

INSTITUTE FOR THE
STUDY OF WAR

MILITARY ANALYSIS AND EDUCATION
FOR CIVILIAN LEADERS

INTERVIEW AND MODERATED Q&A
WITH GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS

January 22, 2010

Institute for the Study of War
1400 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

P R O C E E D I N G S

(10:05 a.m.)

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3 **MR. SINGER:** It's a pleasure to be here and
4 to be able to participate in the Institute for the
5 Study of War's outstanding program this year.

6 In a sea of public policy research
7 organizations, many of them doing important work, ISW
8 is a much needed island. The reason is that very few
9 institutions in American life are dedicated to
10 advancing an informed understanding of military
11 affairs.

12 This is a task that was once done at
13 America's colleges and universities, but many of them
14 abandoned that task long ago.

15 Under Kim Kagan, who received her Doctorate
16 from Yale, taught at West Point, Yale, Georgetown and
17 American University, and is an author, lecturer, and
18 advisor to generals, she has stepped into the breach as
19 the founder and leader of the Institute for the Study
20 of War.

21 She provides America's civilian leadership
22 with impressive, unbiased, timely and fact based

1 analysis.

2 ISW was founded on the principle that a
3 healthy democracy requires civilian leaders who are
4 well versed in military affairs, and every day it
5 fulfills that task.

6 For a nation at war facing challenges on so
7 many different fronts, ISW is indispensable. I'm
8 extremely proud to support Kim Kagan and the good work
9 of ISW.

10 I've been asked to introduce many people over
11 the years, but few of them have achieved as much as our
12 speaker today.

13 General David Petraeus assumed leadership of
14 the United States Central Command in October of 2008
15 after serving for over 19 months as the Commanding
16 General of the Multi-National Force in Iraq.

17 His awards and decorations are too numerous
18 to cite here. Suffice it to say that General Petraeus
19 is an authentic American hero. A man of remarkable
20 honor and valor, and one of the most important public
21 intellectuals in our country.

22 When he became the Commanding General in

1 Iraq, that country was sliding into Civil War. It was
2 caught in a death spiral. The conventional wisdom was
3 that Iraq was broken beyond repair.

4 Under the command of General Petraeus,
5 America adopted a new counter-insurgency plan, one that
6 was focused on securing and winning over the
7 population. The shift was deliberate and strategic and
8 desperately needed to reverse the slide.

9 We all know that the challenges in Iraq are
10 still formidable, but we should all take note that
11 without David Petraeus' wisdom and execution on the
12 ground, Iraq would not be a nation on amend.

13 We are blessed with the greatest military on
14 earth and the greatest military we have ever had in our
15 nation's history. There is simply no substitute for
16 that.

17 No single individual deserves more credit
18 than General Petraeus. Having performed what nearly
19 qualifies as a miracle in Iraq, he has now been handed
20 responsibility for important parts of our Afghanistan
21 and Pakistan challenges.

22 I know I personally take great comfort from

1 the fact that David Petraeus is applying his skill and
2 judgment to the complex issues and challenges in these
3 two countries.

4 It is my great privilege, truly great
5 privilege, to present to you one of the bravest
6 military commanders and one of the finest military
7 minds America has ever produced, General David
8 Petraeus.

9 (Applause.)

10 **DR. KAGAN:** Thank you all so much. Thank
11 you, General Petraeus, for joining us today.

12 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Glad to be with you. Can
13 I respond to that, by any chance, is that possible?

14 **DR. KAGAN:** You can.

15 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Paul, thanks for an over
16 the top introduction and very, very generous words.

17 I would remind you that it has always been
18 about the team and teams of teams. It's great to see
19 some of those members who are such heroes on the ground
20 and in that team where indeed there were some big ideas
21 that were used.

22 I think a lot of people would argue, and I

1 certainly would, that it wasn't by any means just the
2 surge of forces.

3 In fact, far more important than the surge of
4 30,000 additional U.S. troops was the surge of ideas
5 that helped us to employ those troops, and that surge
6 of forces enabled the employment of the new ideas that
7 were indeed the key to making the progress that has
8 been achieved in Iraq over the course of the last three
9 years.

10 It was the team that took those big ideas
11 outside the wire under Kevlar, under body armor, or led
12 the organizations, as Jim Dubik did with the Multi-
13 National Security Transition Command-Iraq; Greg Goetz
14 in leading the battalion where he was very seriously
15 wounded, and a number of others. Colonel Burton.

16 That was the key. Again, it was also many
17 courageous Iraqi partners, and it's great to see
18 somebody here from Iraq and our partners from all the
19 different nations that made up the coalition of the
20 Multi-National Force-Iraq.

21 I would also add that again in helping to
22 develop those ideas, I'd be hard pressed to say that

1 there was any organization, other than perhaps the
2 Center at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, certainly in the
3 think tank community and the think tank world, no
4 organization, I think, had the truly strategic impact
5 that the organization did.

6 At that time, Kim was in a different
7 location, but the founder of the ISW guided together
8 with Fred and a number of other heroes a study and
9 analysis that did indeed have a strategic impact unlike
10 that of any other study or analysis that I can think
11 of.

12 They came up with the rationale for the
13 additional forces that were required, described how
14 they might be used in Iraq, and then indeed, enlisted
15 the help of some others, General Cain, most prominently
16 among them, in describing all that, and then
17 serendipitously ultimately made its way into the West
18 Wing and ultimately even into the Oval Office.

19 Again, I think it played a very significant
20 role in helping to shape the intellectual concepts and
21 indeed, in helping to shape the ultimate policy
22 decision that was made that resulted in the additional

1 forces and then enabled us to implement the ideas that
2 were so key to their use in a proper fashion.

3 Thanks for that, Kim. Paul, I want to thank
4 you for all you have done to help them do what they are
5 trying to do now and what they do so effectively.

6 We were upstairs and we asked for a show of
7 hands of who is now working on Afghanistan, and there
8 was some great talent. Asked who was still focused on
9 Iraq, by golly, we have to sustain that. Asked about
10 Pakistan. They contracted out Pakistan. Sounds like
11 the military here now, Kim. Don't become like us.

12 (Laughter.)

13 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** I didn't get to ask whose
14 hands would go up if we asked about Iran, but that
15 might be another one, and perhaps Yemen as well and a
16 few others.

17 With that, please, Professor Kagan.

18 **DR. KAGAN:** Thank you so much, General
19 Petraeus. Thanks for joining us today.

20 We have a wonderful format of our
21 conversation today, as we think about what is going on
22 within CENTCOM and AOR, area of responsibility, that

1 runs from Egypt to Pakistan.

2 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** I have a PowerPoint slide.

3 We do have PowerPoint slides. She is not going to let
4 me talk about, you know, that it is every Army Four
5 Star General's inalienable right, there is a little
6 asterisk in the First Amendment, that we all get to use
7 PowerPoints, and a major pointer. I'll try to not
8 shoot your eye out, Kim.

9 (Laughter.

10 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** I understand I get extra
11 credit for each question that I answer without
12 resorting to PowerPoints, so I'll try to make minimal
13 use of that here today.

14 **DR. KAGAN:** Excellent. We are really glad to
15 have you. I'm going to start the questioning, and as
16 we move through, I will go to audience questions and
17 particularly media questions that relate to the same
18 things, so we can stay on topic and really probe in-
19 depth some of the issues that face the CENTCOM AOR.

20 Actually, I'd like to begin with something
21 that can look like a new problem set to those of who
22 have been paying attention to other things. I want to

1 start with a discussion of Yemen.

2 Can you tell us, to what extent do you see
3 the rebellion in Yemen as a larger regional proxy war
4 between Iran and Saudi Arabia?

5 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** I don't see it right now.

6 I think there is some potential for that. We have
7 looked very hard frankly for Iranian involvement with
8 the Huti's, any provision of substantial amounts of
9 weapons or money or direction or what have you.

10 Frankly, although there is a lot of rumor, a
11 lot of allegations and so forth, we have been hard
12 pressed to find indications of substantial levels of
13 that, although there have been some indicators in the
14 past month or so that some of that is indeed beginning
15 to happen.

16 I really don't see that yet. I think there
17 are folks that might want to make it into that. I
18 think this is truly a case of Yemen dealing with
19 individuals who are rebelling against the Central
20 Government up in the border region with the Kingdom of
21 Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi's, understandably, are
22 very concerned because indeed, there has been a lot of

1 stuff that has come out of that region into Saudi
2 Arabia before that has caused problems.

3 They are really concerned about the broader
4 challenges that Yemen faces with not only the Huti's in
5 the north but the southern secessionists, along with
6 the different social and political, economic and
7 developmental difficulties that Yemen faces, and
8 ensuring that Yemen hangs together.

9 Of course, it was only unified a little over
10 a decade or so ago by President Saleh after a very,
11 very tough Civil War.

12 In a lot of ways, Yemen was really sent from
13 Central Casting, I think, as a location for extremist
14 elements, the tribal nature of it, fairly conservative
15 event of religion in certain areas and so on, and the
16 dissatisfaction again with levels of services and
17 opportunity and all the rest of that.

18 Frankly, a number of us have watched this.
19 We have been watching Yemen for over two years, well
20 over two years. In fact, when I was in Iraq we were
21 very concerned about Yemen because we were looking at
22 where the foreign fighters were coming from and where

1 the facilitators were located.

2 A lot of lines, red lines, kept leading back
3 to Yemen, especially as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was
4 doing a very impressive job with a very comprehensive
5 counter-terrorist whole of government counter-terrorist
6 program as additional pressure was being brought to
7 bear in the Pakistani border region with Afghanistan
8 and indeed, as al-Qaeda in Iraq was under much greater
9 pressure as well.

10 In fact, when I went to CENTCOM, I said we're
11 going to put a lot more attention on Yemen. I want an
12 action plan, a country campaign plan. Indeed, we
13 approved one of those in April of this past year.

14 Traveled there a couple of times. The first
15 trip candidly didn't go entirely according to what we
16 had hoped it would be. It was more along the lines of
17 what Bud McFarland would recall from his days as frank
18 and open conversations.

19 The visit in July, on the other hand, was a
20 literal as far as figurative embrace. That gave us
21 what we needed together with the State Department to
22 intelligence agencies to start building what ultimately

1 enabled us when we saw the serious threats starting to
2 emanate from Yemen to help with operations that were
3 conducted on the 17th of December, 24th of December,
4 and a number of other smaller ones that the Yemeni's
5 conducted.

6 Those operations took out two training camps,
7 killed three suicide bombers, the fourth who was with
8 those three was wounded and captured with his suicide
9 belt still on by the Yemeni sensitive site exploitation
10 team.

11 A senior leader was killed and a number of
12 others also were killed or wounded.

13 That pressure has continued. I think it is
14 known. I was in there on the 2nd of July as well, had
15 a very good meeting, and illustrative, I think, of
16 where we are, we were going to make that a secret
17 meeting as was the meeting in July, until a month or so
18 ago at least.

19 I noticed there was a camera in the room. We
20 left the big plane up in the Sinai, the sergeant major
21 made a big show of going around the observers, I did
22 sneak off, got in a smaller plane and went down to

1 Yemen, spent a few hours down there.

2 I noticed there was a camera in the room, in
3 the meeting with President Saleh, and within an hour of
4 leaving, it was on al Jazerra, indicating there was no
5 reticence to show that he was meeting with again the
6 Commander of Central Command and indeed, announcing
7 that the reason I was there was to talk about how we
8 could support them and assist them in the effort to
9 deal with the growing al-Qaeda in the Arabian
10 Peninsula, because they were franchised this past year.

11 They went from being al-Qaeda in Yemen to al-
12 Qaeda senior leadership recognizing them as al-Qaeda in
13 the Arabian Peninsula.

14 That is sort of how this has evolved, and the
15 way ahead certainly has to be one that is again as
16 always the biggest of the big ideas. In fact, it came
17 out and was reaffirmed in the strategic assessment
18 conducted by Central Command when I took command, the
19 biggest of the big ideas about all this is it takes
20 more than counter-terrorist forces to counter terrorist
21 organizations, to deal with extremists.

22 It really takes a whole of governments, with

1 an "s" on the end, to a counter-insurgency kind of
2 approach. That is really the appropriate way to go at
3 this.

4 In this case, thankfully, the Saudi's have a
5 huge interest in it, enormous. A number of the other
6 Gulf States, Oman and other countries, also have a huge
7 interest in it.

8 This is very important because again you must
9 pressure al-Qaeda everywhere that al-Qaeda is located.
10 You cannot hit here and have them pop up there. It
11 can't be whack-a-mole, as we also did in Iraq for a
12 while. You have to go after them everywhere and whack
13 moles everywhere you can find them.

14 We have to watch Somalia, by the way, as
15 another place where there are considerable concerns,
16 even though the senior leader of al-Qaeda in East
17 Africa, Nabhan, was killed some months ago.

18 **DR. KAGAN:** The Saudi's aren't a neutral
19 player in Yemen. As you talk about regional aid,
20 coming into Yemen and hoping to reinforce the state,
21 what are the different interests that we have with our
22 regional partners and how is it that we must mitigate

1 for the differences in those foreign policy views?

2 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Well, obviously, there is
3 always a mix where you have some very much mutual
4 interests and then occasionally there are some that are
5 divergent. That's just again sort of the stated nature
6 of this kind of stuff, if you will, and certainly the
7 case in Central Command.

8 It is one of those welcome to our world kind
9 of observations.

10 In this case, I think actually there is much
11 more convergence than divergence. I think every
12 country on the Arabian Peninsula wants to help the
13 Government of Yemen to address the problems that exist,
14 want to prevent the country from splitting in two or
15 whatever, as it was for quite some time.

16 Want to prevent the further growth of
17 extremist elements that threaten all of them. Want to
18 prevent migration of disaffected Yemeni's or even
19 Somali's who make their way into Yemen, which is a huge
20 problem, Somali refugee flow is an added challenge that
21 Yemen has to face.

22 I think as a general proposition, again, in

1 terms of our interests and their interests, they
2 generally are convergent.

3 **DR. KAGAN:** President Saleh, I know he has
4 been very forthcoming with you over the past six
5 months, as you have described your meetings.

6 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Among many others. Again,
7 right after I went in the summer, John Brennan went in,
8 the JSOC Commander went in. That was actually released
9 as well, which was a surprise.

10 **DR. KAGAN:** President Saleh has supported
11 elements within Yemen. Can you in fact rely on him to
12 go after AQAT?

13 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** As always with policy
14 choices, I think, typically it's compared to what, and
15 compared to various alternatives, none of which have
16 ever been presented to me or even remotely realistic or
17 good, I think the course that has been adopted is the
18 appropriate one.

19 That is not to say there is not again U.S.
20 and other countries in the region encouragement to move
21 in certain directions or others, but in terms of the
22 security threat, again, which I think has to be

1 paramount here, in this case, now a security threat
2 that has been shown to present a threat to our
3 homeland, with of course the failed Detroit 25 December
4 bombing.

5 We know that individual was in Yemen. We
6 believe he was there for several months. We know he
7 left some time in the mid-December time frame, went to
8 a couple of different countries, Africa, from which he
9 finally flew to the U.K. and got on the flight to
10 Detroit.

11 We are pretty certain that the explosives
12 were made for him in Yemen and he was trained to use
13 them there, that he had contact with al-Awlaki, the
14 Yemenian American who has been unhelpful, such a
15 charitable figure in cyberspace, which is another great
16 conversation topic.

17 **DR. KAGAN:** Are there audience questions
18 about al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and about
19 Yemen?

20 Please. If you could identify yourself.

21 **QUESTION:** Thank you, General. Thank you for
22 making time for us.

1 There are other Kagan's in this room who have
2 argued and are somewhat critical of the Obama
3 Administration policy towards Yemen. The argument
4 being that we go to an ally and ask them please stop
5 fighting your enemy and please start fighting our
6 enemy.

7 I wonder if we are being too hard on Saleh in
8 asking him to strike some sort of peace chord with the
9 Huti rebels, should be more accommodating to Saleh in
10 helping him put down that Civil War, and if so, what
11 can we do to be more accommodating towards him to help
12 him put down his enemies?

13 (Sound feed cut off.)

14 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Again, that has been a
15 topic of discussion. There is an understanding of the
16 threat to Yemenian sovereignty and obviously to
17 stability and so forth, especially in that area that is
18 disputed.

19 There has also been encouragement to at some
20 point, at an appropriate point, to reach out to those
21 who have been responding and saying get behind us, and
22 either they are willing to accept the terms of

1 President Saleh B- we will have to see where that
2 process goes.

3 It certainly has resulted in the displacement
4 of probably hundreds and thousands. I think that is
5 the source of the concern there and the reason for
6 encouragement to be ready to accommodate at some point
7 in time.

8 These kinds of wars or conflicts don't always
9 end with one side taking (Inaudible) at some point,
10 there has to be some form of reconciliation. I think
11 that has been the genesis.

12 **QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

13 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Let me start by offering
14 the observation that the best recruiting officer in
15 most recent times for the CENTCOM, there is one, and it
16 may not be a NATO like structure, but there is
17 definitely a security architecture and there are
18 milestones and so forth that continue to expand it.

19 The best recruiting officer for that effort
20 has been the Irani President, Ahmadinejad. His
21 rhetoric, his actions, the continued missile program
22 development, the nuclear program, the employment

1 elements instilled in Iraq are still active, certainly
2 after being defeated in March and April 2008, they are
3 still there, there are still residual elements. Re-
4 equipped and re-trained and so forth.

5 This architecture is literally in a sense
6 being fleshed out. Shared early warning, if you look
7 at where we were a year or so ago -B we go through a
8 process that we sometimes call bi-multi-lateralism, and
9 what I mean is that you have bilateral arrangements.

10 The United States works out a shared early
11 warning agreement with a particular country, and then
12 by integrating many bilateral arrangements, we achieve
13 multi-lateral effects.

14 That has actually worked quite well. You see
15 it not only in shared early warning but also in a
16 variety of different ballistic missile defense
17 endeavors in counter-terror activities, a common
18 operational picture, and on and on.

19 You also see it in substantially increased
20 arms sales, frankly, by countries in the region. One
21 country alone, for example, last year I think it was
22 \$18 billion. That is a serious amount of investment in

1 a tiny little country who has an air force that is
2 better than the entire Iranian Air Force, I might add.

3 Again, Iran is clearly seen as a very serious
4 threat by those on the other side of the Gulf front,
5 and indeed, it has been a catalyst for the
6 implementation of the architecture that we envision and
7 have now been trying to implement.

8 It also includes, for example, eight Patriot
9 missile boundaries, two in each of four countries, that
10 weren't there, U.S. Patriot boundaries that weren't
11 there say two years ago.

12 Other countries have certainly increased
13 their Patriot's, a whole host of different systems,
14 Aegis ballistic missile cruisers are in the Gulf at all
15 times now.

16 That is sort of the context in which this is
17 playing out. I don't personally think that the concept
18 of an NATO like organization is all that realistic, at
19 least in near terms, and you have to remember there is
20 some friction certainly to put it mildly between a
21 number of the different countries.

22 (Sound feed restored.)

1 **QUESTION:** What role does Iraq play in the
2 security of the Gulf region and in a Gulf region in
3 which Iran is developing increasing power?

4 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Well, the GO strategic
5 position of Iraq couldn't be more significant I don't
6 think. The recognition that again the extraordinary
7 blessing's that it has, second or third most oil in the
8 world, maybe the most if the exploration really gets
9 going again.

10 You see these enormous deals that have been
11 consummated now which is very, very heartening. The
12 fault lines that run through it, of course, between
13 Arab and Kurd communities, between Sunni and Shia, and
14 also a number of other minority, ethnic and sectarian
15 grouping's in the society there.

16 Just literally the position between in a
17 sense what some have occasionally called the Shia
18 crescent and the Sunni Arab world.

19 It's hugely important to do all we can to
20 continue to help Iraq get it as right as possible.

21 It's an interesting observation, by the way.
22 I had a question yesterday. Someone asked, what

1 really was accomplished out of all this. It's a
2 legitimate question.

3 One of the accomplishments is that you have a
4 country that touched wood, that right now of the 20
5 counties in the Central Command region, I think
6 arguably, it is the most democratic. It's a very
7 interesting observation that sort of smacked us in the
8 forehead as we were thinking about this.

9 It has a parliament that is representative
10 of the people of Iraq. It is reasonably responsive to
11 them. The fact that they know they have to face the
12 electorate and all the leaders have to face the
13 electorate on the 7th of March, it is very significant.

14 It is why they have really taken on
15 corruption, why they have worked very hard to increase
16 electrical production, 1,400 megawatts added to the
17 grid in the last 13 months alone, why they have raced
18 now to finally get these oil deals done.

19 I'm not saying they wouldn't have done all
20 this on their own, but there is something about the
21 prospect of having to face the electorate in the
22 morning that does indeed give you some added incentives

1 if you in fact want to retain your job and your
2 position in a sense, political power and so forth.

3 It's been very interesting, I think, to see
4 how this has evolved. There was yet another political
5 crisis last week with this supposedly defunct
6 commission in its role as the Accountability and
7 Justice Commission, for which it was not confirmed, but
8 that hasn't stopped it. There are various accusations
9 about what country is behind this and sort of pulling
10 the strings and trying to mimic perhaps the Guardian
11 Council activities in vetting candidates.

12 There are over 500 candidates now. I think
13 this is going to through. The Minister of Defense's
14 name was removed from it. It was bizarre that the
15 individual that played such a prominent role in the
16 post-liberation of Iraq and who was imprisoned by the
17 Ba'athist for six or seven years, and whose property
18 was seized by the Ba'athist and everything else, but
19 was at one time a Ba'athist and would be on that
20 particular list.

21 I think they are going to work through that
22 again. There is an aspect of muddling through that

1 does sometimes, I think, characterize Iraq's movement
2 forward, but yet it does happen.

3 There is often enormous emotion. There is
4 drama. It's all at the 11th hour. Actually, it's
5 beyond midnight typically. There is ultimately white
6 smoke comes out of the chimney somewhere in the green
7 zone.

8 Again, touch wood that will all continue.
9 Iraq is a country of just staggering potential. What
10 we fought for was, of course with our Iraqi brothers
11 and our coalition partners, to provide the people of
12 Iraq a hope that potential could indeed be realized.

13 I think it is more within their grasp and
14 certainly much more than it was when the surge started
15 and there were 53 dead bodies every 24 hours. Just
16 think of that. Every 24 hours on the streets of
17 Baghdad, just from sectarian violence.

18 **MS. KAGAN:** Has the new Iraq actually been
19 accepted by its neighbors and by its partners?

20 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** You know, the short
21 answer, the candid answer is probably no, but it's a
22 mix. Some countries have very much sought to embrace

1 the new Iraq. There are certain Gulf states that quite
2 early were sending ambassadors and sending foreign
3 ministers, even when the violence was very high, still
4 taking considerable risk, to send those very prominent
5 leaders in.

6 Then there were others who still just
7 couldn't come to grips with the idea that this formerly
8 Sunni Arab led Shia country was now led by
9 representatives of the majority in the country, by Shia
10 Arabs.

11 That was a seismic change. There is a very
12 long view. You have leaders in some cases who have
13 been in their positions for decades and don't jump
14 right into something. To some degree, it's also on
15 Iraq that it has to show that it deserves again an
16 outreached hand or at least an ambassador.

17 Now, having said that, if you look at the
18 list of ambassadors that are now there, let's face it,
19 Ambassador Crocker and I were sent in fact to do the
20 tour of the countries in the region on the way home,
21 and I think it was from the September 2007 testimony,
22 and over time, and we have done it again and again, and

1 of course, I've done it many more times as Central
2 Command Commander, and one of the arguments that I have
3 made is okay, I've got it.

4 You don't like the Iranian influence that is
5 in Iraq now. Well, do you really not like that. Oh,
6 it's very disappointing. I say how about a little Arab
7 influence then. When are you going to send your
8 ambassador? When are you going to have a senior member
9 visit there?

10 Again, it takes two hands to clap or shake,
11 putting an ambassador in a green zone.

12 Over time, I think this is going to knit
13 together. It does happen. Most recently, Kuwait, who
14 has every right to be the most aggrieved of the
15 neighbors of Iraq, given what Saddam did to Kuwait, of
16 course, in 1990, Kuwait has now had sort of low key
17 steps, but there are a number of different steps that
18 have been taken by Kuwait that really add up to a
19 degree of conciliatory policy that again I think points
20 the way ahead and offers some encouragement for the way
21 ahead.

22 **MS. KAGAN:** Is U.S. engagement in Iraq

1 important to ensure that Iraq remains internally
2 peaceful and part of the international community?

3 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Of course. It's hugely
4 important, as I think it is in any country really.

5 You can argue about our status in the world
6 but I think it's fairly difficult to assert anything
7 but that the U.S. is the only super power in the world
8 still, and the economy is still in multiple's, larger
9 than any other in the world, despite all of the
10 different challenges and down turn.

11 Yes, as always, U.S. influence, U.S.
12 leadership indeed is very important, but we have worked
13 very hard to change the character of that from that in
14 which the U.S. was leading activities in Iraq to one in
15 which Iraq is a sovereign country.

16 There is a big shift. You could feel the
17 shift when the security agreement and the other
18 agreement that was reached with Iraq after very tough
19 negotiations in the Fall of 2008, when that was
20 implemented in early 2009, and even more important when
21 in July, we lived up to that agreement and removed our
22 combat forces from Iraqi cities, and have increasingly

1 supported Iraqi leadership, the Iraqi lead of security
2 forces and operations, if not having turned them over
3 completely to them in certain areas.

4 That's not to say we are not working hard to
5 provide assistance, support enabler's and all the rest
6 of that, to share intelligence. There is a very good
7 partnership.

8 It's relatively rare now that an operation is
9 carried out that was not based on an arrest warrant.
10 Unthinkable probably three years ago when we launched
11 the surge that you could reach that point and there
12 would actually be a reasonable dependence on the rule
13 of law.

14 Again, I don't want to over state this, as we
15 occasionally mentioned, it is Iraqacy, not necessarily
16 democracy, but again, it is in that region still
17 something that is quite unique.

18 Certainly, there are challenges in the rule
19 of law. Certainly, there are issues across the board
20 and innumerable obstacles and events that should give
21 rise to great emotion and drama.

22 Again, the Iraqi leaders have generally,

1 after some wrangling about, tended to figure out a path
2 forward. Again, touch wood.

3 **MS. KAGAN:** Are there media questions about
4 Iraq? Eli? Eli Lake.

5 **QUESTION:** Eli Lake, Washington Times. Was
6 Qais Qazal's release part of a hostage exchange? And
7 is he still dangerous?

8 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** No. His release was part
9 of an overall effort led by Prime Minister al-Maliki
10 and the Iraqi Government to reconcile with a group of
11 that he led. His brother, Laith, was released earlier
12 in that regard. In a sense, this was on the Shia side
13 similar to what the Iraqi Government and we did with a
14 variety of different Sunni elements during the course
15 of reconciliation that did so much to help reduce the
16 violence starting in the Spring of 2007 in particular.

17 We did a reconciliation in Mosul in 2003. In
18 fact, with Ambassador Bremer's express approval, as Dan
19 will affirm. In the Summer of 2003, the Iraqi's, not
20 us, we supported it, ran a reconciliation commission in
21 Mosul.

22 It's very important to remember, Ambassador

1 Bremer not only did de-Ba'athification, it was de-
2 Ba'athification and reconciliation. In fact, in one of
3 his final speeches in May 2004, he noted his
4 disappointment that one of the tasks that he really
5 regretted not being able to bring along further was
6 indeed the reconciliation component of de-
7 Ba'athification.

8 Indeed, we submitted -B the Iraqi's submitted
9 on our CH-47s, to Baghdad, literally boxes and boxes
10 full of documents that supported their decisions, their
11 recommendations, out of the reconciliation commission
12 that was run there.

13 By no means was it a whitewash or anything.
14 It started off with Mosul University in which there
15 were 110 or 120 of the tenured professors who were
16 Ba'ath level four's or above, in part, you had to do
17 that to get educated outside the country.

18 By the way, these are folks in many cases
19 educated in the West, in the United States, the U.K.
20 and elsewhere, and generally somewhat secular, but had
21 advanced over time to Ba'ath level four.

22 The de-Ba'athification commission, which had

1 been somewhat hi-jacked by certain individuals in
2 Baghdad at the time, just slow rolled this. Gave a lot
3 of assurances, visited Mosul, spoke very heartily, but
4 did not in the end live up to the encouragement that
5 they provided to us about this.

6 Again, that is what Ambassador Bremer
7 observed as well. Again, this is part of that.

8 There has been other reconciliation with
9 other Shia militia or former militia groups as well,
10 just as I mentioned with various of these Sunnian
11 surgent groups.

12 **MS. KAGAN:** John Barry, did I see your hand?

13 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Hello, John. How are you?

14 **DR. KAGAN:** If we can have a microphone for
15 John. On Iraq.

16 **QUESTION:** You mentioned tactically a
17 question yesterday about what had been accomplished in
18 Iraq. Could I tempt you to broaden it and attempt some
19 kind of net assessment? I mean, looking back on Iraq,
20 what would you count as the big pluses of the
21 expedition and its aftermath, and what do you see, what
22 are you living with, as any down sides of what happened

1 in Iraq?

2 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Well, you know, first of
3 all, you've got to -- I think you've got to let history
4 proceed a little bit further before you make any kind
5 of definitive assessments. But, you know --

6 **QUESTION:** Well, but you always do.

7 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Well, no. I know. And
8 nor do the Professors Kagan. So, I mean, I'll try to
9 be a good student here.

10 But, you know, as an interim assessment, as
11 a, you know, work in progress, I mentioned that, you
12 know, it has features of democratic governance that are
13 again, I think, fairly unique in those 20 countries,
14 from Egypt to Pakistan, Kazakhstan down to Yemen, and
15 of course the waters off Somalia, so that we could keep
16 the pirates.

17 Beyond that, certainly I think that the
18 threat that Saddam posed to his neighbors, needless to
19 say, is removed. The kleptocracy that he used to lead
20 is obviously gone, I mean. And it was not just an
21 autocracy, it was a, you know, kleptocracy because he
22 was also stealing from the Iraqi people. An incredible

1 amount of stealing and, you know, an incredible way of
2 running that country.

3 I remember, in the early days, we used to --
4 we were trying to, of course, you know, resurrect
5 different businesses and rebuild markets and repair
6 infrastructure and all the rest. And it didn't take to
7 long to figure out that there really weren't that many
8 true private industries or private businesses or
9 anything else that was truly private.

10 You might actually have a level that seemed
11 to be private, but then it would actually -- very
12 quickly, you'd find the link to Uday or Qusay or some
13 other inner circle member of Saddam's regime. So
14 that's obviously gone.

15 And I think, you know, arguably, that's the
16 most important accomplishment, assuming that the Iraqi
17 people can indeed enjoy a much brighter future as a
18 result of that, and that the work that is in progress
19 there continues toward, again, a future that does
20 indeed provide them better services, indeed, a
21 continued form of democracy and so forth.

22 Obviously, on the other hand, if you take it

1 from the perspective of the Sunni Arab governments in
2 the region, again, I think it's understandable to have
3 some of the concerns that they have that there is,
4 obviously, greater Iranian influence in Iraq. But then
5 I'd also note that, look: Iraq has to have a
6 relationship with Iran.

7 It is its neighbor to the east. It is a
8 fellow Shia-led country, albeit one that is very
9 conscious of its Arab identity and, you know, speaks a
10 different language, has a different background, and is
11 not at all desirous of being the 51st state of Iran.

12 In fact, as we saw very recently, where you
13 had Iranian military or border guards take over an
14 Iraqi oil well inside the border, very clearly
15 demarcated, the outrage over that was not just by Sunni
16 Arabs or others. In fact, the most outrage was by Shia
17 Arab tribal elements in the south.

18 So again, I think that's sort of the texture
19 of this. And I think you can actually say that, you
20 know, within reason, life is better for, you know,
21 quite a substantial swath of the Iraqi society and,
22 touch wood, getting better as, again, basic services

1 have gradually shown some improvement as this, you
2 know, 1400 megawatts has been added to the grid, as --
3 and there's much, much more coming, and as now these
4 multi-billion, multi tens of billions of dollars of oil
5 deals have been struck, as you see the Kurdish regional
6 government and the citizens of the Kurdish region of
7 Iraq really pointing the way ahead to show what can be
8 possible if you stop shooting and just, say, shout at
9 each other instead of shooting.

10 So, you know, that's sort of where I would
11 put that, I think. And, you know, Iraq is not going to
12 be the 51st state of the United States, either. And I
13 think we have to be very realistic about that, and we
14 have to recognize that this is a proud country with an
15 extraordinary history, the land the two rivers, ancient
16 Mesopotamia.

17 And we have to, again, be respectful in our
18 dealings with our Iraqi partners. That is crucial to
19 this enterprise, indeed. And we have to understand
20 that they, like other countries, will on occasion want
21 to show their independence of the great United States,
22 despite all that we have done, indeed, to make it

1 possible for those who are now in power to be
2 exercising that power.

3 **DR. KAGAN:** You mentioned Iraq's neighbor to
4 the east. And I would like to turn now to Iran and ask
5 you: What is Iran's regional strategy, and how is
6 CENTCOM countering it?

7 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Well, you know, since --
8 with Professor Kagan, you know, we should start off
9 with a little international theory, I think. And if
10 you think, you know, the international theorists -- I
11 think I got this right -- you know, sort of divide the
12 world into two camps. You know, you have the status
13 quo powers and the revolutionary powers.

14 The status quo powers are obviously sort of
15 reasonably accepting of the way things are. And, you
16 know, they might have a little more of this, a little
17 more of that -- there's always going to be a quest for
18 that -- but in general aren't out to completely upset
19 the existing order; whereas revolutionary powers do not
20 accept the status quo and are, indeed, intent on
21 bringing about some significant changes.

22 And I think, you know, that has some pretty

1 big ramifications if you assess that Iran is not only
2 revolutionary in the title of its country, the name of
3 its country, but also, of course, in its activities.

4 And as you assess those activities -- again,
5 as I mentioned, the provision of -- continued
6 provision, maybe a smaller scale, of weaponry,
7 training, equipment, money, and even direction to
8 various Shia extremist elements, proxy elements, in
9 Iraq that still cause problems for Iraq.

10 I mean, Ambassador Crocker, a great
11 diplomatic wingman, during the surge used to assert
12 that in a perfect world, Iran would like to Lebanonize
13 Iraq. They'd like to have sufficient proxy elements
14 that when something is starting to head in a direction
15 they don't like, those proxies could launch a bunch of
16 rockets or mortars or something else like that, and the
17 Qods Force commander could call up and say, oh, my
18 gosh, I'm so disturbed to see this is happening. We'll
19 stop it immediately. But, of course, you know, we'd
20 like to have one more vote in the council of this or
21 that. So again, you have that activity there.

22 You obviously have the continued provision of

1 all kinds of resources and weaponry and advanced
2 technology and so forth to Lebanese Hezbollah, to
3 Hamas, and, to a much lesser degree but still
4 happening, to a lesser degree to the Taliban in western
5 Afghanistan. Certainly the use of soft power wherever
6 they can, as well, to compliment the various activities
7 of the hard power.

8 And now you have this complicating factor
9 that Iran has gone from being, you know, if you will, a
10 theocracy to what some pundits have described as a
11 thugocracy, where because of the unrest in the wake of
12 the hijacked elections this past year, the security
13 apparatus has been able to grip even more of the power
14 because the Supreme Leader has had to turn to the
15 Revolutionary Guards corps, to the siege militia, and
16 to the Qods Force far greater than before.

17 And that has enabled them to then expand
18 their already considerable influence beyond just the
19 security arena, but ever more greatly into the economic
20 arena and even into the diplomatic arena. You know, in
21 the middle of the battle with the militia in March and
22 April of 2008, a message was conveyed to me by a very

1 senior Iraqi leader from the head of the Qods Force,
2 Kassim Suleimani, whose message went as follows.

3 He said, General Petraeus, you should know
4 that I, Kassim Suleimani, control the policy for Iran
5 with respect to Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza, and Afghanistan.
6 And indeed, the ambassador in Baghdad is a Qods Force
7 member. The individual who's going to replace him is a
8 Qods Force member.

9 Now, that makes diplomacy difficult if you
10 think that you're going to do the traditional means of
11 diplomacy by dealing with another country's Ministry of
12 Foreign Affairs because in this case, it is not the
13 ministry. It's not Mottaki who controls the foreign
14 policy, again, for these countries, at least. It is,
15 again, a security apparatus, the Qods Force, which is
16 also carrying out other activities.

17 So, you know, that's -- again, these are the
18 dimensions of this, with now greater unrest in the
19 country, I think it's safe to say unrest that is of
20 more significance than at any time since the actual
21 revolution itself, and seems to have more legs to it.

22 I mean, it seems to have an enduring quality

1 where every anniversary or every additional milestone
2 in the days of mourning after the death of a
3 significant leader, or the other traditional national
4 or religious celebrations, this unrest surfaces again
5 and is posing enormous difficulties because it starts
6 to create cracks in the edifice of the security
7 structures that maintain order in Iran.

8 **DR. KAGAN:** Speaking of those security
9 structures, and indeed, of Kassim Suleimani and the
10 Qods Force, have you actually seen a pattern whereby
11 Kassim Suleimani, who seems to control a portion of
12 CENTCOM for Iran, actually shifts resources from one
13 theater to another, as the United States does?

14 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Well, I think -- you know,
15 I don't know if it's a shift of resources or
16 occasionally a little less here, maybe more here, that
17 kind of thing. I mean, there's no question that the
18 level, we think, went down after the militia were
19 defeated in March and April of 2008 in the battles of
20 Basra, Sadr City, and a couple of other places.

21 And so in the wake of that, I mean, they just
22 did -- and the leaders, many of the leaders, went back

1 to Iran. Many of the fighters went back to Iran. A
2 number of others were killed or captured or detained.

3 And it's never, I think, come back to the
4 levels that the assistance reached prior to those
5 particular battles. And I think Iraq is very sensitive
6 to that. I mean, the Iraqis don't want their political
7 decisions made under the threat of rockets or EFPs or
8 what have you that have come from Iran.

9 Remember that prior to those battles, in
10 fact, in the fall of 2007, two or three southern Iraq
11 governors were assassinated and two or three police
12 chiefs were killed by EFPs provided by Iran that were
13 used in those particular attacks. And that was very
14 well known by the Iraqi leaders, and then, needless to
15 say, they more than resented that. They were very
16 disturbed by that when, on the other hand, they'd have
17 cordial relationships with the leaders.

18 So again, there is the dynamic that's present
19 in that case. I've seen a fairly constant level of
20 support, I think, to Lebanese Hezbollah, to, again,
21 Hamas -- although there have been interdictions of
22 this, too, by the way, I should note. I mean, this has

1 by no means been easy for them to do in all cases.

2 And there's a calculation you can see going
3 on about, you know, what happens if you get caught in
4 this. What are the down sides, and all the rest of
5 that.

6 **DR. KAGAN:** What is the likelihood that
7 nuclear proliferation, should Iran become a nuclear
8 power, would actually occur within the Arab world as a
9 whole?

10 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Well, I think that's one
11 of the big concerns that, you know, strategic thinkers
12 that hang out at places like this present, that if Iran
13 were to get nuclear weapons, that some of its Arab
14 neighbors would figure out how to get them as well.

15 You know, you can -- again, you can head down
16 this road. I mean, it's almost as if the wizards of
17 Armageddon have, you know, a new reason to live here
18 now after being somewhat -- you know, a lot of us were
19 in grad school in the mid-'80s and all that period
20 when, indeed, all of these discussions about various
21 forms of deterrence and so forth took place.

22 And, you know, you could sense some of that

1 kind of discussion coming. But of course, there are
2 also some substantial unknown out there. And, of
3 course, the biggest is that a country in that region,
4 not in the Central Command area but that feels that
5 Iran poses an existential threat to it, that Iran has,
6 you know, said it doesn't have a right to exist and has
7 questioned the existence of, you know, the Holocaust
8 and so forth, that indeed that country wouldn't stand
9 by and allow Iran to have nuclear weapons.

10 So again, you have those aspects of the
11 situation out there as well. And I think -- I don't
12 think this is on quite the same timeline as perhaps
13 some do. It's a little bit -- you know, there's a
14 little bit further to the right, if you will, to your
15 right in terms of a timeline. But at some point over
16 the course of this year or next year, there's going to
17 have to be some very, very hard decisions made on these
18 issues.

19 **DR. KAGAN:** Let's take some questions about
20 Iran.

21 **QUESTION:** General Petraeus, Louis Clemente.
22 I do have a question about Iran. And what is

1 America's strategy to try and prevent Iran from
2 obtaining nuclear weapons? And do you think the
3 Israelis may actually take action? I think that's what
4 you were alluding to. If we don't do something, are
5 the Israelis going to step in and say, enough's enough?

6 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Well, first of all, of
7 course, it's not just the U.S. strategy. It's
8 obviously an international strategy. It's the actions
9 taken by the IAEA, by the UN Security Council, with
10 various resolutions to impose a whole variety of
11 sanctions, a number of which are intended to make it
12 much more difficult for Iran to get materials that
13 could be used in various nuclear programs that could
14 ultimately lead to the production of nuclear weapons,
15 and also with some missile technology-related items and
16 so forth.

17 So I think, again, those are the big
18 components, and so those have been the diplomatic
19 economic elements that have been employed. You know
20 well, I'm sure, that the Perm-5-plus-1 have recently
21 had more discussions on the possibility of additional
22 sanctions, and what form those sanctions might take,

1 and so forth.

2 The IAEA has had additional conversations
3 with Iran on whether or not there's a deal possible to
4 take the more than I think it's a thousand kilograms of
5 low enriched uranium that have been produced in Natanz
6 and then send it to a third country for the production
7 of somewhat more highly enriched uranium, but that
8 could only be used in the research reactor that Iran
9 has.

10 That deal hasn't been struck. That could
11 have an important stabilizing effect to it. And we'll
12 just have to see whether Iran, you know, has any
13 sincerity at all about pursuing that or is slow-
14 rolling.

15 But certainly, you know, the diplomacy has
16 intensified. It has been complicated probably a bit
17 just because of the preoccupation of Iran with its
18 internal affairs. I mean, there are literally
19 organizations within Iran that just, frankly, haven't
20 met the way they used to, certain of the important
21 Iranian security bodies and advisory bodies that help
22 the Supreme Leader and so forth, because -- in some

1 cases because of internal divisions among the senior
2 members of these different groups. So that has made
3 things more difficult, I suspect, as well.

4 As to the latter part of your question, I
5 mean, that's obviously, you know, something that only
6 Israel can answer. Needless to say, there are
7 communications with Israel on a host of different
8 levels.

9 And indeed, a number of individuals, very
10 senior individuals -- the Secretary of Defense,
11 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and others -- have all
12 pointed out the various ramifications, just in a
13 general sense of what could result from strikes. And
14 again, you know, who knows what the impact could be on
15 the global economy or on infrastructure in the area or
16 what have you.

17 So again, you know, we're sort of staring at
18 some very, very difficult areas, the ramifications of
19 which could be enormous for the entire world, not just
20 for the region.

21 **DR. KAGAN:** I'd actually like to turn the
22 conversation to Pakistan and Afghanistan, and make sure

1 that we have a little bit of time to talk about them.

2 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Okay. Sure.

3 **DR. KAGAN:** And Pakistan first. Have the
4 Pakistani military operations over the course of the
5 past year defeated the TTP?

6 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Well, I don't know that
7 you'd characterize it as having defeated the TTP and/or
8 the other elements that are associated with the
9 Pakistani Taliban. But they have certainly set them
10 back very considerably.

11 They cleared and have held Swat Valley, Swat
12 District, really, the Malakand Division of Northwest
13 Frontier Province. They've conducted important
14 operations in Bajaur, Mohmand, and Khyber in the
15 Federally Administered Tribal Areas; and then most
16 recently, of course, about three or four months ago,
17 launched an important operation in eastern South
18 Waziristan, the tribal areas controlled by the
19 extremist element that was led by the former Baitullah
20 Mehsud, who was killed in the Fatah last year, a very
21 important action.

22 And that has put considerable pressure on,

1 again, the Pakistani Taliban and some of its
2 affiliates. It has been, I think, of enormous
3 importance that we recognize this important development
4 because until about ten months ago, I think there was
5 generally an assertion by a number in Pakistan that the
6 Pakistani military was being coerced into fighting the
7 U.S. War on Terror.

8 And somewhere around that 10 or 11 months
9 ago, there was this significant shift in public
10 opinion, the political leadership, even many of the
11 senior clerics, that the Pakistani Taliban was becoming
12 the most pressing threat to the very existence of
13 Pakistan. And it was really supplanting even India, at
14 least as the most urgent threat that needed to be dealt
15 with.

16 That is, again, a very, very significant
17 shift, and it provided considerable support for the
18 Pakistani Army and Frontier Corps as they launched the
19 operations into Swat Valley after the extremists there
20 had literally begun to encroach on the settled areas,
21 as they're called, and to really threaten, again, the
22 very writ of governance of Pakistan in a very

1 meaningful manner.

2 And the Pakistani Army and the Frontier Corps
3 have carried out really quite impressive counter-
4 insurgency operations. There are certainly limitations
5 in the resources available to them. There are
6 limitations in the governmental agencies and resources
7 that they can bring to the rebuilding effort because,
8 of course, it's not just clear and leave, it's clear,
9 hold, and build, and even transition. And again, the
10 Pakistani military's approach has been quite
11 impressive.

12 So I think all in all, they have shown quite
13 a facility for carrying out these operations, a
14 recognition that you have to hang onto what you fought
15 to clear. You know, the act of taking over that area
16 of eastern South Waziristan, where there was so much
17 infrastructure that contained explosives, and IED
18 factories, and car bomb factories, and arms and
19 ammunition storage sites, and planning locations,
20 training facilities, all the rest of that -- that's not
21 in their hands now, in TTP's hands. It's in the hands
22 of the Pakistani Army.

1 They may be able to reach a deal that allows
2 the traditional tribal elements to return to that area
3 less those that were part of the extremist forces that
4 had hijacked those tribal areas that also, of course,
5 were engaged in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto,
6 blowing up the Marriott Hotel, blowing up a visiting
7 cricket team, and innumerable innocent Pakistani
8 civilians in Peshawar and Pakistani officials and so
9 forth.

10 So this has been a very significant
11 development, but again, very much a work in progress,
12 to be sure. And certainly there are numerous other
13 extremist elements that threaten Afghanistan and our
14 forces and efforts there that, over time, we want to
15 see, of course, additional pressure brought on as well,
16 even as there are other campaigns that are pressuring
17 the leaders of those organizations very significantly,
18 too.

19 **DR. KAGAN:** As we talk about those
20 organizations based in Pakistan or with bases in
21 Pakistan, of course, Al-Qaeda Central comes to mind,
22 and one of the things, one of the dynamics that we've

1 seen very much on the -- throughout our fight in
2 Afghanistan and throughout our fight in Iraq is that
3 Al-Qaeda has a better apparatus for distributing
4 information to the populations of -- of Afghanistan, of
5 Iraq, than we do.

6 Do you have the authorities that you need and
7 the capabilities that you need actually to counter the
8 information operations campaign of Al-Qaeda globally or
9 in -- or its affiliates in areas where we're fighting
10 against insurgencies?

11 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Let me go back to Iraq and
12 talk about some very important lessons that we learned
13 there and as you go after an organization like Al-Qaeda
14 in Iraq and the other semi-extremist elements that were
15 its confederates, you had to have again a very
16 comprehensive approach.

17 Again, you don't just deal with them just
18 with your high-end Special Ops or even your
19 conventional forces. You have to get host nation
20 forces. You have to do politics. You gotta get laws
21 and legislation and promote reconciliation and generate
22 Sons of Iraq and you have to get smarter about how you

1 fuse, gather and fuse intelligence. You have to deal
2 with detainee operations so that extremists aren't
3 running your training camps and then you have to help
4 the host nation deal with the basic reasons why
5 individuals might be prone to extremism in the first
6 place: lack of adequate education, basic services,
7 health, opportunity, and so forth, and then work on the
8 source countries and the way foreign fighters can flow
9 into the country. But a huge element of this is
10 information operations.

11 Now, this is not propaganda. This is living
12 within the admonition that was part of our counter-
13 insurgency guidance that was titled Be First With The
14 Truth and that's what we sought to do and we tried to
15 operationalize that concept.

16 We didn't lie to folks like Al Gordon. We
17 tried to provide him the honest facts as we knew them.

18 We sought to expose them. Yeah. Sure. We'll let him
19 see some good news stuff, but, I mean, we weren't
20 trying to pump it to him and he saw some plenty of bad
21 news stuff, too, and when we had bad days, we went out
22 and said we had a bad day, here's what we're trying to

1 learn from it and how we'll try to mitigate the chances
2 of it in the future.

3 But we also had to build a structure that
4 could carry out a true information operation campaign
5 plan and this is strategic communications. It's
6 providing content for radio, television, print media.
7 It is having a rapid-fire channel, if you will, so that
8 if someone sees a story in the news, you can respond
9 very quickly.

10 It's not unlike what political campaigns have
11 with perhaps the lack of some of the spin that
12 occasionally might characterize political campaigns.
13 I'm sure in other countries, not in ours.

14 (Laughter.)

15 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** And so we set about
16 building a very substantial structure and we did. We
17 combined all of the capabilities and aspects of our
18 military information support teams in CYOPS elements.
19 We used Public Affairs, certainly kept a distance from
20 some of those -- the information operations elements
21 that are now part of our structures, did a fair amount
22 of contracting of various folks in that kind of

1 business, and -- and again this made a big difference
2 because, over time, as the extremists carried out
3 various activities, we were able to hang around their
4 neck three labels.

5 Those labels were indiscriminate violence,
6 extremist ideology, and also oppressive practices. Now
7 think about that. The indiscriminate violence, they
8 blow up an innocent -- bunch of innocent civilians in a
9 market. We immediately hammer them with that, ideally
10 through helping Iraqis to do that.

11 The oppressive practices. They cut the
12 fingers off somebody smoking in Anwar Province and,
13 boy, that's a great one to, you know, Sunni Arabs know
14 that they just lost their inalienable right to a
15 cigarette. That is a great one.

16 That's when I knew we might be able to turn
17 this thing around, you know. Al-Qaeda had done
18 something so stupid as that or forced marriages or a
19 variety of other things.

20 And then just the sheer extremism that did
21 indeed characterize their ideology and so that was
22 done, though, you know, again this wasn't luck. It

1 wasn't serendipity any more than reconciliation was, I
2 might add. It was done with, you know, an explicit
3 campaign. It took us well over a year to truly build
4 this organization and I should tell you that we're now
5 doing the same thing in Afghanistan.

6 It is not pure coincidence that Rear Admiral
7 Greg Smith, who came to Iraq, I think, for three weeks
8 and ended up staying for 18 months, thanks to Admiral
9 Mullen, then as Chief of Naval Operations, now the
10 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who then, not
11 coincidentally, of course, came to Central Command, and
12 who now is in Afghanistan, and Rear Admiral Greg Smith
13 is helping to establish this overall information
14 operations task force that will endeavor to do in
15 Afghanistan what we sought to do in Iraq.

16 We're also trying to replicate some of that
17 at Central Command, Headquarters. Obviously, it takes
18 resources. We're working through that in Washington.
19 Again, those who, you know, bemoan the fact that our
20 message doesn't seem to get out sometimes -- by the
21 way, again, it's a truthful message. This isn't spin.
22 It's not propaganda.

1 But those who, you know, are frustrated that
2 it's hard to operationalize the concept of Be First
3 With The Truth, then also have to come to grips with
4 the fact that it does take resources to do that.
5 There's a very impressive Under Secretary in State now
6 for Public Diplomacy, a woman who really helped with
7 the discovery of not just the channel but the
8 corporation become all that it has become who -- with
9 whom we are partnering on this, as well, because
10 certainly we very much want to do this as a -- as an
11 interagency, as a whole of government effort.

12 And now, then when -- so that's the first
13 element of it, but that is in the traditional
14 communications media.

15 There's a new battle space now and it is, of
16 course, cyberspace and I think that as a government, we
17 are very much still coming to grip with the policy
18 issues, the, you know, areas in which legislation is
19 needed, oversight, and resources to come to grips with
20 the challenges in cyberspace and to ensure that the
21 extremists don't have free reign in cyberspace.

22 This is, of course, why Secretary Gates,

1 needless to say, has promoted the idea of a
2 CyberCommand with -- and has nominated a commander of
3 it to be initially a sub-unified command under
4 Strategic Command, very important initiative.

5 In all, we've had some very good discussions
6 among all the combatant commanders and Joint Chiefs
7 with the Secretary just in the course of the last week
8 or so, actually, and so that is, you know, for -- I
9 mentioned to some university audiences recently, you
10 know, if you're looking for a great thesis or
11 dissertation topic, cyberspace and activities in it,
12 while protecting again the inalienable rights that we
13 recognize and codify in our Constitution and Bill of
14 Rights and so forth, but also ensuring that we can
15 protect the American people from security threats which
16 can be generated and aided and abetted in cyberspace.

17 Indeed, I mean Anwar al-Awlaki has, you know,
18 how did he attract Major Hassan's attention? I mean,
19 it was through cyberspace. How presumably did he link
20 up with the Detroit bomber? Probably again through
21 cyberspace, and there's no question that there's a lot
22 of command control, a lot of literally proselytizing

1 and sharing of lessons learned, discussions of tactics,
2 techniques, and procedures for extremism activities and
3 so forth, all taking place in cyberspace, and we have
4 to figure out how to come to grips with that and over
5 time I'm sure that will be the subject of legislation
6 and a lot of policies.

7 **DR. KAGAN:** One last question about
8 Afghanistan. As we go into the London Conference next
9 week, we have begun to hear much talk of reintegration
10 and perhaps reconciliation of enemy groups within
11 Afghanistan.

12 Don't we have to win first?

13 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Well, I think that --
14 let's define here what we're talking about because
15 these terms are a little bit new for Afghanistan.
16 They're a bit different from what -- the way they're
17 employed in Iraq.

18 Reconciliation in the Afghan context
19 typically means senior Taliban leaders, commanders,
20 even Mullah Omar, reconciling with the Afghan
21 Government, agreeing to lay down their arms, agreeing
22 to become again part of the process in a constructive

1 manner rather than a continuing part of the problem.

2 And reintegration of reconcilable elements of
3 the Taliban and other extremist elements operating in
4 Afghanistan is indeed just that. It is more junior
5 members of it, sub-commanders and so forth, and
6 actually we see examples of this, you know, on a fairly
7 regular basis in Afghanistan and, of course, the more
8 there is pressure on them.

9 Again, a lot of people talk about the, you
10 know, positive incentives for reconciliation or
11 reintegration. There are also, you know, some other --
12 you know, you bring them about by what they see as
13 negative actions, of course.

14 I mean, there's no greater incentive to
15 reconcile than the fact that, you know, you might be
16 killed if you don't reconcile. So one of the reasons
17 reconciliation started to -- to -- to gain progress in
18 Iraq, among a variety of others, was that, indeed,
19 there was greater pressure on those who were even
20 tacitly or actively involved with the extremist
21 elements with Al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

22 And so you're exactly right. I mean, why

1 would senior members of an insurgent movement come to
2 terms or reconcile if they think that they are in the
3 resurgent mode as opposed to under enormous pressure
4 and certainly one of the objectives that we have for
5 this coming year is to put the kind of pressure on the
6 senior members and on the junior members, as well, so
7 that there can be certainly reintegration and perhaps
8 the prospect for some true reconciliation as it's
9 defined for Afghanistan, although that probably is a
10 bit more remote than the very likely possibility that
11 there will be a continuation of what we have seen and
12 that being the reintegration of lower-level members of
13 the Taliban and the other groups.

14 **DR. KAGAN:** General Petraeus, thank you so
15 much for spending time today with the Institute for the
16 Study of War, and thank you so much for your service to
17 the United States, to our security, and to our Armed
18 Forces.

19 **GENERAL PETRAEUS:** Well, thanks, thanks for
20 yours, as well, Kim, and thank you all very much.
21 Thanks.

22 (Applause.)