanistan sanctuary, although that was a very, very severe problem, but terrorist groups with global reach, of course the European cells and others, but also East Africa, Arabian Peninsula, Southeast Asia, a global problem that exploited globalization. After the 9/11 attacks and Operation Enduring Freedom or the war in Afghanistan, we practiced a revolutionary form of unconventional warfare, combining our most advanced weaponry and surveillance equipment with our Special Operations capability to eliminate the al Qaeda and Taliban-hosted sanctuary in short order, had a number of early successes in the clandestine war, principally in Pakistan, which some of the al Qaeda – against the al Qaeda fleeing senior leadership.

And then the war in Iraq, I think is properly – strategically seen as a fundamental struggle between ourselves, our partners, and our adversaries to deliver a decisive goal in this war, in both cases. One, to bring about a change that would catalyze further change, I think the perspective on our side and then of course, trying to exploit the opportunity, al Qaeda and its affiliate side as well to foster their strategy. I'd like to shift now to the continued threat from the al-Qaeda-associated movement and again, some of this ground has been covered. I just want to put my personal perspective on it.

We've had some notable successes over the past seven years and some of these have been gradual and incremental but still quite significant. I mean Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines, but elsewhere, in an area we describe as the terrorist transit triangle which includes a lot of insular Southeast Asia. We've had considerable success against Abu Sayyaf and other groups and Jamaat al Islamiyya. That doesn't mean they're finished off, but we've had substantial success.

The group that called itself al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula was doing rather well until 2003, particularly in Saudi Arabia and then the tide really has turned against them. And over the past four years, there've been considerable successes against that group and it's offshoot to change the balance there rather significantly. More recently, there's been a significant balance change in Iraq. Al Qaeda in Iraq is now a whisper of what it used to be. It doesn't mean that it's gone away but its capabilities are a lot less on many metrics than it was a couple of years ago.

Director Hayden, CIA Director Hayden has even mentioned that as he looks around the world in open testimony, that the reconstituted sanctuary in the tribal areas in Pakistan or Federally Administered Tribal Areas and adjacent areas, al Qaeda senior leadership is on its heels as well. Some like to cite a core metric that there haven't been any homeland attacks since September 11th, 2001, that doesn't mean there haven't been plots, as I think the national intelligence officer recently discussed in talking about the national intelligence estimate of a year ago and – (inaudible). Fortunately, these plots have been disrupted but the threat remains fairly significant.

And al Qaeda has also demonstrated a capability to regenerate. When they get set back, they're able to replace some losses, not necessarily to the previous level, not necessarily to the same skill in some individuals, but they do have a regeneration capability. Looking around in where I think we are right now, the Afghanistan insurgency has gotten significantly more intense the past two years from – I would add – from a very, very low base but is a growing challenge there. The situation in Iraq has gotten much better but as General Petraeus and others have pointed out, the durability of the change that we've seen, the dramatic change that we've in Iraq in the past year is still a bit difficult to measure just how fragile that may be. But the signs are certainly pointing in the right direction.

The tribal areas of western Pakistan remain the most significant strategic threat, globally, and within the region I might add, a threat to Pakistan, a threat to Afghanistan, and a threat to the United States and Europe and elsewhere. The situation in the Horn of Africa remains challenging, Somalia, across the Red Sea, and Yemen. In the Levant, it's challenging, in Lebanon, and in the Maghreb, particularly in Algeria, we've had a dip down and now a rise up in violence over the past year and of course, Algeria's had enormous conflict for the past two decades. These are areas that al Qaeda targets strategically and with varying degrees of success but they remain of concern to us.

Looking around the world, looking at some of these areas where we've had greater successes and others where we still face challenges, the point I would want to leave you with is one, the threat remains global; wherever it emanates from, it still takes advantage of globalization, both in a diaspora sense both also in mobility and Internet and things like that, and that threats do not just emanate out of traditional Muslim lands but can emanate out of the U.K., other parts of Western Europe, et cetera. If you look at the number of threats over the past decade, you would see as many or more coming out of Europe as the greater Middle East.

Al Qaeda's goals remain to catalyze an Islamist insurgency, to break up and/or prevent the formation of international coalitions arrayed against it, to exhaust and expel the West from Muslim lands, to overthrow apostate, or what they consider illegitimate states and to establish a

new caliphate, weaken the West, and transform the international balance of power to favor this new caliphate. Rather large ambitions, to say the least.

Now, the long-term strategic challenge, I believe we face in the war on terror, is what we described in our 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review – this is a major strategic review that Congress has mandated every four years to look at our strategies, our modernization programs, our force structures and our global postures – and that is the challenge of dealing with this global threat, of winning what we call steady state, or through continuous operations, albeit small and in a lot of cases low-visibility operations, in scores of countries with which the U.S. is not at war. So rather than large combat zones, a couple of large combat zones, as we see today, the fundamental long-term strategic problem, in our view – and this doesn't mean this is the only aspect of the war on terror – is really this problem of how do I do with a threat that has spread across the globe, across, say, some 60 countries at any one time on multiple continents.

Dealing with this problem requires, again, looking back at the Quadrennial Defense Review and other documents, fundamentally what we describe as indirect approach. Indirect approach contrasting through how we apply power, whether we apply it principally through ourselves as an instrument or through others that we enable in some way. This doesn't necessarily have anything to say about the kind of power that's applied, that one is more forceful or less forceful than the other, it's just who is the primary instrument. Are we advising, training, enabling, doing something else, are we the smaller forces in number relative someone else's larger forces that we are trying to amplify or are we the main force? And a clandestine approach, because much of this war is a war in the shadows, and fundamentally an intelligence war.

When you operationalize that basic idea of an indirect supplemented by a clandestine approach, and there's still room for direct approaches as well, that means we do most of this work by, with, and through our partners. We try to mobilize as many partners as we can around the world in this common cause. And as I mentioned, that principally means training and advising and assist and enabling them, but it can mean in-combat or not in-combat, depending on the circumstances in a particular country.

I mentioned the primacy of intelligence; there's not much I can say about some of our intelligence disciplines in this forum, but they are absolutely essential. They've made great progress in their capabilities during this decade, and then one particular discipline which I have some familiarity with, which is the most difficult to talk about, the area of covert action is absolutely central. It was the decisive instrument of the Cold War, it remains a critical instrument to the war on terror and I'll just leave that at that.

Another aspect of this strategy which has existed since the 9/11 attacks is the imperative of denying our adversaries any sanctuary. Many of you remember, in the 1980s a lot of the terrorism game was trying to catch terrorists before they could go to some sanctuary and then come out to attack again; the greater lethality of terrorism today mandates that we do not give them that sanctuary, but we also try to deny them resources as they operate globally around the world, whether those resources are financial resources or information resources, and bringing multiple elements of power to bear on this network. Both where they seek respite, but also where they seek strength.

Because our most dangerous threat is the nexus between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, counter-proliferation efforts become very, very important, both to stop those activities at their source, but also to have the ability to detect them if they were in transit and then stop them before they reach their intended destinations.

Now, this strategy, of course, since it's principally indirect and involves working principally through others, must of course be enabled by diplomacy, and information operations, both of the less visible, I'll say, and more visible variety are central to the conflict. And I've already talked about the supporting elements of financial, law enforcement, and development assistance, which all must be integrated to bring about this effect.

But what – the purpose of my talk today is really to talk about what I believe is – will prove to be the decisive operational instrument of this war, and that is something we describe as a global counterterrorism network. First sort of general principle is that it takes a network to defeat a network. The adversaries that we confront range from fairly organized networks to what someone might describe as franchises that have marriages of convenience our some other relationship, but because they take advantage of globalization and because they have these greater or lesser degrees of links, defeating the network becomes very, very important and defeating it at multiple modes becomes critically important.

Now, this global counterterrorism network, the capabilities and capacities and posture and policies that comprise it, didn't just arise post-9/11. They're built on capabilities that we had before, the expansion of some of these capabilities started right after the 9/11 attacks, others – significant changes have occurred more recently after the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, and the strategy for employing these capabilities, of course has continued to evolve as threats have changed and as other capabilities have evolved as well. In some cases, you know, it's a question of – we started on a path to build certain capabilities and capacities, and authorities and policies to be able to use them before we knew exactly how all the elements will fit together. That's often the way it works in the security business, and then you add pieces to it and you'll find your concepts and strategies and over time, you know, you hopefully get the right combination.

The core operational elements of our network, this global counterterrorism network, is really our intelligence community at large and all of the capabilities that it brings to bear, and some of that of course can be delivered remotely and some of it needs to be delivered locally, but one important element in particular of the intelligence community is the national clandestine service of the Central Intelligence Agency, of which I'm a former member, that comprises a lot of the modes of that work, supplemented in a very large way by our Special Operations Forces, but most importantly, by the security forces of our many partners around the world, security forces of varying types.

And so those are sort of the three legs of the stool, if you will, sort of the – broad intelligence apparatus that supports the network, the operational aspects of of our intelligence community, particularly the National Clandestine Service that comprises an operational backbone of this network. And then our missions overseas of course, which bring together all

the other elements to bear in that – not just intelligence and security, but those others that I talked to, and of course, the diplomacy to bring in the foreign partners. The key military component is our Special Operations Forces, but then as I mentioned, our foreign partners are really the core element or the sinew as I've described it.

The purpose of this network is to create a persistent, ubiquitous presence against an adversary's network or to prevent them from emerging in various areas and essentially to smother them over a very protracted period of time until that movement is supplicated. Now, this is just from an operational perspective, not from the broader informational and developmental assistance and other effects that one would have, but they work in parallel obviously, and in harmony. Now, this is in my view how we expect to win this war over the long time. This is the instrument, or at least the core operational instrument. It will occur very gradually over a long period of time. Some have called this the long war for good reason; we have no idea how long, long is. But like a lot of intelligence competition, it's a protracted competition, but it's a more largely in the shadows and through others or conducted clandestinely.

That doesn't mean that there couldn't be spikes from various times, either of our choosing or our adversary's choosing. If we have state sponsors for example, such as the Taliban-al-Qaeda marriage that existed in Afghanistan prior to the 9/11 attacks, we might choose to deal with that state sponsor through precision fires, assisted unconventional warfare as we did then or some other means – a more conventional means.

We also have to be prepared, however, for success on the adversary's part, where we could have a critical state failure. Instability in some key state – and I'll let your imaginations work there – that we have to shore up. And this again is why the department has expanded its focus substantially on irregular warfare and the counterinsurgency side – both the steady state working through others but also the large-scale counterinsurgency where we may use large numbers of our general purpose force – as we are currently in our Iraq to do stability operations and counterinsurgency – remain a really critical capability in our arsenal. And this is again where you get into the more direct approach versus the indirect approach.

Now I'd like to talk about some of the components of this network and focus principally on our Special Operations Forces. Special Operations Forces and our Special Operations command down in Tampa has been really one of the growth stocks of the Department of Defense during this decade. By the end of the decade or probably early in the next decade, our Special Operations Forces will essentially twice as large as they were at the beginning of the decade. They'll reach about 64 – the mid 60,000 in terms of total manpower. There will have been more than a doubling of Special Operations command budget. There will be a lot more – there already is – but there will be a lot more flag officers and general officers who come from a Special Operations background among our senior leadership.

If you look at the operational core of our Special Operations Forces, and focus on the ground operators, there are some 15,000 or so of those – give or take how you count them – these range from our Army Special Forces or our Green Berets, our Rangers, our Seals, some classified units we have, and we recently added a Marine Corps Special Operations command to

this arsenal as well. In addition to adding the Marine component, each of these elements since 2006 and out to about 2012 or 13 has been increasing their capacity as well as their capabilities, but their capacity by a third. This is the largest growth in Special Operations Force history. By the time we're done with that, there will be some things, some gaps we need to fix undoubtedly, but we will have the elements in place for what we believe is the Special Operations component of the global war on terrorism.

Special Operations Forces, I think through this decade and into the next one, have been and will remain a decisive strategic instrument. We used the – when trying to answer the question about what made Special Operations Forces special, we like to say that well, it was because of this tactical virtuosity or the skill of the individual operator that they were trained to such a high level. My counterpart, Admiral Olson, and I now like to talk about it that it really is the strategic employment or impact that these forces cumulatively have in this broad war that we find ourselves in that really is what's making them special. It's not so much the virtuosity, though that remains and is on display almost every day overseas.

There's been a very significant – about a 40, 50 percent increase in operational tempo and of course more intense in terms of the action since the 9/11 attacks. On any given day that we wake up, our Special Operations Forces are in some 60 countries around the world. But more than 80 percent or so of those right now are concentrated in the greater Middle East or the United States central command area of responsibility – the bulk of those of course in Iraq and Afghanistan, which is one of the reasons why we are expanding our force rather significantly so we can get broader global coverage.

Our Special Operations Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, but with applicability some other areas of the world have really invented a new way of war. And I'd like to talk about that – some of the key elements in a little bit of detail, and that is waging the war on terror from a operational perspective – meaning a campaign or protracted perspective by waging war on terrorists, on key leaders, on key facilitators through a proactive approach and through a sustained approach to counterterrorism. Again, our counterterrorism operations have changed from what we knew pre-9/11 where they would tend to be more isolated operations and a response to something. And now, of course, they are very sustained, proactive, and almost everything has changed about them – not that we can't still do the old thing.

The elements of this new way of war really changes in the concepts – the way we do these, we now have intelligence-driven operations that you actually do operations to generate intelligence to then lead to more operations. And the cumulative effects of those operations allow you to take down a network over time. And so if you look at the tempo over time in Iraq, whether it's a province like Anbar where we've had great – we had very, very difficult time and then great success, or you look at the country as a whole against Al-Qaeda in Iraq or the special groups, you see this idea of – we call it F-three-EA (FFFEA), which is find, fix, finish, exploit and analyze. I would emphasize there's a lot of intelligence in those things, and the finish part is something that's very dramatic and we're very good at, but it's all the other parts of that alphabet soup that really matter – that allow you to do the finishing.

New tactics, techniques and procedures of how we go about doing these operations have changed – how we enter buildings, et cetera, to deal with a very difficult threat. Our Special Operations Forces in this sustained war on terrorism have pioneered – have been pioneers in the exploitation of new technology – applying it to this cycle – principally unmanned aerial vehicles, but what we describe as persistence intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance or more colloquially the unblinking eye. And that, again, has made enormous difference. That's why it's Secretary Gates' top priority. He stood up a task force to bring more intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance into the department so we can get them in the hands of our troops. And, again, our Special Operations Forces have really pioneered these techniques and it's expanded with a broader force.

And then, the third leg of this – or the third portion of it more than leg – is relationships. And that is – I mentioned the intelligence-operations link – but, really, the interagency link – relationships – the close operational collaborations that have been formed in this war. Where we have partners from across the interagency working every day together on the same problem has produced really dramatic results and allowed us to move at the speed of war, where we couldn't before. The decision-making has now matched the operational requirement.

And then, perhaps not for the faint of heart, but the force component is relentless. And, sometimes, it's hard to measure how well you're doing, but if you look at results over time, what looked like a very difficult fight in some cases led to – we had taken down the network, pretty substantially – but you wouldn't do that without a strong stomach and without operations day after day and doing intelligence and ops to generate more intelligence and then taking apart the network. And that relentlessness is a really key component.

Okay. I mentioned there's been dramatic increases in our Special Operations Forces to date; there's more ahead that will take the next administration to play out. But there are still some gaps that – we have another strategic review coming up with the beginning of the administration – that right now clearly need to be addressed and weren't addressed in the last one. And that is, basically, again, in these areas of enablers, of – you've got to be able to find the place you want to go, so intelligence, surveillance and requirement – or reconnaissance. We're working as hard as we can on that. We may be getting close to having the problem more or less under control, but perhaps more needs to be done.

We clearly have more that we need to do in getting more resources out of our existing, and perhaps additional, rotary airlift. If you can't get to the fight, even if you do a good job in your local neighborhood, it festers in other places and that's, fundamentally, one of the problems we have in Afghanistan. And, again, if you're going to do this principally with partners, you've got to be able to move them, too. I mean, they're really your muscle. So you may be enabling them with intelligence, you may be helping them plan and train them and go with them. And you've got to be able to move them. And so that's a shortfall.

And then there's areas on the, sort of, the non-muscle side in civil affairs and in psychological operations that are – these forces are in enormous demand. We're on less than a one-to-one deployment cycle, and they pay enormous dividends. In several countries around the world, we have small civil affairs teams that work with the Agency for International

Development, and the bang this country gets for the buck out of four Americans is truly astonishing. And the work they do in some very remote places, you know, helping people dig wells or establish schools or a range of things. And we've found we need more of them. We've actually, I think, quadrupled our capacity in the past four years and it's not enough. Now, we started from a very low base, but we probably need to double it again or more before we're done.

And then, in keeping with the idea of no sanctuaries, we need to make sure we continue our capabilities and our investments to make sure we can clandestinely infiltrate hostile countries that might harbor terrorists, or denied areas, as we describe it more generically. As we look out over time – as we move into a more information-intensive, biometric world – that will pose challenges for operating in these environments and we'll have to exploit that both ways, both figure out how to counter it as well as exploit it for our own benefit. It's always a struggle to make sure we have the foreign-language expertise we need in the force or foreign-born operators, but we're taking steps toward that.

We may need some additional organizational arrangements. I think greater integration, building out our wartime lessons with the intelligence community and others may be useful, and we're looking at some alternative command arrangements within the Department of Defense. As I mentioned, we're seeing more mainstreaming of Special Operations Forces senior leaders into senior leadership positions. I think that trend will continue, and I think it's important.

Now, I'd like to make a few brief comments about the intelligence component of the global counterterrorism network – the intelligence community writ large in the national clandestine service. And, again, I can't really say much about this area in a public forum, but this is really – Special Operations Forces have been a major growth stock in the Department of Defense, and there have been a number of growth stocks – this is another big one across the U.S. government since the 9/11 attacks.

Again, without getting into details about the magnitude, its capacities and capabilities have grown pretty substantially. Central Intelligence Agency, of which I'm an alum, got the name "central" for a variety of reasons – in a community, to sort of be the central focal point serving the president – but let me tell you, it's central in terms of the global counterterrorism network, too. And you hear a lot of talk, sometimes, by pundits and others saying how CIA is broken and it needs to be re-born as another Office of Strategic Services; nothing could be farther from the truth, in my mind. While all organizations populated by humans have human problems, they literally are central. The intelligence community gives us our global reach and allows us, as I mentioned, to move at the speed of war – intelligence enabling that. Couldn't – since it's an intelligence-led war – couldn't do it without them.

Finally, a comment about our international partners. Again, this ranges from across security forces – this could be internal security, intelligence forces or intelligence services, special operations forces, general-purpose forces, or conventional forces of our partner nations – we partner with all of them to bring about the effects we need within specific countries, within sub-regions, across regions, and then, globally. It is absolutely impossible to win without them.

So, again, you know, there's a lot of debates a lot of times about how we do the big wars and whether we're the dominant partner in the direct approach with junior partners or not. You know, each war looks a little different. For the global war on terrorism across multiple countries, they are the dominant partner. I mean, we may be the big enabler, but they're the dominant partner and there's just no other way to say that. They're the synonym of the global counterterrorism network and they're – we're trying to jointly establish security, and it's impossible to do it without them.

So I'd like to conclude – and then I'll open it up for questions and discussion – talking about – giving you sort of the concept and the strategy of the global counterterrorism network – how it's going to be applied against this array of threats we see, and then it's key operational components and then supporting components. Where are we, in terms of actually building it? And, as I mentioned, some of these capabilities, capacities and relationships have been – predate 9/11 – the September 11th attacks. Some were significantly expanded since the 9/11 attacks, and take more than a decade to reach their projected end-state. Others will take through the end of the next administration. But the pieces are basically coming into place, now that we're able to build more and as we get more experience and we get more capability and capacity to develop a far more capable network of these elements.

There will likely be a need for more integration as we go forward, particularly, again, if this fundamental problem is corrected, it's countries with which we are not at war that we have to operate in simultaneously. And then, of course, partner development and partner alignment in terms of goals and aspirations remains the critical problem, which is why, again, I just want to – can't emphasize diplomacy enough. But, rest assured, we're on the way to building this network and it is really a critical instrument for keeping America safe through the next decade and beyond. With that, I'd like to take your questions.

(Applause.)

MR. LEVITT: I'm going to take the moderator's prerogative to ask the first question, but I'll preface it by saying make contact with me, we have almost an hour for questions and I expect to be able to get everybody. If you're behind a pillar, make sure I can see you, and if you're in the back, please come to the mike for your question.

Mike, thank you very, very much. I'd like to follow this question on the partner issue in part – listening to you talk about no sanctuaries in denied areas and WMD, terrorism, I'm left feeling I need to ask: of the two – I would argue the two biggest issues that we're facing today, many people may argue there are more than two – Iran and Pakistan, how do we see the priority between these two in terms of our alignment of what are still limited forces? And maybe even more importantly, do these partners who are such a critical leg in this tripod share our assessment of that priority and how does that affect our ability to build this network which is appropriately so dependent on our partners?

MR. VICKERS: Well, I think we need to separate here the notion of what are really pressing strategic problems we currently have on our plate and the next administration we'll have on our plate, which Iran and Pakistan are certainly two of the top – whatever your number is –

within a small number, but probably well more than two. And the issue of the relative challenge they pose in terms of immediacy or severity as well, along with other similarly serious problems, versus the issue you raised about being aligned with partners on various goals.

So, for example, in the – in using a global counterterrorism network to prevent attacks on the United States, you certainly have to worry about sanctuaries, whether they are in countries which are aligned with us or countries which are hostile to us, but you also have to worry about actors elsewhere globally. Again, remember the 9/11 attacks, we had, you know, training and planning and lots of things going on in Afghanistan, but very important things going on in Europe as well. And that same phenomenon exists today. So it's not enough just to deal with the sanctuary or to have a strong partner in one country or a handful of countries – say, pick them. You really have to be stronger than your adversary in lots of places. That's one of the fundamental challenges of this world, which is why again sort of lead you to the strategy I think that I talked about.

So, getting the Europeans – we have a very close counterterrorism partnership with our European partners, but they are an essential component of this for stopping attacks in Europe or stopping attacks that may pass through Europe to the United States. And again, it takes that multi-aspect approach. And then in a lot of sub-regions, whether it's the Arabian peninsula, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, UAE, etc. number of countries, or the Levant or the Maghreb, they may pose sub-regional threats or threats beyond their region in some cases, generally not quite as much to the homeland as a couple of other regions, but they still – the same strategy is required and you have to have those partners aligned. And again, I guess the one point I want to sort of emphasize is the critical relationships here is with us and perhaps a couple of other eternal partners in some cases – at least on the operational side – with the locals that really matters. And you add up those local partnerships and that's what gets you the strategic effect around the world.

Now, in things like donor assistance for specific countries that may be unstable and require assistance, then mobilizing a broad array of external partners to provide that assistance becomes critical. But there's no formula in terms of partnerships. Now, I don't know if I answered your question about Pakistan and Iran – I don't want to really get into anything current policy or operations across the world, but they are both pressing problems.

(Laughter.)

MR. LEVITT: I expected the answer to that would be yes. (Laughter.) AP right here. If you could all just speak into the mikes at the middle of the tables. Thank you.

Q: Thanks, Pam Hess, with AP. Using your experience in Afghanistan with the program that eventually ousted the Soviets, what lessons can be drawn from that as people are trying to come with how to handle the problem in the FATA, and especially given the model that keeps getting bandied about with Anbar. What's applicable, what's not, and what caution should there be?

MR. VICKERS: Well, I've learned in irregular warfare and clandestine operations and other parts of this business that it's way more art than science and you have to adapt it to specific conditions. It's hard to export one model to another area. But the problem that we faced in Afghanistan in the 1980s was the Red Army and other instruments of Soviet power occupying another country, and so it took an industrial strength approach to get them out. One of the big lessons of that conflict and great success – I think it was decisive in helping – not the only element by far, but was decisive in bringing an end to the cold war – was not to declare victory and go home – that if there – Secretary Gates has said this. If there is something we could do over as a country, it would certainly be not to have the hiatus we had with Afghanistan and Pakistan after the Cold War. So I think that's one lesson, strategically, that's been internalized.

Operationally, it's a part of the world – the broader region where everybody has a gun and it's part of the culture and so local security is sort of a way of doing business, and so that creates operational prospects in various areas. But the broad strategy of the necessity of dealing with partners, doing some things that we might do and then being willing to work with formal institutions of a government and those who might not be part of a government but might be very helpful is pretty central to these kinds of operations.

MR. LEVITT: At the back mike.

Q: Brian Katula, Center for American Progress. You mentioned briefly your criticisms about the idea of a new style OSS being developed. I thought maybe you could offer a little bit more insight as to why you don't think that would necessarily be the best model for going forward and then looking at the next administration, what types of large initiatives do you think they need to dedicate more resources to on the intelligence front?

MR. VICKERS: (Chuckles.) Okay, well, I'll answer the first question. I don't think I want to tackle the next one, but the reason I think another OSS isn't the right model is if I understand it correctly, it means creating something out of nothing. We've got something. You know, it's had greater successes and lesser successes, but it had a lot more successes than people think and it's doing critically important work around the world today.

And if it also means putting that organization inside the Department of Defense, as the OSS was, I'm not sure that's the right approach, and we're at war. Not only do I think we're doing a lot better than people think in some of these areas, but the idea that the first thing I would want to do in the middle of a war right now and with some of the threats you've described, to come in and say let me figure out how I can play musical chairs here and reinvent new institutions doesn't strike me as the wisest approach.

So I'm not sold on the specifics. I don't think we need to – for instance some have suggested combining our Special Operations Forces in the same organization with the Central Intelligence Agency. If that's what they mean by OSS, you know I've seen that variant. We don't need to do that. We get the – you know, again, we might need more integration than we have today in some areas. We can achieve that.

So I guess I'm just generally leery of organizational solutions to problems. I'm much more a believer that the people you have in certain positions – basically, there's two ideas you can do in organization. You can make it very difficult to wield power or you can make it easier to wield power, right? Our founding fathers said we want to make it difficult for you. As we became a great power, we created institutions in World War II and then following that, you know, National Security Act of 1947, to make power more easy to wield.

That doesn't mean that every occupant of both positions or the organization performs at optimum all the time. What it means is you have organizational capacity – if the time is matched and the person is matched – to get it done. I think that's – I think we have the institutions we need, I think we need to focus more on getting the right people in them and making sure those organizations are resourced and have the authorities and capabilities they need, then rejiggering things.

Some organizational reforms, I think, were necessary. I think the Department of Homeland Security, for example, was something where consolidation – again, if you look at our organizational history as a government after World War II, it took time to build the Department of Defense to what it looks like today. It just didn't happen in a year or so, and it will be true for any other organization. But that consolidation was very important, and it may take a decade or more to really get it working the way it should, but I guess I'm really skeptical of remaking the CIA or remaking this or that – again, just a personal view, but an insider one. Yeah. Oh, am I – you're supposed to. I didn't –

MR. LEVITT: It's okay. It's all right, go ahead, we'll get there.

Q: I'm Bob Dreyfus, with the Nation Magazine. John Brennan, who's got some experience in intelligence and countering terrorism, has told me, but a lot of other people that he thinks that even the words 'Global War on Terrorism' are terrible, and that too often people are now all over town saying we're using a hammer to fight a nail when we have other tools besides hammers. Now, you seem to represent the hammer side of the equation. Are you ready for a new boss who might say hey, we're going to take a whole new approach to this and is our institutions of military and intelligence prepared to be reorganized from top to bottom on a new method, a new strategy and new ideas?

MR. VICKERS: Well, I think our institutions understand democracy and understand civilian control and however new leadership wants to reorganize if that's their business. I don't think what I was describing would be described as a hammer approach. If an intelligence and foreign assistance and working with partners in many countries with which we're not at war – and I would emphasize that, not at war, but joined with them against terrorists – I think John Brennan and I would actually describe that the same way whatever you call it.

If you – as far as the name "war on terror" or "the global war on terrorism," again, I'll leave that to others. There are a lot of choices one has to make. If you take that apart, some people say the only word we can all agree on there is "the." And after that, you know, we have arguments. But if you take it apart and say do I like the word war or not, and what do I mean by that? Well, clearly we don't necessarily mean big military operations or anything else. We may

mean the non-military part is dominant. It's 98 percent. But does the word war add some value in terms of law enforcement or criminality versus – and again, if you look at al Qaeda's aims, they look like war aims to me. They don't look like criminal aims. But again, that's for others to decide.

The – I think most would agree it's global. I hope there's not as much dispute about that. The global part frequently gets dropped off, but that doesn't mean it's everywhere all the time in the same strength. It just means that it takes advantage of globalization. And then if you look at the terror aspect – I mean terrorism is a central phenomenon. People argue semantically – well it's just a tactic, it's not this fine – sometimes euphemisms are rather useful in something in terms of not – and I'll just leave it at that. But as you wrestle with this problem, again, as I say, each word has come to dispute, but have at it. It's just that people who have wrestled with this made deliberate choices for a variety of reasons and one could go the other way, but it's not that they didn't think about it.

MR. LEVITT: We have lots of questions, and I promise you I'm going to try to get to all of you. Edwin (ph) right here.

Q: Yeah, Ed Friedman (ph) from the Cato Institute.

MR. LEVITT: Can you speak into the mike?

Q: Yeah. Ed Friedman (ph) from the Cato Institute. I have a question about counterinsurgency doctrine in Afghanistan. According to Sean Naler (ph), you opposed the surge or at least sending more troops to Afghanistan back last winter. And I appreciate that. I agreed with you then and now. And I just wonder if you agree with me about something, which is it seems to me that the – in the United States we've now sort of conflated state-building and counterinsurgency and we've discovered, I think, in Iraq, another strategy of counterinsurgency which is contrary to state-building, which actually empowers people who are not committed to the state, which serves our goal but maybe not be the goals of the state we're operating in. And that seems to me an even better strategy for Afghanistan which has never had powerful, central authority, and yet everyone talks about Afghanistan as if our security depends on the success of that state. So I wonder if you could just comment on that and tell me if I'm wrong.

MR. VICKERS: Those are separate ideas. I mean one, the article you are referring to is more headline than substance if you look at the rest of it. It is "is a surge –" meaning an Iraq replica, the right answer. And then my answer to that is no. Does that mean you can't have more forces of some kind – are you surging if you go from something very small to something a little larger, and your approach is still dominant the other way? Well, then I don't think we should get hung up on that.

I agree with you. I think first and foremost, you have to take each of these cases on their merits and to make it specific about Afghanistan, it is always better strategically and operationally to swim with the tide than to swim against it. So you have to make an assessment of how government structures will work, what the art of the possible is – in a counterinsurgency context; in some other context, of course, different problems. And that then should drive sort of

the mix of instruments you bring to bear and their – how much of it should be done by an indirect approach or through locals versus a direct approach. Again, you have to look at what's possible. In El Salvador in the 1980s, we fought a very successful counterinsurgency with a very, very small U.S. footprint but a pretty big financial commitment and a lot of senior leader focus on the country.

So there are varying different models that you have to apply in each case, you know, Afghanistan will likely require additional resources of some kind. That may be assistance, that may be more supporting assets in some cases, it may be different strategies to empower more of the Afghan people. But that is something that is under review, and I don't want to prejudge any outcome, and it's something undoubtedly the next administration will tackle as well, but so we'll have success in Afghanistan if we remain engaged; it will require additional resources of one form, what those resources are I think will be determined.

MR. LEVITT: Yes, right here.

Q: (Inaudible) – with CNA. Both presidential candidates have stressed the need to get bin Laden and Zawahiri and they both have said they're going to do it. What will you tell the next president about the importance of getting the two gentlemen – gentlemen, the two terrorists, and what the key challenges they face in capturing the two?

MR. VICKERS: Well, again, if you look at this problem as I do, from a strategic and operational perspective, unless I'm talking about the tactical aspects of, this guy is in this house, and how do I actually deal with that, the principles are quite similar in a sense that my fundamental problem is to identify elements of the network, I have to be able to defeat a network, not just its senior leaders.

Now, often I can – a way to collapse the network is to attack it from its top levels, not necessarily just the top, but different networks have different characteristics. And I need a certain degree of persistence to do that, so whether, again, I'm talking about loosely affiliated networks around the world that subscribe generally to some common ideology and you have some core group that exploits it, or I talk about a much tighter network that's confined in one area, such as Pakistan border region, where I have a lot of senior leaders and planning and other things going on, it's not enough – one, it's very, very difficult to find any one person at any time, but it's not – even if you can, it's not enough to not attack the network. You've got to get the planners, the trainers – you have to take down the capability as a whole.

And so while the top leadership has great symbolic value, leadership value, all sorts of unique characteristics resident in them, they don't represent the whole power of the organization. And it is a larger problem, I guess, is what I would convey, than just them. And then if you look at it more broadly, as I said, it's those who support – you know, either provide sanctuary to them or join common cause and fight with them, you know even if they have common aims in any war, you know, you have allies of convenience in others, but you have that in some of these cases as well. And so it's important, depending on what each aspect, how they mutually reinforce each other, but whether some portions represent a threat to Pakistan or some to

Afghanistan or some to the homeland. If you want to deal with all three problems, you got to deal with all portions of that network.

MR. LEVITT: And right here.

Q: Elaine Grossman with the National Journal Group. Just wanted to ask if you would bring us up to date on efforts by any terrorist organizations around the globe to acquire or build weapons of mass destruction: chem, bio, nuclear. So where are we in that, and if you could also just say a bit about international organizations' efforts to try and interdict any such movements of these weapons or materials. For instance, what's Interpol doing on that front?

MR. VICKERS: Could you repeat the first part? I got them –

Q: Just looking for a status update on efforts that have been conducted over the last year or two on the part of these groups to acquire or build weapons of mass destruction.

MR. VICKERS: Well, a number of states and non-state actors are trying to acquire such weapons, and counter-proliferation remains a critical mission of the government and our partners. The president's Proliferation Security Initiative, which again applies similar principles of trying to rally multiple partners to interdict and prevent the acquisition and movement of these weapons if they are acquired, is really a critical strategic aspect of that. And then when you get into the area of specific countries or groups or others, then it becomes, you know, almost unique to each country, and that's about the most I can say about that.

Q: (Inaudible.)

MR. VICKERS: Interpol I can't, I mean I would if I could, that's not my area.

MR. : I'll direct you to some of the other speakers we've had in this series, including Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, whose statement is on the website –

MR. VICKERS: Sure, much better than I could do on that.

MR. : – and spoke specifically on this issue. Rafi.

Q: I'm Rafi Danziger from AIPAC, and there are those who say that what you are doing war of terror is like going after fish, or at most, the school of fish, but as long as the sea in which they swim remains intact, there will be other fish, or schools of fish, will come up, and they say that that sea the sea of ideas, and the real war is to be the war of ideas, and I'd say it's the need to persuade the people that want those terrorists and the support of their spouses really not good for those people. Can you address that, and to what extent you were involved in that interagency process is taking this into account?

MR. VICKERS: Well, I mean the war of ideas is a central element. I alluded to it briefly, about, sort of information operations at large. It is an interagency problem, I do participate in those discussions and have oversight of a number of the capabilities as well. The

fundamental problem is how you wage that war, or if you don't like the word war for war of ideas, whatever that struggle or competition looks like. What themes you emphasize, how well they resonate, the distribution mechanisms, who's giving the message can determine success or failure, but not surprisingly it may be something that takes a long time and is enabled by something else as well.

When you look at the operational challenges that terrorists pose, you have more of an immediacy that you have to deal with as well. So I don't think you have a choice of just doing, you know, the operational or as I described, sort of the war in the shadows versus the war of ideas. You have to do both, and which one ultimately gets you closer to victory or whether they reinforce each other at varying points along, you know, will be determined. But everyone recognizes it's important. It's not enough to say, you know, then what do I do about that realization? How do I implement that and how do I protect myself while I'm implementing it?

And as I said, what you find sometimes is, you know, you have to have people come to their own conclusions about whether this is good for them or not. How you get them to reach those – I mean that's fundamentally a war of ideas, but it's a war of ideas in their own head. About how they reach that – I shouldn't harbor these people or I – whatever the case is. You know, a lot of instruments by which one could do it that aren't necessarily just informational. You know, we get some of our greatest successes, if you just try to measure images of the United States or whatever, from acts rather than arguments in a lot of cases. You know, we can talk until we're blue in the face, in a lot of cases, but when you do things like earthquake relief or others, you know, you see that opinions change some. Now, whether that then has a strategic effect in the war on terror or it has some other effect is another matter.

So it's, you know it's something people wrestle with and will continue to wrestle with. It's – this is analogous in some ways to the intellectual struggle we had in the Cold War. Many have argued that we did a lot better early in the Cold War than we're doing early in this war. They're very different though. You know, the population – there are just so many variables that are different, it's hard to say. So.

MR. LEVITT: Ma'am here in the front.

Q: Sigmund (ph) with Office of the Secretary of Defense Policy. What is your vision for the cyberspace domain in general? You mentioned information operation, sir.

MR. VICKERS: Please say it again.

Q: Yes, sir. Cherry Sigmund (ph), Office of the Sec. Def. Policy. What is your vision of the role of the cyberspace domain and the GWOT –

MR. VICKERS: Cyberspace, oh.

Q: And, General, you mentioned info wats (ph), what are you able to share with us?

MR. VICKERS: Well, not much, but I'll try. Cyberspace in general is of growing and very significant strategic importance. Whether it's various states around the world as an instrument to use or whether it's non-state actors. Al Qaeda and its affiliates do use the internet very effectively, as do others, as I alluded to, or the cyber-domain. And it is a – because it's an emerging area of – or a – emerging in the sense that it hasn't been around that long, of conflict. What's most effective, what policies we should adopt, legal frameworks, et cetera – you know, still represent to some degree a work in progress. And I think will for some time to come.

It is a central battleground, and then if you nest that in the broader – just information sphere after an operation – I mean some have argued that our adversary – you know, I talked early about how, to try to operationally take apart a network, we will do operations just to generate intelligence to lead to a series of operations to then generate the effect we want. Some argue that a lot of our adversaries, you know, do operations just to support their information objectives. Or use our operations to support their information objectives, and they actually do very well in this area by making false claims – and you know, they have a lot of advantages, if you just stack up competitors, and you say, well, you can lie, and you can't, and you can do this, and you – they play pretty well on that battlefield.

So both in that, you know, the cyber is aid for al Qaeda and others, it's a very important aspect of globalization. And again, if your strategy is, I want to catalyze this movement, I want to share my successes, I want to fire you up, do a lot of things, they have a great tool that they wouldn't have had otherwise. And they use it rather well, and it's been a lot of growth in the past couple years in that area.

MR. LEVITT: Yes, sir.

Q: Reuters – oh, sorry. David Morgan with Reuters. Can you give us sort of a general assessment of the threats facing U.S. interests in Afghanistan and Pakistan, especially from a historical perspective? I mean, when you consider statements from top U.S. officials that Pakistan now faces an existential threat from Islamist militancy and when you consider that al Qaeda is operating out of safe havens that are beyond the easy reach of U.S. forces, might it be said that the threats posed by that region of the world are greater now than they were, say, 10 years ago?

MR. VICKERS: Okay. Well, the threat posed from Afghanistan 10 years ago was pretty serious. In a sense that it was a sanctuary for al Qaeda to, you know, develop the 9/11 attacks and earlier attacks before that. And as I mentioned, one of the lessons we took away from the Cold War, as Secretary Gates has said, is that we don't want to leave the prospect of failing states, and so whatever is the right destiny for Afghanistan is fundamentally up to the Afghan people. However one defines our goals, we certainly don't want it to be a safe haven for terrorists, and a source of instability.

You know, same true for Pakistan. In Pakistan the problem has gotten worse over the past decade, substantially worse. As al Qaeda senior leadership fled from Afghanistan after our successful operations there in 2001, late 2001, they have been very successful aligning themselves with local groups. They've married into a number of these groups, going back 20-

some years, but in other cases, local groups have become more militant and presenting an internal threat to Pakistan, reaching into the settled areas and bombing – I don't have to remind you of bombings, assassinations, and others. In the past year or so, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri declared open war on Pakistan. They hadn't done that, I believe, bin Laden hadn't, I think Zawahiri started very recently as well.

And what is meant by existential threat is both the significant threat to Pakistani stability, a judgment I share, but also it's the classic problem of, you know, I have this neighbor that I've had conflict with in several wars and that's my fundamental strategic problem and then I have this other problem in the other area that seems lesser. I've shaped a lot of institutions to do this other, how do I realize that this may be the more dangerous or immediate threat to me right now? And then of course, a number of these groups, several of them operating in that area like the way they had it in Afghanistan before and want to restore that. And so they pose a challenge to international strategy in Afghanistan and stability in Afghanistan.

So it's a three-way problem that emanates from the border region of Pakistan. A threat to the American homeland and Europe – or just basically, globally. A global threat I guess is the way to describe it. But including a homeland threat, a threat to Pakistan and a threat to Afghanistan. It's a very, very serious problem. And as I said, it's – you know, I don't want to measure trends month to month or anything, but if one looked at, say, 2001 and 2007 or eight, the threat got a lot more serious in Pakistan. Afghanistan it is ticked up since 2006 or so. And the multi-insurgents, the local insurgency and then the cross-border aspect.

MR. LEVITT: Yes, ma'am.

Q: As CIA officer, you're now – (inaudible) – to talk about the ongoing discussion about Title X authorities versus Title 50 authorities. Title X of course being the section of the U.S. code where the authorities who are DOD largely reside, Title 50 being the National Security Act and other authorities for CIA and other elements of the intelligence community, and particularly I would think you'd have some insights at how this plays out in the covert action arena, where we have this elaborate mechanism set up to provide for careful management and oversight of covert actions in the National Security Act, but the definition of covert action excludes traditional military activities, and I wonder whether anything the DOD is doing in the counterterrorism realm is considered these days to fall within the definition of covert action, is treated as a covert action, and if not can you reassure us that there are appropriate oversight and management mechanisms in place?

MR. VICKERS: Well, I speak to every person's opinion who might have one, particularly outside the government. I can assure you that DOD does not do covert action. And as you mentioned, covert action is an important instrument but an instrument that must have oversight and there are mechanisms to do that in the Title 50 realm and in the intelligence realm that date back to 1947. The Title 10, or traditional military activities, are just that. They – now, again, what it is a traditional military activity has to evolve depending on the circumstances, to varying degrees, as new challenges are posed. For example, in cyber. But the boundaries normally established for covert action, which is, and, again, I'm out of my depth here – this is

going to get into legal stuff that I've got to stay away from – but the boundary for covert action is typically whether the U.S. government would acknowledge it or not.

But the traditional military activity – that doesn't mean that you can't conduct something – what we describe as clandestine, which was also an intelligence term, but it means different things in different forms, but it basically – we did a secret operation to rescue the hostages in Iran in 1980. We don't want to tell the world about that before we do it, but at some point, you know, it is U.S. troops going in under, you know, DOD authorities – we will acknowledge the secrecy of that operation as it becomes public, or at the appropriate time. Covert action is something that the U.S. government does not and, again, I'll get out of my depth if I go any more there, but DOD does not conduct covert action.

MR. LEVITT: Right here in the front. I see people, I'm getting to you.

Q: John Berry (ph), Newsweek. Back in 2004, I think it was, Secretary Rumsfeld sent around one of his "snowflakes," posing the question whether we were killing, capturing, or otherwise neutralizing more adherents to al Qaeda than were being recruited through the madrassas. If you were asked that now, how would you reply?

MR. VICKERS: Um. Well, it would be very difficult to measure, globally. I think it's – if I looked at, say, al Qaeda in Iraq – an organization – and foreign fighters going to join it, I would say, clearly, we're on the positive side of that goal, by a long shot. I would also say that, you know, earlier I answered your question about the importance of taking a network approach rather than an individual approach. That doesn't mean you have to get every foot soldier or every wannabe who would join to destroy a network or to shut it off.

And so the metric of, you know, essentially – and I'm hoping to escape my hammer reputation back here, but – (laughter) – whether I'm going to kill my way to stopping this pipeline is probably not the right framework to begin with, but even in the kill-or-capture end of this business, how I achieve that can change rather suddenly, depending on how a network gets collapsed. You know, in other words, if enough middle management – or it looks pretty unsafe to join, you can stop a flow pretty soon, and it isn't like you – at that balance, at that moment – you are achieving your way to victory. But, again, so depending on the level you look at, it's specifically at that operational aspect, which, again, I would probably argue.

The problem – again, I want to emphasize the idea of regeneration. Now, I talked about the strategy of smothering, which is, even if I did that and I achieved it, the problems with these groups is that you've got to sit on them for a long time until you basically convince those around them and others that this is a bad idea. Whatever mechanisms you bring to bear to do this, that's a protracted period, I mean, even if you take away their operational capabilities. If you look at Baader-Meinhof, Red Brigades, or others, small little groups hung on for a long time in pretty sophisticated states.

And, you know, why did they give up the ghost – well they partially did at the end of the Cold War, when the world collapsed around them. But, so, yeah, I mean I would – getting the right metrics for this and knowing how you're doing at any point in time is a challenge. I would

say that in some areas, it's clear we're having a lot of success and – you know, Southern Philippines, as I said, and Iraq against al Qaeda in Iraq, at least operationally and then some other stuff.

MR. LEVITT: In the yellow tie –

Q: CSIS. You made quite a strong statement about the centrality of the CIA in all of this and I don't think there's any debate about it. You went on to characterize this as, you know, there's some problems and, you know, the human element and things like that, but that nothing could be farther from the truth in terms of how central they are. I don't think anyone debates that. There's a question, and I'd like your assessment on this, on the role of the DNI, and in the process of building capacity, have we, for example, brought in other layers of bureaucracy that reduce degrees of freedom to operate and are there new resources that are, perhaps, new enough, given the time it takes for case officers to be developed, that you have the capacity diminished, in some sense, because of the green-ness running operations from Washington. I'd just like you assessment on that.

MR. VICKERS: The last part was green-ness from Washington?

Q: In other words, the newness of people who are now becoming sort of handlers for people in the field who are having to go back for permission to do things, in Washington, with people who haven't had experience.

MR. VICKERS: I don't think – I don't think that's a correct statement, but all right, let me try to tackle that. What I was trying to say there was, from the framework that I was describing of, how do we operationally get at these terrorists around the world that would do us harm, the Central Intelligence Agency is an essential component of our network. That doesn't mean they're the answer to all our problems or they don't have some problems, but they really do vital work in all their traditional areas, you know, analysis and collection and special activities.

But there has been a significant expansion in this decade. It takes time to do that; to train people, to get them seasoned. Again, I mentioned earlier that this is – this area is a lot more art than science. I know there's at least one other former case officer in the room. You never know how good someone is going to be by looking at them in training or the best selection program or anything: You've got to see them out in the field once or two tours or something or maybe more to really see what you have. And so that takes time, and so if you have a younger workforce by necessity, because you're expanding it enormously and you're only bringing in new people, it may take time for that organization to mature. But it's not the case – or at least I'm not aware – that green people in Washington, junior to senior people in the field who are hamstringing them or anything like that, or anywhere else.

You know, the DNI broke up the DCI's job – took two parts of it over for community management and resources and then the PDB part, and others, and left management of the CIA with the director – that's working. It's an early reform. We'll have to see, over a longer period of time, as with any of these major government reforms.

But I'll share my prejudice; I always think it's about the people you have in the jobs. I mean, we generally have pretty good organizations in the government and so, you know, it's – what's the alternative on the green – you know, if I have a younger workforce or something, I mature them as fast as I can, and if they're getting a lot of experience, they'll mature faster than they would otherwise, but they've still got to mature, so that – all I was trying to say was, one: They're central to the way we do business. And two: They're really doing a good job.

MR. LEVITT: Okay, we've just a few minutes left and five or six questions, so we're going to try and bundle some together and try and get in as many as we can. We had two over here. If we could take both your questions and then we'll answer them together.

Q: Pushing on the theme of capacity building as force multiplier, what do you see as the future – and that your 20 percent capabilities – what do you see as the future capabilities need for effective capacity building? Some argue that we need 20, 30,000 Army officers or Army personnel.

MR. VICKERS: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Yes, to have a – whereas others argue that the expanded SOF should – post-Iraq, post-Afghanistan, should return to their FDA origins.

MR. VICKERS: Yeah.

Q: Also within that, which – what internal limitations or legal restrictions and diplomatic restrictions need to be revisited and in the future, possibly reworked? I.e., in CJTF-HOA, they have difficulty training the regional coast guards because those – technically under U.S. law, come down as internal security forces, which therefore the Navy can't train. And they're similar their SOPAC runs into restrictions in Philippines as far as force caps on Mandaue and other locations.

MR. VICKERS: Well, it's certainly – security force assistance is way more central to our strategy than it had been in the past and that's recognized and it goes by various names, building partnership capacity and others. But certainly since when it was formalized, the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, it's recognized as central to a number of things we want to do around the world.

Estimating the demand signal for the future, again, you know, it's complicated for some the reasons you may have eluded to, which is what countries can tolerate it in some cases. You might like to supply more but this is all they'll accept. So can you achieve your effects with that? But the growth in SOF was essential for lots of reasons, partner capacity being one of, but just to build this network that we needed. There are things that SOF can't do or shouldn't do in security force assistance, whether it's technical conventional, you know, I'm going – air defense training, I'm going teach them how to use Patriots or whatever it is or basic training, or when the demand becomes to big, as we have in Iraq and Afghanistan, where I need thousands of advisors to build an army. Then, you know, I have to find those wherever I can get them.

But then the question is should I make that a permanent part of my institution or should I – how often do I think I'm going to do that? So the real driver is more the continuous demand around the world and then how much insurance do you want to buy for the surge. I don't think we need – well, let me put it this way. There's multiple ways to look at that problem or do I – however big people who would do security forces systems outside SOFAR that they have the opportunity to do so whether its training or advising, that their career paths allow them to succeed within their larger success, or some of the fundamental issues. There are lots of benefits one could get from having some of that rather than gobs of it. But you have to institutionally manage it.

You know, the demand number – numbers like 20,000 or 30,000 are just numbers. I mean, you know, I mean whether the answer should be 2,000 or you know, I mean, there's order of magnitude differences there in the debate right now so I would – and whether how much of that you can actually do with existing units even though its an inefficient way of doing business rather than creating more specialized things. So we're, you know, the department is wrestling with that, it's been doing it through this past year and there've been a number of studies on it.

Q: Bob Leiken from the Nixon Center. You mentioned earlier that in any war, there are allies of convenience and in this one – I wonder if I can entice onto the ground of politics, not the war of ideas or the military, but somewhere in between. In the political world, there – terrorists groups find themselves in an adversarial relationship with fundamentalists, Salafists, political Islam. Some people think that political Islam or the Muslim brotherhood are long-time allies and that they shouldn't be allies. Others think, no, they are allies of convenience. I wonder whether you can address that.

MR. VICKERS: Yeah, I mean, that's too specific about – you know, for me to assess how enduring – how that partnership manifests itself in various areas and how enduring it might be. You know, I would say that any war – you know, I mean, one of the laws of strategy is, you know, conservation of enemies. Don't make more than you have to and get as many friends as you can on your side against those enemies, right? And I mean, that's one of the advantages we actually have over al Qaeda is they seem to like to take on the world.

You know, they don't like anybody and so – but the idea that you can – you'll have foreign policy goals in conflict and the idea that from our side, you can win wars, whether its World War II or others by saying, I'm only going to play with guys that are just like me or I like is you know, historically not very accurate but it's also for this kind of war, we have to deal with the world as it is across the world and you have – and you know, it's politics is local. Well, this is a case where war is local and global at the same time.

You know, you have to deal with lots of partners and you look at your goals and what can be short term, what is long term, and you know, to get these security effects that you need. And it's a difficult balancing act for a policy-maker. And then I would say same thing is true on the other side in the sense that you get very strange marriages where you see that people say, well, today we'll work together but you're next after I get rid of this guy. You know, I'm getting rid of you too, and, you know, it's the way it works.

MR. LEVITT: All right. Perhaps it is the sign of an excellent event that there are so many questions that we cannot get to them all. For those of you that we didn't get to, I apologize. Please join me in thanking Mike Vickers for taking time to talk with us today.

(Applause.)

(END)