

UNEDITED DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

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Frederick W. Kagan: Thanks everyone for coming. I'm -- it's rather odd for -- but I guess not very surprising for me to be sitting here a little less than eight months after the inauguration of a president who had campaigned with the full-throated support of his party on the premise that Afghanistan was the central front of the war on terror, absolutely vital to American national interest and something that we had been under-resourcing, that we had to -- where we had to remediate the failure to resource. And here we are sitting at AEI and I'm defending that Democratic president against his predominantly Democratic opponents who are now saying we really don't need to be there and we really should find some other way of doing this.

I do that -- I do defend the president's strategy and I do defend the president's decision so far and I hope and expect that the president will make the right decision when it comes to supporting the request of his commander in the field for the resources that will be necessary. But the way that this policy has emerged and the -- I think we do have to accept the fact that the administration has failed to be forceful at all in

explaining why we actually need to do this and not only why we have to be in Afghanistan but why we have to be there in a particular way, has led to the mobilization of forces against a counter-insurgency strategy properly resourced that I think had been inchoate a few months ago.

And so on the one hand, it's a perfectly healthy conversation to have. It's always a good thing to step back from a conflict and say, "Is this really important? Is this really worth the blood and treasure that we will have to expend in order to succeed? What is success?" I do think that those are absolutely appropriate and important parts of any conversation.

In this case, there's a certain amount of journey of rediscovery on the part of some of the critics, however, who are presenting as new problems things that -- that certainly I've seen for a long time. People like I see Dave Kilcullen sitting over there. None of this is news to him. I'm sorry. I see the ghost of Dave Kilcullen sitting over there. None of this is news to him. None of this is news to the people who've been following this closely. So we're in a little bit of an odd position because we're being presented with sort of critiques of the entire strategy on the basis of premises that we are well familiar with.

So what I'm going to try to focus on here and I'm going to try to make some brief remarks and then open it to question and answers as much as I can and I do, again, want to underscore especially for the newcomers that these views are mine and I'm not going to channel McChrystal or the Assessment and I can't speak to either his views or the views of the Assessment.

I'm not even going to joke about that on the microphone. No, I'm not going to be handing out copies of the Assessment. But I want to talk a little bit about why we actually have to be here and why it matters and why, in particular, we have to pursue the approach that I and many others are advocating of actually fighting a counter-insurgency.

And to do that, I'll ask those of you who are experts on this to forgive me as I -- we do a little bit of geography because the truth is most people are not all that familiar with the geography of this area, and particularly where the enemy groups are and how they lay out and at the end of the day, that's the main reason why we care. We care about this area because of the enemy groups that are operating that have as their objective attacking us, that have as their objective destroying Pakistan, that have as their objective igniting conflict between Pakistan and India. All of that is, I believe, serious challenges to American national interests.

After that, we can talk about Al-Qaeda but we don't -- frankly, the reason to be in Afghanistan is not because of fighting Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. That's never been -- or not since 2001 has that been the primary reason to be in Afghanistan. And, unfortunately, the rhetoric of the administration which initially tried to sell this war on the premise that we needed to be there to fight Al-Qaeda has found itself a little long-footed. But as I said, the saying that Al-Qaeda is not in Afghanistan, that's not news to me and it's not news to virtually anyone who's been supporting this effort all along.

Nevertheless, it is an important front in the struggle against Al-Qaeda and affiliated movements because - and this is the key point that I think we need to take away - this is a two-front war. The war against the Islamic extremists in this part of the world which include Al-Qaeda and include groups that are targeting stability in Pakistan and targeting stability in India occurs on both sides of the Durand Line.

People tend to go two ways about this. On the one hand, sometimes people treat the Durand Line as though it actually is a border and you have problems on one side and problems on the -- not on the -- you know, on the other side. And in this case, I think people are tending to do that when they say, "Well, we'll just pull out of Afghanistan. We won't do

counter-insurgency. We won't mirror what the Pakistanis are trying to do on their side of the Durand Line and we'll do something entirely else and that'll work for some reason even though we know that the Durand Line isn't in fact that kind of border. Or alternatively, people will say, "Well, the Durand Line is a meaningless demarcation point and we should understand that this all Pashtunistan and so whatever we're doing on one side we should be doing on the other side. And the truth is neither of those are true.

The Durand Line is a meaningful demarcation in the sense that we can't readily cross it, and neither can the Pakistanis nor can the Afghan National Security Forces, and the enemy is perfectly well aware of that and they use it all the time. In that sense, the Durand Line is a meaningful and important international demarcation. However, you do have Pashtun's on both sides interconnected tribally with clan links and also with affiliations in insurgent movements, and so you can't treat the Durand Line as a hard border where you do one thing on one side and another thing on the other side and the two things don't have to be interconnected. So it's more complicated. The relationship of both parts of this border, I think, is more complicated even than most people recognize.

That having been said, I'd like to just, if you'll bear with me for a couple of minutes, just put up on the map where

the enemy groups are and what they're trying to do and why we care and why we have to fight them this way.

So we talk about Taliban. What is Taliban? Taliban is lots of different things. If you're talking about enemy groups, you should not be talking about Taliban because you have to specify their individual, particular Taliban groups that are connected in ways but are -- that are not all the same. There is something that is Taliban that is sort of a gestalt or sort of a social movement. You know, one can identify oneself as Taliban loosely in this part of the world and it has a sort of a meaning.

Frankly, I'm not interested nor do I think the United States should be interested in combating that social movement and saying that anyone who calls himself Taliban is our enemy and we need to be defeating all of the Taliban in the world. That is not useful because the term has come to have a meaning far beyond what we actually care about.

That having been said, neither is it simply an amorphous social grouping. There are a series of organizations, enemy groups that are of significance to us. The one that most threatens our efforts in Afghanistan is the Taliban group that is based out of Quetta in Pakistan. That is to say its leadership is in Quetta. It is headed by Mullah Omar who was the former head of the Taliban government in Afghanistan

working through many of his former cronies in that government. And it works fundamentally in the southwestern region of Afghanistan. That is its fundamental area of operations although it goes beyond that, and I'll talk with you in a minute about some of the things that it does.

The second group that we had to be concerned about in Afghanistan that is primarily going after, that can make us fail there is the group led by the Haqqanis formally Jalaluddin Haqqani who was a hero of the Anti-Soviet war. He's now getting old so his son, Sirajuddin has taken command of that. Their base is in Miranshah in North Waziristan in the federally administered tribal area in Pakistan. Their area of interest in Afghanistan is what they call Loya Paktia or Greater Paktia which is basically the provinces of Khost, Paktia and parts of Paktika province. They have a tribal stronghold in the Zadran tribe -- Zadran tribal area that crosses the border from Khost into Paktika and they have various supporters and they operate in the city of Khost which has a significant emotional meaning for them. Khost was the first city to be liberated after the Soviets withdrew - liberated - and it was liberated by the forces of Jalaluddin Haqqani. So this is a very significant issue for them.

There are other enemy groups that operate in Afghanistan in much smaller numbers. You do see occasional Al-Qaeda

fighters come in. You do see fighters from the various Uzbek militant movements that have gotten themselves based in the tribal areas and you do see fighters affiliated with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar who was also an old revolutionary who fought with us, fought against us, fought with us, fought against us, fought with and against just about everybody. The military capability of that movement at this point is pretty minimal.

So what you see in the east is you see a fragmentation, you see a lot of different groups sort of hanging out in the mountains. Some of them are HIG, that is the Hekmatyar. Some of them are just bandits, some of them are other things that I don't even know what they are but there's no cohesion driving them.

So those are the major enemy groups that we're actually facing in Afghanistan right now. I would call your attention to the fact that these are all Pashtun groups. They operate almost exclusively in Pashtun areas and a few annexed [sounds like] areas such as Kabul. But they don't -- wherever you see the Pashtun tribal boundary, beyond that you pretty much don't see Taliban activity or Haqqani network activity or even very much Hekmatyar activity.

You also don't see very much in the way of ethnic conflict in Afghanistan at this point. So we do not now have anything that looks like a reprise of the 1990s when the Pashtun, the

Taliban-led Pashtun insurgents were fighting against the Northern Alliance-led Tajik-Uzbek coalition of Ahmad Shah Massoud whose death is being celebrated, if you will, today. Was it yesterday or today? Today, I think. You don't see that.

So again, in contrast to Iraq where by the end of 2006, the thing that was pushing Iraq off the cliff faster than anything else was the sectarian civil war that was going on. You don't actually have that in Afghanistan. You don't have the equivalent. You don't have the ethnic civil war that you could have that would be pushing this quickly off a cliff. What you have is a Pashtun-led insurgency against a Pashtun-led government that it doesn't like. And the aim is to regain control of Afghanistan. That is the aim of the Queta Shura. The aim of the Haqqani network is probably more limited which is to regain its traditional sphere of influence in Loya Paktia under the rubric of a Taliban government which is how it had functioned previously.

I would also call your attention, from the standpoint of American interest, to the fact that the 9/11 attacks were planned in Jalaluddin Haqqani's area. Jalaluddin formed close relationship with Osama bin Laden in the 1980s when Jalaluddin was in Saudi Arabia raising money for the jihad against the Soviets. Bin Laden was there helping with that and doing the

same thing. Jalaluddin invited Bin Laden to take up a position in Loya Paktia which he did. The relationship between the Haqqani network and Al-Qaeda continues to be close. Siraj does not seem -- if anything, seems to be strengthening it rather than weakening it.

So this group which was the group that had created the safe haven in the first place from which Bin Laden was able to attack us seems to have done nothing at all to weaken its ties with Al-Qaeda. And I -- my own personal assessment is that if this group were allowed to recreate a safe haven, it would absolutely invite Al-Qaeda back into that safe haven. Now, whether Al-Qaeda would go or not isn't [sounds like] a complicated a question. We can talk about whether they'd rather be living in Afghanistan or Pakistan or moving around, but there's no question in my mind that the Haqqani network would create a very conducive environment for them once again.

There's a discussion about the degree to which the Queta Shura would do that. There are those who say that Mullah Omar has learned his lesson, that because he knows now that because of his friendship with Bin Laden, his refusal to give up Bin Laden, he was driven from power. That if he just wants to retake Afghanistan, he has to not get involved with Al-Qaeda again and therefore we can have some kind of Taliban government under Mullah Omar that wouldn't be a sanctuary for Al-Qaeda. I

frankly don't buy that. The ties between Mullah Omar and Bin Laden, I believe, remain strong. They recognize each other, they admire each other, there's been no open breach that I'm aware of.

And we also have to keep in mind that even if you imagine that Mullah Omar himself might not invite Bin Laden back in, there are many, many, many people who are working for the Queta Shura Taliban who are not of that view. And I think you have to ask yourself, if the Pakistanis -- if you assume good will on the part of President Zardari and General Kiyani and the Pakistanis are not able to prevent their agents from continuing to support the Haqqani network and the Taliban, I don't know why anyone would imagine that a Queta Shura-led Afghanistan would not have rogue elements, if you will, supporting and abetting Al-Qaeda presence there either. We should remember that the nature of Taliban control over Afghanistan was fairly tenuous even when they were in power.

So all of that is to say that you really cannot dismiss readily or at all the notion that if we allow Afghanistan to fail, the likelihood is that the groups in Afghanistan that will take power, at least in parts of the country, will create an environment much more conducive to this re-establishment of Al-Qaeda sanctuaries in their country. Now, I'll come back in a minute to the question of what we could do about that and

whether we could take a counter-terrorism approach and over the horizon stuff, I'll address all of that. But let me start there with those enemy groups.

But that's not the only reason why I think we have to be concerned about Afghanistan. I think when you look across the other side of the border, you notice a number of deadly threats to the existence of a stable Pakistani state. They tend to be concentrated in Waziristan. They are also concentrated in Bajaur-Mohmand, the northern part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Down here, you have the group that was called the TTP, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan which was the Baitullah Mehsud's group. We recently helped off Baitullah that the -- with the assistance of the Pakistanis after a significant counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism campaign that the Pakistanis had conducted in Waziristan, much more successful, much more determined, much more skilful in my view than any previous operation they had conducted there. This was a pretty significant win.

In the northern part of the FATA, you have the TNSM, which I'm not even going to try to mispronounce for you. This is the group that provided the fighters who launched the attack to take the Swat River valley and then having done that and having made a deal with the Pakistani government, started pushing down the Swat River valley into Buner district toward Islamabad and

then we got all of the hyperventilation about Taliban is only 60 miles away from Islamabad and so forth, which was a little bit overwrought, frankly. But that led to the Pakistani operations that ultimately cleared the Swat River valley and also supported Pakistani operations that had been going on in Bajaur, Mohmand, Malakand and Dir up in this area.

These groups have as their aim the destruction of a secular Pakistani state. Do we know that Baitullah Mehsud killed Benazir Bhutto? I don't know, certainly not in any level of classification that I have ever seen or could tell you about. Do we think he did? Yeah. Was it consonant with his sort of objectives? Absolutely.

The TNSM also has a similar set of objectives. They look from a Western perspective. If you don't pay a whole lot of close attention on what's going on, they look more harmless than they are because what they claim to be doing is simply trying to insist upon the imposition of Sharia law in a Muslim country. Now, we saw in Swat how problematic it is simply to accept that to begin with because the funny thing about Pakistan is it is a Muslim country, it is an Islamic country and there are already provisions in the constitution insisting that all legislation be in accord with Sharia law.

These guys, what they were actually saying was, "We interpret Sharia law," and what they -- the concession that

they had actually gotten from the Pakistani government in Swat was basically permission to do that. And that is by having their own Sharia judges selected and imposing an extremely radical interpretation of Sharia law and custom on a population in Swat River valley that actually was not on a whole very supportive of that vision. And the Pakistani government initially acquiesced in that.

When they went too far, the Pakistani government went after them and ultimately drove them out of Swat. We now had - - had many, many, many hundreds of interviews of people who fled from Swat about what the Taliban had done which has helped to change the dynamic in Pakistan somewhat because you do have now a recognition on the part of a greater proportion of the Pakistani population I would submit than previously that the Taliban can be a threat to Pakistan. That it is not a benign force of Islamists but actually can be a threat to the fabric.

One of the reasons why that threat was expanded was because the TTP re-ignited or energized groups actually of Punjabi terrorists who conducted operations in Lahore, the heart of Punjab. And then -- so there was a group formed that was called the Tehrik-i-Taliban Punjab and the Pakistanis, some Pakistanis denied that they're Punjabis. The truth is they're Punjabis. There is a Punjabi militant Islamist network. It does coordinate, it does recognize or it did recognize the

authority of Baitullah Mehsud. It did recognize the authority of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. Who was giving orders to whom? That's a whole other question but there was a relationship. That was another thing that got the attention of the Pakistani government in a big way and something that we need to be concerned about.

Lastly, we have to recognize that the Pakistani government does maintain its own terrorist movement, the Lashkar-e-Taiba whose objective is to liberate the Muslims of India, if you will, but actually the Lashkar-e-Taiba is misrepresented often as a Kashmiri separatist group. The truth is it's much more than that.

Ideologically, it's committed to a much grander vision that would destroy the entire subcontinent if it were allowed to. It is groups like that that conduct attacks like the Mumbai attack whenever they see that Pakistan is moving too close either toward the United States or toward some sort of rapprochement with India which would tend to eliminate their raison d'être and prevent them from achieving their goals, which, by the way, just as a footnote, we have to keep on the watch for that because the closer -- the more it looks like the Pakistanis and Indians are getting along, the more likely you are to see some kind of Mumbai 2 or something else that will be launched by Lashkar-e-Taiba and its allies for the purpose of

derailing that. So we have to understand that dynamic a little bit.

All of these groups are interconnected. All of these groups are interconnected. It is a mishmash. It is not a clear -- I can't draw you a clear network chart, I can't tell you who gives orders to whom or who takes orders from whom, but they are all interconnected such that when Baitullah Mehsud starts going after the Pakistani government, Mullah Omar goes to Baitullah Mehsud and he says, "Would you please stop doing that? We need you to focus on Afghanistan. Please don't get into a fight with the Pakistanis." Baitullah says, "Sorry, boss. Can't help you there. The fight goes on." Now, what -- so what happens as you have the TTP break down after Baitullah's death? You have Afghan Taliban involved in negotiating the succession in trying to keep the group together in various ways. In other words, playing actively in the militant Islamist politics in Pakistan.

The thing that's confusing to us about all of this is that the Quetta Shura does not operate in Pakistan and it does not operate against the Pakistani government. The TTP largely does not operate in Afghanistan, which is one of the things that aggravates -- as I said, aggravates Mullah Omar. The TNSM largely does not act in Afghanistan. There is coordination with Hekmatyar. Everybody's frustrated with everybody for not

doing this but what they've basically done is create a series of groups that have divided the task. So you've got the Pakistani groups working in Pakistan. You've got Afghan groups working in Afghanistan.

The overall objective of all of these groups is very -- is either the same or very similar. You do have a vision of Pashtunistan. You do have a vision of Islamism, militant Islamism, being imposed on a region where they think it needs to be imposed. Where it's not -- it's not really clear at all to the populations actually down with that. You have a fairly strong anti-Hinduism that also feeds into this. There is a lot of synergy that goes on among all of these groups.

As the Pakistanis were conducting operations in Bajaur and Mohmand against the TNSM, we deployed an American battalion on the east side of the Kunar River which helped ensure that TNSM fighters and leaders couldn't flee in large numbers to a sanctuary in Afghanistan. These guys were not standing in Nawa Pass, you know, counting sheep herders as they came through or looking, checking ID cards.

What they were doing was conducting counter-insurgency in a population with the aim of making it resistant to the free movement of Islamists through their territory, which worked pretty well and was an important part of Pakistani success. We have been doing a similar thing in the Waziristan area

particularly in Khost where we have concentrated a certain amount of effort, and again, the issue is not trying to stop border crossings, which is a fool's errand. The issue is trying to make the population in what would be a sanctuary for the enemy, hostile to the enemy or at least unwelcoming in an environment where in the past it has been welcoming.

So if you pull that stuff out, you have a high probability that any Pakistani -- future Pakistani operations against these kinds of groups will be seriously harmed by the prospect that these groups have of being able to retreat into sanctuaries in Afghanistan where they can make themselves at home again. That's the first thing but there's an even more important problem vis-à-vis Pakistan with an American pullout from Afghanistan. I believe this is not consensus, there are people who disagree with us. I believe that there is leadership in the Pakistani government, the Pakistani military that sees the Islamists as a threat, that regrets Pakistan's long history of supporting some of these guys well after the time when they were all probably are useful and that would like to deal with them. And I think we've seen evidence of that in the operations in Swat, in northern FATA and in Waziristan.

There are clearly also elements within the Pakistani security services and government who, at a minimum, argue that they need to maintain support for the Haqqani network and the

Taliban because it is a hedge against when the Americans leave. Whether or not that's their actual motivation, it is their line. For the moment, those guys are not doing that well in shaping Pakistani policy. If we announce that we're going to bail on Afghanistan and do and confine ourselves to a strict counter-terrorism mission there, we will snatch victory from the jaws of defeat for the radicals within the Pakistani military and within the Pakistani government who will say, "You see? We were right. The Americans were going to bail and we need our proxies." Those are exactly the people we do not want to strengthen in the internal Pakistani debate right now. It is the -- but strengthening their hand would be the almost inevitable result of withdrawing.

Another almost inevitable result of withdrawing will be the portrayal by Al-Qaeda of having successfully defeated the next superpower and all of its allies, indeed, the entire West. Now, you know, to get this, you have to put yourself a little bit into a world view and a mindset that is not entirely coherent with reality and not entirely coherent with the rationality that, you know, one would like to see in one's enemies.

But you have to remember that Al-Qaeda is a group that claims credit for having defeated the Soviet Union. Well, Al-Qaeda didn't exist when the Soviet Union fell. They certainly

weren't responsible for defeating it and all like that but that has been a major rallying cry and they have been ready on repeated occasions. First in Iraq, now in Afghanistan to say, "We defeated the Soviet Union, we've defeated the Americans [audio gap] to add in this case we've defeated NATO, which is to say the entire might of the western world. "Al-Qaeda has defeated them. This is a huge victory for us. Rally to our banner."

It doesn't matter that it's not true. It matters that it will be an extremely effective propaganda tool and what we will do is take an Al-Qaeda movement that at the moment, frankly, is rather rocked back on its heels and breathe new life to it in a way that it hasn't had for a very long time. I think we have to keep that in mind. I also think we have to keep in mind that we do not control the narrative of what our withdrawal is. We can make speeches about that. We can say this is why we've done this with that or the other thing but the global narrative in the current contest is extremely likely to be that we've accepted defeat because we don't think we can succeed.

Losing wars is always bad. You always pay a price for losing wars. And I think that this is, well, perhaps the most insidious long lesson that Americans learned from Vietnam was that sometimes you can just accept defeat, walk away and pay no serious price for it. I don't happen to think that's true even

in the case of Vietnam. I really don't think it's true here, but I think there's far too much complacency in the American political discourse about the prospect of simply accepting failure here or trying to cover it over by saying, "We didn't really fail. We're just redefining our objective so that they look nothing like the initial objectives we went in with."

The last point that I'll make to you is dealing with this argument that we can do all of this from space basically. We could do this from offshore Special Forces strikes, precision guided munitions. George Will made this argument. You had former Marine Commandant Krulak write a letter sort of supporting this stuff. And it's right to be impressed with the gee-whiz capabilities that we have in our classified forces, they can do amazing things, but I want to make a couple of points.

First of all, if you were going to look for a human being on the planet to advocate, design and execute that plan, his name would be Stanley McChrystal. This is *the* guy who knows better than anyone else, because he did it for four-and-a-half years in both Afghanistan and Iraq, how to plan, design and execute strictly counter-terrorism campaign relying on classified forces. He is now the commander in Afghanistan. At the risk of leaking something shocking, I can assure you that there's been no pressure from this administration on him not to

look at that option but instead, to insist on a large troop number, counter-insurgency surge. This isn't Bush in the White House. If there were a feasible option along those lines, General McChrystal would have at least listed it or indicated it if not advocated it. Instead, he has been absolutely uncompromising in his commitment to the need to do counter-insurgency in Afghanistan. And I can't, offhand, think of someone that I would take more seriously on this issue than him.

If you want in detail, I'll -- I'm going to stop in a second because I want to get to questions. If you want to go into more detail about why counter-terrorism doesn't, you know, isn't going to work here, we can just ask me that, we can talk about it in more detail. The bottom line is it is not technically feasible, in my opinion, to do this. And furthermore, there is no historical record that I'm aware of that suggests that this would work.

And just to raise that point also as a segue into a last, slightly related point. We actually have tried that. We tried it in Iraq where we had an enormous number of classified forces running around freely with the support of about 150,000 American conventional troops which were mostly training -- either training Iraqis or trying to support the classified

forces one way or another. They are conducting real counter-insurgency operations before 2007.

General McChrystal ran that effort and it was run beautifully and brilliantly. And we killed hundreds, if not thousands, of Al-Qaeda and Iraq leaders and hundreds, if not thousands, of Shia militia leaders with precision strikes and Special Forces raids. And we detained a lot of them, too. We killed Zargawi in June of 2006. Take a look at the violence charts from June of 2006 to December of 2006. It was a calamity.

But we have tried this experiment in conditions much more conducive to it and much more supportive of it than anything we're going to get in Afghanistan both in terms of terrain and in terms of the willingness of the government to support this because keep in mind, there is you will [audio gap] more enthusiastic about going after Al-Qaeda than a Shia government in Iraq. And that includes any government in Afghanistan, just about.

So even in those conditions, the counter-terrorism approach in Iraq failed. What worked to defeat the terrorists was the counter-insurgency approach. And General McChrystal will be the first to recognize that you need both if you're actually going to defeat an organization like this. You need to have both.

Which leads me to one final observation. There has been a lot of discussion in the press and, again, from George Will and various others that we've lost Iraq, that Iraq is a calamity, that the violence is spiraling out of control and so forth. And I want to tell you that is not true. The violence is not spiraling out of control. We have not seen sectarian reprisal attacks nor have we seen terrorist campaign on the scale of anything like what we had in 2006 or 2007. What we see in Iraq is a preoccupation with politics, which is good. The politics may not come out well and I think Ken Pollack's recent article on this is something that we should be concerned about, but it is fundamentally going well.

The question is: Are we going to see it through, and are we going to get past a strategy of endless war to a strategy that actually focuses on reaping the benefits from the successes that we've had in reinforcing them? So as far as Iraq, if you want to talk about that more, we can. But with that, I'll just open it to questions.

[Audio gap from 0:33:46 to 0:35:03] [QUESTION]

Yeah, I don't see any indication that the Pakistanis have any intention of going after the Queta Shura. I'm not -- I don't think that they have any real intention of going after the Haqqani network although that's more open to question. I think we've seen damage done to the Haqqani network is as

collateral damage in operations in their stomping ground in North Waziristan aimed at Baitullah Mehsud, but I don't think that there's been a concerted Pakistani effort against either one of those groups. And I don't think that you -- I don't expect so see that either, you know, anytime soon.

I think that the strike against Mehsud was a good decision on our part. I think helping Pakistan deal with its internal foes is absolutely the right thing for us to be doing. But this raises the larger question of how significant are those safe havens in Quetta and in Miranshah for what's going on in Afghanistan?

Here I think I would never say that they're not important. They absolutely are important. You have leadership cadres that have sanctuary there. You have various strategic assets that come through there. What you don't have, in my opinion, is large numbers of fighters taking sanctuary there or crossing back and forth through the border. It's my belief that the overwhelming majority of actual Taliban fighters in Afghanistan are local. Afghan officials will tell you that they're all Pakistanis. I don't think that there's anything to support that. So you're not talking about a huge movement of fighters back and forth and up and down this border. You're talking about a movement of leaders; you're talking about a movement of

strategic assets in which I include things like suicide bombers and money and various other things.

But I would also note that in contrast to the situation in Iraq, no one is really supplying the Taliban with very high end weapons. So they don't have access to loads of EFPs. They don't seem to have access to high-end surface-to-air missiles. The weapons that they have are our weapons. You know, they have some cruiser weapons. They have AK47s. They have mortars and RPGs but no one is really giving them high-end weapons. So the strategic significance of the weapons flow in from Pakistan, I think, is less than the significance of the same flow was into Iraq, for instance, because of the nature of the weapons that are going there.

So all of this is to say, "Can we succeed in Afghanistan without having the Pakistanis take down the Queta Shura and the Haqqani network?" Well, here I think I have to go with those who say it depends what you mean by success. Can we establish then an Afghan state that is reasonably stable and reasonably able to ensure that it is not going to be a safe haven for terrorists? Is not going to fall to Taliban? Yes, I think we can actually do that without eliminating the Queta Shura or the Miranshah base.

Can we make it so that this is permanently stable and, you know, we don't have to worry about it anymore without doing

those things? No. As long as there's a sanctuary in Quetta and Miranshah, we will have to continue to support Afghanistan in some form. But I think that analogies are always dangerous but I would go back to the Iraq analogy. Did we ever get the Iranians or the Syrians to stop trying to provide weapons, fighters, leaders and so forth? No. They are still doing it today but we have been able to get the situation to a point where even though they're doing it, the population that they're trying to supply is not friendly to it and is not providing the same degree of freedom of movement to them and is not allowing them to operate.

So the fighters don't have the networks, the weapons don't necessarily go to militia's that are interested in using them and so forth. Can we replicate that in Afghanistan? I don't know. It's a war and the enemy gets a vote and nothing is certain but I think that it's a reasonable proposition to try.

[Audio gap from 0:39:01 to 0:39:18] [QUESTION]

When we're talking about this, I think we all have to be careful - and I do, too - not to talk about the Pakistanis because I don't think there's a unified Pakistani position on this. I think that the people who are supporting these groups are concerned about a variety of things. They're concerned about our withdrawal. Some of them, I think, frankly are concerned about our success. I think that there are elements

within the Pakistani security services that see the United States as a Trojan horse to inject India into Afghanistan. And I think that there's enough evidence on the ground to support that viewpoint that it's hard to call them insane.

And so what I'm saying is that I think there probably are some elements in the -- in the Pakistanis' side who would like to see us fail because what they see us trying to do, they see us being very harmful to their interests. Now, I want to be very clear about this. I don't think that includes President Zardari. I don't think it includes General Kiyani. I don't think it includes General Shuja Pasha. I don't think this is a senior leadership issue, but I do think there are elements within Pakistan that think that way.

And I don't -- Pakistan is a very fragmented polity. It's remained very weak as a state. The ability of the leadership to impose its will over elements of the security forces that want to see things their way requires a large expenditure of effort in a time where they're all very vulnerable. So for all of those reasons I would just say as an analyst, I think it's unlikely that they're going to do this.

[Audio gap from 0:40:46 to 0:41:20] [QUESTION]

The first thing that I would say is that part of the -- one of the things that we're going to have to talk about a lot is the question of developing the Afghan National Security

Forces which obviously has to be a key part of the exit strategy. Dani's going to kill me but I'm going to give an advertisement to the Institute for the Study of War which has an event at 2 o'clock this afternoon with General Jim Dubik and Dave Barno and Kim on the development of Afghan National Security Forces. So anyone who's interested in part two of this should go to 1400 16th Street. That --

Male Voice: [Inaudible]. [QUESTION]

Frederick W. Kagan: No, you can get that on their website. But it's a -- but it's a good question. Right now, we're not on a path to do -- to having any of this work out which is why it's been essential to have General McChrystal conduct a full review of our strategy and come in with an adequate resource request. It's also essential to have conducted a review of the -- our strategy for building the Afghan National Security Forces because at the end of the day, we have to leave Afghanistan with forces that -- well, they will require our help but we need to leave it so that they don't need hundreds of thousand or 100,000 foreigners to do it.

How does that work? Well, the first thing is that you do an actual counter-insurgency campaign instead of one that briefs well. And this has been one of our problems. When you actually go -- when you go there and -- as I did in February and you got the briefings in the pre-McChrystal era, everybody

knows how to brief FM3-24. Everybody knows how to brief counter-insurgency. So every brigade and battalion commander knows how to tell -- well, knows what the slide should look like to tell you that he is doing counter-insurgency in his area.

That's a problem because unless you can really get out and look hard at what's going on on the ground, you can't evaluate whether it's actually going on or not. To the extent that we were -- I was able to pry into it in a couple of trips, I was not satisfied in many areas that was going on. As I've looked into it more and historically, I see that we've had a problem in Afghanistan in failing to understand what some of the basic counter-insurgency concepts actually mean. So you will find, going back to 2006, operations announced as clearing operations, two weeks later announced as having concluded successfully. You don't clear an area in two weeks. Two weeks is the kinetic part of the clear. Two weeks is when you're going in drinking chai and kicking down doors. It is not the clear.

Clearing an area takes anywhere from three to six months because you have to stay in the area after you've done the initial sweep, develop intelligence, develop rapport with the locals, which in Afghanistan takes longer than it does in Iraq rather than shorter because Afghans are much more suspicious of

anybody coming in and saying, "We're going to take care of you." They've got 30 years of experience of people not doing that even apart from any cultural differences. So you have to stay long enough to get their rapport and you also have to wait long enough for the enemy that has gone to ground in the area that you just cleared waiting for you to leave to realize that you're not going to leave and launch a second wave of attacks, which is what invariably happens. And then you have to take them down and then you have to develop more rapport. All of this takes a while.

You'll also find, therefore, in briefings going back several years that we move from clear to hold in about two weeks and then the line between hold and build is very fuzzy but in reality, hold tends to be a few weeks or a few months at most. In reality, again, you hold an area for a year if you're serious about it. Because you simply can't -- you're not going to create conditions fast enough to turn over to local security forces by themselves in less time than that. So the time frame in which -- we've been saying that we're doing clear, hold, build but in fact, we have not been. We've been doing something that briefs like that but it doesn't actually look like that. So the first thing is if you're going to do counter-insurgency, you actually have to do counter-insurgency.

The other thing -- one of the other major problems with the strategy we had before is that it was not geographically focused on critical terrain. And there is critical terrain in counter-insurgency. Some places matter more than others. In Iraq, the critical terrain was Baghdad obviously. But when you -- as the team got into looking at how they were going to deal with Baghdad, they discovered that critical terrain for securing Baghdad actually lay in the belts around Baghdad and you had to deal with the highway junctions and the villages that were feeder lines for all of this kind of stuff.

Terrain matters. Insurgent groups don't exist in the ether. They live somewhere, they sleep somewhere, they drive on roads, they have to have houses to put things together and train and so forth. We did not see a coherent plan, have not hitherto seen any coherent plan that was focused on identifying what terrain was critical to the enemy, what terrain was critical to the Afghan government, what terrain was critical to us, allocating resources appropriately in a phased manner. We haven't seen that.

I believe you will see that come out of General McChrystal's assessment and process and I think that that will be very significant. There are a few obvious points that come out. There are a couple of pieces of key terrain in Afghanistan, one of which we have been dealing with and one of

which we really have not been dealing with. We have been dealing okay with the Greater Paktia area with the Haqqani network. So we have a fair amount of force in Khost, Paktia and Paktika that's been operating against there. We probably need more.

The other piece of critical terrain is Kandahar. This isn't rocket science and it's amazing to me the degree to which we've had to argue to get people to recognize that Kandahar is really important. Part of it is because, unfortunately, we've gotten drawn into a debate about whether we need to be in Kandahar or whether we need to be in Helmand which has turned into a political alliance debate among other things as we have to reinforce the British in Helmand or they'll leave and so forth. It's also gotten confused with the question of narcotics and we need to be in Helmand because we need to take money away from the insurgency and a variety of other things.

If you go back and look at how we got into Helmand initially, we got into Helmand in 2006. In the process of transitioning to full NATO control over the country, British forces rolled into Northern Helmand and made contact with the enemy in what is called the military parlance, a meeting engagement. And in classic fashion, both sides escalated and we became -- we got drawn into a major fight there. Is Helmand

strategically critical? No, it is not. It's -- I'm sorry?
I'm -- yeah.

This is Helmand [POINTING TO MAP]. The British initially came in. They found themselves engaged in the area of Northern Helmand especially around the Kajaki dam. People have been trying to build the Kajaki dam for 40 years. This one became a big development project. It's a whole other issue. They got into this fight. Kandahar is here. Kandahar city is right here.

When you fly be helicopter or airplane from Kabul down here, this is all mountain, Hindu Kush foothill and then all of a sudden it opens up and at the mouth of that, at the base of the mountains, basically, is Kandahar. It's the largest city in the south. It's the -- no estimates. No one knows how many people live in Afghanistan or where they live. Let's start with that. So anyone who gives you population statistics is more or less making it up. That having been said, there's something between 400,000 and a million people in Kandahar, not kidding. I think there were about 600,000 Karzai votes though. No, I'm sorry.

Okay, Kandahar is also the fictitious home of the Taliban. It's an important area. The Karzai family is from just to the southeast of Kandahar. The Popalzai tribal area is there. Mullah Omar -- actually, Mullah Omar was born in about 15

different places and there are lots of places in Afghanistan that say Mullah Omar was born here. One of them is in Kandahar. I actually think that he was born in the area of Dehrawud in Southern Oruzgan, but the Taliban movement got its start in the vicinity of Kandahar in theory. That's the mythology of it. So it's important to them, it's important to Karzai, it's sort of the first city of Pashtunistan. What is the capital of -- it's not Kabul. Kabul is not the capital of Pashtunistan because Kabul is not seen as a Pashtun city. It's a mixed city. It's mostly -- the linguistics of it are mostly Dari. Kandahar is the city. It's the city of kings. This is where the Durrani tribe -- I mean there's a whole lot of reasons why Kandahar is incredibly important in addition to its geographical location.

We have virtually no forces in Kandahar right now. There's a Canadian battle group there that has a few thousand troops for a province of - again, I'm inventing a number - of something over a million people in it. By contrast, there's about 10,000 British soldiers in Helmand and multiple thousands of Marines in Helmand, okay? So one of the things that we're going to -- so, as a result of that, it should be no surprise that the Taliban has effective control over most of Northern Kandahar.

And it has recently, in a very dangerous turn of events, also taken control of the Arghandab river valley which is -- which flows right to the northeast of Kandahar city which is a very bad thing. Because among other things, the Alikozai tribe that lives in the Arghandab River valley had been a pro-government tribe and an anti-Taliban tribe. The Taliban -- the Queta Shura has now effectively taken control of Arghandab which, by the way, is also very unpleasant terrain to fight in. We're going to have a hard time taking it back.

So we have -- I'm laying out for you a series of technical military issues to say, "We haven't been doing the COIN fight right to begin with." We haven't been allocated properly geographically and we haven't been operating on the ground with a few exceptions. We haven't been operating properly on the ground either. So the first answer to the question why should I think this might work is that we haven't been doing it. And I think there's reason to believe that that can work.

That having been said, we have to recognize that there's another fundamental problem in Afghanistan. And it was only highlighted by the elections but we were well aware of it before that. And it is the issue of corruption but corruption really isn't the word that I'm most concerned about. I have to tell you that I have no interest in spending American blood and treasure to eliminate corruption in Afghanistan.

First of all, we're not going to do it and second of all, it's such a monumental task, you've got to be kidding me. When we eliminate corruption in the United States, we can turn to that in Afghanistan. It's not corruption that's the problem. The problem is that you have systematic abuse of power by powerbrokers within the government and outside of the government supported by people within the government that has the effect of seriously harming the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the Afghan people. Our posture hitherto has been, more or less, blindly to support the Afghan government and to go into villages and say, "We want to connect you to your government." And you would go in -- when we would go into some villages and say that and Afghans would listen to us and hear, "Oh, so you're with the criminals. Huh." And that doesn't really work.

So we're going to have to adopt an approach that is much more nuanced toward the issue of connecting Afghans with their government and also toward helping the Afghan government build up its legitimacy. Now, there are those who would say that we can't do this kind of thing. We don't have the intelligence, we don't have the ability, we don't have the tools, and I would say, actually, there is a model for this. It's very hard but we have done something like this before.

In 2006 and 2007, the government of Iraq was shot through with sectarian militia leaders who were running death squads. And you -- and the Iraqi National Police were serving as vehicles, literally, for death squads. The ministry of health was using ambulances to run death squads around and do a variety of other things. Maliki was, to put it mildly, not stopping this from happening.

What did we do about it? Well, we conducted a very thoughtful and intelligent campaign of compiling evidence on all of the people that were doing this at a level where it was a real problem to the mission and then taking varieties of action ranging from going to Maliki and saying, "Okay, we've got -- I've got a four inch-thick dossier on this dude. What're you going to do about it?" To sometimes just going in and confronting the official who was doing this and saying, "Look. I've got a four inch-thick dossier on you. I've got you dead right so are you going to cut this out or do I need to do something about it?" And little by little, action by action, actor by actor, you prune away the worst of the behavior and you change the incentive structure.

We're going to have to do something like that in Afghanistan not with regard to death squads but with regard to abuses of power that are on the order of undermining the mission. One [sounds like] of which is to say, I think that

it's going to be very hard, I think it's going to be very complicated but I do think that it's feasible if it's properly resourced. The one thing that I can tell you for sure is that you cannot do a counter-insurgency strategy in Afghanistan with the forces that we have now.

[Audio gap]

The -- well, I think what we're trying to get to -- yeah, what we're trying to get to is a point where we reduce the virulence of the insurgency and the degree of abuse of power in the government while simultaneously increasing the capability of the Afghan National Security Forces which will happen over the next few years so that we can pull a large number of our forces out, have the Afghans mostly confronting the enemies and you have a degree of stability with a basic level of acceptance by the population of the government. We're not looking for any kind of Jeffersonian democracy here.

[Audio gap from 0:55:34 to 0:56:15] [QUESTION]

Frederick W. Kagan: What if we could kill Bin Laden over here you mean?

Male Voice: [Inaudible from 0:56:17 to 0:56:28].

[QUESTION]

Frederick W. Kagan: Well, on the political side -- right. I'm going to be honest with you. I can't give you an answer to the first question. I don't. I don't know exactly how Al-

Qaeda Central plays with the other groups in the area or the -- or the other Al-Qaeda cells around. They are certainly important symbolically. They have historically been able to channel strategic resources including funds one way or another both directly and indirectly. And you've seen in the past Al-Qaeda groups bidding for -- effectively bidding for the support of AQ Central because it was a profitable undertaking. I don't know to what extent that's still true. I suspect that it is.

Bin Laden's word matters a lot in the world of Islamic extremists. And his relationship with Mullah Omar is important. It certainly matters a lot out there, and yet Bin Laden has called for things that people haven't done. He's to ask people not to do things that they have done. It's very hard to define I think. I think it's significant and I think we need to be concerned about it and I think as a symbol, it's very potent. But beyond that, I can't give you specifics. As for what would happen if we killed him, it would be a very significant blow to the movement, unquestionably. It would probably also be a significant blow to maintaining any degree of American public support for continuing to operate in this region at all, which I think is unfortunate since I think we have interests beyond killing Bin Laden.

[Audio gap from 0:57:56 to 0:58:51] [QUESTION]

Sure. That's a good question. Afghanistan, again, we're inventing all of these population figures so take them all with a grain of salt but it's the best we can do when we talk. If you want to do the COIN math, let's do the COIN math on the basis of the generally accepted statistics. That would say Afghanistan is a country of about 32 million people which if you do the 1:50 COIN math, it requires about 640,000 counter-insurgents. Okay, most of -- well, how about half of the country is not fighting? The insurgency, as I said, is predominantly in the Pashtun and a few mixed areas. I'm going to estimate the population of those areas at about 16 million. So COIN math for that said 1:50 on 16 million is about 320,000 counter insurgents.

You do need to police the rest of the country. How many does that require? Lord knows. If you want to take the U.S. ratio of about 2.3 cops per a thousand people which is probably way low in Afghanistan but then again, it's not a country that has a tradition of having lots of policemen running all over the place so maybe it isn't, would get -- would require another maybe 40,000 cops in that area. So just as numbers to play with, let's say that there's about a requirement for about 360-some or thousand counter-insurgents and police to make this go, all right?

You have right now about 107,000 troops in the Afghan National Army. How many of them wear the colors, whatever, knock it down as you want, it's not that horrendous. So you have something approaching that and you have more coming on line so let's say there's about 100,000 in the ANA. You have about 96,000 in the Afghan National Police but lots of them don't show up, lots of them don't exist and lots of them are insurgents. I'm willing to treat that as zero. It isn't; there are ANP who are doing good things but I don't have any good way of making that calculation so we can strike that. So we're starting with 100,000 ANA. Right now, you have about 100,000 ISAF troops. It gets you up to 200,000, all right? You have some cats and dogs, let's count a few ANAs; maybe, we have 240,000 somewhat, all right?

Now, what can you do in terms of expanding the Afghan National Army? Again, if you want the details on this, go to the Institute for the Study of War. Short version is that I think that it's reasonable to expect that we could get to about 134,000 troops in the Afghan National Army by October of next year. And I think that within a couple of years after that, we could get up to about 240,000 in the Afghan National Army. I think that on the Afghan National Police side, we can probably make a lot of the guys who are now in there affective - at least not criminals - within a year so get that number up. In

other words, you can see a path that gets you within a few years to enough ANA and ANP to maintain this, especially if you don't have to do it at 1:50 which is the high ratio for counter-insurgency. Especially if you don't do that ratio, it's reasonable to imagine getting to an ANSF level within a few years that can sustain that.

What does it mean in the short term? All right, so I've identified a gap of maybe 120,000 counter-insurgents and I'm going to tell you that I don't think we need to send anything like that over there. Why? Well, because again, there are parts of the country that matter and parts of the country that matter and parts of the country that don't matter. And we -- and this was part of the conversation that we had, in fact in this very room just about three years ago now, as we sat down with our Iraq planning team and looked at maps of Iraq and maps of Baghdad and said, "Okay.

Where do you actually have to put down 1:50 on the population?" In other words, again, what's the strategically critical terrain? Well, if you do that here, you say, "I'm not adding any more troops to Helmand." Let me start with that, all right? I'm good with that. We need to add more troops to Kandahar. You can sort of count that in a variety of different ways. And then you start looking around, you say, "Do we need some more force up in here?" "Yes, we do. Is it urgent?"

"Yes, it is but it's not life or death. We're doing -- we can do counter-insurgency there." Keep in mind that Afghan, unlike Iraq, Afghans don't fight in their cities. And this is a very important point. There is no -- we're not going to fight our way block by block through Kandahar unless things go incredibly badly because they won't fight that way. It's an Afghan thing. You don't fight in populated areas.

This is one of the reasons, by the way, why all the collateral damage from the bombs and stuff has such a resonance in that culture. We look like barbarians when we kill civilians because the premise of the way that Afghans fight is you don't do that, all right? So you have to -- then you say, "Okay, so it's 16 million but there's what, maybe 3 million in Kabul?" We're not going to do 1:50 in Kabul; we don't need to, all right?

Are we going to need to go into Kandahar City? I don't know. I would want to be ready for it but I'm not going to start by planning the invasion of Kandahar City at 1:50 ratio. So as you work through all of that, you can get yourself down to a force ratio that -- where it's not saying -- it's neither one thing or the other, you're saying, "This is enough force to allow us to get the necessary concentrations of forces counting only reliable Afghan forces in the critical areas for the initial phase of the operation, and then we think we can move

on over this kind of time period." That's what I would tell you. I'm not going to give you numbers more specifically than that.

As for can we have made progress within a year? Yes, I think we can. I think we can. Particularly, in important areas around Kandahar that we haven't been contesting. I think it's quite possible to make progress and I think the progress will matter. Could we make progress in terms of abuse of power and other problems with the Afghan government? That's harder to say. It depends on how aggressive we are, it depends on how they react, it depends on how skillful we are and so forth but I think we have a chance at having made some decent progress on that. Obviously, a lot depends on how the election works out. So I don't think that's unrealistic but I'm not going to promise you anything because it is a war.

Male Voice: [Inaudible from 1:04:45 to 1:05:28].

[QUESTION]

Frederick W. Kagan: It looks very different in Afghanistan from what it looked like in Iraq and it will look different in every part of Afghanistan from every other part of Afghanistan. One of the funny things about the Anbar awakening and the way that it spread to the rest of Iraq is that the Anbari sheiks rapidly found themselves on the phone with Sunni sheiks in Diyala and Baghdad and Salahhadin and then they were

saying, "Hey, this looks like a good racket you guys are in. How do we do this?" "So how do we -- let us know how you shipped the Americans down. What -- can we ask? What'll we get out of this? Let's make this happen in our area. We want this." That doesn't happen in Afghanistan. Because of the tribal nature of the country where, actually, the tribes are probably stronger in Afghanistan than they were in Iraq for the most part, you have the problem that ink spots don't spread beyond tribal boundaries. And you're more likely to have the next tribe over say, "Well, if they're doing it, we don't want any part of it," than to have them say, "Well, if they're doing it, we want to do it too."

Now, that doesn't mean that you can't make it work in some form. And at the end of the day, you are going to have to make it work in the sense that, look, everybody in Afghanistan has an AK47. A lot of the time, you got Taliban intimidation going on with four guys in jingle truck rolled into a village and take it over. The Afghans are perfectly capable -- the villagers are perfectly capable nine times out of 10 of taking those people out. And they don't need to have an AP3 and they don't need to have anything else.

What they need to have is the conviction that there are Afghan security forces nearby that will protect them from retaliation, that will ensure that the Taliban don't then mass

50 jingle trucks to come and kill everybody in the village or whatever they're going to do, that that has to be there, that that backup has to be there. That's a generalization. In different areas, it's going to be different. But no, I don't think you're going to say an Anbar awakening-type thing spread in Afghanistan. I think it's going to happen in a way that you're almost not even going to notice it if we do our counter-insurgency properly and if we build the Afghan security forces properly.

Male Voice: [Inaudible from 1:07:23 to 1:07:38].

[QUESTION]

Frederick W. Kagan: Well, I don't want to say that Helmand isn't strategically important. It is strategically important. It's one of the populous provinces in the south. It has probably almost as many people as Kandahar province does - again, population statistics. Again, we're there for historical reasons and we're there because of the opium trade which I'll talk about in a minute.

And now we're there because we've been doing counter-insurgency and the thing about counter-insurgency is when you do it right, it starts by making a commitment to local population that you're not going to abandon them. So however strategically important it might or might not have been when we started, it's not something that we can simply pull out of now

because pulling out of it will mean throwing to the wolves people who have stood up with us in a variety of places there. So this is one of the problems with counter-insurgency, you have to pick your fights well to start with because it's not something that you want to pick up and go to somewhere else.

What I really want to address is the issue of the narcotics trade because I think the people have a misperception about -- both about how this works and about how important it is. The Taliban does not, on the whole, sell narcotics. That's not how they make their money. What they do is to tax the opium -- the poppy crop and then they tax the movement of the opium paste from part A to part B because they have a system of taxation in place in the country, in the parts where they have significant influence, especially in Helmand and Kandahar.

The thing is, they also tax wheat. In the north, where marijuana is grown and there's a Taliban presence, they tax marijuana. If people were growing hemp or anything else, they'd be taxing hemp. Now, you might say, well, poppy is more expensive than wheat. That actually isn't always true. There've been recent cases in recent years where the wheat actually fetched more than the poppy did.

But that's, to me, that's not the point. If you're talking about going after the Taliban money supply, the problem

is not the poppy. The problem is the taxation and that's why the answer is counter-insurgency. But it's why, to my mind, you don't focus on going after Taliban where there happens to be poppy. First of all, you can grow poppy almost anywhere. That's why it's such an attractive crop. It grows better in places where there's lots of irrigation and good land but it also grows on anything that's almost not rock. So if you chase them out of Helmand, you will see poppy cultivation. We already have. You see it moving into Farah. You'll see it moving into Herat. You'll see it moving around the country one way or another. And do we want to be in the business of chasing the poppy harvest wherever it goes? I would submit that that's probably not a good use of our resources.

The other thing that we have to understand is that the Taliban has multiple sources of income. It does tax and it does basically levy tolls. And it does levy penalties in Sharia courts that it collects. Those are the local sources of income. And it has, of course, sources of income from abroad. If you took out all of its poppy money, would it die? I don't think so. It would be worthwhile asking someone -- if you could get someone to give you a real [indiscernible] finance analysis on this, what that actually looks like. I don't think that you could shut this insurgency down even if you could take all of the narco-money away from it, which you're not going to

do by going after the crop anyway. But the reality is, you're not going to take all the money away from it whatever you do. So to me, focusing on Helmand because of the poppy is a mistake.

And the last reason why we focused on Helmand is because of the Kajaki dam, which is a huge infrastructure project that is meant to both irrigate the valley and make the cultivation of poppy -- I mean of licit crops better and also to provide electricity and so forth. And so this is a development project. Why are we doing that? This goes back to the period before 2006 when we saw Afghanistan primarily as a development problem. That the main thing that we saw as being the difficulty in Afghanistan was its poverty, its lack of infrastructure smashed by 30 years of war and so forth. And so we thought that we were going to address the instability by going after development.

The problem is, first of all, now we're in an insurgency and we saw in Iraq, among other things, what happens when you try to focus on development in the midst of an insurgency, it doesn't tend to work very well. You don't usually get the development and to the extent you do, it doesn't necessarily have an effect on the insurgency because Maslow's hierarchy, right? If people are worried about whether they're going to live or die, the question of whether the lights are on or not

is secondary. Well, that's where we are in Afghanistan where people also have to worry about whether they're going to eat or not.

But the other problem is that Afghans are not Iraqis and they have a different set of desires. When you look at the development packages that we did in Iraq, what was the SWET package? Sewage, water, electricity, trash. Okay, sewage. Guess how most Afghans deal with sewage? Water. Afghans love it when you drill wells for them. No one in rural Afghanistan is looking to turn on a tap and have water run out of the faucet. So you can address this and it can matter. What they really care about is irrigation which is a different issue. Electricity, electricity is great but most rural Afghans do not rely on electricity for anything. So this is not something that's a huge priority for them and a subsistence farmer does not produce trash, almost by definition.

So what is the equivalent of the SWET package in Afghanistan? Well, the things that Afghans care about are security, justice which is where the Sharia courts come in, arbitration of local disputes which include especially land rights, rights over women who are obviously regarded as property in most of rural Afghanistan, disputes over animals, so forth. Some large-scale projects like irrigation projects and so forth but not on the level of the Kajaki dam, that sort

of stuff is always more local. Those are the things that Afghans -- what most of rural Afghans care about. So distorting our strategy to focus on large-scale hydroelectric dams and irrigation systems in the midst of this insurgency is not a good idea.

[Audio gap from 1:13:49 to 1:14:33] [QUESTION]

Yes, that's right. I'm not saying that we should pull forces out of Helmand. And I'm not saying that the fight there isn't important. What I am saying is that we have been focusing on it to the [audio glitches] more important at this moment and it's one of the reasons why I think we need more forces. Precisely because I don't think we can shift forces out of Helmand to Kandahar.

[Audio gap from 1:14:50 to 1:15:16] [QUESTION]

I think that we've been excessively focused on embedded training teams in Afghanistan and insufficiently focused on real partnership because I think one of the things we've seen from Iraq, especially, is that embedded training teams are useful and important and essential but not sufficient. An embedded trainer does not have independent sources of information, can't evaluate the situation independently from the way the unit that he is with evaluates the situation. So there's a whole level of intelligence, assessment, planning and so forth that an embedded trainer really can only enable the

unit to the extent that the unit is already functioning reasonably well along those lines. And the embedded trainer is mentoring individuals in the unit about how to do their jobs and maybe walking the unit through some procedures.

What he can't do is show the unit what right looks like because the trainer is not doing that, is not doing anything. He's mentoring. I'm sorry, don't quote me saying the trainer is not doing anything. The trainer is not executing - planning and executing operations. The trainer is mentoring partners.

When you have a unit, as in Iraq, partnered with an indigenous unit, if it's done right, both units go through their own planning process. So the American unit does usually with Iraqi presence watching that. The Iraqi unit would go through it with the training team presence watching that. Then they would come together and do it jointly and then they will go out together and operate jointly in the field. So that not only do you have the mentors teaching individuals and small groups how to do stuff but you also have them -- you have partnered units showing them. This is what it looks like. This is how the American military plans and conducts operations.

And I'm looking round this table, lots of people in this room have been to Iraq. Lots of people, I'm sure, have seen the Iraqi standing there with the night vision goggles and the

shoulder and the elbow pads and the knee pads and everything standing at attention and giving you chest bumps trying to look like Americans. Certainly I got that and it almost makes you laugh but it's an indication of the importance of providing a model to be imitated and of the fact that indigenous groups will try to do that.

We need to go much more to a partnership model in Afghanistan. I think that General McChrystal intends to do that but, again, in order to have a partnership model, we have to have forces operating on the ground that can partner. And that's another reason why I think additional forces are going to be required.

[Audio gap from 1:17:44 to 1:18:23] [QUESTION]

I don't think we know whether or not he's impervious because I don't think we really tried this. I think we've done a fair amount of nattering at him publicly and privately and I would note that nattering at him publicly is probably the least effective thing that you can possibly do, especially in that culture.

But what we haven't done is systematically compile the evidence, the dossiers, the reports, the things that would be very compromising. Sometimes all you have to do is go to these guys and say, "Look, I've got all this stuff. Do you want me to hand it to Pashwak? We can have a big front-page news story

tomorrow but what a dirt bag you are." That doesn't -- that doesn't go over well. That's not really -- that's not culturally acceptable. Whatever you think about the culture acceptability of corruption in Afghanistan and people go back and forth on that, the truth is it's less culturally accepted than people make out. It's one thing to be corrupt. It's another thing to be publicly demonstrated to be a dirt bag and this is leverage.

Will it work? I don't know. But, the truth is Karzai -- you want to keep in mind that Karzai's government is significantly more dependent on the international community than Maliki's government ever was. At the end of the day, Iraq is a country that's going to export 2 million barrels a day of oil. It's going to have its own revenue stream. It has a tradition of having a large army. They can -- there are a variety of ways for the Iraqis to solve the sectarian problem none of which we would have found appealing or acceptable but which they might've been able to live with.

If Karzai is not getting international assistance, there is no Afghan government. If he is not getting military support for his forces, there is no military force there. That's a significant amount of leverage. I would submit that we haven't been using it very well partly because it's not the sort of thing that you want to use as a blunt instrument which is one

of the things that's been happening in the past sometimes unfortunately. We say, "Look, you need to you clean up your act or we're not going to support you anymore." So Karzai calls your bluff. That's why you need to have a more nuanced approach. But at the end of the day, the leverage is very significant.

[Audio gap from 1:20:18 to 1:20:46] [QUESTION]

I don't see the Haqqani network leadership accepting the legitimacy of this Afghan government and agreeing to put down arms and stop fighting. I don't think there's any basis for imagining that. I think that when you start to get away from the leadership and talk about can we pare parts of that organization away from leadership, especially going after its tribal base and doing a variety of other things, there may be possibilities along those lines which is what a good counter-insurgency effort would aim at doing obviously. But I don't see any -- I don't have any reason to think that someone's going to get Siraj Haqqani to decide that it's okay and he's just going to go back to the farm in Miranshah and he doesn't care what happens in Khost anymore. I'm just -- I'm very skeptical of that.

Male Voice: [Inaudible]. [QUESTION]

Frederick W. Kagan: Yeah, that's what was called the 1990's. It was Taliban and then he doesn't live up to his end

of the bargain and what do you do about it? I mean, the problem is once you made that deal and left, you have no ability to control it and I just -- I think there's a very significant onus of proof on anybody who makes the assertion that you can get them to make that deal and stick to it to provide any degree of evidence to support that assertion because I don't see it.

[End of file]

[End of transcript]