

Watching ‘Zero Dark Thirty’ with the CIA: Separating Fact from Fiction

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(In progress.)

MARC THIESSEN: – to AEI and to this morning’s panel, Watching “Zero Dark Thirty” with the CIA: Separating Fact From Fiction. My name is Marc Thiessen. I’m a fellow here at the American Enterprise Institute and a member of AEI’s task force on detention and interrogation policy.

Kathryn Bigelow’s recent film depicting the operation that killed Osama bin Laden has sparked controversy over its graphic depiction of terrorist interrogations and their role in leading us to Osama bin Laden. For the most part, the outrage at the film has been coming from the left and has been directed at Ms. Bigelow. Now, if you’re a conservative like me, when you see the Washington left in a brawl with the Hollywood left, your temptation is to sit back, get a box of popcorn and enjoy the fight. And to some extent, I think that’s why many of the CIA’s defenders and supporters have stayed out of this debate; why interrupt while the progressives are fighting it out?

But the fact is culture matters, and many Americans are going to form their opinions based on what they see on the silver screen. So it’s important for those who know the truth to set the record straight and to separate fact from fiction.

And today, we have a distinguished panel here to help us do just that: three veterans of the CIA who were directly involved in the CIA’s interrogation and detention program, and also in the hunt for Osama bin Laden. Mike Hayden is the former director of the National Security Agency and also director of the Central Intelligence Agency. I got to know Mike back in 2006 when I was a speechwriter for President Bush. I was asked to write the president’s speech revealing the existence of the CIA interrogation program, and Mike was very kind to give me access to all the intelligence that that program had produced, and introduced me to the men and women who had actually conducted the interrogations, men and women who I grew to admire and respect a great deal and who I consider to be heroes.

But he’s not only one of the smartest people I know, he’s also, I think, one of the most compelling witnesses to the efficacy of this program. Because when he came into office in 2006, the program had been suspended, and he was not involved in its initial creation. And so he conducted an impartial assessment; he gathered all the information and had to advise the president whether or not to restart it. And based on that objective assessment, he concluded that he could not in good conscious advise the president not to have an interrogation program. So I think we’ll ask Mike today to explain why that is that he came to that conclusion.

Jose Rodriguez is the former director of the CIA’s National Clandestine Service. He’s spent 25 years in the field as an undercover officer, becoming the head of the CIA’s counterterrorism agencies, counterterrorism center, where he led the worldwide intelligence collection programs and covert action programs against al-Qaida, including the interrogation program that’s depicted in this film. He’s the author of what I consider to be the best book written on this topic: “Hard Measures: How Aggressive CIA Actions After 9/11 Saved American Lives,” and he is in my view also an American hero.

John Rizzo is the former chief legal officer of the CIA. He spent 34 years in the CIA's Office of General Counsel. He's been called the most influential career lawyer in CIA history, and that's probably an understatement. In his memoir, former Director George Tenet wrote that when there is a crisis, despite what Hollywood would have you believe, you don't call the tough guys; you call in the lawyers. Take that, Kathryn Bigelow. (Scattered laughter.) And for three decades, that call went to John Rizzo. And he provided – he provided the legal advice that allowed our interrogators to get the information they needed while staying well within the bounds of law, and sacrificed personally in his service to our country. And I'm proud to know him, and I am very glad that he has joined us here today.

So before we begin our discussion, I thought it would be helpful – I assume most people have seen the movie, but let's show just a trailer of the film so you can get a taste of it.

(Trailer plays.)

MR. THIESSEN: All right, so the progressive complaint about "Zero Dark Thirty" goes something like this: While the depiction of enhanced interrogation techniques in the movie is accurate, their role in finding Osama bin Laden is not accurate. I suspect that most of our panelists would tend to disagree with that assessment. But so I'd like to take those two topics during the course of our discussion in turn.

But first, I just want to ask a real simple question. It must have been quite an experience going to the movie theater and seeing something that you all worked so closely on in your lives depicted on film. And so just what did you think of the movie? I'm going to start with Mike.

MICHAEL HAYDEN: I liked it in balance. I turned to my wife after it was done and simply said I'm glad it was made. And we'll talk about should have broken left here, broken right there, or that's not quite right and so on. But on balance, I'm very happy that the story was made.

And frankly, I'm very happy because – you know, I read the op-ed in the Post this morning by Mr. Cohen, kind of calling the movie the national Rorschach test – we'll discuss the accuracy, artistic and historical, inside the film. But I think it does a masterful job at suggesting that in the real world, there are no right angles and there are no easy answers to very difficult situations. And that to me was a great service.

JOSE RODRIGUEZ: I also liked the movie. It's very entertaining, but it is a movie. And there were some things about the movie that I really liked and things that I did not like. I did not like, for example, the portrayal of the enhanced techniques. I did not like the fact that it made a false link between torture and intelligence successes, because I also think that torture does not work. And our program worked because it was not torture.

But there were other things I liked about the movie. And I liked the fact that it conveyed that this was a 10-year marathon, rather than a sprint ordered by a new president, and that the agency was the focus of this effort, and that it succeeded because of the commitment, dedication and tenacity of its people. I liked the fact that it showed that the enhanced interrogation program

had something to do with the capture of bin Laden. I like that it conceded that in fact, there were other intelligence techniques that allowed us to capture bin Laden besides interrogation, including human operations and analyses and SIGINT and technical operations, imagery. And I also liked that it showed the strong working relationship between the agency and the military. So it's a mixed bag, but again, it's entertainment. And I liked it as an entertainment.

MR. THIESSEN: John?

JOHN RIZZO: Yeah, I mean, I basically agree with Mike and Jose's take. I thought it was a terrific action flick. My money was about 20 minutes too long – (laughter) – maybe it's my advanced age, but I start twitching at the two-hour mark. And obviously, that – the final takedown was done – as I understand it – in real-time and it was riveting.

The interrogation scenes – I mean, they were – they were striking. They were hard to watch for me, having lived through this and how the – how the actual techniques came to be, and all the safeguards we put on them, all the monitoring by medical personnel during the course of the interrogation – you know, again, it's a movie, so you know, the character in the movie, the interrogator, seemingly making stuff up as you went along, you're not talking – OK, bring on the water and –

MR. : (Off mic) – get the buckets.

MR. RIZZO: – and get the buckets – now, the box – people have asked me about the box. And since this whole thing has been declassified now, most of you probably know that one of the techniques was a box, putting a detainee in a box for a – for a limited duration. Now, the box in the movie is not the kind of box that was – that was used.

When I say all this, I don't want to downplay or leave any impression that the actual program, the actual – the actual waterboarding was, you know, was tame or benign. I mean, it was a very aggressive technique, as were all the – all the others. But – so on the whole, I mean, I went into it – I went into it telling myself it was going to be a movie. I was frankly relieved that there were no lawyers involved in the movie. (Laughter.) I would have just spent the next four years at cocktail parties explaining why I wasn't that lawyer. So I was – so I mean, on the whole, it's as they said. It was a mixed bag, but it was a terrific movie. And you know, I think it did really take no sides and Miss Bigelow and Mr. Boal, I think, skillfully teed up the complicated moral questions of all of this we're facing, especially in those first few scary months after the 9/11 attacks.

MR. THIESSEN: Can I – just to follow up on that. I mean, you know, you were the chief legal officer at the time. I mean, would you have authorized the interrogation techniques the way they were depicted? I mean, explain the difference in the box – (chuckles) – explain the – you know, explain that you – do people just throw somebody on a mat and start pouring water over their heads? I mean –

MR. RIZZO: No, no, the – first of all, you know, it was – it was “Mother, May I.” Those interrogators were not allowed to adlib. There were certain specific – as the memos – OLC

memos show at the time, I mean, it was a – there was a meticulous procedure to undertake. And before the use of the waterboard – they will confirm this – the interrogators at the site would have to come back in writing, explain why they thought the waterboard was necessary, it would be approved at headquarters. During the time the waterboard was used, which was only until mid-2003, it took the CIA director to approve the use. So it was a much more modern program.

Now, the box – I mean, a box is not pleasant. First of all, there is – there was a big box authorized that the detainee could stand in and a smaller box. It wasn't – it didn't appear to me to be quite as small as what was depicted in the movie. But yes, there was a box technique. But again, the – I mean, when I – you know, everyone can look at this in a different way. I just had the impression from the scene that the guy was sort of, you know adlibbing as he went along, which was, believe me, far from the – far from the reality.

MR. THIESSEN: Mike, one of the – one of the scenes, you have the interrogator throws the – whoever the detainee is down and starts pouring water over his face and starts shouting, when's the last time you saw bin Laden? And I think that gets to a deep misunderstanding of how interrogation actually worked. And one of the things you explained to me when I was working on my book and on the president's speech was that there's a difference between interrogation and debriefing, and the purpose of interrogation was not – we actually didn't ask questions that we didn't know the answers to. It was to ascertain whether they were being truthful or not. (So if you ?) walk through that?

MR. HAYDEN: Yeah, it did – and look, I understand how it's got to compress everything. I mean, as John's happy that there are no lawyers depicted in the film, I wonder why it left a – one station chief in Islamabad for 10 years. I mean – (laughter) – so things are badly compressed. And in reality, it may have just been too long a story to weave out in terms of what the narrative needed to move forward.

But I'm almost willing to make an absolute statement that we never asked anybody anything we didn't know the answer to while they were undergoing the enhanced interrogation techniques. The techniques were not designed to elicit truth in the moment – which is what was, you know, tell me this or I'll hurt you more, I'm not your friend – for about a third of our detainees. By the way, for two thirds of our detainees, this wasn't necessary. Now, I'm willing to admit that the existence of the option may have influenced the two-thirds who said, well, let's talk, all right? I mean – I mean, let's be candid with one another. But for about a third, techniques were used not to elicit, again, information in the moment, but to take someone who had come into our custody absolutely defiant and move them into a state or a zone of cooperation, whereby – and then you recall the scene in the movie after the detainee is cleaned up and they're having this lengthy conversation – for the rest of the detention, and in some cases it's years – it's a conversation. It's a debriefing. It's going back and forth with the kind of dialogue that you saw in that scene about a – about a third of the way through the movie.

You know a lot of people kind of reflexively say – they'll say anything to make you stop, which may actually be true. That's why we didn't ask them questions while this was going on. Again, as John said, I mean, you know – these things weren't gentle or kind, but the impact – and I think Jose's written very thoughtfully about this – the impact was psychological. The

impact is you are no longer in control of your destiny, all right? You are in our hands, and therefore, that movement into the zone of cooperation as opposed to the zone of defiance. But Jose's got more of the fine print on that.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, and usually, the enhanced interrogation program lasted a few days, in the case of Abu Zhubaydah and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a few weeks. But it was a finite amount of time. As a matter of fact, I think the justifications for the use of the techniques said that we could not go beyond 30 days, and they had very specific information, guidance, regarding how long the sessions could be and how long we could pour water. So it was very well-controlled.

MR. THIESSEN: And KSM figured out those restrictions, didn't he?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: He did, because pretty quickly, he recognized that within 10 seconds, we would stop pouring water. So after a while, he figured it out, and he started to count with his fingers up to 10, right, just to let us know that the time was up.

MR. THIESSEN: Yeah, now, if you would, tell the story that you have in your book about Abu Zhubaydah, and what he said – said to our interrogators after he was waterboarded.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, it was interesting because Abu Zhubaydah at one point finally told us that we should use the waterboarding in particular, but the enhanced interrogation programs on all the brothers. And he said it because – he gave us the explanation, and the explanation was that the brothers needed to have religious justification to talk, to provide information. And – however, they would not be expected by Allah to go beyond their capabilities or their resistance. So once they felt that they were there, they would then become compliant and provide information. So he basically recommended to us that we needed to submit the brothers to this type of procedure if we wanted them to cooperate, as a matter of fact, to help them reach the level where they would become compliant and provide information.

MR. HAYDEN: Yeah, or to do without sin.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

MR. HAYDEN: And I should add, this narrative was in – you know, my summer of 2006 was, as Marc suggested, trying to make judgments on the overall effectiveness of the program in the past, and what would be a legitimate program going forward, because circumstances had changed. And this narrative, this story was important for my own soul-searching on this, because in other words, I was not trying to prove the point that what we were doing was universally applicable for all detainees in all circumstances for all future crises. It was peculiarly well-suited to this group, whose belief was founded on almost metaphysical principles, you know, obedience to the – to the will of God. And this story that Abu Zhubaydah told about, you know, creating – Allah expects us to obey him, but he will not send us a burden that is greater than we can handle; you have done that, therefore you have freed my soul that I can speak to you without fear of hell. All right? That set my thinking for this program, for these detainees, for this enemy. And some on the outside try to expand the debate to suggest we're trying to suggest some metaphysical

macroprinciple that applies for all time. That may or may not be true, but I wasn't interested in it. I was focused on what was happening here in this – (audio break) –

MR. RODRIGUEZ: And in many cases, I think that they were finally relieved that they had reached the point where they felt they could talk. And then once they reached that point – now, these are very egomaniac people; they've got big huge egos, and they can't wait to tell you, you know, how evil they are. So they just started talking. Like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed – he wouldn't stop, but, you know, he also – the psychological issue of the big egos and wanting to tell you, I think, played into our hands after a while, because they would just want to tell us everything.

MR. THIESSEN: One of the things I think people don't realize is that that philosophy actually started with Zawahiri. If you read "The Looming Tower," Lawrence Wright tells the story of how Zawahiri, when he was a member of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, was arrested and was actually tortured and gave up one of his close confidants and was despondent over it.

And the person came to him and said no, no, no, you're OK. You resisted, and you resisted as far as you could; no one could have – could have undergone it, and so you did the right thing by giving me up. And so Zawahiri, it's my understanding, was actually one of the people who trained them in counterinterrogation techniques.

And so this is a philosophy that stemmed from Zawahiri's experience, which he spread throughout the – throughout the group. But John, we see in the movie, for example, that Abu Faraj al-Libbi was waterboarded. And I don't think that actually happened, but how many detainees underwent waterboarding? We often hear, also, that KSM was waterboarded 180 times; he told the Red Cross it was five times, but no one seems to believe him. (Laughter.) Could you – could you expand a little bit on that?

MR. RIZZO: Sure. Yeah – Michael and Jose will remember this – Abu Faraj al-Libbi was the – well, he was never waterboarded, but he was the last detainee who was – who was subjected to EITs before we had to suspend the program. So the EITs, in his case, stopped midstream, thus earning him a minor footnote in history I suppose, but – and they were not resumed till some months later.

Yeah, this issue of numbers – how many times? How many – you know, how many times was KSM waterboarded? How many times Zubaydah was waterboarded – you know, this first arose because of an IG report that was done by CIA IG in 2004, which was subsequently declassified by the – by the Obama administration when he came into office. You know, Jose's probably more of an expert on how this was actually done, but it depends on the way you count them. I mean, the actual applications, so they said, lasted just a matter of seconds.

If you – I think the impression was unfortunately left that 83 meant 83 sessions and – 183 sessions. Now, again I don't – you know, I don't want to say that what these guys went through was not very aggressive, but it just simply – I mean, those numbers just are way out of bounds and have been, you know, misinterpreted in subsequent years to suit a particular commentator's or organization's polemic perspective.

MR. THIESSEN: One of the startling statistics in looking at this is that there are actually more journalists who have had themselves waterboarded to prove it's torture than there are actually terrorists – (laughter) – who have – who have been waterboarded.

GEN. HAYDEN: Almost an equal number of lawyers, too. (Laughter.) No, seriously, in order to offer a judgment on this, there will be people in the agency who said, I want to be able to experience it.

MR. RIZZO: For the record, that was not me. (Laughter.) I wasn't quite prepared to go that far in my legal research, so – but there was a lawyer in our office who was closely monitoring the program on a day-to-day basis who, in fact, agreed to do that.

MR. THIESSEN: And tens of thousands of American servicemen have been waterboarded, and I think right now, the only people we still waterboard are Americans in uniform. So waterboarding continues just not – just not of terrorists. But let's turn to the question of the role that detainees played in the hunt for bin Laden. And maybe I'll turn to you, Mike, and just – if you could walk through –

GEN. HAYDEN: Sure.

MR. THIESSEN: The role they played, tick-tock, and how it interacted with other intelligence techniques.

GEN. HAYDEN: Right. And the first thing I have to – I have to mention, because, you know, we're kind of anchored on the movie, right – is that the movie – it's a lot more subtle, I think, than – those who have not seen the movie, feel free to comment – as Jose points out – I mean, after reading commentary about the movie, I expected this non-stop linear, pretty short line between an interrogation session and boots on the ground in Abbottabad. And there really is an awful lot of complex intelligence work that is shown in the movie, and for which I don't think the movie gets sufficient credit. All right? So that – I do want to make that point.

Secondly, when I was first briefed – and I think it was late '07 – pretty sure it was late '07 – may have been very early '08, but I think it was late '07 – when the UBL team came to me and said, we think we're onto something here. And look, portrayed accurately in the movie was the obsession of people in tracking down Osama bin Laden. Now, they personify it in Maya, but you have to understand, this is a very, very broad team.

And these folks had been working on one or another different hypotheses as to, how do we do this? And they came to me and said, couriers. Right? We think – we think this is going to be a very positive line of inquiry. We've gotten some information – we know he's communicating. We're confident he's not communicating electronically because, you know, given all the other means, we probably would have detected that. So it must be face-to-face, it must be humans. We have some leads on couriers.

They laid out – and Lord knows, I wish I'd have taken notes at the meeting, but I didn't – but they laid out a whole series of paths that they were following, one of which was information

derived from – three, actually CIA detainees. I mean, it was just mentioned in passing; we got it from these – I mean, we weren't trying to prove a principle here, trying to refute an argument, trying to, you know, anticipate the script of a future Academy Award-nominated movie.

It was just – it was just part of the flow. And that's the point I think I try to suggest to you. It's almost impossible for me to imagine anything like Abbottabad happening without making use of this almost Costco-like storehouse of intelligence information that we gained over the years through detainees, and the ability to go back to the detainees and challenge their information or to prompt them with new information.

Let me just suggest one other thing, too. Again, in an attempt to create the argument around a linear connection between interrogations, yes, no and so on – you know, very often, stuff you have in your possession takes meaning only from information later discovered. And that – as I said, that kind of Costco warehouse sort of thing – something way in the back row – kind of one of those – last scene from “Raiders of the Lost Ark” – kind of starts to glow because of something you've now learned in 2007 or 2008. So you have to treat this not as a thread, but as a tapestry. And I think that's the only way to consider it.

MR. THIESSEN: Can I ask you one follow-up there – is that one of the things you told me was that intelligence – and I'd like you to take a – intelligence is like putting together a puzzle without the cover on the box. You know, if you could talk about that.

GEN. HAYDEN: Yeah. One of the lines we use is, you know – as Marc says, it's like putting together a puzzle, but I think, as John McLaughlin says, there are no edge pieces, and you don't get to see the cover on the box. And by the way, there are a whole bunch of puzzle pieces there that don't belong to this puzzle. If you can talk to someone who has glimpsed the cover of the box – and that's the detainee – it illuminates an awful lot of things that you may already possess but can't quite fit into the pattern.

MR. THIESSEN: And in some cases, the man who drew the cover on the – (audio break).
Jose.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: You know, the movie is about the hunt for bin Laden, and it focuses on the information that led to bin Laden, but there's a lot more to this story. And that is the destruction of al-Qaida. And the enhanced interrogation program was key in destroying al-Qaida. Bin Laden came 10 years later; in the meantime, we had a number of terrorists that were coming after us with plots, and we were able to capture them or kill them – destroy the plots, wrap them up because of this program. We can go into detail in terms of everything that happened, but the enhanced interrogation program was the key – the key to that.

MR. THIESSEN: Follow-up, Jose. I mean, take us back to – since we're pulling the broader picture – take us back to September 11th, 2001. You know, we've just been hit – there's smoke in the ground in New York, buildings have fallen, the Pentagon is broken. And what do we know about al-Qaida? I mean, did we know that KSM was the operational commander of al-Qaida or that he had this – or that members of his network – or all this information that we take for granted that we know now?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, we didn't know that much. I mean, we didn't know whether it was Khalid Sheikh Mohammed or Abu Zubaydah who were responsible for 9/11. We had a few assets that provided us some peripheral information, but we didn't know very much. It took a long time for us to be in a position to really learn what was going on.

In March of 2002, we captured Abu Zubaydah; we recognized that he was a key member of al-Qaida. We recognized that we had to do something different, because contrary to what some people are saying, Abu Zubaydah initially provided a couple of pieces of information, but then he shut down. And we knew that they were coming after us in a second wave of attacks. We knew that they had a nuclear program – that they had a biological weapons program; we thought we needed to do something different, and that's when the enhanced interrogation program came into existence.

So Abu Zubaydah went through the enhanced interrogation program starting 1 August of 2002 for 20 days or so, and about three weeks later, we captured bin al-Shibh. Bin al-Shibh was a major player; he participated – he was at Hamburg – in the Hamburg cell, and he was a go-between to the al-Qaida central. And then we captured Rahim al-Nashiri, who was responsible for the Cole, Khallad bin Attash, Ammar al-Baluchi, Khalid Sheikh Mohamed, Hambali, every chief of operations of al-Qaida. This program was the key to all of that. And we forget, you know, that it was not just bin Laden 10 years later, it was al-Qaida coming after us with plots and with very capable people that allowed us to – this program allowed us to take down.

MR. THIESSEN: John, one of the – one of the points you made to me once that we – when – after 9/11, we had a lethal program to get the people who had done this to us, but we also had a program to get some of these people alive and find out what we know, and that it's – in this situation, it's not optimal. You want to kill terrorists, but it's not always optimal to kill terrorists. And it seems to me right now, our policy is to vaporize all the intelligence with drones. Is that an optimal situation?

MR. RIZZO: Yeah. Well, certainly in the wake of the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, when we were frantically – that's the only word that can describe it – trying to pull together a program that would elicit the information that we were – our experts were convinced Zubaydah and his colleagues were keeping from us. The – I mean, I can tell you – I would – you know, I was there from the beginning through the – through the end of the program in '08, '09. You know, CIA is an intelligence collection organization, first and foremost.

And so it's in – it's always been in the agency's institutional DNA to want to collect intelligence from all sorts of – by all sorts of means, especially human intelligence. You can't collect human intelligence from a dead guy. The priority – the absolute priority was to thwart the next terrorist attack which in 2002 everyone, including our people at CIA, thought was – convinced was only a matter of time.

So the priority from the beginning with Zubaydah and the others were to take them alive. As many of you know, the – Zubaydah was captured in a rather furious firefight in which he nearly – he was seriously wounded. It was the agency who sent doctors over to bring him back –

acting not out of some sense out of extraordinary compassion for this character but because he was no good to us dead. So the intelligence collection portion, for years, was paramount. Lethal operations were certainly not the first option, and it clearly was not the only option for those of us at the time.

MR. THIESSEN: Jose, one of the – one of the critics – critiques of the program is that, you know, KSM, he underwent waterboarding, he underwent sleep deprivation and all the rest, but he still lied about al-Kuwaiti. And you have a fascinating story in your book about how we discovered that he was actually covering for al-Kuwaiti. Could you sort of expand on that?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. You know, people think that, so once you become compliant, that means a hundred percent of the time, they will give you a hundred percent of the information, you know, that they have in their minds, which is not going to happen. I mean, this is not a push button, get banana type of thing. (Laughter.) Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was so vociferous in his pushing back on the courier, that we smelled a rat. We knew that there was an issue there.

At the time, we had a number of prisoners at one of our black sites, and they were communicating clandestinely with each other. They didn't think that we knew, but we didn't tell them either that we knew that they were communicating with each other. And so we intercepted a communication between Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and some of his – of his – the other detainees, in which he said, do not say a word about the courier. That told us a lot about the courier. And it speaks to the importance of having a place like a black site to take these individuals, because we could use that type of communication, we could use them as background information to check a name. I mean, it was very, very helpful for us.

MR. THIESSEN: You know, one of the – after the raid came out – after the bin Laden raid happened and the word came out that interrogations had played a role, Senator McCain said – gave a speech, and he said that – he mentioned that the first mention of Abu Ahmed al-Kuwaiti, as well as the description of him as an important member of al-Qaida, came from a detainee held in another country; the United States did not conduct this detainee's interrogation, nor did we render him to that country for the purpose of interrogation.

That statement is technically correct and deeply misleading – not intentionally, but just – it implies that we knew all this beforehand and then just were – now just saying, well, we got more information from the detainees. Can you – can someone explain why that particular – why it's important – even if it's true that we had a mention of him before, why the program wasn't critical to it?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: You're probably talking about al-Qahtani, who first mentioned al-Kuwaiti. And he mentioned it – well, al-Qahtani was never in our custody, but he mentioned it in passing and identified him as a security expert for al-Qaida. At the time – which was 2002 or '03, it really didn't mean anything to us. I mean, a security expert for al-Qaida? It didn't – it was not till we got our own information from a facilitator in 2004 that we learned that al-Kuwaiti was the courier for bin Laden. Al-Kuwaiti – even the name al-Kuwaiti, at the time, didn't mean

anything to us. It meant – you know, al Kuwaiti – Ahmed al-Kuwaiti is like saying Jose the Puerto Rican. (Laughter.)

But what meant something to us – what really meant something to us was the fact that we got validation that there was one courier who was bin Laden's principle way of communicating with al-Qaida central. It meant that bin Laden had taken himself out of the day-to-day running of al-Qaida, that he had decided, for whatever reason, that he was just going to run the operation long-distance, recognizing, in my view, that it was going to be a lot less effective to run an operation like that from far away.

It also told us that finding bin Laden was going to be a lot more difficult, because he was dependent on one courier. It was not till years later that we were able to put the – (inaudible) – with a real name, his true name and go out and find him. So I mean, the information that was obtained at the black sites, although not complete, was key, in my view; it was important in the eventual takedown of bin Laden.

GEN. HAYDEN: But I want to add, Marc, you know, sometimes in – remember I mentioned the article this morning about this movie being a national Rorschach test? You're going to see in the movie what you want to see. I mean, sometimes we talk past one another. You just heard Jose's description. You heard Marc's quotation from the senator. I kind of suggest back to my point earlier, it's a tapestry. It's very complicated. The pieces fit together.

I think there's an echo here in the CIA IG report. And I know these two guys will pick up on this immediately. When John wrote the report, he said that there is no evidence that any imminent attacks have been stopped through the CIA interrogation –

MR. : (Inaudible.)

GEN. HAYDEN: No, no, not this John. (Laughter.) John (sp), our inspector John (sp). All right? And let's let that stand on its merits, all right? Let's not even – let's not even challenge that. That then is taken to mean the program therefore wasn't effective, all right? I mean, if you can't prove this dot-to-dot, linear, close, immediate – in other words, if it didn't lead you to tackle somebody who was (chambering ?) around on the rooftop right before the attempt, then it didn't count. Breaking up the financial network 18 months earlier, disrupting the courier for that – I mean, you get the point, all right? And so I think sometimes the debate gets bolloxed up by someone proving, you see, it wasn't A to B to C, and our saying, yeah, but I mean, we had all the letters here and we're mixing and matching over the course of years. And I just think that gets lost in the public debate.

MR. RIZZO: I mean, one example of talking about the interweaving of these things is the takedown of the Ghuraba cell, where you had KSM, you know, gives us information, that he gave \$50,000 to Majid Khan and then take that information to Majid Khan and he gives us the name of the person, Subar (ph), that he gave to – a description and the phone number. And then that information – you were the head of the NSA at the time – you then would use link analysis on that phone number, and that unwraps an entire network. So it wasn't just the – the information was critical to that, but all sorts of other intelligence assets get involved.

GEN. HAYDEN: You can't – you cannot separate any single source, any single discipline – (inaudible) – any single thread. You say, that's it; that's the golden strand. OK. Maybe if you gave us enough time up here, we'd think of one, but that's not how it normally happens, all right? It's very complex, and in fact, a bit reflected in the movie with the kind of detective work that goes on once you leave the emphasis on the black sites and you – and you go into the analytical stream of a plot.

MR. THIESSEN: You once called the bluff of the deniers and suggested that if the program produced no useful information, why don't we just destroy all the interrogation reports? And you know, we've got the Senate Intelligence Committee now that has a report that basically – we have – no one's actually seen it, so we can't know exactly what it says, but they claim that it says that no useful information came from enhanced interrogation. Why don't they just pass a law saying that all the – all the rewards and intelligence produced by the program should be destroyed and never used?

GEN. HAYDEN: Yeah, I was feeling a little prickly when I wrote that like that. (Laughter.) You know, look, if you just think it's all invalid, if you think it's all illegitimate, you know, in our legal system, you know, the fruit of the forbidden tree never shows up in the court system. I mean, if you opposed it so strongly on ethical grounds or if you opposed it so strongly on practical grounds – just never works – fine. Let us know. We'll clean out the files. And you know, obviously it's an overwrought challenge on my part, but do you see the – do you see the point that I'm trying to draw here, that this stuff was important?

By the way – and I'll maybe queue Jose up to put flesh on these bones – let me tell you what you throw away. You throw away the 9/11 Report if you throw away this data.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: I think that it's ridiculous assertion what – when a report says that the enhanced interrogation program had no value or produced nothing. Frankly, it's disturbing, because, in my view, it is an attempt to rewrite history, and the narrative of this administration is that the enhanced interrogation program was torture and that nothing came out of it. But in fact, we were able to destroy al-Qaida because of it. So I don't know how they can spend three and a half years spending I don't know how many millions of dollars, never interviewed any of us and come up with a statement like that or a report like that. So I just don't understand that.

MR. RIZZO: Well, it's just – I mean, my take, it just doesn't – it doesn't make any sense. It doesn't compute. Nothing? Nothing? Well, all of those thousands and thousands of reports produced zilch? It's just – I mean, it beggars the imagination. I mean, we can all argue and disagree about what role it played. I mean, this administration, in the person of Director Panetta at the time, have – shortly after the bin Laden raid, and subsequently reaffirmed by the current acting director, Mike Morrell, unfortunately got (pillared ?) for it by the – by the committee – you know, the program did play a role. As Mike said, this is a – this is a complex picture with many different strands intertwined. So we can argue about how big a role it played, but it just – it just – as I say, it just defies logic for someone to take a position, an absolute (categorical ?) position that none of it – none of the reports, none of the seven years, none of the detainee reporting made any difference at all. I mean, I just don't buy that.

MR. THIESSEN: Mike, one of – Mike once said, he had a great op-ed in The Wall Street Journal comparing the people who – the deniers of the CIA interrogation program to birthers and

9/11 truthers. (Chuckles.) But it seems – there seems to be sort of an obsession among some of the critics to deny the efficacy of the program. And you look at some movie like “Zero Dark Thirty” with Kathryn Bigelow, she – I mean, she wrote an op-ed the other day saying that she opposes the program but she acknowledges its effectiveness, which is, I think, a valid position to take, to say this program worked, it played a role but we shouldn’t have done it. And you know, that’s a valid position to take. But why are people so obsessed with trying to disprove the obvious, that we got information?

GEN. HAYDEN: Well, let me be maybe a little edgy in my response and point to no human being, all right? And I mean this. I’m pointing to the broad American public, all right, and I’m talking about the national psyche, not anybody, in/out of office, with the agency, outside the agency, just you, all right, as part of a collective, the American citizenry.

Let me tell you a sentence I never heard as director of NSA or director of CIA. Hey, Hayden, I know this is bad, but whatever you do, don’t overreact. Never heard that. In fact, I can document a whole bunch of conversations that were way on the other side, all right? I actually think it’s – it might be, as part of the national conscious – consciousness, all right, a moral struggle for some in our citizenry or maybe a certain chunk of our national political culture, that they’re now trying to deal with – not that we did it, but that they didn’t mind it or they didn’t mind it at the time or they didn’t mind it at the time strong enough to say, now, let’s not overreact here. Let’s be really careful.

Let me – let me give you the intelligence officer’s lament. And you know, I’m going to tell you this is whining, right, even before I do it, all right? We are often put in a situation where we are bitterly accused of not doing enough to defend America when people feel endangered. And then as soon as we’ve made people feel safe again, we’re accused of doing too much. I realized that’s my fault, that’s my whining, that everyone may not share that view but every now and again in a sober, somber, self-pitying moment, I allow myself that thought. (Laughter.)

MR. RODRIGUEZ: And I want to share in your whining because I totally agree. And I think, look, I agree. I think that whether we do this type of programs ever again, you know, it’s up to the president, it’s up to the American people and they can choose. But what I take exception to is trying to then say that it did not work. I think we need to be honest with ourselves and do an honest assessment of the value that this program brought. Because you know what? We may have to do something like it someday, maybe, you know? It’s a dangerous world out there.

MR. THIESSEN: One of the – let me ask you a question. I mean, are we less safe today because this program has been curtailed, and particularly because one of the things that Mike and – together with John – you did in 2006 is you scaled back the program significantly. And I know Mike said that it was – he was – you know, this was always based on legality and efficacy, but you wanted to add the element of political sustainability. And I think together you helped develop a program that was handed off to – any administration coming in could have continued and yet it’s been eliminated. Why and what’s the effect of it?

GEN. HAYDEN: Yeah, and again, Jose and John have already mentioned this. Honest men can differ about this, OK? And I actually respect honest men who differ about this, all right? And that’s – you know, the individual can form the sentence. I don’t want you doing this and it

didn't work anyway, I have issues with. I don't want you doing this even though it may have helped. You and I are coming from the same political culture. You and I now have a meaningful discussion about what it is – how much risk do we want to embrace as a people.

When I became director in 2006, number one, I concluded that we are not the nation's jailers. As John already suggested, we are the nation's intelligence service. And so there's just can't be, you know, an endless detention program where we keep people. And so I spent the summer of 2006 talking to people in the White House saying, we need to move these people out of CIA custody – not because their intelligence value had become zero – that never is the case – but because the intelligence value of most of them had aged off to a point that other factors were becoming more dominant in the equation. As you know, over Labor Day weekend in 2006, we moved 14 detainees to Guantanamo.

I also attempted to begin a dialogue with the Congress because I recognize that if this were valuable – and Marc's already suggested I've kind of done my homework and said we need some kind of program to go forward, all right? We needed this option. I was not prepared in (conscious ?) to tell the president, don't worry about this. You're never going to need this in the future, that we needed to preserve something. I also knew that the preservation would depend on a whole bunch of factors. Number one was need, all right? How much more did we know about al-Qaida now? How many more human and other intelligence penetrations of al-Qaida did we now have compared to where we were almost in extremists in 2002?

Additional factor: that U.S. law had changed, all right? The Detainee Treatment Act, the Military Commissions Act, so things that were judged to be lawful in one circumstance may not be judged lawful in another.

And then finally, I believed this had to be America's program. This couldn't be CIA's program. This couldn't be the Bush administration's program, that there is no success if you're running an on-off switch every two years based upon the results of congressional elections. And so with all those factors, I was quite willing to revamp the program, actually make it more narrow, actually take more than half the techniques off the table in order to preserve the program that was politically sustainable. And that's pretty much what we thought we did, and that's the honest dialogue we have with the incoming Obama administration. And I actually began my longest conversation with them at the agency with something along the lines of, you know, I think we may have already done what it is you guys are fixing to make us do, that we had scaled the program to be appropriate in the new circumstances. That argument did not hold, obviously. The program was started.

Let me offer you an additional thought. All American detainees now, under any agent of the American government – and agent's a big word, all right – have to be treated in accordance with the Army Field Manual. And the Army Field Manual, created in September 2000, approved in September 2006, is frankly, I think fair to say, a cautious manual when it comes to interrogation. I would suggest to you that that cautious manual was written with the knowledge that there was option B, that this program was also available. Now all we're left with is option A, none of which should concern you, because before you get to interrogation, you have to capture, and we don't capture. We have made it so legally difficult and so politically dangerous to capture that it seems, from the outside looking in, that the default option is to take the terrorists off the battlefield in another sort of way.

MR. THIESSEN: John, could you talk a little bit about what Obama inherited, I mean how scaled back? I mean, I – you know, we had moderate sleep deprivation, you know, tummy slap, diet of liquid Ensure. I'm sure the makers of liquid Ensure would love to know that their product is considered torture. (Laughter.)

MR. RIZZO: Yeah, I mean, it was – as Mike indicated, under Mike's leadership – and we assessed the political realities, we assessed the legal decisions, the new statutes, the court decisions. And Mike tasked the counterterrorism – (inaudible) – basically say, what techniques do you have to have to ensure the continued efficacy of the program?

And they came back with a very realistic set of scaled-down techniques. Obviously waterboard was off the table. Sleep deprivation remained, albeit in a more limited form, plus a – you know, a – what we called the basic techniques. You know, the box was gone. It was a definitely far less aggressive program, but in the eyes of the expert and the analyst, it remained viable and effective. And as Mike indicated, he and I both took part in the briefings of the incoming Obama administration transition team. We thought we had a program that was viable, was limited, was politically and legally realistic – one, by the way, which we had – the entire intelligence committees of the Congress had been now briefed into.

Just to digress for a second, looking back, I think the major mistake we made – and I include myself in this – was in the early years of the program, the existence of the EIT program, what it was. What it wasn't was limited to the so-called Gang of Eight, a very small, you know, basically congressional leadership. I think that was a mistake. But by 2006, both intelligence committees of the Congress had been briefed into the program.

So, you know, we thought it was – we thought it was possible and we thought that the Obama administration people, should they have chosen to do it, could have continued a program in this limited form – at least maintained it as an option. It obviously did not come to pass, and I think Mike will back me up. At the first transition briefing, you know, they – the folks – the folks told us that no, no, describe the program, but I don't think any of us really realistically thought they were going to stick with it.

GEN. HAYDEN: On the day the president issued the executive order, which we had – we had not reviewed. I think John had gotten a pirated copy about 12 hours before. Do you remember the two – (inaudible) – Guantanamo, which was kind of out of our lane, which, by the way, is a factual flaw in the film in that it kludges the black sites with Abu Ghraib, with Guantanamo, and that's why Jose is saying these are not factually correct.

In any event, we got a hold of the executive order again, all agencies of the United States government will be confined to the techniques in the Army Field Manual. And I called Greg Craig, who had led the transition team, who had led the team to come out to talk to us. And I mean, Greg and I have stayed friends. We've talked about this after we were both out of government. And I said, Greg, not that you asked, but this is CIA kind of nonconcurring on the executive order. And I said, let me offer you a thought. Down here, where it says all agents of the United States government will be confined to the techniques in the Army Field Manual – I said, if you would just kind of put the phrase, unless otherwise authorized by the president, you might be able to buy back an awful lot of flexibility, and what we needed most of all, which was ambiguity, in terms of someone coming into American custody, not being quite sure what would

happen. And then that obviously didn't happen, but that was the last thought we had on the process.

MR. THIESSEN: I had mentioned – said once that if there's a classified annex to the executive order, even if it was a blank page, would have made – would have had an effect. And I know that one of the last detainees that came into the program, and maybe one of you can speak to this, he – and I can't remember the name of the individual, but it was one of the last, it might be Abdul Hadi al Iraqi – when he came into custody he – they said – he was told, we're the CIA. And he said, I'll tell you anything you want to know. (Laughter.)

GEN. HAYDEN: Well, it wasn't quite that way, but you know, our cartoonish version of it is, let me tell you who we are. And he said, like, oh, I've heard about you guys. (Laughs.) And he actually –

MR. : I'll tell you want you want –

MR. : Yeah, he was cooperative.

MR. THIESSEN: So just the existence of the program – (inaudible) –

GEN. HAYDEN: Yeah. And again, back to – back to the ambiguity – by the way, one thing that does come across in the movie – but you have to be careful, I mean, you have to watch it very, very carefully – and again I'm cuing up the guy here who already knows this – the most powerful tool we had in every interrogation we conducted was our knowledge not one or another technique.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. I think that, you know, once you got through the enhanced interrogation process, then the real interrogation began, debriefing. And that's where the skill and the knowledge of the people who were conducting the debriefing sessions, which we used to call them at the time, started. And the knowledge base was so good that these people knew what – you know, that we actually were not going to be fooled. And it was an essential tool to validate that the people were being truthful.

And because we had other presenters in our black sites, we would be able to check information against others. And they knew that. For example, you mentioned the take down of Hambali. Majid Khan did not know how much Khalid Sheikh Mohammed had told us about the \$50,000. So we would go and give him what we had heard from Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and he thought we had, you know, given him all our information. So he provided the name Zubar (sp) and on from there.

So you know it's, I thought, very well done. And the credit goes to the agency analysts and others who participated in the debriefing of these hardened terrorists and wrote thousands and thousands of intelligence disseminations, which we would read every morning and were amazed at the information that were being – was being disseminated at the time. So it was an incredible effort.

MR. THIESSEN: This program gave us an enormous amount of information about al-Qaida central in Pakistan, which is really – I mean, the – this administration continues to use that intelligence every day in drone strikes and all the rest, because it's not just specific actionable intelligence but just knowledge of how the network operates, how it moves money, how it moves operatives and all the rest.

Since the program has shut down, we've seen the emergence of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula in a bomber who got on a plane on Christmas day, 2009. And the administration admitted that we didn't know that al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula had developed the intent or capability of striking the homeland, that they were focused on regional attacks.

We've had the emergence of al-Shabab and merging with al-Qaida central and a new terror network there. We have the emergence of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, who are – and al-Qaida in North Africa that's killed an American ambassador and recently killed – we had an al-Qaida terrorist who killed American hostages.

I mean, are we in – are we struggling in way – the comparison between the information we have on Pakistan and the lack of information – is it much harder to get the intelligence we need now on those other networks because we don't have this tool?

GEN. HAYDEN: I'm – look, one of the more important – one of the most important threads of information that I saw when I got there – and still in 2006, so this is pretty late in the game, this is, you know, four and half years after 9/11 – is detainee information.

Now, I've already suggested to you that I'm willing to adjust the detainee program because we're no longer as single threaded as we were back in early 2002. There – you know, we have other penetrations, we have other sources, we have more knowledge, we've got a better sense of the imminence of attack, what – you know, what state of danger we're in as a nation. And so I'm quite willing to throttle back.

To be fair to the current administration, all right, we have – I told you we emptied the black sites in September of 2006 – did not close them, which kind of lazy journalists sometimes say closed, we did not. We quite explicitly kept the option open for the president. The public record is quite clear, between that date and my time leaving the agency we captured two people, which, you know, ain't setting indoor records compared to what we have done. It had become operationally far more difficult to do this. So I understand that, all right, I do.

But again, I go back to my earlier statement: We have made it so legally challenging and politically dangerous – I mean, it's like the third rail out there. Now, you tell a bureaucracy, yeah, that's an option, but it's electrified – (laughter) – OK? I know how bureaucracies respond. That option does not float to the top when you begin to – when you begin to explore things. Which, again, is a little bit different than the White House saying all options are on the table, that would be probably correct.

But again, in the real world – remember, I said real life doesn't have right angles – in the real world, what I just described for you makes a real difference. I mean, let me – let me spin this

for you one more time, reasoning by analogy. So let's make it Christmas night 2009, all right? Let's make it the conference call with Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the guy who tried to explode his underpants, all right? And you know, it's Christmas night, so who's in town, I mean, you know, it's – so you've got everyone on the conference call.

And the attorney general says: We're going to – we're going to – we've had a team talk to him for about 45 minutes now. We're going to send a clean team in there now and we're going to Mirandize him, all right? Put that aside – whether that's a good idea or a bad idea, I have my views. I wrote an op-ed on it, all right? Can you imagine the guy at the CIA point of contact on that conference call going – ahem, ahem – excuse me, Mr. Attorney General, I've got another option for you to consider.

Right, I cannot imagine that happening because of the broader political, cultural context we have – we, plural – we have created. Again, so legally difficult, so politically dangerous that we just seem to be in this – in this trough and, absent catastrophe or incredible heroism, I don't think we change.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Do you remember, General Hayden, at one point Khalid Sheikh Mohammed told us, you know, eventually your own government will come after you. And at the time – you know, this was 2003 – and, you know, we had tremendous support from the Congress still and from the American people to make sure that we weren't attacked again. But we heard it, but we kind of laughed. Well, the problem is that a few years later many of us, you know, were being investigated, the agency was being investigated.

And the concern that I have, frankly, to this day, is the chilling effect that it has on the leadership at the agency and elsewhere in the intelligence community who – tomorrow if there was a big crisis and they said, oh, we're going to start X, and there is controversy in it and risk in it that people are going to say, look what happened in the past. I mean, despite the best efforts of John Rizzo and our directors and my best efforts, we still have to face a lot of investigations and a lot of bills and indictments and stuff. I mean, I fear for the safety of our national security because of that. Maybe I'm overdoing it, but I have a great concern about it.

MR. RIZZO: Yeah, well, looking – I mean, looking down the road – I mean, let me – indulge me while I quote another lawyer from literature, Tom Hagen, who advised Michael Corleone – this analogy may be a little inexact, but – (laughter) – you know, you can't kill everybody. You can't kill everybody. Detention must be, in my view, an option – an option that's left on the table.

And as Mike indicated well that, theoretically, I suppose is an option today. The reality is, as best anyone on the outside can judge, there's been a grand total of one detainee captured by the – since the program ended. And that just – I mean, we just can't kill this threat by killing this threat. So I'd just leave it at that.

MR. THIESSEN: We've got about 20 minutes left, and so I wanted to turn – open it up to questions from the audience. We have microphones? Up here in the front.

Q: Hi. My name is Andy Rowe (sp). I'm an open source intelligence researcher in the D.C. metro area. I wanted to speak to what you wrote, Mr. Thiessen. Some of the things I've gathered in other events is, in the movie, they have a portion where they take the gentlemen and give him a very nice plate of food. And the guy's a little apprehensive, you know, like, does he talk, does he not talk. And the issue is, well, we can just put you back in there, you don't have to eat this now. And he's like, no, no, no, no. What do you want to know? I would rather eat this than be left without it.

The movie is criticized for its enhanced interrogation techniques, but when somebody decides to cooperate, one of the things that isn't always acknowledged is once you get someone to cooperate, sometimes just giving them the option to have something better than what they've had – sleep deprivation and everything else – that that can actually get somebody to talk because you're giving them something that they wouldn't ordinarily have, which is a better plate of food.

I was just wondering, like, to – maybe, what would it be, Director Rodriguez, in your experience, to what extent – when you're not dealing with somebody like Abu Zubaydah and/or Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, you have some of the mid-level guys who maybe aren't nearly as radicalized, how much experience did you have where taking somebody off the liquid food diet really helped turn the table to give them something – you know, the carrot technique versus the stick?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Well, the whole program we designed around providing rewards for good behavior. So they got a lot more than just good food, they got the best medical care, they got books, they watched movies, you know, pretty good. And they appreciated it. So it was – it was part of the program.

MR. : We did have a complaint about the DVD collection at Guantanamo once we – (laughter) – it's a true story – once we moved the detainees, yeah. (Laughter.)

MR. THIESSEN: Go ahead.

Q: Hi. My name is – (inaudible). A question for Mr. Rodriguez and a general question: How did you get the true identity of bin Laden's courier at the end? And the general question being, would you have been able to track down bin Laden without using enhanced interrogation?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: As I said – I said, we first got the nom de guerre for bin Laden's courier from a facilitator who went through the enhanced interrogation program. It was not till some years later that we were able to get the true name of al-Kuwaiti. And that was obtained through human collection capabilities.

That was – that was the important intelligence operation that provided real information on the person who was the courier. The facilitator provided good information – I would say the lead information that allowed us narrow it down. But it was intelligence collection, traditional intel work that led to the identification of al-Kuwaiti.

Q: And the other question? Would you have been able to get him without enhanced interrogation?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Well, as I said before, it provided the lead information on bin Laden, but the enhanced interrogation program, I say again, was much more than just getting bin Laden. And it was protecting the country and saving American lives and this program allowed us to do it for 10 years.

MR. THIESSEN: Let's take a question all the way in the back over there.

Q: Hi. My name is Oliver Grimm. I'm a correspondent for the Austrian newspaper, Die Presse, in D.C. I have a couple of factual questions about the film. First of all, the main character, Maya – was that a fictional composition of different people who were doggedly looking after bin Laden or was there – I understand this all very classified as so forth – but was there one person who was actually really that sort of template for this fictional character in the film?

And then two short ones – did you actually really pay – did you actually really give Italian sports cars to middle men in order to obtain information? And if so, which cars were they? (Laughter.) And finally, a slightly more tragic incident that this is well shown, a horrific incident, the deadly attack on the outpost in Khost, I think. Did that really happen, because the local head of that station was so eager to finally talk to that person that she totally threw overboard any sort of security measure or it was it more complex than that?

GEN. HAYDEN: Yeah. First of all about Maya, I think all of us can claim we know a Maya. And – but clearly the character in the movie is a composite. My wife will kill me for this, but we were talking to her sister the other day and she said something about the movie being politically correct by making the woman the hero. And my wife responded, uh-uh. (Laughs.) This – and I think Jose will back me up – this is an incredible band of sisters that really spearheaded the UBL (sp) cell.

So this is not, you know, just – you know it's a better story if you, you know, have an attractive woman as the lead character. Most of the people who briefed me on Osama bin Laden were women officers of the CIA. But Maya is a composite and, in fact, is one of my complaints about being artistically correct but factually incorrect, that there's so much emphasis on Maya.

The part of the movie that I think disturbed all of us the most was the portrayal of Jennifer Matthews, the base chief at Khost. Jennifer was a wonderful officer. She was part of this band of sisters. She was in this hunt before hunting bin Laden was cool. She goes back pre-9/11. And I understand, artistically they wanted to create some sort of juxtaposition between her and Maya, but it – but it is very unfortunate and very unfair that she was portrayed that way.

Let me offer you an additional thought. At the level of ethics and focus and attitude and culture, you don't get Abbottabad without Khost. OK? It's not – it's not cause and effect, we learned this, that led to that. But the kind of agency that was willing to lean forward, willing to take this risk, willing to bring this potential source in, is the kind of agency that leaned forward

and finally lead you to Abbottabad. It comes out of the same kind of cultural, ethical, sense of duty reservoir.

MR. RIZZO: Yeah, I knew Jennifer Matthews quite well, as did Jose and Mike. And yeah, that was – in many ways, that was the most, in terms of trying to separate myself from the movie, the way she was portrayed – and it was clearly her that was being portrayed – you know, just was manifestly divorced from any sort of reality. Jennifer was in the counterterrorism center before 9/11. She and a lot of her colleagues were haunted by 9/11 – haunted by guilt, haunted by the thought that maybe they should have or could have done something else or found out something else or something.

It was a terrible burden on, certainly all of them, but Jennifer, I know, it affected her directly because she came to talk to me about it afterwards. One of the – one of the reasons she came to talk to me about it was that the CIA Inspector General launched an investigation after 9/11 to assess accountability for 9/11 in the agency by name, by people. And think about that for a minute – people were going to be singled out for being – for whose performance led to the 9/11 attacks. There was a long list of people originally. That list was eventually whittled down. Jennifer was on that list. And that – and that haunted her and upset her most of all.

So she was, in many ways, I think, a far more complex and interesting character in real life, certainly than what was portrayed in the movie, and in many ways more than the composite figure of Maya. One last thing I'll say about Jennifer is that she was far more attractive than the woman who played her in the movie – (laughter) – which may be a first in the history of modern docudramas. So I'll leave it there.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: And she was a lot more fun, too. I mean, she was exceptional. I don't even remember approving the purchase of an Italian sports car to give to anybody, so – (laughter).

MR. THIESSEN: In the back right there, under the clock.

Q: First let me just say, thank you. It's been a really interesting talk. My name is Adam Lewis. I'm with Human Rights Watch. But I had two quick questions. One was I was wondering what your position is on whether or not the SSCI report on the interrogation program should be declassified and why or why not?

And the second question I had was, if we can see the fact that there was actionable intelligence gained for the interrogation program, or it had practical value, I'm wondering what – whether you do see any risks to the program from a moral or ethical perspective on a personal level. And if you could speak to that, why we should not have this program all the time or why you chose to – (inaudible) – on what those risks are, even if there is practical gain to be had.

GEN. HAYDEN: Let – thanks, yeah, that's – good question. And this is going to sound like pandering, and I don't mean it to be – I mean, a complex political culture like ours needs people arguing all sides of issues. So we actually understand that.

Yeah, there are risks, all right? I'll try to be very efficient here. I went to the German embassy in the spring of 2007 to talk Ambassador Scharioth – the Germans were in the chair of the EU, so Ambassador Scharioth had all the ambassadors to the U.S. from the EU in for lunch, and he would bring an American in for entertainment. So I was – I was the luncheon speaker – been director about a year. So I said, OK, good lunch, good speech. Let's talk about renditions, detentions, interrogations.

And I laid it out, and I said, let me give you four sentences, all right? Number one, we believe we're a nation at war. We're at war with al-Qaida and its affiliates, this war is global in scope, and my moral and legal responsibility is to take that fight to this enemy wherever they may be – four sentences – war, al-Qaida, global, take the fight. There is not another country in the room who agreed with any of those four sentences. They not only rejected it for them, they had serious questions about the legitimacy of those four sentences for us, right?

Sometimes you have to forgo things that in your mind are ethical, legal and effective because secondary and tertiary effects of taking that course of action may, over the longer term, make you less effective, less able to reach your goal. Let's take targeted killing, all right? I said on "CNN Sunday Morning" that, you know, there was a time when targeted killing – yeah, I knew there were secondary and tertiary effects, but that primary effect was so important because of the degree of danger that existed at the time.

Now, if the external environment has changed – if the degree of danger is somewhat different, now those secondary and tertiary effects may become dominant. And so yes, I can see a downside for doing things that you believe are effective and legal and appropriate if it denies you the cooperation of others who see it in a different way. And I think we're all aware of that. We knew that. Hence, in 2006, it's kind of – (huddle up ?) – the world has changed, what's appropriate going forward, with no judgment whatsoever on what went on before. Different circumstances, different people.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Not having read the SSCI report, I would say that before it's released, it needs to be fixed if, in fact, it concludes that the enhanced interrogation program had no value – they need to take a second look and maybe spend more time and maybe even talk to those of us who were involved in this program way back then.

In terms of the ethical question, you know, in writing hard measures – I spent a lot of time talking to people who worked with me. So my deputies were very senior analysts, very logical and – these are folks who will analyze every aspect of everything. And I asked them this question, and he actually gave me a long explanation – 15-minute explanation as to why he thought it was ethical and why he agreed to participate in the first place. I mean, he provided arguments that I had never even considered, and to a certain extent, I was amazed, because different people have different ways of coming to the conclusion, whether it's ethical or not, to do this.

In his case, obviously, he thought about this for a long time. He even researched a lot of things. In my case – and maybe it's because I'm an operations officer – it was much quicker – pretty quickly. I was told it was legal. I had no issues with the procedures; I knew that many of

these procedures were applied to our own servicemen – tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers had gone through this. So – and then when I looked at the purpose here – to protect America and to save American lives, and when I saw the threats that we were facing, which were of great concern, it was not that hard for me to make that decision.

MR. THIESSEN: Well, I think we're – we've come sort of to the end of our time here, but just to conclude, say we were facing threats and the three men on our panel today are a large part of the reason why we didn't experience another September 11th, 2001. So I thank you not only for being here today, but for your service to our country. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

(END)