

Center for American Progress



SPECIAL PRESENTATION

“THE FORGOTTEN FRONT: A NEW STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN”

MODERATED BY:

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FEATURED PANELISTS:

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MS. CAROLINE WADHAMS: Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Caroline Wadhams, a senior policy analyst at the Center, and on behalf of the Center, I want to welcome you to today's event: "The Forgotten Front: A New Strategy for Afghanistan." We have a great panel here today to discuss the Center's new report on Afghanistan and U.S. strategy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan. But before I introduce the panelists, I want to speak very briefly about why Larry Korb and I wrote this report and how current events in Afghanistan and Pakistan have validated many of our concerns about this region.

Today's news of a suicide bombing in the north of Afghanistan is another tragic example of a faltering mission in Afghanistan and a deteriorating security situation. It has been reported that more than 100 people were killed today, including children, Afghan parliamentarians and police officers. This is just the latest in a series of suicide bombings that have rocked the country, and remember this was a tactic that was not seen in Afghanistan prior to September 11th.

Furthermore, we see signs that the Taliban and al Qaeda have reconstituted in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan and that they are growing in strength. And Pakistani President Musharraf's recent imposition of a state of emergency only raises further concerns about the stability of Pakistan, its growing extremism in that country, and its ability to crack down on al Qaeda and Taliban in its country. Finally, opium production has reached unprecedented levels, now providing about 93 percent of the world's opium economy and those revenues are believed to be partially funding the insurgency in Afghanistan.

And with all of these dire statistics, this country has remained largely unfocused on Afghanistan. We are barely paying attention. We've been consumed as a country by Iraq, and thus the title of our event and report, "The Forgotten Front." Larry and I felt compelled to bring attention back to this crucial mission and make the case for why we need to refocus on Afghanistan. We believe that the current approach is not working, and we outline a strategy in our report for turning the situation around, one that confronts a variety of issues: weak governance, the growing opium production, the safe haven in Pakistan, stalled reconstruction and growing insecurity. Larry will summarize this report in detail and I'm not going to go into it here.

Let me quickly thank a number of people who made this report happen, including our fabulous interns: Chris Sedgwick, Leah Greenberg, Lily Smith and Luis Vertiz. I also want to thank members of our national security team here at the Center, who were essential to getting this report out, including Peter Juul and Sean Duggan. And I also want to thank people in our editorial department who deserve high praise including Shannon Ryan, Annie Schutte and Robin Pam. And I finally want to thank the Open Society Institute who partially funded this report.

We have three excellent panelists here to discuss this report and more broadly U.S. policy. Their bios you should have found on your chairs, but let me quickly introduce them. It is an honor to have Ambassador Jim Dobbins here who knows more about Afghanistan probably than just about anyone else. He directs RAND's International Security and Defense Policy Center and has held numerous positions in the State Department and the White House. He handled a variety of crisis management assignments as the Clinton administration's special envoy for Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo. But most importantly for this panel, he was the Bush administration's first special envoy for Afghanistan. In the wake of September 11th, Ambassador Dobbins was designated as the Bush administration's representative to the Afghan opposition. He helped organize and then represented the United States at the Bonn Conference where a new Afghan government was formed. He is responsible for whatever progress has been made in Afghanistan.

We are also very pleased to have Alexander Thier here who is senior advisor in the Rule of Law program at the U.S. Institute of Peace. He's the director of the Project on Constitution Making, Peacebuilding, and National Reconciliation, and co-founder of the International Network to promote the Rule of Law. He is responsible for several rule of law programs in Afghanistan, and prior to joining USIP he was the director of the project on Failed States at Stanford University. He spent more than six years on the ground in Afghanistan, including from 2002 to 2004, when he was a legal advisor to Afghanistan's Constitutional and Judicial Reform Commission in Kabul. And he also worked as a U.N. and NGO official in Afghanistan during the Civil War from 1993 to 1996.

I think most of you know our very own Larry Korb. Larry is the senior vice president for national security and international policy here at the Center, and a senior advisor to the Center for Defense Information. Prior to joining the Center, Larry worked for almost every think tank in town, including the Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute. And he served as assistant secretary of defense from 1981 through 1985.

Thank you so much for being here. I'm now going to turn it over to Larry to discuss the report, and then we'll have your comments. Thank you.

MR. LAWRENCE KORB: Thank you very much, Caroline. And welcome, all, here to the Center. I wanted to commend Caroline for coming up with the idea that we had to do something about it and seeing this project through, and also thank Jim and Alex for joining us. They're the real experts. We're putting this report out and we're interested in their comments, and they've also been helpful to us as we've written this report.

I think it's interesting that on the sixth anniversary of the American military invasion of Afghanistan there was almost no press at all. In October we were trying to get an op-ed published, and people gave it very little attention and I think that indicates this idea of the forgotten front. And we would also argue it's the central front really in the war against terror. That the consequences of not prevailing in Afghanistan are very

great, and in fact I would argue and we argue here, even greater than not achieving your objectives in Iraq. It would be a failure not only for the United States, we'd be the second major power that's not been successful in Afghanistan, but even NATO. This is the first time NATO has operated outside of its traditional areas, and this is something if we want to deal with the challenges of the 21st century, it would be very important for NATO to be able to operate out of its traditional area.

Now, the report basically says there are three problems that you have in dealing with the situation in Afghanistan. One, as Caroline mentioned, lack of attention and the focus on the part of people in government and I think the public at large. Number two, resources: you need more resources, both in terms of military as well as financial and diplomatic, and finally coordination. Whatever else you may think about the efforts there, if you take a look at it, the whole is not greater than the sum of the parts given the involvement of some 37 nations and an untold number of non-governmental organizations.

Now, it's getting worse, and Caroline mentioned the event – not only the horrible events that happened this morning in Afghanistan where some five lawmakers were killed and maybe 100 people, but the situation obviously in Pakistan is not helpful in terms of dealing with this situation. There is a window opening, but it's not going to remain open forever, and you've got to move and move quickly.

Now, the goals that you're trying to accomplish in Afghanistan are relatively simple and straightforward. You want to deny sanctuary to al Qaeda and its affiliates, and you want to build a stable, secure state that is not threatened by internal conflict and does not threaten its neighbors.

So the question becomes how do you do it? Well, the overarching strategy has got to be you've got to really emphasize a counterinsurgency framework, which we're moving toward, but not to the extent that we should. There's still too much emphasis on the military component and counter-terrorism, and of course the rage during the last year and dealing with Iraq has been the Army's counterinsurgency manual. Well, if you take a look at that, that's applicable really to Afghanistan. And then finally, you need to commit for the long haul. This problem is not going to be solved overnight and we're talking, at least in our view, it would take at least a decade to achieve the goals that we've laid out.

Now, what are the challenges that you face and the things that you need to do to help accomplish your goals? First of all you have to build the capacity of the Afghan government. Remember, Afghanistan has never had a strong central government. You need to ensure that you have a government there that's able to provide the rule of law and provide services to its people. You've got a lot of problems in the ministries, particularly the Ministry of Interior, which of course, as you know, controls a lot of the security forces there, and that is riddled with corruption, and that certainly has to be cleaned up. You have to create and implement a judicial sector strategy to address the absence of the rule of law, support efforts to curtail corruption, not only in the ministries but throughout

the country, reform the Afghan police force, and make the Afghanistan government a true partner in this approach.

One of the things we discovered in doing this report is sometimes people work through the Afghan government, sometimes they don't, and there don't (sic) seem any rhyme or reason for getting them involved, but they have got to be seen as the key actor there, and until they do, it's going to be hard to get the people to cooperate in this counterinsurgency strategy.

Number two, you've got to increase security. You need more forces, both NATO as well as United Nations, and we also talk about considering bringing in some Muslim nations to help provide security. But it's not just more forces. It's got to be the right kind of forces. You have to have forces that understand and know how to deal with counterinsurgency. And then finally, on this recommendation, controversial among some people, you need a unified command. One of the things about military operations, you want to make sure you have one command and right now you have two commands: a U.S. command and a NATO command.

Number three, you've got to jumpstart or really start focusing on construction. And here again, obviously it's going to require more money. If you look at the amount of money, we've got all the figures in there in terms of the money we're providing to Afghanistan for reconstruction, as opposed to Iraq. You do need more money, you do need better coordination, and the Afghan government has got to be more involved in the reconstruction. Because they're the ones that can help you set the priorities, they're the ones that people have got to see as providing this reconstruction.

Fourth, you've got to reduce opium production. Afghanistan now supplies 93 percent of the world's opium. It's the largest part of their gross domestic product. The problem you have now is our strategy of eradication is working at cross-purposes, not only with counterinsurgency, but with the wishes of the Afghan government, and it focuses too heavily on the farmers and not on the traffickers. Because even if you eradicate some of the fields, what happens, the price goes up and the traffickers, they're getting as much money.

And then finally, and of course I'm sure there'll be a lot more questions about this then there would have been a week ago, is you've got to deal with the terrorist safe haven in Pakistan. And we've got to put much greater pressure on the government of Pakistan to ensure that the money we give them, something like \$10 billion in aid, that goes to counterinsurgency and dealing with the resurgence of al Qaeda and the Taliban along the Afghan-Pakistan border. And we would all – again, it's not in the report because obviously we didn't predict what was going to happen here. I think you ought to take a hard look at the aid you give right now to the government of Pakistan, because obviously they will not be using it to deal with the insurgency, even though that's what they claim. It will be much more dealing with their own domestic problems.

Let me conclude by saying – and we have a section in there which I think is very important. Even though many people in the administration conflate Iraq and Afghanistan, Afghanistan is not Iraq. The people there want us there. They support their

government. The international community is involved. And you cannot let this fail, and it will fail if you continue to just drift along with your current policy, don't improve the resources and don't improve the coordination, and focus more attention on it.

Thank you very much.

MS. WADHAMS: Ambassador Dobbins, if you could go next, please.

MR. JAMES DOBBINS: Thank you. I think the report is an excellent one. I think the recommendations are sound, and it also contains a wealth of material and various tables and forms which are easily accessible, attractively presented, and which I think pretty clearly indicate how we got to the situation we're in now.

It is remarkable in a way that in the aftermath of 9/11 we had such a rapid, brilliant and complete success, and yet now, six years later, we find ourselves in such difficulties, and it's worth asking how we got to this situation. In the aftermath of 9/11 we were able to overthrow the Taliban and, perhaps more importantly, replace it with a broadly-based representative and very moderate government within a matter of weeks. Kabul fell in late November. The Karzai government was inaugurated in mid-December. And the government was accorded full international legitimacy, was popular domestically, and was subsequently given a clear and unequivocal democratic mandate in elections that were relatively – were quite peaceful, and in which there was high participation and in which the international community found to be largely free and fair.

I would say that the responsibility for the current difficulties we face in Afghanistan are a combination of sins of omission and commission. Now the sins of omission are essentially the failure on the part of the international community led or, in this case not led, by the United States in those early years, in 2002 and 2003, to take advantage of the benign situation that we then faced to begin a comprehensive and substantial program of nation building, as we had done in previous such situations.

We needed during those months when the Taliban was in disarray, when al Qaeda was in flight, when there was no significant resistance in the country, to begin quickly to help the Afghan government to project its governance and provide public services to the population beyond the capital. And we failed to invest in that. This was not only a U.S. failure. It was a failure on the part of the international community as a whole, but the international community was looking to the United States to provide leadership.

Some of the figures are interesting in this regard, and many of them are in the report. There was a major international donors conference held in January of 2002, which raised \$5 billion for Afghanistan. That sounds like a lot of money until you divide it by the number of Afghans, at which point it's a lot less. The U.S. contribution to that – the U.S. pledge at that conference was \$290 million. So the U.S., which represents some 23 percent of global GDP, and which had just conquered this particular country, pledged 5 percent of the assistance.

The Iranian pledge was \$540 million. Iran, a country one-sixth the size of the United States with a GDP, probably one-twentieth the size of the GDP, pledged twice as much assistance as the United States. And I think it's important to compare these figures to figures that the United States has provided in other comparable situations like Bosnia, like Kosovo, where the amount of American, and indeed the amount of international assistance more broadly, was anywhere from 10 to 15 times higher during those initial periods.

Similarly in terms of the amount of security which was provided in the form of international peacekeepers, the contrast is even greater. On a per-capita basis, that is, on the proportion of international peacekeepers to population, the international community provided 50 times more security to Bosnia and Kosovo than they did to Afghanistan; that is, the ratio of international troops to population was 50 times higher in Bosnia and Kosovo than it was in Afghanistan. Now, there's a pretty easy equation that one can draw for this, which is low input, low output; that if you apply low levels of international economic assistance and military manpower to a post-conflict – in a post-conflict environment, what you get are low levels of economic growth and security. And that was clearly evident in the development of Afghanistan over the next several years.

The sins of commission I think largely lie not so much with the United States or with the Karzai government or with the international community, but lie with, or at least in, Pakistan. The Taliban insurgency is not a popular revolt against an intolerable or unacceptable government. It's an insurgency which is raised in, funded in, supplied in, and to some degree recruited in a neighboring country, in Pakistan. And it's important to understand the demographics of those – of this border region. The insurgency is basically a Pashtun insurgency. Now, that doesn't mean all Pashtuns support the insurgency. It simply means that all of the insurgents are Pashtuns, which I think broadly speaking is true, with the exception of some complete foreigners who are associated with it.

Most Pashtuns don't live in Afghanistan. Most Pashtuns live in Pakistan. Most Pashtuns have always lived in Pakistan. Three-fifths of the total Pashtun population is Pakistani and always has been. So the source for recruitment, for funding, for other things, transcends Afghanistan to a very significant degree. The degree to which the Pakistani government is responsible for this I think is still a subject of some debate, although it's difficult to escape the conclusion that they bear at least some responsibility for, at a minimum, tolerating, but also to some degree perhaps facilitating, the resurgence of this insurgency, one which incidentally now threatens them almost as much as it does Afghanistan.

And their reasons for doing that are several-fold. I mean first, there's a kind of geopolitical rationale. Pakistan looks to its relationship with Afghanistan largely in terms of its relationship with its larger, more powerful adversary, India. And it's keenly interested in not having to face hostile neighbors on both sides, and therefore to the degree that it perceives that Afghanistan is friendly with or even allied with India, it becomes very hostile to whatever regime is potentially in Afghanistan. And so in part, a desire to keep the Karzai government off balance, prevent the consolidation of a regime

there, may be driven in part by a concern that that regime will become too closely linked to India.

But there's also a domestic political component to this. There are several. One is the reliance that Musharraf has historically had upon the more extreme and fundamentalist elements of his society in order, for one thing, to continue to put pressure on India over Kashmiri. There's been a long historical association of the Pakistani state with what are essentially terrorists designed to undermine Indian rule in the parts of Kashmir that are controlled by India. This seems to have diminished lately, but there was a long term partnership there, a partnership which drew Afghanistan into it in the 1990s as well.

And finally, there's simply the desire to externalize Pashtun ambitions. The Pashtuns might theoretically want a better deal in Pakistan. They might want a larger proportion of Pakistan GDP devoted to their parts of the country. They are a significant proportion – a minority, but a significant proportion of the Pakistani population – and they're the least well-served portion of that population. They have the lowest level of public services, the smallest percentage of GDP on a per-capita basis supplied to them.

They might want to establish some sort of autonomy. They might even want to separate from Pakistan and create a Pashtunistan or, alternatively, become part of Afghanistan. Those are all potential aspirations. And to the extent these aspirations can be externalized, that is, to taking over Kabul rather putting pressure on Islamabad, that's a way of relieving a certain number of internal tensions and pressures. And so if these incentives don't actually lead the Pakistani government to actually support the insurgency, they do explain why it has been less active and less effective in suppressing the elements of the insurgency that take place in Pakistan.

Now, I think that most of what I've said is now generally accepted within the American administration, but I think we went through a long period during which the administration was, to quote Bob Woodward on the subject of Iraq, in a "state of denial" about the complicity of the Pakistanis in the mounting insurgency in Afghanistan. I believe that that's largely over and that there's a more candid recognition of the problem, and I think recent events in Pakistan will remove what further inhibitions there have been about addressing this aspect of the problem frankly and openly.

I do think that the report largely makes the right recommendations. I agree with Larry and with the report that the existence of two international military command structures operating within the same physical environment is a violation, in this case a rather blatant violation, of the military virtue of unity of command. And it's an invitation to fratricide, failure to render timely assistance, and to a confusion of roles and missions and attention between different components of the international presence there.

The existence of these two commands really is a lot more – it's actually worse than most people realize. Because it's not just that you have two commands in Afghanistan; you actually have two command chains going all the way to the president of the United States that don't meet until they get there. So you've got the NATO command

which operates under a four-star general – four-star American general – in Belgium. That is, the supreme allied commander and the American unites in that, operate under the European command, because that's what that commander's American hat is, and then you have a U.S. coalition command, and these are about the same size as I recall, in terms of number of troops, which is operating under a four-star general in Tampa, which is the central command. So you not only have two commands in Afghanistan, but you've got two four-star generals, each of whom is the link between those commands and the national command authority in Washington.

Now, almost any structure can be made to work, but structures that have this degree of dissonance and friction in them are just much more difficult to work effectively, and they are invitations for serious problems at some point down the road.

There's an equal need for better coordination on the civilian side where there's arguably even less clarity about who's in fact in charge. And this was partially because back in 2001 the U.S. wasn't really interested in taking charge of a large-scale nation-building operation, and the United Nations itself wanted to limit its own purview to largely the political implementation of the Bonn Agreement which they have succeeded in implementing rather brilliantly and rather surprisingly successfully.

But nobody really wanted to assume responsibility for all of the other tasks for building the police, building the army, building the ministries, creating civil society, creating free press, creating political parties and rebuilding the economy. These things got divvied out. One country took one, another country took another, and there was not overall sense of who was in charge, who was setting priorities, who was trying to ensure that all of this came together in a single coordinated strategy. So I think that that's still something that's lacking and we ought to be looking toward that, either by giving the UN leadership there a broader set of responsibilities, to include not just the political development, which they've done very well, but the economic and other nonmilitary tasks; or alternatively, creating a special ad hoc arrangement, as we did in Bosnia with a high representative, who doesn't answer to any particular organization, but answers to a collection of governments that appoint him and pay his salary and ask him to coordinate these efforts. Of the two, I tend to prefer the UN alternative because there's no sense in introducing yet another organization to an already complex mix, but I think one or the other would be desirable.

Now, I do think it's fair to say that the administration, I think, actually recognizes most of this and probably accepts most of the recommendations in this report, but it is an administration that's heavily distracted by other even more difficult situations. And I'm not sure they have the time or the attention or the resources to adequately carry out many of these recommendations.

Assistance to Afghanistan is going up. I think the assistance levels for 2008 will be something like \$10 billion, if I remember correctly, which is 20 times more than it was in 2002. This is good, but it is an indication of how much ground we lost and it's the exact opposite of the previous administration's approach in Bosnia and Kosovo, where

the tactic was to throw in huge amounts of troops and money in the beginning and then begin to taper them off.

So you put in, in Bosnia, 60,000 troops the first year and then you can cut them in half the next year because you didn't need 60,000. You made your point. You could have 60,000 troops there if anybody was going to challenge you, and once you'd made the point, you could begin withdrawing them. And similarly with the economic assistance, it tended to be very large in the beginning and then to taper off fairly rapidly over the next five to 10 years. We've done just the opposite in Afghanistan and the results are much less satisfactory.

This is also true on troop levels. We probably have there now – we, the international community, NATO and the U.S. – five times more troops than we had in 2002. Well, if you add five times more troops in 2002, we would have seen a lot more security promoted in the countryside, we would have seen reconstruction funding flow into the countryside. And by the time the threat from the reorganized Taliban emerging out of Pakistan had renewed, we would have had a population that had reasons to be loyal to the government, reasons to take risk to the government and we would have had a government that was more firmly implanted in the regions that the insurgency has responded to.

So I think – I would just conclude on a final point, which is that the reason we succeeded so quickly in 2001 was because we were able to work with a very broad coalition of countries that accepted our objectives and worked for them. There's a popular belief in the United States – in the aftermath of 9/11, the United States formed an international coalition and overthrew the Taliban. That wrong. In the aftermath of 2001, the United States joined an existing coalition that had been fighting the Taliban for most of a decade, and the addition of American air power allowed that coalition, which consisted of the Northern Alliance, Iran, India and Russia to overthrow the Taliban and replace it very quickly.

And we succeeded because we joined an existing coalition and because we detached Pakistan from the other side and we brought all of those countries, including Pakistan, Iran, Russia, India to the conference at which the Karzai government was chosen, and it was the intervention of those powers on our side which was decisive at many points in that conference in pushing it in the right direction.

So I don't think that we're going to do more than stem the deterioration in Afghanistan through the application of manpower and money. Military commitment by the United States may prevent the situation from getting worse, but only a successful diplomatic effort is going to make it better. And that effort is going to have to, once again, reconstitute this regional consensus in support of a peaceful non-threatening Afghanistan. And given the state of our relations with Iran on the one hand, and now Pakistan on the other, this is going to be a lot more difficult to replicate in 2007 or 2008 than it was in 2001.

MS. WADHAMS: Thank you, Ambassador Dobbins.

Alex, could you take over?

MR. ALEXANDER THIER: Yes. I want to thank Caroline and Larry, not only for inviting me to speak at this event, but also, I think, for this important initiative. A number of months ago, when Caroline contacted me and said that they were looking at doing something like this, I was enthusiastically supportive, I think, for many of the reasons that have already been expressed, that Afghanistan is certainly not getting its due and I think we all are already paying the price for that.

I wanted to start off this talk today with a brief tribute to Mustafa Kazimi, who is one of the parliamentarians that was killed in Baglan this morning, along with other parliamentarians, as well as a number of innocent civilians and women and children. They were visiting a sugar factory, one of the mundane things that we only pray Afghan politicians will be doing more of, but I wanted to express a brief tribute to him in particular.

He was an opposition spokesman in the parliament who recently had really been working as a bridge between some of the conservative forces in the parliament and the more moderate forces in the parliament. And in particular, he was instrumental in the passage of a new – recently of a new media law in Afghanistan. Debates over the media law for a while looked like they were going to go quite badly with undue sorts of restrictions, and that got turned around, in part due to his efforts and actions and his ability to mediate between these fairly divided camps within the current parliament. Kazimi, in many ways, I think embodies the epitome of what Afghanistan needs to move forward, which is well informed, well intentioned, public spirited former combatants who understand that the battle for Afghanistan is now a battle to rebuild the country.

I'm particularly opening this up because I just got back from Kabul last week and only about 10 days ago, I sat with Mustafa Kazimi in his office for about two hours and what we were discussing was – well, eventually, we did discuss suicide bombings, and I'll get to that. But what we were discussing was the constitution and the role of the parliament and the checks and balances that exist, or should exist, or are now developing between the three branches of government. And it's just really striking when you're talking to people like him, or the current speaker of the House, the current president of the Senate, the current chief of staff, President Karzai's chief of staff, all people who I met with in the last couple of weeks, and all to argue about the constitution and the issues of separation of powers, and how they're going to make their political system work going forward.

I can't emphasize strongly enough that having spent about four years in the civil war during the 1990s, seeing these people, all from different factions getting together and arguing about the constitution and not shelling each other, is really a dramatic improvement, and one that's important to hold in our minds, I think, as we think about what we're losing right now in Afghanistan.

We are almost to the week, six years since the fall of Kabul, which happened very rapidly as Jim outlined, and as I think this report really ably details, Afghanistan is facing a very serious crisis of governance and security that threatens to derail much of the progress that Jim outlined. The picture in Afghanistan right now is extremely complicated. I don't want people to leave this session thinking that everything is heading downhill.

It's very much a one-step-forward, one-step-back sort of situation, not only with these politicians, but I spent a bunch of time in the Supreme Court on this trip, and the thing that's remarkable is that it used to be that you would go to these institutions, you'd go to a ministry or the courts, and there were maybe one or two people, hopefully, at the top who were reasonably competent. And they had very little underneath them to support an institution that would actually implement the constitution or implement the sorts of gains that we're talking about.

And now, when you go to some of these institutions, there actually is another layer underneath them. There are a lot of people who have come up, either through experience over the last couple of years, have gone abroad, have some back from abroad, and there is the beginnings of institutional development in Afghanistan, which is absolutely fundamental to the success there, but it really is only the beginning.

And at the same time, you have some horrible countervailing forces. As I alluded to, almost like sort of creepy foreshadowing, as I think about it today, from a movie. When I was meeting with Kazimi, our meeting was interrupted by a message that came in saying that there was supposedly a suicide bomber patrolling Kabul that prevented me from going to my next appointment. It didn't turn out to be the case, but it certainly reinforces a really difficult and dangerous trend that's affecting a lot of parts of Afghanistan.

There have been a number of suicide bombings, not only in the unstable areas of the South and East this year, but in Kabul. Baglan is in the north of the country, one of the last places you'd expect there to be suicide bombers roaming around. There has been a real deterioration since 2005 in the security, both for individual Afghans, as well as for the international community, and this is having a dramatic influence on the way we operate and the way we think about Afghanistan and its future.

The Northern militias that Jim also alluded to are rearming. There are very alarming signs that a lot of these former commanders and warlords, and whatever you call them, who in some ways, give or take a few, have gone away with some of the effort to reestablish governance in Afghanistan. They've certainly tried as hard as they can to entrench themselves economically and politically in the areas that they live and work in, but for the meantime, they seem to be, at least many of them, on a gradual course towards politics and away from outright factional warfare.

There are dangerous signs that this could be reversing, in part because they fear that the Kabul government is too weak, that the resolve of the international community is too weak and that they're going to be called upon again, or at least feel in the position

again the need to repel enemies, whether it's each other, because these militias have been fighting each other for decades, or a resurgent Taliban is yet unclear. But the signs are there that some of the progress of demobilization and really, politicization of the conflict – and I mean that in a positive sense of moving the conflict into politics and away from the battle field – is being reversed.

I think one of the really critical and important things about this report is that there is a real wavering of long-term support for the mission in Afghanistan, and if we're serious about this mission, it is going to be a long-term one. I think that this comes from three places. Other elements of the international community, particularly at the moment, Germany, Canada and the Netherlands are wavering about their commitment to having soldiers in Afghanistan.

Now in the case of the Dutch and the Canadians, it's because they're actually in the South in the most hostile areas, and they're losing soldiers and for countries that consider themselves peacekeepers, and not war-makers in this day and age, their publics feel that they were sold a bill of goods that's not accurate. Fortunately, I think that their governments see this as a critical mission that does not only affect the United States, but that affects NATO and the security of Europe, as well as North America, and that they're sticking with it. But there's a real danger that unless serious work is done with these publics, that they are increasingly going to become against the war and that politicians are going to use this, as always, opportunistically, to win elections and endanger the presence of those forces there.

At home, I also worry, despite the fact that we see what is, I think, a continuing and dramatic bipartisan consensus here in Washington in support of Afghanistan, I worry that the miasma of Iraq, and the emphasis on the need to withdraw from Iraq, is going to affect Afghanistan and is going to affect people's perceptions of whether we should be in Afghanistan and whether we can succeed in Afghanistan. And so I think that there's critical work to be done with the population, our population, to explain why this mission is central, and that's why I think not only this report, but the effort that CAP is going to be undertaking around this report, is really essential.

And third, Afghanistan. The Afghan people have overwhelmingly supported this mission so far. You look at every opinion poll and there have been a number of good ones over the last couple of years, and they all show basically the same thing, that the Afghans support the new government and support the international military presence there. But there has been dramatic softening of that support in the last year, and it's the type of thing that can snowball, as people become disenchanted with the military forces because of tactics and civilian casualties, as people become disenchanted with the international community and the NGOs for driving around in expensive cars and collecting big salaries, but failing to deliver much in a practical way to the Afghan people, and most of all, disenchantment with the Afghan government which, of course, is seen alternately as being responsible for not making these things work, or at worst, being puppets of infidel occupiers.

And that's not to say that a lot of Afghans feel and fear the Americans and other forces as infidels, but there certainly is a core of the country that is susceptible to that sort of propaganda, and there's evidence that people, if not turning in droves to support the Taliban, are at least starting to turn away from the Karzai government.

So I won't go too deeply into the why we are here because I think that that's been ably and better covered by Jim than I would be able to, but the primary thing that I would point to, and this is recommendation or issue number one within the report, is this question of a crisis of governance in Afghanistan. I think that this is by far the most important factor of all five very important factors highlighted in the report.

Any analysis of the challenges in Afghanistan, whether through the prism of reconstruction, justice and the rule of law, counterinsurgency points over and over again to one central element, and that is at the end of the day, the need for effective and legitimate government in Afghanistan. That is our end state or exit strategy from Afghanistan. It is to have a stable Afghan government that can, with our continued support, but in the lead, address the challenges which face the country.

The state building mission, I think, as Jim has outlined has always taken a backseat to the counterterrorism mission, and even when it was done, it has not been done well. And as a result, I think our fundamental objective of building a competent government that can provide security and justice, and gain the trust of the Afghan people, has so dangerously lagged that we now find ourselves six years and \$120 billion-plus into this operation, with the feeling that things could still go completely off the rails.

Afghans are, I think, rightly leery of government after 30 years of war. They have to be given reason to trust government because government for Afghans, particularly over the last 30 years, has meant, at best, ineffectualness and at worst, severe repression. A lot of work that's been done on the security sector by ICG and AREU, the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit, as well the U.S. Institute of Peace and RAND, I think all points to a central problem, which is not only that there is a tremendous lack of capacity within the Afghan government, but the capacity that exists is corrupt and problematic.

Since Bonn, the government has included many people who the Afghan population considers to be war criminals, and I want to give a nod to one member of the audience, Nadir Nadery, who maybe didn't asked to be recognized, but Nadir is a member of Afghanistan's Human Rights Commission, and has been the focal point for the last several dangerous years on the question of transitional justice, and how does Afghanistan, while moving forward, also account for its past?

I think that this is fundamental to understand why this is so important. It's not just a question of wanting to get bad guys behind bars. In fact, that's not what most people are advocating. What is advocated is a process that will remove bad actors from positions of power so that they, a) do not continue to undermine the government through corruption, which is endemic, and drug trading, which is endemic throughout the government, but also to give the Afghan people a reason to believe in and trust the future of government.

Now, some of the former combatants, people like Mustafa Kazimi, are great symbols of the hope for the future of Afghanistan, that former combatants can not only participate in Afghan government, but can lead the transition from war to peace, but there are some people who really are beyond the pale and there have been some instruments that have been established to try and deal with that. There was a presidential appointments panel that was recently constituted to look at the most high level appointments, chiefs of police in provinces, governors and so on, but it's not being supported. It's not being supported by the Afghan government in a meaningful way, and it's not being supported by the international community, our embassy included. And the reasons for that, frankly, I think are specious because I think it ignores an overwhelming desire on the part of the Afghan people to have a government that it can trust and rely upon.

Let me move quickly – let me just say quickly I think that the government, or rather, this report makes some critical recommendations on shoring up the government. Focusing – and particularly from my experience in Afghanistan, I want to mention one thing in these last couple of weeks. There's a question of focusing on institutions rather than individuals is one that I just touched on a minute ago, but is really fundamental, and that goes all the way from the top to the bottom. One thing that I heard from people all over Kabul that we talked to is an Afghan phrase, which is also well known in English, which is, all the eggs in one basket.

A lot of politicians, well meaning politicians, criticize the U.S., in particular, for putting all of its eggs into the Karzai basket. Now, this is not a criticism of President Karzai. It's a criticism of a narrow strategy for thinking about what the future politically of Afghanistan is and can be. And the political future of Afghanistan has to be a diverse one in which there are lot of actors, and that there's not a very strong perception that any actor in particular is the one that is supported, particularly by the U.S. Embassy, as the behemoth of the international community in Afghanistan, but it also applies below Karzai.

We need to focus on institution building in Afghanistan, and this may be one of the most obvious things, but the fact that we have not engaged, in these last six years, in a crash program to establish a competent Afghan civil service is one of the things that is most undermining the mission there. This is particularly true, I think, in the justice sector, but spreads beyond the justice sector to many of the other sectors. You simply do not have competent people, largely in Kabul, let alone spread throughout Kabul's 34 provinces, who can run basic administration in Afghanistan.

The police, the courts, schools, these are the things that Afghans look to as their symbols of government, and unless they are functioning, unless they have competent individuals who are helping them to run, then we're getting nowhere. And our money – the money, there's been a need for more money in Afghanistan, but frankly, the Afghan government can't spend the money that it gets right now, and this is in part due to the fact that we have not paid enough attention on establishing the fundamental core of institutions that's going to make further development possible in the country.

And finally, I just want to say a word about security, and we can come back to this because I think it's a critical thing. Suicide bombing has increased dramatically if you look at the curve since 2002. Battlefield commanders say that part of the reason for this is imported tactics from Iraq, and part of it is because the Taliban don't do well on the battlefield when we confront them directly, which is true, and so they're engaging in other tactics, but that's not to say that these tactics are not extremely effective.

You can derail an enormous amount of operations in the south and the east for example, but also in the north and other places outside Kabul by a few well placed suicide bombs because the international community is deeply concerned about security and that means many operations, development operations getting out, get stopped. Getting into the U.S. Embassy in Kabul right now is virtually impossible, and getting out is impossible. Our diplomats do not get out of that embassy. They are sequestered there for security reasons.

I had tried to set up a meeting with somebody at USAID for the following day at 1:00 in the afternoon, and he got back to me saying that his 24 hour window for giving notice to security, just to come out to perfectly safe Kabul to meet with 15 other people from the UN and other embassies and NGOs, had not been met and he couldn't attend that meeting. That's not a single story. That's the story of our embassy every day and it greatly hobbles our ability.

But in the south and the east, we also have a real clear problem with the counterinsurgency strategy. Some people that I talked to there said we're simply not implementing the great new counterinsurgency strategy which was outlined for us. Clear, hold, build is the simple way to say that strategy, but the strategy that's being implemented in the southeast, as was described to me by somebody in Kabul, is called, mowing the lawn. And that means you go in and you mow down the insurgents, and then you wait for a while to let the grass grow enough that it seems like trouble might be brewing and then you go and you cut the lawn again. That is clearly not an effective means to fight the part of the war that does still need to be fought there.

And just one more word on Pakistan. I think that we will soon be pointing to the days when our limited cooperation with Islamabad on counterterrorism circa 2006 looked good. I am deeply troubled by the events in Pakistan this week. I think the severity of the actions by the military have stunned people, and I think that it is clear that these actions are more focused on the political future of Musharraf than they are on shoring up their counterinsurgency strategy. There's very little evidence that what's been done was done to somehow make them more effective in that strategy.

And as Ahmed Rashid said the other day, the real winners of Musharraf's second coup are the Taliban, both in Pakistan and in Afghanistan, because it has undermined the capacity of the military to effectively pay attention to what's happening in those tribal areas. And as Jim ably described, those tribal areas are the fount of the insurgency and unless dealt with, there's not a whole lot we'll be able to do in Afghanistan to prevent it from continuing. I'll leave it there and wait for questions.

MS. WADHAMS: Thank you so much. I'm going to now turn it over to the audience for questions for our panelists. If you could wait for the microphones, state your name and affiliation, that would be great. I need to ask the press to go first, so if the press has questions, if you could raise your hand. Okay. So let's go to the non-press. Sir, here with the blue tie, blue and white.

Q: Hello. I'm not with press. (Unintelligible) – I'm a defense counselor at the Estonian Embassy here, and I have a question about the poppy situation. It seems to be one of our trickiest things. And there have been some recommendations put forward in Europe about actually buying up poppy production. I think the – (unintelligible) – council in Paris, and also, if I got it correctly, the European Parliament also said something about that to that effect. So I would like to ask the panelists what their opinion is about that general idea put forward in Europe.

And secondly, that's about security. Your study says on page 24 that the U.S., Canada and Netherlands and UK are the only countries deployed in the south of Afghanistan. I'd like to point out that Estonia, Denmark, and Romania have also a substantial number of forces in the South; Estonians and Danes in Helmand and Romanians in Kandahar. And we have suffered a number of casualties and those forces are caveat-free, so just a clarification there. Thanks.

MS. WADHAMS: Do any of you want to take the opium question?

MR. DOBBINS: I'll say a few words and maybe Alex and others will as well. I think that the objections that are put forward to a large scale program of legalizing, and then buying the crop for medicinal purposes, are two-fold: first of all, that it would simply drive up the price, that you'd be, in effect, competing with the illegal drug market and you would be competing against them and you'd drive up the price. As the price went up, the incentive to plant would grow up and logically, the size of the crop would increase, so that's one argument.

The second is that the Afghan government and, indeed, the international community lack almost any capacity to implement any program outside Kabul – that the number of people who actually could oversee, implement, and account for the funds and the opium are so limited that a large-scale program would be virtually impossible to implement.

That said, I think what the Senlis Council is proposing is a small trial, a trial in a very geographically limited zone, to test the feasibility of the project, which, if demonstrated, could then be expanded. And personally, I'm sympathetic to the idea of giving it a trial in a very limited area just to see whether the incentives would work and whether – and the degree of oversight that would be required, and then make conclusions based on something other than abstract arguments, which is what we're doing at the moment.

MR. THIER: I think it's an interesting question, and I largely agree with what Jim said. I think that it is important to make a distinction between the idea of granting Afghanistan one of the few worldwide medical opium-growing licenses that are mostly now controlled by India, Turkey and Australia, to give them some economic benefit in a place that is a natural poppy-growing area. And I think that that's an interesting possibility and one that I would support, and I think that a pilot project to see if it could be made effective should be studied.

But for the reasons that Jim outlined, I think that a large-scale program is unlikely to ever work, in part because it would be a terrifically difficult regulatory framework to enforce in Afghanistan, but also because the cost would also be prohibitive. And, frankly, the world demand for opium is minuscule in comparison to Afghanistan's current production. So I think that it's important to separate these suggestions a little bit. It's a good idea to try a pilot project for economic reasons, but not primarily as a means to fight the illicit opium growth.

I just wanted to say, because you raised the question of the opium problem, he laughingly told me this himself, but our new ambassador to Afghanistan, Bill Wood, is being called Chemical Bill in the European press right now. And that's because they have – with the support of the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Division of the State Department are sort of hell-bent on this idea of spraying opium poppies with herbicides to kill them in Afghanistan. And there is so much evidence that this is a wrongheaded approach. As one person said, every goat with a bent ear and every stalk of wheat that dies, if such a policy were to be implemented, would be blamed on our spraying of herbicides.

So it's one question whether spraying is effective – and I think that is actually a question, given the experience in Columbia – but it's an entirely different question to say whether a spraying policy would so severely undermine the broader goals in Afghanistan, which the report lays out, I think is so foolhardy to have made me continually somewhat mystified as to why they continue to push this line so hard.

MR. KORB: I would say two things about this. We had considered this, but we – like Alex said, we recognized that this wouldn't solve the problem. So I think it's important to keep in mind, because some people have argued, well, Afghanistan could be just like Turkey and that would make this problem go away. It won't, and we have no objections to this pilot project.

The other, in terms of the nations, we did say there are 37 nations that are involved there and we – on page 24, we mentioned the ones who've taken the most casualties. We didn't mean to diminish all of the countries that have been there. In fact, we make the argument that's why it's so – you have so much better chance to succeed, is because you've got so many nations involved.

MR. DOBBINS: Let me just make one point on the eradication. First of all, it is hard to understand how the support for this has – how this has advanced. We know that the U.S. military are against aerial eradication, we know the allies are against aerial

eradication, and we know the Afghan government is against aerial eradication. I must say it's a real credit to the State Department to be able to prevail against those odds. (Laughter.) I'm absolutely amazed.

There is one argument for aerial eradication that rather appeals to me, although I generally accept the conventional wisdom that it's not a good idea, which is that you can – that it's the only way that you can actually eradicate your enemy's crops. The current system is based on physical eradication; that is, people go in and beat the crops down with sticks, and you can only do that in friendly areas. In other words, you can only eradicate the crops of Karzai's supporters, because they are the only ones who will let you. You can't go into the Taliban areas; it's too dangerous. Eradication only takes place in the areas where the government is supported.

And so clearly, a program of physical eradication has the worst possible political – in that you're harming your friends and simply increasing the price realized by your enemies, who aren't subject to the eradication. Aerial eradication does let you go after your enemies and their crops. So, I mean, I think that's the one argument that I've heard for it that actually makes sense.

MS. WADHAMS: Mark Schneider, in the back here?

Q: Mark Schneider, International Crisis Group. I sort of followed Alex out of Afghanistan last week. Thank you very much for the report and for the event today. It is crucial, in terms of what Alex was talking about, the need to demonstrate that the U.S., at least, and hopefully, the rest of the allied community, will make a long-term commitment to governance and to reconstruction in Afghanistan. Most of the people that I've met with in the government and the UN and the allied community really were in doubt whether the political support would continue over time.

And one of the reasons, which I think is – it's touched on in the report in several ways is, there is concern about the inability of the Karzai government to take certain steps that are crucial to good governance and are crucial to any effective counter-narcotics policy, and that is to remove people in government and not to appoint people to provincial police level, particularly, who are engaged in drug-trafficking. If I found anything there that was disturbing, it was that agreed-upon mechanisms for anti-corruption, the joint board on vetting senior appointments, which had been agreed to at the – by the Afghanistan accord between the Karzai government, the opposition and the international community has not moved forward.

And the mechanisms that were to be put in place to prevent, in a sense, corrupt people from having official jobs during the day and unofficial jobs at night, those mechanisms are not working. And that's a major concern, because what it says to the population is that this counter-drug policy is aimed at the farmer and the big guys are getting off, and that governance is not supporting me. And that's very devastating when you have an insurgency to deal with, and so I would urge the continued focus on that issue.

MS. WADHAMS: Any comments on that? Yes, sir, right here. Sorry, right up front, second row.

Q: James Kitfield, from *National Journal* magazine. I'd like the panel to address this issue that Ambassador Dobbins said, that as long as you have a relationship with Iran, in the situation that it is now on one side, and as long as you have a Pakistan government, for the reasons we can all see, it seems totally incapable of going into the tribal areas and stopping the sanctuary that al Qaeda and the Taliban have gotten in its tribal regions. How difficult this will be because to be quite honest with you, I don't see either one of those things turning around any time soon. Could you all sort of explore, if that remains the case, which I think it's reasonable to assume, can we get Afghanistan right?

MS. WADHAMS: Larry, you want to take that?

MR. KORB: Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. I'll start and I'm sure Jim and Alex can amplify and probably give you a better insight. One of the things we've tried to point out in this report, and all the reports that we've done, is you can't solve these things individually; you have to solve them regionally. And I think that's important.

We talk about getting a contact group, which involves Afghan's neighbors, including India. We've sort of talked a little bit about India today, but we haven't really talked about the role that they could play. And then, of course, if India plays a constructive role, that will help you with Pakistan because it's been pointed out a lot of the money we give to Pakistan to fight the insurgency goes to buy weapons, that they're worried more about India.

In the same way, in terms of Iran, there's no doubt, and we point out in the report, that they've turned away from giving the excellent cooperation that Jim has pointed out. In fact, on other occasions, I've heard Jim say, without the Iranians, the Bond Accord would not have been as successful as they were. But I think if you're going to deal with Iran, you're going to have to deal with them in terms of the situation in Iraq, as well as Afghanistan, and a whole host of other issues.

My personal view is you've got to sit down with them without preconditions, because you're not going to solve these problems without them. So I think that's the way that you can do it, but your point is well taken. You can't solve these things individually; it has to be done regionally.

MS. WADHAMS: Jim?

MR. DOBBINS: I think that to the extent the Iranians are misbehaving in Afghanistan, it's largely a function of their relationship with the United States, not a function of their perceived self-interest in Afghanistan. I think they're interest in Afghanistan, and ours, are largely coincident, as they were in 2001. We both support the same factions in Afghanistan basically, and to the extent they're now shifting in

providing limited support to the Taliban or other insurgent groups, it's largely, I think, a not so subtle reminder to the United States that they could be even more unhelpful if driven to it.

Pakistan, I think that's not something that a simple shift in American policy is going to solve. It's a much more serious fundamental problem, but I do think that we need to do for Afghanistan – for Pakistan, we do need a concerted international strategy for dealing with Pakistan, much as we had a concerted international strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union, not because it's an enemy or an adversary, but because we've got an alliance that's now tied down in Afghanistan as the result of what's coming across that border, and we need to understand it and we need to have common approaches to it.

And we need to acknowledge that Pakistan is, always has been, and probably will remain the central front in any international war on terrorism – if one wants to use that phrase – because that's still where people who want to blow up buildings in London go for inspiration and guidance. They're not going to Iraq; they're going to Pakistan. And so, a candid acknowledgement that this is our principal foreign policy – foreign and security policy challenge today is, I think, the beginning of wisdom.

MR. THIER: I would only add to that by saying that I think that right now, obviously, Pakistan is experiencing some extreme instability, and I think that we have to be very careful. Pakistan is a much bigger game than just Afghanistan for the United States and the region. When you hear people on both sides of the aisle talking about the need to think about unilateral action in Pakistan to get rid of insurgent hideouts, I think is a terrible idea right now.

The instability in Pakistan has a lot of factors, some of which have to do with those areas where militancy is on the rise, and some of which have nothing to do with that. But to stoke the flames of anti-Americanism and in favor of Islamic militancy in Pakistan at this movement of instability, which any – even that rhetoric does, let alone actual attacks, I think is a grave error. And so I think that we need to be careful.

I think that what we do need to do, to act at the moment, along the lines with the recommendation of this report, is to have something of a surge in troop levels that can be dedicated to the Afghan side of the Afghan-Pakistan border. I mean, we're never going to stop everything coming across there, but we could certainly do more, together with the Afghan government, than what we're doing now. And given the fact that this instability, I think, is a boon to those insurgents, we need to do more where we clearly can do more now, and that's on the Afghan side of the equation.

MS. WADHAMS: Thank you. Sir? Right here, the blue-striped shirt.

Q: Lowell Smith. This is a question for Ambassador Dobbins. You've stated that the recommendations in this report are probably generally acceptable by the administration. By that, do you mean the State Department administration or the Department of Defense administration, or both? And two, if they are generally

acceptable to the – one or two or both of the administrations, what is preventing their more proactive implementation, other than the divergence of attention in Iraq?

MR. DOBBINS: I don't think that there's a difference between State and Defense, as far as I know, on Afghanistan. There may be a difference between the Bush administration and the Cheney administration, but not between – (laughter) – State and Defense, at least as far as I know. And more seriously, I don't know that there're necessarily differences between the vice president and others either.

I think it's partially limited resources. They have, as I have suggested, increased assistance to Afghanistan by 20 times. Between 2002 and 2008, they've quadrupled the number of troops. So you know, they are putting in more resources, but clearly, they are limited by the immense and much larger commitments in Iraq. And that's particularly true on the manpower side, where it's really unrealistic to think the United States is going to put in large numbers of new manpower in the short term.

They're also limited by simply the intractability of some of the problems and the difficulties of securing agreement among all of the parties, for instance, the idea that we should appoint a czar or a supremo or somebody who's in charge of coordinating international assistance and non-military aspects of reconstruction. The administration agrees with that. They've been talking to other countries in an effort to decide whether it's in the UN or some other structure, and who should do it, and they simply haven't been able to get agreement for a variety of reasons.

When you say Iraq is absorbing resources, it's also absorbing time and attention. And so the secretary of state, the secretary of defense and other senior officials at the top simply don't have the time to devote to Afghanistan that they would if it was our only war. If it was the only thing that was at the top of our international agenda, then they would be able to – they would be more successful in building coalitions and securing cooperation of other governments and, of course, of applying resources.

MS. WADHAMS: Yes, this lady in the black sweater.

Q: Hello. Paula (Lloyd ?) from IRG. I just have one quick comment. When you mentioned the diplomats in Kabul that don't get out, I'd say that's very true, but you do have State Department, USDA and USAID who are out in the field, and your first civilian casualty was USDA representative in the east.

My question is, I hear from – I heard in this panel that we need to focus on counterinsurgency, and then again, that we need to focus on nation-building. Those aren't two – they aren't the same thing, and I'm curious to see how you think the best way forward is for doing that at the same time. A separate question is, if you could address information about the growing – the quietly growing influence of Russia, I'd be interested in that. Thank you.

MS. WADHAMS: Larry, you want to take the first question?

MR. KORB: I think if you read the counterinsurgency manual that was put out, they emphasize that you've got to put nation-building and political first. And, in fact, they say don't overuse force because if you do, you're going to undermine the other goal. So that's what we were trying to say, that you basically – the military has recognized this and moved along. Now, you've heard some other comments here today about whether, in fact, they have done that, but at least it's on paper.

Now, of course, one of the problems you have is if you don't have enough troops and you're worried about security, then of course, you call an air strike and, of course, that does not help you in terms of a political settlement and gaining the confidence of the people, and that's what we're trying to point out there. So in terms of counterinsurgency, nation-building, obviously, has got to be a part of it, at least according to the new manual.

MS. WADHAMS: Can anyone speak to the influence of Russia?

MR. DOBBINS: I'm not sure. I think the Russian influence is not necessarily malign from our standpoint. It could become so, if as Alex suggested, some of the former Northern Alliance elements are beginning to doubt the capability of the Karzai government to hold the line, Russia would be one source of support and supply that they might turn to.

The Russians, like the Iranians, were actually quite helpful in the aftermath of 9/11, and a Russian demarche made in Kabul at the behest of Colin Powell, but made by the – at the direction of the Russian foreign minister, created one of the main breakthroughs in the Bonn negotiations for the formation of the Karzai government.

So the Russians were quite helpful and quite constructive in that period. I haven't heard of anything particularly troubling they're doing, but that doesn't mean it's not happening. And maybe Alex is more aware of it, but it certainly would be true that if you begin to see a disintegration of the Karzai coalition, then elements of that would begin looking for foreign sponsors.

MR. THIER: I haven't heard anything different.

MS. WADHAMS: Any more questions? Yes?

Q: Thank you. My name is Elizabeth Rood. I'm a Foreign Service officer with the State Department. I'm one of a large number of Foreign Service officers, who are right now in language training bound for Afghanistan in the coming year. I'm going to a PRT. I noticed that you have a number of recommendations with respect to PRTs in the report. I wonder if you could discuss it a little bit, the effectiveness of the PRTs as you have been able to examine them, and why you have made the recommendations that you have made. Thank you.

MS. WADHAMS: Larry, you want to speak to that?

MR. KORB: Well, I think that the PRTs are basically, the way they go. If you go back to the comment that was made before, Alex was talking about the people who won't leave the embassy. There are people out all over the country and that's certainly part of the counterinsurgency strategy, and you have to ensure they get folks like yourself and from other agencies, that it can't all be military.

The only thing, I think, goes back to this – after we talked about coordination. Now, all of the PRTs working together, who's in charge, are they – do they have one central authority? One of the problems you have there is you would have PRTs that are set up by different countries and many times, they are basically not acting in the same way and sometimes at cross-purposes. So what we would try to get in this whole report is the whole is not the greater than the sum of the parts, and it includes, as well, the PRTs.

MS. WADHAMS: Do you have any comments?

MR. THIER: Yes, I think that the PRT issue is a really interesting one. Obviously, it was expanded out into Iraq. It has been a very, very unevenly conceived and implemented strategy thus far in Afghanistan. I think that many of these things are laid out in the report, but let me highlight a couple of them. First of all, no PRT is alike. It's almost silly to talk about a PRT unless you're talking about a particular one in any generalized sense. They vary greatly in terms of the size of the PRT, in terms of the civilian component within the PRT, and in terms of the mission that the PRT is meant to be fulfilling.

I recently drove by the PRT in the Panjshir Valley, which happens to be an American PRT, and they're not even allowed to carry guns because the authorities in the Panjshir Valley, who keep things pretty secure said, you're welcome up here, but you don't need to carry guns. Carrying guns will attract people who want to shoot you, not defend you against people who want to shoot you.

There's a PRT that's run by New Zealand in Bamyan, which is doing all kinds of great work, building the university and so on. They get out into the population. But then you have other PRTs which are a very, very thick military shell with a very, very small, soft civilian center. And the military objectives in those PRTs dominate, and I mean that both in the sense of primarily a force protection perspective, but also in terms of wanting to work in the areas and on the areas that they feel are of most interest, as opposed to what they civilians want.

And so there hasn't been a consistent enough approach to evaluate them effectively. But I think that one of the conclusions, which is in the report, which is fundamental, is that if the PRTs are actually going to serve as any kind of a mechanism to enhance civilian governance in Afghanistan, which is one of the things that they're billed as doing, then they need to have a much larger civilian component, which is much more closely tied to central government objectives and provincial objectives, as opposed to being essentially a firebase where occasionally people get out and give money to a school and give money to a well project or an irrigation project.

They're non-integrated into the national development strategy, and they don't have the means to be integrated into the national development strategy. And unless that works, then I don't think that they can ever be effective mechanisms for delivery of development in the difficult environments that they function in.

MR. DOBBINS: First of all, I'd just like to express my appreciation and support for your willingness to go out and do this difficult job in that kind of environment. I do think that PRTs are a second-best alternative to the preferable arrangement, which is more normal, which is that the military establishes security and then the civilians are free to circulate and do the other non-military tasks, not encumbered by the need to live in military concerns, wear flack vests and helmets, travel in military convoys, and behave, for all intents and purposes, as if they were soldiers, which definitely reduces their capability of adding value to the effort by bringing unique civilian skills and capabilities.

That said, in areas of very high violence and insecurity, it's better than not doing it at all, and certainly, there are areas in Afghanistan where that's the case. There are other areas where it's not so clear that this is, in fact, the best. You've talked about a PRT in the Panjshir Valley, where they're not even allowed to carry weapons because there's no risk. Well, why do you have a PRT? Why didn't the AID just open a branch office in the Panjshir Valley and do its business, hiring some Afghan guards to provide normal perimeter security and make sure people don't come and rip up your cash box.

But we've established this model and we're sort of applying it uncritically everywhere. That said, once you've got the model, you might as well use it. And it probably is the only model that will allow the civilian agencies of the government to operate in highly insecure areas.

When I said that there was a need for better coordination of the non-military aspects of the mission in Afghanistan, the PRTs are perhaps the primary example of a lack of adequate coordination with many nations conducting many programs in many different parts of the country, which they are only with some difficulty coordinating on a national basis, and which neither NATO, nor the UN, nor anybody else are coordinating on an international basis.

MS. WADHAMS: Thank you so much. I think we need to wrap this up. If you have any closing remarks? No, you're all set? Thank you so much for coming. And please feel free to contact us if you have any further questions.

(Applause.)

(END)