



2012 ISW President's Circle National Security Leadership Award Ceremony

13 November 2012

[Partial Transcription]

Dr. Kim Kagan: Ladies and Gentleman, thank you so much for joining us at the Institute for the Study of War this evening in this really interesting discussion among friends, colleagues, industry leaders, and a whole bunch of wonderful people who are committed to the national security of the United States. I founded ISW actually 5 1/2 years ago (and I can't believe it's been that long) in order to make a connection between those who serve in uniform and the policy and decision makers here in Washington who have to make decisions about national defense. And I thought it was really important in a war fighting environment, in a dangerous environment, to ensure that our policies were as good as they could be and that we as an organization would have as our mission serving the war fighters in the field as well as serving those here making decisions by providing them with the very best analysis and the very best advice that we could as an independent organization. And it is really part of that that we celebrate here this evening. The independence of this organization, the Institute for the Study of War, and the extraordinary generosity that makes it possible because we do not as an organization accept government funding, even though our primary readers of our materials, the people that take our briefings, those whom we serve who are serving, we provide them with this research without government contract, without government funding, without any connection to the government at all, whatsoever, precisely because we want to be smart, flexible, strategic. We really want to be independent and we don't want to be constrained by the enormous kinds of intellectual and bureaucratic problems that actually constrains strategic thinking in this country, not for lack of the extraordinary talent within our uniformed services or intelligence agencies and elsewhere, but because of the policies, and some of them very important policies, that those agencies have to uphold.

So, tonight, here we celebrate our annual President's Circle dinner to honor the wonderful people who really help us do our work, who help us deploy forward to our war fighting commands (not just me, but actually a number of members of my team), who have really supported us as independent individuals while we were away and let us come back to be part of the great debate and discussion here in Washington. And among those wonderful supporters of ours are the sponsors for this particular event this evening and I want to thank them very much for making this kind of conversation, this substantive policy conversation, an exchange among colleagues, possible. In particular General Dynamics—the presenting sponsor of tonight's award, Raytheon, L-3 Communications, the extraordinary team at Alvarez and Marsal, who provide consulting services to top companies, Palantir Technologies, which is also a tremendous partner of ISW as an organization and which makes available some of its really wonderful technologies to our analysts so that we can do what we do as well as we do it. And last but not least, our first Corporate Council member and very important event sponsor, CACI International—thank you so much for your support. [Applause]. In fact, I want to thank the rest of the Corporate Council supporters, some of whom are here tonight, not all of whom, but they really are such an important part of what we do. They include: DynCorp International, Palantir Technologies, Northrop Grumman, CACI, SAIC, which is represented here tonight, which has been an important partner to us, Raytheon, General Dynamics, Critical Solutions International, and L-3 Communications. Thank you very much for all that you do for us. [Applause]. And we honor also tonight the individual sponsors who provide funds to ISW. Our President's Circle, the individuals who make the kinds of contributions that really allow the young scholars here at ISW to grow and flourish and who allow us to focus on our

work. I'm not going to thank them all because they're in the program, but I am going to thank those in particular who have come this evening—Brigadier General Burke Whitman had to leave, the Marine that he is, he had to march off to an assignment already for the evening, and John and Mary Taylor, who are here with us. The rest are listed in your program. And, obviously, while we're on the subject of thanks, before we get to the good part, the Board of Directors of ISW: General Jack Keane, who is our fearless Chairman, Bill Roberti, and Liz Cheney who are here. Thank you so much for what you have done for us as well as the lovely team of Advancement Committee members that we have here—my wonderful, energetic group that gets together once a month and tells me what I should be doing differently and makes ISW a viable organization. Dave West, Kim Roberts, Burke Whitman, Lieutenant General Jim Dubik, and Marty Sullivan: thank you all for your help. [Applause]. Last, but not least, I have some thank yous for those who made this event possible. In particular, we have a tremendous intern program at ISW—everybody's helped out. We're a team and we make everything a team effort, so that means I get to stuff name tags and do all sorts of great things and it's very important work. But in particular, among the interns Ellen Gleason and the lovely Lorraine Larminaux have been distinguished among them for the great work that they've done. Susan Ralston and her magnificent staff, who have put together each of ISW's big events and who are absolutely superb at organizing us. All the staff here at the Fairmont Hotel and in particular and in addition, I would like to thank the amazing Katie Santoro, our Operations and Development Officer. She is the driving force, probably behind everything that goes on at ISW, but in particular of this event, which she put together more or less single handedly with her enormous checklist, her binders, and her great verve, organization, and energy, commitment, and drive. Thank you so much, Katie, for everything that you do for us. [Applause].

Now for the good stuff. I have the pleasure of presenting tonight, thanks to General Dynamics, our second annual National Security Leadership Award, which ISW has created in order to be able to honor an individual who has exemplary achievements in the national security field. Someone who embodies an ethic of service and who has really demonstrated that in everything that he or she has done. Someone who has tremendous intellect, because this is a time when thinking is required. Someone who has made a unique intellectual contribution to the development of policy or strategy or doctrine, and someone, most importantly, who has demonstrated leadership, a quality that we all admire and that we all require, who has inspired peers and subordinates to excel in their own performance. And so, as General Keane and the ISW Board were deliberating about these qualities that we wanted to honor, Senator Lieberman obviously leaped to mind because he is so much the embodiment of these qualities and so many more that we would all like to have but perhaps do not ourselves possess.

I want to talk a little bit less about his extraordinary policy achievements, but just a little bit because that's how I came to know him and I'd like to tell you a little bit about his character and the kind of leadership that I've seen him perform over my fairly short time in Washington the past six years. And I came to know Senator Lieberman in the context of Iraq in 2007 when he, along with Senator McCain, really anchored congressional support and indeed anchored support in Washington for our Iraq mission, for the surge of troops into Iraq, and for making sure that we achieved our national security objectives there. And I have to admit that I've been very blessed in that Senator McCain and Senator Lieberman were the first two United States Senators that I met in any context other than shaking hands in voting booths, and so I've been spoiled in Washington by both of them. And spoiled especially by their concern for the nation and their ability to pursue it even at great cost to themselves. Senator Lieberman I've known also in the context of Afghanistan policy, something that we discuss that's very dear to my heart. Something that he was very interested in before it was cool. When in fact it was difficult to balance the mission between Iraq and Afghanistan, to figure out how to conduct a strategy that was going to be successful in both places. He was an anchor in keeping the focus on Afghanistan but also thinking about those two theaters at the same time. Although we would love to have the ability only to focus on one or the other, he really kept us focused on both. I've known him as he led the fight on sanctions against the Iranian regime, I've known him as a vital and vigorous supporter of peoples who have fought for freedom, especially in the Muslim world, and I think that it is really quite amazing that he is not embarrassed to say that it is in America's interest that

people should be free. I think we really don't say that as much as we should. It's a really core principle and it's a moral imperative and he says that as well.

I want to tell you a little bit more about what it has been like to have the privilege and honor of interacting with him and observing how he played his leadership role here in Washington, within the Senate, within really Washington's entire playing field because of his committee memberships and his senior statesmen status. And also abroad, since I have the strange privilege of having been with him sometimes in Afghanistan while he's gone from the gym at the embassy over to breakfast and of those things we will not speak further this evening. So it has been a really great pleasure to know him as a fighter for all of these things. And I think we've all observed some of these qualities that he has that are just unique to him. First of all, his calm composure, his dignity, and his decorum. I certainly do not have calm composure and so perhaps I admire that in most in you, but it has such a wonderful effect on some of us with fiery tempers, not to mention certain amigos, with all due respect, and keeps them focused on what it is that they need to do and how it is best to execute the policies that they advocate.

Senator Lieberman just has an extraordinary curiosity. What I love about talking with him and briefing him, and here again I'm spoiled, is the way that he will just continue to ask questions that are smart questions, sometimes that don't necessarily have an impact on policy and policy decisions but because he's going to be restless if he doesn't know the answer at the end of the meeting. And that is something that I think all analysts enjoy, but it's something that we don't ever see well done. So what a tremendous thing to have. And a wry wit that he applies as we go through some of these curious things, much of which you've already seen this evening.

He has an extraordinary determination, and I think that has been something that I've admired and sometimes in Washington and also when I've been abroad in Afghanistan serving, it has been really difficult to stay focused on remembering that we have to fight, that there are policy issues at stake. That we can't just go home to Connecticut for Thanksgiving and have everything just be okay, that it actually takes a strong degree of participation and that even when times are bad we have to keep fighting and that also takes moral focus and moral courage, not just to keep fighting when others will not, but to know what to fight for. To keep one's eye on the larger issues that are at stake, and again, to do so many times when it is not in one's political interest or in one's personal interest to do so, and to just hold to that course doggedly because it's the right thing to do, is really an amazing quality and has certainly been inspiring to me.

Senator Lieberman's bipartisanship has also been extraordinary. His willingness to work across the aisle, his willingness to spend time actually working across the aisle to get things done. And that's another quality I like about him, is his ability to get things done. He focuses very much on implementation and action and does not just sit around thinking big thoughts, but actually gets out into the world both in terms of how he mobilizes policy makers and also how he really conducts himself, almost as an ambassador when abroad for the United States, and really gets to very important issues that are obstacles to policy and just breaks them down relentlessly. And of course, he's assisted in that by a tremendous team, and I'll come back to the team in just a moment.

Senator Lieberman's love of country is obvious, because why else would you do this? There's really no glory in continuing to take these risks and continuing to fight for these things except for the love of country and I think that motivates all of us here and it's one of the things that we love to celebrate at ISW.

And the last thing I've seen that has truly impressed me and always awakens my inner West Point professor is the way in which Senator Lieberman has cultivated young talent. There is a huge cadre here tonight of people who have worked for Senator Lieberman, for years some of them, newly recruited to his staff, and some of them long timers. But there are few leaders who've had such an eye for talent, to find smart, driven, patriotic people, with the same love of country that he has, and to take them from this world in Washington, where normally they would be, well, stuffing nametags, and

actually make them into policy leaders that we can admire, who are going to be part of the next generation of policy makers wherever we go. And I just want to take a moment to thank a couple of those whom I've worked with and the ISW staff has worked with extensively over the years, particularly Vance Serchuk and Maggie Goodlander, who have been incredible mentors for all of the young ISW staff on the hill for the first time, navigating a very complicated political world and just being role models back to us so that we can all do what it is that we want to do here and raise that the next generation of national security leaders to take on the extraordinary responsibilities and challenges that our nation faces. And so Senator Lieberman, if you would come to the podium and please, John Casey, if you would join him, I would really like to take this moment to present the award to you. Now we at ISW have a tradition of not handing off bobbles because well, we know what happens to those, and we also have a tradition at ISW of absolutely loving maps. We're very, very determined to make sure that you read your military history with a map and that you study your military operations with a map. In fact, one of the first things I remember doing is briefing Senator Lieberman and Senator McCain with a big map of Iraq and boy we zoomed all over those villages and got into a lot of detail and so what I really wanted to do today was to give you a sense of the history of the area that you've studied, worked on, and changed very fundamentally during your tenure. And so the map that we're giving you today, a map of Persia, Asiatic Turkey and Arabia was actually rendered in 1766 by Louis Brion de Tour. Back in Paris, he was the royal cartographer, probably at a time that wasn't really good for being a royal cartographer. Kings came and kings went, but happily the earth stayed the same and it was absolutely possible to draw wonderful political boundaries, develop an atlas of the world, and create a sense of where Le France fit in the world and community of nations. And so tonight, we wanted to present this map to you as our honor to you and our recognition of all of those qualities that you have embodied in your service, intellect and leadership. Thank you so much for everything that you've done. [Applause].

Senator Joe Lieberman: Thanks very much, Kim, and thanks Kim for your really overly generous words. I appreciate them, though, very much. Thanks to John and General Dynamics for being a principal sponsor. And I might say, some might think parochially, thanks for overseeing the production of the greatest submarines ever made anywhere in the world. That incidentally come in ahead of schedule and under budget. Since I had really ample opportunity to speak before in the conversation with Kim, I will try to remember those wonderful words that Muriel Humphrey spoke to her husband, Hubert, saying, "Hubert, always remember that to be immortal, your words do not have to be eternal."

I'm grateful to a lot of people here. I thank Jack Keane for his leadership to this group, for his service to our country, and for all the help that he's given to the three amigos. I don't know what the process is for electing a fourth amigo, but you're at least in the running, Jack. I'm very honored by the presence of my colleagues, John McCain and Ben Nelson from the United States Senate; colleagues, but really dear friends and great coworkers, and even more honored by the presence of their wives, Cindy and Diane, who are here tonight. I thank my wife Hadassah for all that she has put up with and supported throughout the years. In 2006, after I lost that democratic primary in the general election campaign, my slogan was, "I'm stickin' with Joe," and they put it on bumper stickers, lawn signs, buttons, "I'm stickin' with Joe," so, some wise guy in the campaign had a button made for Hadassah that said "I'm stuck with Joe." But I'm very grateful that she stuck with me. Thanks to all of you who have contributed to this night and serve on the board. I thank you not only because I'm honored by this honor, but of all the causes you could contribute to that, as I said earlier, would make a unique contribution to our national security and well-being, ISW is really the best. It's a gem. And I want you to know that I appreciate your generosity. As I end these 24 years of service to the U.S. Senate, the most profound emotion I have is gratitude. Gratitude to the people of Connecticut who have given me this opportunity over 24 years, which is really extraordinary to me, but gratitude also for the opportunity that I've had to serve with colleagues like John and Ben and to work particularly on the Armed Services Committee, and to serve with those who serve in the United States military. I believe in America. I love America. I know, with pride, how much America has contributed to the world. As you said before, there are hundreds of millions—I'll be exuberant and say more than a billion people in the world today who are living in freedom and out of poverty because of the unique global leadership principle, and I'd say, selflessness, of the United States of America secured at every point by the men and women who serve in the United States military. The

people in the United States military have given me such inspiration and cause for confidence in our country. We really are unique, I mean we are a country that was founded uniquely on a principle, that every one of us is endowed by God at our birth, with those rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And incidentally the good lord didn't just give the endowment to us who are lucky enough to be Americans, it's a universal declaration of human rights, which we, mostly through our military and the service and sacrifice and loss of a lot of lives, have expanded and extended and guaranteed for those hundreds of millions of people around the world. I remain very confident about our future. I think if we have a problem in this country, frankly, it's here in Washington. I think we're just one grand fiscal bargain away from solving our national debt problem, and in my opinion, unleashing all the creative energy and investment capacity of this country and going on to a period of great economic growth, when we will be able to support our military so it can support us in the way we want. I mean would anybody here want to be a citizen of any other country than the United States of America? I always say, one market test of this is that there's no other country in the world where as many people are trying to get in, legally, and as few people are trying to get out as the United States of America. And you look at anywhere else in the world, the European Union, China, Japan, India, who has a brighter future if we get it together and I mean again, in government, than the United States of America because of all the human talent, the capacity for entrepreneurship and innovation that we have? And all of it, ultimately, is guaranteed by the service and leadership of our military. So to have had the opportunity to work as closely as I have for the past 24 years, particularly the last 20 as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, is really a privilege so great that I cannot adequately express my thanks for it, and it means that an award like tonight and all the kind words and generous words of Jack and Kim and others who have spoken, really are unnecessary. They're deeply appreciated, but really it's for me to say thank you, rather than for you to say thank you to me. I suppose the one thank you I can give as I leave the Senate is to promise that in one way or another, I will do everything I can to continue to stay involved in the debates on how to keep America engaged constructively in the world, and how to keep our military the strongest and best supported in the world. Thank you very, very much. [Applause].

Dr. Kagan: Thank you so much, Senator, and since I deeply believe that no celebration is complete without champagne, and champagne should be consumed with a toast, I have asked Senator McCain, please, to lead a toast here from the platform to you.

Senator John McCain: Well thank you, Kim, for all your words... I've been friends with Joe for decades and in fact, it was 24 years ago that he was new to the Senate and came to my office and we had a nice visit and we have had our friendship and travels together now for more than 20 years, all the vacation spots, including Iraq and Afghanistan, and for the sake of comic relief we always try to bring Lindsey Graham along.... The opportunities I've had to travel with Joe have deepened our friendship and my admiration. I've never encountered a more honest, a more decent, or a more principled public servant. Few people here remember that in 2007, the Senate became within one vote of requiring the president to pull all of our troops out of Iraq. That one vote was Joe Lieberman. Needless to say, it didn't win him any friends in his caucus, and he did it for the simple reason that it was the right thing to do. The Senate will be a poorer place when Joe leaves us next year. All of us like to believe that we are irreplaceable to our organizations or institutions or colleagues, and that fact is, we are replaceable. However, once in a while, you encounter someone who truly can't be replaced. Joe Lieberman is that kind of man. There will eventually be another senator from Connecticut next year, and there will be many others who will eventually take the place of old geezers like me. But no one will take Joe's place, not really. There will never be another Joe Lieberman. And this is truly the ending of an era. In Joe Lieberman, the Senate is losing one of our giants, not just a talented and accomplished legislator, but a moral leader, a man of character and integrity. And though there's much sadness in this for me, I feel nothing but gratitude for the time that Joe has been my colleague, my traveling companion, at times my sparring partner, but always, always, my dear friend. And there's no one I respect more, and I doubt we will ever see his like again, so please join me in a toast to a truly great and wonderful American, Joe Lieberman.

General Keane: Well I'm the closing act, and I'll be brief, I just want to add my compliments to Senator Lieberman and also Hadassah, who's here with him, and the life that they've shared together and the love they have for each other, the example they've set to so many people who've been associated with them, the common values that they have, the dedication to their faith and what's really important in life, and dedication to this country. Hadassah's a very accomplished woman in her own right and this night was about Joe as far too many nights are in Hadassah's life, but I just want to stand up and recognize what a great, great woman we have here with Joe Lieberman tonight. Please join me. [Applause]. I want to thank Dr. Kagan, who's led this organization, and it's a unique organization to be sure. It's about helping to formulate military policy, in that greater umbrella around national security policy, a very niched undertaking to be sure, in a town that has many, many think tanks doing many, many things, but then is totally dedicated to execute military policy, which really is quite unique, and that means that this organization goes forward and shares in that experience and helps to deal with the execution of that policy and helps to shape the execution, and that's quite remarkable. When Kim said what she did, it was something that we insisted on at the beginning, and that this organization would not take government money because we didn't want to be beholden to the government and felt that if we were going to help them do what they needed to do, we shouldn't take their money. And I think that's a brilliant start. So that being the case, we truly appreciate all the support that you're doing for us because our organization can't exist without your help. It's that simple. Now, whatever help you can give us in the future will truly be appreciated, because this organization is going forward and with all the problems we have in the world, it's truly going to be needed. Thank you very much for coming tonight. We appreciate all of your attendance, and we appreciate the Senator and his wife, Hadassah, Senator McCain and Cindy for being here tonight. Thank you very much.