

**CENTER FOR  
STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CSIS)**

**THE MILITARY STRATEGY FORUM:  
A CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS**

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MAREN LEED: Good morning. Welcome everyone. Thanks for being here at our first Military Strategy Forum event of 2010. Let me start by thanking our very generous sponsors Rolls-Royce and I would be remiss if I neglected to give you the very sought-after gift.

GEN. DAVID PETRAEUS: Is this is a CSIS coin?

MS. LEED: No, it's a Rolls-Royce. (Laughter.)

GEN. PETRAEUS: Oh, right.

MS. LEED: Well, at least a key chain, acceptable under the gift rules.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Isn't there a television ad like this or something?

MS. LEED: There's a light on it.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Oh a light?

MS. LEED: Yeah, it's a flashlight too.

GEN. PETRAEUS: You mean all this and a light too? (Laughter.)

MS. LEED: Exactly.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Let me – where's Bill Taylor? I'll try it out on him.

MS. LEED: That's how we'll pick out questioners when we get to the Q&A.

We are continuing our series of combatant commanders, Gen. Petraeus this morning. And we're going to talk about a quiet little corner of the world known as Central Command. But before I start I just want to make a few admin notes. First, please turn off your cell phones and Blackberrys.

Second, when we do get to Q&A, if you could wait for the microphone we've got a number of folks around with microphones. State your name and your affiliation and please be succinct and I will attempt to be mean and blame it on hormones if people get too verbose. And, finally Gen. Petraeus needs to take off at about 11:50 this morning to get to another event. So if everybody could stay seated as we wrap this up and allow him to get out quickly it would be much appreciated.

So with that, let me introduce our very well-known guest, Gen. David Petraeus, the commander of U.S. Central Command. And he may well be the best-known military officer on

active duty today for many, many good reasons, Iraq, a recurring theme in your career. He was commander of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne in the first year of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

He later became the commander of Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq and NATO Transition Mission-Iraq and then culminated his time there as the commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq. He has also served in Bosnia, Haiti and Central America I believe.

He's a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, has had just about every command and staff position at some point both within the Army and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in international organizations, in interagency organizations. So he's pretty much done it all and many of you may have heard he got some degrees from Princeton along the way and also picked up a few rewards – or sorry, awards and other recognitions that just are a clear demonstration of how he's always been a very high performer. His commitment and integrity are reflected in all of that and we are very honored to have him here as our guest. Thank you.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Thank you. Well, it's good to be with you and you know you have a couple of choices when you're in this position and of course we've got a whole staff of PowerPoint rangers out there that are always eager to provide the latest update. Actually so Tony Cordesman can take them then by the way and repackage them and send them out, which we are happy to have happen. (Laughter.)

No, truly, I mean actually I think Tony will be the first to admit that there has been no more cooperative provider of slides, metrics data and everything else to him since I don't know when we started that, probably when I was a MNSTC-I commander and it's quite a good partnership.

And in return, in truth, Tony has been a very good conscience for us at various times and one reason we do these kinds of events is because it does – it challenges us. It sharpens our thinking. It forces me to come to grips with issues and so forth. And so I really am pleased to be back with CSIS because we have done these before but each time I've done it before, again, we always sort of started out with a monologue of about 40 to 60 minutes of PowerPoint slides. And they're very informative I'm sure but I thought that we'd do and what we've done in a couple of cases recently we do these so-called conversations.

Now, having said that, of course it is every Army four-star's inalienable right to have PowerPoint slides. There's a little asterisk on the First Amendment and if you read the fine print it says general officers are allowed PowerPoint in addition to freedom of speech.

And so I do have PowerPoint slides loaded up and I guess they're going to be shown on either of these screens right here. There are some terrific folks that are sweating bullets out there trying to figure out which slide I might ask for and we'll use them if necessary to illustrate some of the answers, to give some of the metrics in fact that Tony has helped us sharpen our thinking on candidly as we've gone about the endeavors that we've been engaged in over the past couple of years.

I probably ought to say up front, Maren, just a reminder of what Central Command consists of now because it did change on 1 October 2008 when U.S. African Command was formally established and stood up. We have 20 countries now: Egypt in the West to Pakistan, including Pakistan in the East, Kazakhstan in the North and the waters off Somalia. We had to keep the pirate-infested waters as well.

And obviously a country or a region of real contrasts: the richest of the rich, some of the poorest of the poor, innumerable religions, ethnic groups, tribal elements and so forth in an area needless to say rich in energy resources, often poor in water and a whole gamut of levels of development of government, social structures, political development, economic development, and so on, no shortage of challenges.

Occasionally I am asked what does a Central Command commander do. And then in some cases I will respond that a little like the guy in the circus that gets a plate spinning on a stick and then tries to get it going enough so he can go get another stick and another plate and get that one spinning.

And the truth is we've got a fair amount of plates spinning out there and we're trying to keep them all spinning. And even as we occasionally add a new plate or sometimes occasionally actually are allowed to slow down the revolutions on another but Yemen of course coming up while we obviously seek to sustain the gains in Iraq.

But, with that why don't I let you have the first question, Maren, and then we'll launch the conversation.

MS. LEED: Okay, sounds great, I wanted to ask you about Iraq and actually more about Afghanistan than Iraq. You frequently talked when you were in Iraq about the Washington clock and the Baghdad clock. And so my question is whether there is enough time on the Washington clock to make meaningful gains in Afghanistan and what we might see in the next year that will allow for the Washington clock.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yeah, well you're right. When we launched the surge, those questions loomed very large for Ambassador Ryan Crocker and myself. We used to talk about the Washington clock and the Baghdad clock and of course the Washington clock was racing forward. We weren't sure when it might expire.

Indeed there were some Washington clocks within Washington clocks and of course the idea of facing the September 2007 testimonies loomed very large in particular. And then there was the Baghdad clock: And that clock on some days seemed to go backwards and on other days you had to hit it to see if it was still working or not but it gradually started moving and of course there was really substantial progress there.

Obviously in the 3 years since the surge was launched, levels of violence down by well over 90 percent now, violent civilian deaths down by well over 90 percent, high-profile attacks down by over 90 percent and all the rest. Having said that, innumerable challenges and yet the latest one of course is this political issue that is quite substantial that has sprung up where an

organization that really was supposed to have replaced the former Deba'athification Committee, supposed to have been replaced by the Accountability and Justice Committee by law, it never had its members replaced, some of the old members still manipulating things, and came up with a list of over 500 individuals with links to the – alleged links to the former Ba'ath party and therefore said they ought to be disqualified as candidates for the election.

This is of enormous concern to the Iraqi political leaders. They are quite feverishly behind the scenes working out how to deal with this and how to come to grips with an issue that could really undermine a key element in the progress over the last 3 years which of course has been the reconciliation effort.

By the way, it's been reconciliation not just with Sunni Arabs, which is seen as the most prominent of course but also there's been reconciliation with a whole variety of Shia elements as well. The release of Qais Khazali recently, for those who know about Asaib al-Haq and all the rest of this, at the request of the Iraqi government was indeed to further the process of reconciliation with that particular subset of former Shia militia elements.

This could have a very, very difficult effect on the Sunnis in particular although there are some Shia on the list as well and could really reverse some of the progress. There is keen awareness of that by Iraqi political leaders and as I mentioned they are indeed working very hard behind the scenes to figure out what could be an equitable and just resolution to that particular issue.

Back to Afghanistan and the Washington clock and the Afghan clock, in this case, I think that it is possible to demonstrate progress and that's what you're going to do in Afghanistan. You're not going to turn Afghanistan. I note, you know, Iraq was so horrific that I think there really very, very few who thought there could be dramatic improvements, but if you knew what was possible there and if you knew that if you could change certain aspects of what was doing (sic), remember that Iraq was not just a surge of 30,000 forces.

It was really a surge of ideas emphasizing, above all, security of the population, promoting reconciliation, living with the people to secure them, sharing their risks, 77 additional locations in Baghdad alone for the occupation by our forces and Iraqi forces together, being first with the truth, living our values, all the rest of that. And that enabled the, sort of, the reclamation of some of these forces that if they could get back on the straight and narrow, could really help and that was indeed, among a number of different factors that led to the progress that took place there.

I have personally always seen Afghanistan as different in that regard and I have stated on the record a number of occasions that in September 2005, on getting ready to come home from Iraq, Secretary Rumsfeld put his arm around me, saying, hey, really good job. You've done great stuff out here and there's 15-and-a-half month tours standing up the train-and-equip mission. I'm really glad to hear you're going to come home through Afghanistan. (Chuckles.)

I said, looked at him, said well, thanks for that Mr. Secretary, but we'll be happy to do that. We put together a team, went over there and looked at their train-and-equip mission and

came back and you know, of course, developed some PowerPoint slides, one of which had on the top of it, the title was Iraq and the do-not-equal sign Afghanistan.

And indeed, then also offered that, by the way, not only were a bunch of observations about the train-and-equip effort but that overall, I thought that Afghanistan was going to be the longest campaign in the long war. And that I think – and that was, by the way, when the level of violence was considerably lower than it has been over the course of the last 2 years, during which, each of those of years and indeed, the third year prior to that, has gone up significantly.

So I think what the objective is in Afghanistan is one of demonstrating that progress can be achieved with the appropriate approach, enabled by the additional forces and the kinds of directives that Gen. McChrystal has issued in the counterinsurgency guidance of the issue and his technical directive, even the technical driving directive.

All of these essential, if again, you are truly going to be seen, not only just to secure the people, but to serve the people and not play into the insurgents' hands. Of course, a huge emphasis of his has been to reduce civilian casualties and indeed, that is the case.

And some of you may have seen in the press very recently, an assessment by, I think – I forget which of the groups, international groups that looks at civilian casualties and indeed announced that the vast majority of civilian casualties in Afghanistan last year was caused by the insurgents, by the Taliban and the other members of the extremist syndicate, not by ISAF. And in fact, ISAF's numbers have continued to go down even as the operations have expanded.

So we have to show progress. We have to show that it can be done over time and I think that's the key to maintaining time on the Washington clock. And by the way, on the Kabul clock and the Afghan clock as well because they also want to see, after some eight or some so years of this effort, that there is a prospect of improvement in their lives that merits them supporting our effort and really the effort of their forces.

You may have seen, by the way, I think it was yesterday it was announced, that the JCMB, one of the joint boards of international organizations, ISAF and Afghan leaders approved an end strength for the Afghan national security forces, that is, a good bit – a little over 100,000 more than it currently is by October of 2011.

Right now, it's a little under 200,000 end strength right now. And that's indeed, with the verification process going on for those police who are on the books. And then a little bit over 300,000 – 305 or so by October 2011 is the new approved end strength for that time and then we'll see where it goes after that. There's also an end strength for October 2010.

MS. LEED: Okay, well, let me get out to the rest of you all so we have a little – let me start over there and we'll work back this way.

Q: General, Jon Alterman. I run the Middle East Program here at CSIS. I want to ask you about Yemen, which you mentioned briefly.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yeah.

Q: As you know, Yemen has a host of problems which are only tangentially related to our concerns with al-Qaida. They have an active insurgency in the north, rebellion in the south. They've been pouring tremendous scarce resources into fighting both of those. I'm wondering what steps we've taken, what steps have we taken to ensure that the resources we put into Yemen stay focused on our issues in Yemen, not only given the fact that they're diverted in the north and south but also, they have a history of diverting the weapons that come in and shipping them right out to fight other insurgencies, including against us in Iraq? So especially as we're thinking about a light presence for ourselves on the ground, how do we make sure that the Yemenis we're supporting are doing what we're asking them to do?

GEN. PETRAEUS: We partner with the elements that are focused on the extremists of most concern to us and that is, of course, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, given that name this past year, franchised now, by al-Qaida senior leadership in the Federal Administered Tribal Areas in western Pakistan mountainous region, border with Afghanistan, as you know. Prior to that, they were al-Qaida in Yemen.

And there are certain units – there are three of them in particular that tend to focus on that particular challenge to Yemen and not surprisingly, those are the three that we have focused our efforts on. By the way, this is not something that is a total surprise to us at all. I've noted that Yemen was very much in my sights as much as 2 years ago, when as the commander in Iraq, we were looking very comprehensively with the entire interagency, a lot of effort with the State counterterrorist ambassador at that time, Dell Dailey as well.

Treasury, great hero, Stuart Levey, the undersecretary that does designations. And again, the entire interagency was working to try to cut down on the foreign fighters into Iraq. At that time, it was as high as 120 or so per month through Syria, principally. And we had to cut that down. So we went after what we could do in Iraq. Needless to say, with various special and conventional forces to go after the foreign fighter infrastructure, the emir foreign fighters, indeed, was killed in Iraq, I think in the fall of 2006.

And then we also worked hard with elements in the interagency and of course, the intelligence community as well to work with host governments, source countries from which military-aged males used to be able to fly in on a one-way ticket to Damascus, something that most countries outlawed around that time.

And over time, the combined effort, external and internal, reduced that flow to now, it's down under 10 or so per month and that's very significant because of course, a number of those used to blow themselves up inside Iraq, targeting innocent civilians. And you would recall Abu Ghadiya, the foremost facilitator, also was taken out of the mix about a year-and-a-half ago or a little less than that as well.

Now, part of the target countries, if you will, that we focused on as the source of foreign fighters, and one that emerged, loomed ever larger was Yemen. We all knew Qasim al-Rimi and

others escaped from jail back in 2006. About 20 other hardcore al-Qaida fighters and he escaped. We knew they were there. We knew cells were going in.

We knew it's a very rugged area. Of course, there was an operation in there some years back as well. And you had a lot of political dynamics and these other challenges, the Houthis in the North, the southern secessionists, economic, social, political issues that were all really occupying the attention of the government.

And when I took over Central Command commander, I announced right up front, in the early guidance, that one of the countries on which we were going to spend a great deal more time and effort was Yemen. Also, obviously, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Lebanon, interestingly, we had some interest there.

But Yemen was very, very prominent in that guidance and in fact, I made the first trip in there as a Central Command commander, I think it was in November or December of 2008. Candidly, we had some, what diplomats call frank and open discussions during that particular visit. But as you know now, because it was then released I think a month or so ago, I had a very, very good trip in July.

In the meantime, we had a Central Command country campaign plan, in April, that we did with – in coordination with the ambassador of State, other interagency groups, intelligence agencies. And then after the meeting in July, which was a literal and figurative embrace, we got on with building the kinds of efforts that are necessary to develop, above all, the intelligence baseline that then enables you, subsequently, to help the Yemenis and to conduct operations. And indeed, it was that effort that as the threat stream started to come in, in the late fall, enabled the operations on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December, the 24<sup>th</sup> of December and a host of others, right up until I think it was the last 24 hours, even, and he's had a very good operation as well.

In these operations, two training camps were targeted. Three suicide bombers were killed that were literally on their way into Sana'a. There was a solid gold intelligence on that and the fourth one was captured by the Yemenis with his suicide vest still on. A very senior AQAP leader was killed. Others were either wounded or very narrowly missed and that pressure has continued.

I think periodically, the Yemenis will announce this operation or that operation and that does continue. And again, to come back to your question, we are focused on supporting first and foremost, those who are dealing with that challenge. But I think to be fair, you also have to, then, help them with the greater challenges, not necessarily with stuff that they'll necessarily use, or the Houthis or the southern secessionists, but with development aid and so forth that can help them deal with the economic issues that are often reasons that individuals are willing to become extremists or inclined to become extremists in the first place.

A very tall order and it requires not just a whole of U.S. government approach, but a whole of governments approach because of course, the Saudis, the Emiratis, a number of the Omanis, a number of other governments in the region that I've talked to about Yemen have an enormous interest in helping President Saleh and the government there keep the country together

and then deal with some of these very difficult issues that have led to the situations that they find right now.

MS. LEED: I'll go right there. Bob.

Q: Good morning, General, I'm Bob Dreyfuss with The Nation magazine. I have two quick questions about Af-Pak. One is in reference to the Washington clock that Merin talked about. The president, as you know, has set a deadline of July 2011.

GEN. PETRAEUS: I think, wasn't it August 2011?

Q: August 2011.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Okay. Don't start sliding it to the left just yet. (Laughter.)

Q: I think he was thinking about May. (Laughter.) Just, you know, not just to demonstrate success, but actually, as I understand, to start a withdrawal.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Start a transition that is conditions-based of tasks from our forces to Afghan forces, again, in areas where those forces and the situation allow it. And the keywords are conditions-based. And you'll recall this whole discussion when I was in Iraq about conditions-based as well.

I might point out, by the way, that people have said, well, General, you never agreed to timelines before. I've never been a wild fan of timelines, but at times, I have indeed announced timelines myself. Again, conditions-based ones, but in September 2007, in the testimony before the four committees on Capitol Hill, I did announce, for example, that the first of the surge brigades was going to go home in December 2007 and then laid out the rough proposal for the remaining four to go home as well. But sorry, go ahead.

Q: Well, in any case, when I read the president's comment, is that perhaps the pace or the degree of the withdrawal might be conditions-based but in fact, a withdrawal would start on that date. So my question is, what kind of plans are you making? You know, as the contingency – since it isn't that far away in military terms, what kind of plans are you –

GEN. PETRAEUS: It's quite a ways away in military terms. I mean, don't get me wrong, but I mean our focus right now, candidly, is on getting all of these forces on the ground as absolutely quickly as possible. And by the way, pay no attention to these – pay no attention to these reports that have said that you know, there's some kind of difference of opinion here on how fast to deploy.

Everybody engaged in this from the president all the way down to the lowest ranking member of the deploying forces is making an effort to getting there as rapidly as is absolutely possible. The secretary committed to the president, I did as well in the Sit Room, that we would get, again, virtually all of the combat forces on the ground by the end of August.

There is one element, a division headquarters that's not needed prior to then that will come in after that. But otherwise, all of those 30,000 will be on the ground by the end of that time. And that is something we're all pushing. By the way, we're also, obviously, watching very carefully as the U.S military and DOD are providing resources in the government to Haiti.

And so far, there's been no impact whatsoever other than the slippage of one airframe that was used to bring in the air traffic control tower, a critical piece of equipment, I think it was an An-124 airframe that did a contract down there and that just caused the 24-hour slippage of one, again, airframe's worth of kit going to Afghanistan.

Twenty-fourth MEU, the Marine Expeditionary Unit that is announced has diverted down to Haiti was going to go through the European Command in route to Central Command anyway. It was actually not intended to go on the ground in Iraq or Afghanistan. It was to be the theater reserve. We also have a Marine Expeditionary Unit with several amphibs in the area.

We have occasionally put that on the ground, but relatively rarely. And indeed, that's what that force is intended to do and so far, it is still intended to do that. And if necessary, we can extend the existing force that's out there for whatever period of time is necessary until it arrives. But right now, there's no plan or necessity to do that.

MS. LEED: Sorry, let's just do Tony.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Okay, sure.

MS. LEED: And then we'll head back there.

Q: Tony Cordesman, CSIS. I'd like to go back to clocks in Afghanistan. One of the clocks we don't really talk about is our NATO and ISAF allies. And –

GEN. PETRAEUS: You may not talk about it. I can assure you – (laughter) – that some others of us do.

Q: Well, I'm sure you do. We don't see much of it in the press or the media on that effort and when you have as many national caveats as you have, when you have the military who are running various areas, often decoupled from the national PRT – the question really is, can we get the level of coordination, both military and civilian from our allies that's necessary to make the president's strategy work?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Let me sort of frame this a little bit first, if I could, Tony. And I mean, first of all, we really mean it when we say that we obviously don't want to go it alone in these kinds of endeavors. And you know, having said that, Winston Churchill, of course, an ally, had it exactly right when he said that the only thing worse than allies is not having allies. But look, this has always been this way.

Even when I was the chief of the force operations in Haiti, as an example, in the mid-1990s, not necessarily a combat operation – there were some operations to get some bad guys,

but by a small subset of the force. By and large, a peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance operation, there were still caveats even there.

In Bosnia, when I was the chief of operations for ISAF and some other hats, I had an actual matrix on my desk with the countries down the left side, the tasks across the top with as much definition as we could, and then a check in the box as to whether or not that country could perform that task in that particular area.

In Iraq, we had all kinds of caveats in Iraq as well and let's not forget, this was, yes, a U.S.-led multinational force, but the entire southern part of the country, from Baghdad on down, for quite some time, really was all in the hands of non-U.S. coalition members. And I think – so you have to then say, okay, this is reality.

What you're going to try to do, needless to say, is get as many contributions from as many partners as you can. You are then going to identify what the strengths are of the elements that you have, what the shortcomings are, what the caveats are. You're going to obviously look at the mission and the campaign plan and then you're going to figure out how you capitalize, you exploit those strengths, make the most of those and obviously compensate where necessary for the shortcomings, the weaknesses, the caveats.

And there's a point at which you actually have to just sort of stop whining as a commander and I think the military's long past that. But is stop that, again, identify the strengths and weaknesses and figure out how to best try to get the job done with the forces that you have. Not to say you don't ask for more if you need them and all the rest of that and you know, so forth.

But in this case, I think we're up to somewhere – the latest is somewhere between seven and 8,000 additional NATO and non-NATO ISAF coalition partner forces, non-U.S. I think that's going to continue to grow. There are some really important niche capabilities that are also now coming in because of the advent of the NATO training mission in Afghanistan and the way it's been blended in with the U.S.-led Coalition Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (sic), CSTC-A.

So you have trainers now that will increase the capacity of your throughput, your output, the Afghan national security forces training tasks. And you actually have the EU poll that finds that – that's a very important place that they can contribute and some of the gendarmerie-type units like the Italian Carabinieri and so forth.

And again, there is an enormous amount of discussion ongoing, you should be assured, behind closed doors and it's nice to know that it's not all necessarily spilling out into the press about which countries could indeed perhaps do a bit more, which ones have certain strengths in their forces that have some capacity that could be brought to bear. And then in some other cases, of course, just you know, we'll take contributions – monetary contributions too.

So again, I think Afghanistan certainly merits all of that and that's the approach that is being taken with considerable emphasis as we approach the big conference in London, which is a

very good action-enforcing mechanism, not just for additional contributions but also for discussions on reintegration policy, the civilian counterpart issues in Kabul and those kinds of things.

MS. LEED: I'll go right there, blue tie and then I'll keep going this way.

Q: Jeff McCausum (ph), Penn State University.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Hey, Jeff, how are you?

Q: Good to see you. I want to broaden David's question on Afghanistan for a second, back to your slide, you know, Iraq does not equal Afghanistan. One of those certainly seems in logistics, the exponentially and much more difficult problem.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yes, yeah, yep.

Q: And somebody said to me the other day, this is the only war where you have to drive through the insurgency with your logistics to get to the good guys, to go back and attack the insurgents. And as we try to expand that, because right now, we're very dependent, I know, on line networks from Pakistan. That brings into cooperation with many other countries that people don't talk about in Central Asia and how we can –

GEN. PETRAEUS: I'll be happy to explain it to you.

Q: And finally – (laughter) – of course, there's even implications for the Russians. Obviously, we've been talking to the Russians about using that and that doesn't seem to go too well. Can you talk about that a bit?

GEN. PETRAEUS: To the contrary. I'd be happy to. First of all, you have made, as usual, a great point here and that is that the infrastructure in Afghanistan – again, this is a case that Afghanistan does not equal Iraq. There's not all kinds of Saddam-era infrastructure in excess quantities into which the 30,000 surge forces can go.

Yes, we did indeed, then, expand that footprint very dramatically, as I mentioned, 77 additional bases just in Baghdad alone, but – and the same in all the other divisional areas so that we could indeed live with the people as we're endeavoring to secure them and so we can hold areas that we fought to clear and so forth.

But the fact was that in Iraq, we had Kuwait right there. We could drive right then. You can actually come in through Jordan and by air from other directions as well. There is vast infrastructure, all kinds of excess airfield capacity in certain areas and so on, some pretty crowded like Baghdad International, but generally a big issue.

Afghanistan is the opposite of that. Of course, it was, I think, you know, what was it? The poorest country or among the poorest countries in the world before 30 years after war did such colossal damage to it. There is a fair amount of Soviet-era infrastructure, but that's long

since been occupied in the capacity that vastly exceeded. So there's quite a building boom going on.

Some wag the other day, in fact, assessed that this is the largest building boom in Afghanistan since Alexander built Kandahar. And I think that may be accurate. There is a huge amount of construction to develop additional airfields, additional ramp space, additional forward operating bases, combat outposts and all the rest of that.

And indeed, enormous pressure on the two southern lines of communication, the one that comes through the Khyber Pass and there's enormous effort by the Pakistanis to keep that open. They're really not driving through in insurgent-controlled territory because indeed, this is a hugely important source of income for the tribes in those areas.

There's occasional attacks but really nothing serious for gosh, I think, maybe almost a year now or so. I remember one time, even during those attacks, it was less than .1 of 1 percent of what flowed in there. It's a huge number of containers. Another route up through Chaman in the Quetta area there as well. And those are really, again, almost maxed out, in terms of – so about, over a year ago, I started going up into the Central Asian states, together with the great Duncan McNabb of TRANSCOM, has done a terrific job.

And together, CENTCOM, TRANSCOM and the so-called “logistics nation,” as they're proud to say – even more fierce fans of “logistic nation,” I am, than the Boston Red Sox, especially since I'm a Yankees fan. (Laughter.) But anyway, we – the Northern Distribution Network has now been established and there's about – there's now, I think, five routes in. There's now even a route that comes out of Iraq, goes up through Turkey, I think through Azerbaijan across, you know, the two bodies of water, ends up in Kazakhstan, I think, and comes down through Uzbekistan.

There are ground routes that come through Russia. Russia has been very cooperative, actually. And indeed, our approach in the Central Asian states, at least, has been to propose to, really, all the states in that region – Russia among them – that the so-called “new great game” – the new competition for power and influence in the Central Asian states – ought to be replaced by a broad partnership against extremism and against the illegal narcotics industries, both of which threats are very real to those in that part of the world.

This has helped rebuild the Northern Distribution Network. The key piece was Uzbekistan, and once President Karimov gave me the go-ahead for that early in 2009, that was what provided the final piece in this, although we have a number of air routes that also go in and we also obviously had to work with Kyrgyzstan when there were some issues about the Manas Airbase, which is now the Manas Transit Center, being closed. It was not.

There's a good partnership there now, and that's going forward as well. So a lot of effort to try to expand all routes into Afghanistan because this surge is, frankly, vastly more logistically challenging than was the Iraq surge, although Iraq, I think, arguably, was vastly more out of control. You know, when you have a situation where there's 53 dead bodies per day in Baghdad just from sectarian violence, that's a pretty bad security situation from which to begin.

MAREN LEED: Let's go here – sorry. Then right here.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Hey, Tony.

Q: Hi, sir. Tony Capaccio with Bloomberg. The Congress, this year, passed \$6.6 billion to help increase training of the Afghan security forces. That's a major boost from the '09 budget. What steps are you taking, or will you take, to make sure that not only is the money effectively spent in creating a viable force, but also efficiently spent so that 2 years from now, we won't get stories that are SIGAR reports saying much of this was squandered in corruption and small payouts?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yeah, there are a number of these. Let me just make sure I capture these. There's quite a comprehensive effort in this regard. First of all, the Joint Contracting Command-Iraq/Afghanistan, which we created several years ago, and the headquarters of which used to be in Iraq – we have shifted quite a bit of the focus for that organization, needless to say, to Afghanistan. And they really work under CENTCOM now, rather than – used to be they sort of worked under the MNFI commander, although they did do Afghanistan as well.

So there's quite a shift in focus and assets in that very critical element. That was formed in the wake of CPA and the rest to use the resident contracting expertise in the military services and DOD at large, and to provide the kind of expertise and technical competence that we need to carry out very, very large programs.

Second, you mentioned SIGAR. And indeed, SIGAR is being augmented. And I have committed to Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Arnie Fields that we will provide whatever he needs to ensure that he has access to our different bases, our processes, our contracting and all the rest of that. Then, of course, we have substantially up-gunned the overall train and equip mission.

It used to be only the U.S.-led Coalition Security Transition Command Afghanistan – CSTCA for short. It is now that, plus NATO Training Mission Afghanistan that gets much greater NATO contribution to it. Put a three-star general in charge – Lt. Gen. Bill Caldwell – highly competent, extremely thoughtful, visionary, energetic and so forth. He replaced me out at Fort Leavenworth, for what it's worth, so we have great confidence in him.

So he is in charge of that. We've, again, added to his overall strength and tried to help build an all-star bench that supports him there. We are substantially increasing the numbers of trainers and then partner elements for the Afghan forces when they're going through training. The ratio – in fact, I talked to Chairman Levin on the way up here today from Atlanta. He'd just been out there. He was really quite heartened to hear how the ratio between trainers and Afghan forces is going to be substantially increased, which is necessary, by the way.

I reached the same conclusion some time back. In fact, we are going to use the next infantry battalion that goes in – the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry – for this kind of trainer role, just as we used the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in the partnering role down in Regional

Command-South to mirror what we had already done with the 48<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the great Georgia National Guard in Regional Command-East.

And we're dramatically increasing – and Gen. McChrystal placed a very good emphasis – on the partnership programs. And indeed, a number of the additional U.S. forces will have partnership responsibilities in addition to area-of-responsibility security tasks, as well. And then finally, we've also brought in different outside groups and consultants and so forth to take a look at the program at different times.

I, in fact, contracted one of those at Central Command headquarters ourselves. That's for internal use, and that's how we are using that. But that is yet another – and that was at the request of Gen. McChrystal. So again, we're trying to get as many different ways of looking at this as is possible. And we are also doing what we did in Iraq, by the way, which is inviting a variety of the different audit agencies and inspector generals in.

We brought in the Army audit agency to Iraq every chance that I could, basically, get them in. They did at least two or three looks, for example, at the CERP program there. We had the DOD IG in a number of times as well to look at, for example, weapons accountability of the Iraqi forces. And we've done the same thing in Afghanistan.

MS. LEED: Go ahead.

Q: Hi General, Todd Baer from Al-Jazeera English. Are you able to talk to us about these biblical messages that have been found –

GEN. PETRAEUS: Sure, you bet, yeah.

Q: – encoded on the weapons of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and why this may be a problem – perception problem – for what the real intentions are, and how long you have known about it and what will be done about it?

GEN. PETRAEUS: It is a perception problem, without question. I mean, that's why you're asking the question. And it is disturbing to us, frankly, that this was done. I've known about it for about 24 hours – probably not even 24 hours. I think it was some time yesterday or yesterday afternoon. And in fact, DOD has put out a statement on this. CENTCOM is actually just about to hit the “send” key on a statement.

The contractor did this without anyone knowing it or even, frankly, noticing. Again, it's not an actual verse, as you know; it's a reference to a verse. And it comes right after some other data in pretty small print on a data plate. And folks just literally haven't picked it up. And so this is a big concern to the Army and the Marine Corps, who have contracted for these particular sites. That was obviously not part of the specification in the contract. And they are in some pretty considerable discussions right now about how to deal with that.

And I don't want to get into contracting issues, but I mean, I hope you can sense from that, that this is of serious concern to me and to the other commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan

because, indeed, it conveys a perception that is absolutely contrary to what it is that we have sought to do. I mean, there's a reason that we put people through cultural awareness training and try to give basic language training and a whole variety of other tasks that are conducted during the year that a unit prepares to go downrange. And I can assure you that there is much greater sensitivity among our troopers about this kind of thing than, apparently, there is in whatever contractor produced those sights.

MS. LEED: Anybody over here? No, okay. Let's just take right here in the middle – right here.

Q: Morning, General. I'm Frank Solomon, private citizen. Let me try to pull together a question that I think is – my question is sort of could you comment on the ability of the Afghans to recruit, retain, train and lead the forces they are trying to build to, on somewhat the timelines you've got? It's – you hear lots of stories about retention of the Afghan police and so forth.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yep, sure. Yep, I'd be happy to. In fact, I'm particularly happy to do it, because there was a major upswing in recruiting in the month of December, and that has continued into January. In fact, there were actually more recruited in December than the system could accommodate, which is obviously a very positive development, after, frankly, not meeting the recruitment goals for the months prior to that.

And frankly, not surprisingly, that corresponded with the announcement of some recruiting and salary initiatives. And so again – and we found that in Iraq as well, by the way. And that's – when it comes to retention, you know, that's another issue that they are addressing. I've actually discussed this at the highest levels of the Afghan government – others have had those conversations – and it was great to see the Afghan leadership come up with various proposals, and then, to announce those, and to then, more importantly, see the effect of those on recruiting.

Retention – so recruiting, if sustained – touch wood – will be on a glide slope that allows the achievement of what are, indeed, as you noted, fairly ambitious goals of expansion of over 100,000 over the course of the next – little less than 2 years. Now, retention needs to be improved as well. I'm not sure that we have the data yet to show whether that is going to have the same kind of upswing after the announcement of these various bonuses and the salary increase. But with no question about it, that, that, particularly in certain parts of the country – not surprisingly, the parts of the country where the fighting is the fiercest.

Training – we have not had the capacity in the past, although it is very rapidly developing. That's why, as I mentioned earlier, we're literally diverting some combat units to function as trainers. That's why we're soliciting for contributions for trainers from various of the other ISAF partners and also increasing the Afghan capacity to train because, of course, over time, we want to hand that off. And indeed, they're there with us, but the ratio has not been anywhere near what it needs to be for the conduct of that training.

Leadership, I think, is always the long pole in the tent in these kinds of endeavors. It was in Iraq. Anytime you're trying to expand a force very rapidly, that is a huge challenge. It's a

particular challenge in a country where the illiteracy rate is so high, a country that suffered so much from wars of all kinds for over 30 years, and where you haven't had the kinds of institutions developing these military leaders or the pool of candidates to be military leaders.

In fact, you know, there's – until just a year or two ago, when there was an Afghan officer, I think, who made it through the U.S. Army Ranger School, it had been 30 years or more since the last Afghan made it through Ranger School. And he's now the minister of defense. Actually, I think there's two; he's one of them and there's another – Gen. Karimi – who also is, something of which they're rightly very proud.

But it had been quite a few decades since they went through Ranger School as young officers. So that pool of leadership candidates has certainly been mined already, if you will, for those that are available. And what you're having to do now is to develop them on the job. But it's one thing to develop an infantry trooper – a basic, private soldier, perhaps even a young sergeant – over time.

But to develop company commanders, battalion commanders and their supporting staffs, brigade commanders – this takes, in our system, years of education, experience, study and so forth. And it is very difficult to try to compress that for someone and to hand it off to them. So that is, indeed a big challenge. And that's something we'll have to deal with as this goes along, and have been dealing with, frankly.

Q: Arnaud de Borchgrave. General, the Pakistani army has been battling Taliban in South Waziristan since last October, and they announced, recently, that they've stopped that offensive, I guess because of the winter. And now, as of yesterday, they're thinking of signing an agreement with Mehsud in North Waziristan. And I was wondering, given the history of such agreements, how you react to that.

GEN. PETRAEUS: I'm sorry. I have not seen an agreement with the Mehsuds. Now of course, there are Mehsuds and then there are Mehsuds, as you know, and I suspect they are not seeking an agreement with the organization led by the former Baitullah Mehsud, who, of course, was killed some months back.

Let me just talk about Pakistan more broadly, as I could, because, as Arnaud knows, as one of the closest observers in here of Pakistan and years of experience on the ground, what happened about 10 months ago was very dramatic, and that was a true sea change in Pakistani public opinion, the approach of the political leadership and even that of the clerics, to recognize that certain extremist groups – in particular, the Pakistani Taliban, the TTP and also the TNSM – these groups were really threatening the very existence of Pakistan.

So this became Pakistan's war on terror, not Pakistanis fighting America's war on terror. That is an enormous shift. And they showed that by then going into Swat Valley – and of course, it was precipitated. That catalyst was the Pakistani Taliban out of Swat Valley coming further south from the Northwest Frontier Province, threatening some of the more settled areas and really, threatening the very writ of governance, as they term it there.

The result has actually been quite impressive. They cleared Swat Valley and most of the Malakand Division of the Northwest Frontier Province. They have held it, unlike previous times, where they cleared and left. They are clearing and holding – you know the saying in conventional military that amateurs talk tactics; professionals talk logistics. In counterinsurgency, amateurs talk clearing; professionals talk clearing, holding and building, and even transitioning.

And in this case, they have done all of those steps, and they're even thinking ahead to transitioning. The challenge is, of course, the limited assets that the government can support them with and that the military has access to, to do the rebuilding and to do the preparation for transitioning, even as they are working on holding with the military forces. They then – so that's in the Northwest Frontier Province.

They then were over in Bajaur, Mohmand and Khyber of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas – did some quite good work there. There's still work going on, without question, in Bajaur in particular. Then down – jumped down into eastern South Waziristan, really, not even all of South Waziristan, focusing on the Baitullah Mehsud organization that blew up the Marriott Hotel, linked to the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and a lot of other truly barbaric acts – blowing up the visiting cricket teams, numerous Pakistani officials and innocent civilians at, even, marketplaces.

And indeed, have done quite good operations there – quite a deliberate operation, but very, very mountainous terrain, very, very hard operation. And they have literally taken over all of that area that contains so much infrastructure. And I've seen the pictures. I haven't been into Pakistan or met with the army chief about every 45 days over the course of the last 15 to 18 months, starting with the first meeting that was on an aircraft carrier parked off southern Pakistan a year-and-a-half ago while still the commander in Iraq.

And these operations have been impressive. The challenge right now, though, is that there is a limit to their capacity to put more short sticks into hornets' nests. And they've got a lot of short sticks into hornets' nests right now. And they are going to have to figure out how to hold some of these areas through agreements with tribal elements – not necessarily those that have signed on, in the past, with the Pakistani Taliban. And in some cases, there are deals with other elements that are of concern to us, as well, certainly – Commander Nazir, most likely, and some others.

And – but that's going to be the way ahead, I think. Our task – and Secretary Gates has reaffirmed that during his ongoing visit – has to be to show that we are going to be a steadfast partner, that we are not going to do to that country what we've done twice before, which is provide a substantial amount of assistance – in some cases, create issues and challenges that they have to deal with in the future, like mujahideen, and then leave precipitously and leave them with those problems.

Let's not forget the 12-year period during which we did not allow Pakistani officers to attend U.S. military education and training – a real handicap now. There's an entire generation, or more, of Pakistani officers who didn't have the opportunities that Gen. Kayani – the army

chief – had. He’s now, rightly, a proud member of the Command and General Staff College Hall of Fame at Fort Leavenworth. Needless to say, those shared experiences help enormously.

It doesn’t mean they’re necessarily completely pro-American for life, but it does mean, again, that there is, at least, an appreciation for our approach and, typically, personal relationships that help as well. So again, we’ve got to show that we are in this, that we are going to provide sustained, substantial commitment. And I think the Kerry-Lugar bill does that – very important – \$1.5 billion for each of 5 years in terms of economic assistance. The commitments on the security assistance side about like amounts in a variety of different categories – our assistance to them not in direct combat, certainly. They see this as their fight, and that is heartening.

And they are prosecuting it. So what we need to do is continue to support them. We need to rebuild partnerships, rebuild trust and confidence, show that we are in this to – as I mentioned, in a sustained, substantial way – that we have mutual interests and that we’re going to pursue them together.

MS. LEED: Okay, I think we – maybe two, maybe one more. We’ll go right there in the front, sorry.

Q: Charlie Stevenson, SAIS. General, you’re a longtime student of American civil-military relations. What’s your assessment of those relations today, and what are the greatest challenges?

GEN. PETRAEUS: I think they are very good right now, actually. Obviously, there was a period during the discussion, right at the outset of the discussion, of the way ahead for Afghanistan and Pakistan in which, due to leaks and some other activities, there were some concerns that were raised.

But I think, frankly, that the period of several months of very intense discussions – I mean, I think it – and I’m a student, as you noted, of civil-mil – I mean, I wrote a dissertation – I actually went, one time, and looked, historically, at all the times, for example, when the JCS met with the president, when combatant commanders – you know, it was really quite rare, in the past, for that to happen. I’ve also worked for a chief of staff and for a chairman.

And with the exception of the chairman during some ongoing operations, again, not that much contact. To have nine meetings – or eight or nine meetings – with the president, and then another Oval Office session and all the other ancillary contact as well from combatant command activities and so forth, is really quite substantial. And during that, we sharpened our focus; we tested assumptions and concepts and had some very good debates in the real Situation Room. I hate to break it to Wolf Blitzer, but there is another Situation Room out there. (Laughter.)

And in that room, again, some very, very good discussions. And I think there was – you know, as I look back on that, honestly, as I was flying back on Air Force One, in fact, from the West Point speech, and talking with the president, who came back to chat and so forth, at the end of this long process, I sort of thought back and said, you know, there’s been some pretty

substantial team-building that took place here as well. And I think that, that is the case. I think that, that was a byproduct of this whole endeavor that was really quite positive as well.

MS. LEED: Okay, we'll take one last question in the front row there.

Q: Teresita Schaffer. I'm the head of the South Asia program here at CSIS. General, could I take you back, for just a moment, to Pakistan? I spent much of my diplomatic career in India and Pakistan before I retired and went to CSIS instead of to heaven. (Laughter.) One of the constants in our relationship with Pakistan, as you rightly noted, is their conviction that we are an unreliable friend.

Another, however, is that every time we've had a big relationship with Pakistan, it has, at the end of the day, been founded on a false premise that our strategic objectives completely overlapped, or very heavily overlapped. I think we have the same problem now, and I think one of the things you're dealing with is that it's becoming visible. My two questions to you are, do you see us getting closer to a similar way of approaching Afghanistan? And how do you deal with the gaps between our strategic objectives?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yeah, it's a wonderful question, actually. And I thank you for raising that. I think you are exactly right. As I mentioned earlier, there are questions about our reliability. I thought you were going to say the only constant has been our occasional inconstancy or something like that, but I mean, that is exactly right. And beyond that, though, I actually don't think it's a false premise that we think our objectives converge. I think we are very clear on where they diverge.

I mean, again, one byproduct of all of this contact with the Pakistani army chief, for example, and a variety of other Pakistani leaders, has been, indeed, to recognize where it is that we do have mutual interests and where we do not, and in some cases, where those interests actually are in conflict, rather than concert. And the result has been, because of that recognition, an increased effort to try to refine those, to try to figure out how you work your way through the fact that, based on our history, they see things differently and based on their situation, they see things differently.

Now you asked, in particular, about our approach on Afghanistan and their approach and interest in Afghanistan. And what we are doing there is, in fact, literally trying – we're starting to build a foundation of cooperation that's initially founded on cooperation of what goes on, on either side of the border. There have been, for example, various statements – oh, gosh, the U.S. closed out this combat outpost and the Pakistanis on the other side in Bajaur and Mohmand didn't know about it at the right level, or vice versa, because there's a whole host – dozens of outposts on the Pakistani side that are closed or opened periodically, as well.

And so what we did was, we set up a joint coordination cell right at Torkham Gate at the Khyber Pass. That's been in operation, I think, probably, now, for about eight months or so. But it has really picked up steam in recent months. Gen. McChrystal has been quite assiduous and energetic in going to Islamabad and then having Gen. Kayani come to Kabul, and then doing the

same at lower levels, all the way down to division commander and frontier corps commander, for example, to, again, coordinate what it is that we're doing.

And most recently, we briefed them on the whole campaign plan for ISAF and laid out our plans for the future, as they would affect the Pakistani efforts on the other side of the border, and vice versa. And in fact, there is a recent Pakistani operation launched, very recently, in which we were briefed on it ahead of time and, in fact, we changed some tactical dispositions of our forces on the other side of the border in response to that. So the goal is to build that, to solidify those particular relationships, and then you continue to build it up from there.

There are other efforts like that by our U.S. interagency partners. And I mean, some of these have been fairly interesting. I remember, for example, a head of a very significant intelligence organization in the United States who thought it might be a nice idea to have the ISI chief on one side and the Afghan intel chief on the other. And that was an interesting conversation. But actually, that's what you need to do.

And that was a good eight, nine months ago, and I'm not saying that, you know, everybody has linked arms and starting to sing the same tune or something like that, but again, that's where you start and that's how you have to move out. And if you have ideas on how to reduce tensions between India and Pakistan, please send them to david.petraeus@us.army.mil. (Laughter.)

That's an important component of this, in truth, because obviously, the historic tensions there – you know, the historic enmity, three wars – the attention on India, or India on Pakistan, obviously detracts from the attention that could be given to some of these internal extremist elements that are, we think – and now, the Pakistanis agree – pose the most urgent, the most pressing existential threat to Pakistan itself.

MS. LEED: All right. We've got to stop there, I think, to let you get to your next engagement. Again, if everybody could just please stay seated while the general takes off, thank you again so much for coming.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Thank you all very much. It's very good, thank you. (Applause.)  
Thanks.

(END)