

June 5, 2013

Washington, D.C.

Session 1 Panel Member
Michèle A. Flournoy
Board of Directors, Center for a New American Security;
former U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

MICHÈLE A. FLOURNOY: Good morning, everyone. Let me add my words of thanks to you for including me in this very august lineup. And congratulations to IFPA and Fletcher for your fortieth anniversary of a conference, not only this one but many, many meetings that you've convened that I think people here in Washington both inside and outside government, have come to rely on to really host a needed conversation at critical times and produce the kinds of insights that are very helpful to policymakers and everyone interested in national security. So, thank you.

We've already heard from this morning's speakers about the very complex and volatile security environment that we find ourselves in. The U.S. really is at a strategic inflection point. We are coming out of more than a decade of fighting two large simultaneous wars. And the question is where do we set our sights as we lift our gaze and we begin to look forward over the horizon?

And as I look out at the world, I see many of the same things that Admiral McRaven talked about, Ambassador Pickering, Ash Carter. We see certainly fundamental shifts in the balance of power, particularly in regions like Asia where you have the rise of China, the rise of India, and real questions about how the integration of those powers is going to affect the broader international system and the rules of the road that we all operate by day to day.

We see persistent threats like terrorism. I think it's fair to say that we've made tremendous strides in putting pressure on al-Qa'ida senior leadership in the Afghanistan/Pakistan region. But we've also seen the organization morph, grow new affiliates in other geographically dispersed, primarily in under-governed or ungoverned areas. And we see that from East Africa to North Africa to the Arabian Peninsula and now to the heart of the Middle East. And so this set of threats is not going away, but how we deal with them in the future is going to require both vigilance and adaptation.

Proliferation, we continue to see threats from whether it's North Korea and its provocative behavior, its continued pursuit not only of nuclear weapons but also long range ballistic missiles to deliver them that could threaten our homeland. To Iran, which is doggedly pursuing a nuclear capability which could have huge ramifications and cascading proliferation throughout the Middle East region.

We see a number of other challenges. I like to talk about the contested and congested global commons, the air, sea, space, cyberspace domains, that are now becoming areas of greater both cooperation and in many areas competition. These are areas where we can imagine in the future U.S. freedom of action being challenged, if not constrained, unless we take the steps necessary to continue to grow our capabilities. So I'm not going to repeat all of the characterizations we've heard of the environment, but what I will say is in previous periods of military drawdown or budgetary pressure, often those have accompanied the end of a war and the period of greater peace, or strategic pause.

My point is we're not so lucky this time. There is no strategic pause, there is a broad range of challenges and opportunities, but a very volatile and complex environment that will continue to demand great attention and resources.

We are, however, in a constrained budgetary environment, and here I would say I see this as an era of budgetary austerity. Much as many of us who've worked on defense would like to be treated like the FAA and be told, "You are too important and we're going to make you well," I don't think realistically when I talk to people on Capitol Hill, I don't think that's where we're going to come out. And so I see a five- to ten-



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year period of much greater austerity within which we're going to have to work. And that means making some very tough strategic choices, as Ash talked about. This is a time when we have to be very clear eyed about our priorities and what we want to protect and where we will necessarily have to accept and manage a degree of risk.

It's also a time where I think we as a country need to rise to the occasion. We need to go back to the tried and true practice of American democracy, of being willing to engage in principled compromise. Compromise is what makes divided government work; the kind of political paralysis that we are seeing here in Washington today is not only hurting our economy and the American people, it's also giving rise to a very erroneous and I think pernicious narrative of U.S. decline abroad. Can we support our alliance commitments? Will we be there when an adversary is aggressive or coerces a friend?

This is something we have to put a stop to. And I think we know how to do it, we have a history of resilience, we have a history of rising to these kinds of occasions and surprising everyone as a result. So I would like to see us surprise the world and move forward through this period.

But I think as we go forward and particularly coming out of the last decade, the U.S. needs a more sustainable national security strategy. It needs a strategy that can sustain American leadership in the world. I'm one who believes that now is not a time to retrench. Now is not a time to embrace some form of neo-isolationism. We are the indispensable power and partner in the world. We are the partner that is able to inspire and enable and support coalitions of the willing allies, basically common responses to common challenges and threats. And no other power that I can see can play that role. And when we don't play it, very negative things happen.

But we need a more sustainable strategy than we've seen in the recent past. And so, I would call for a policy of smart engagement. And what do I mean by smart? First of all, as Ambassador Pickering said, we need to be more selective about how and when we use military force on a large scale. Second, we need a much more integrated and more balanced approach, a whole of government approach, to dealing with the various challenges we face. We need to not only better use all of our instruments of power together, but also take a smarter approach to resourcing them.

I mean, I for one, am someone who loves to see the Department of Defense on steroids, but not when every other agency of government is kept on life support. It just doesn't make any sense. I can't tell you the number of times where we've toiled away in the situation room or some other venue to try to come up with an integrated plan for a major country or problem only to send it up to Capitol Hill, have it broken up, run through the various committee stovepipes, come out with a DOD piece fully funded and the State Department and AID pieces funded at less than 50 percent. Well, guess what? Your plan doesn't have any coherence anymore when that happens. So we need to take a much more balanced approach as a nation to allowing truly effective whole-of-government approaches.

I also think the last key element of a smart engagement strategy is putting much more emphasis on prevention, preventing conflict, preventing crises, and building the capacity of key partners in troubled areas. Enabling them to take the lead in securing their own environments. And here's where I think the SOF mentality of by, with, and through, is something we all need to learn from and think about how to apply.

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So I wanted to take a few minutes to talk about what I think the implications for SOF are, of all of this. The strategic guidance that was laid out a little over a year ago really emphasized that SOF would remain a priority because it is such a critical instrument in so many of the areas that we've been talking about. I think the full range of traditional missions from conducting non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs) to doing hostage rescue to building partner capacity remain very important today. But I want to highlight just a couple of key areas where I think we really need to put some extra attention.

The first is really scoping out a concept and a vision for what the sustained global counterterrorism campaign will look like given the morphing of al-Qa'ida, given the network of affiliates and given the rise of some of these groups in locations like Syria and Iraq and elsewhere where we have very, very important interests, and our allies have very important interests at stake.

Obviously, I think the president's speech on this issue at NDU was really critical and I think we're all still trying to understand exactly what the implications are. What I heard him say is that yes, of course we will continue to require the world's best kinetic strike capability that can be precise, intelligence enabled, and extremely effective to disrupt imminent threats to our homeland, to our interests abroad and to our allies.

But I also heard him say that we need to put much greater emphasis on building partner capacity, enabling the states who are either unwilling hosts to these groups or sharing borders with these groups, to really be much more effective in addressing root causes but also dealing with the security threat posed.

And I would just say for this conference, one of the challenges I'd put on the table is if we had to envision – what if we looked for five years down the road, what would it look like to, in each of these areas where a new al-Qa'ida affiliate is taking root and getting traction, what would it look like to have a partner-led capability and approach that would successfully contain or defeat that al-Qa'ida element? And what is the U.S. role? What do we need to do to produce that? I think that would be a great thought exercise for all of us to go through.

Obviously, beyond the counterterrorism domain, SOF have a very important role in building partner capacity in other critical areas. When I look at Asia and the various challenges there, whether it's working with our traditional allies like Japan, Korea, Australia, and others, or the full range of the ASEAN countries, I see a lot of partner capacity building that needs to be done.

So I'm aware I'm running out of time, so let me just conclude with four key issues to have all of you think about as the discussion progresses today and tomorrow. The first is as we elevate building partner capacity as a key element of our strategy, we have some division of labor issues to work through. What is the role of the TSOCs versus JSOC within the SOF community? What is the role of SOF versus conventional forces? What is the role of the U.S. efforts versus international? Some of our allies and partners actually have a comparative advantage in some of these countries and they can do it better than we can in some cases.

But really working through that division of labor, understanding maybe it's TSOC's focused on building commandoes and small infantry units. But the big army, we really need them to step in when it comes to building CSS or combat service kind of capabilities; building headquarters, larger forc-

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es, et cetera. But I'm not saying what the right answer is. We need to work this through so we're efficient and effective in our efforts.

Second issue, we need to develop a much more robust set of mechanisms to insure that we get that whole-of-government integration at the Washington level, at the theater level, and the country level. I think we have actually developed some very useful modes of collaboration over the last ten years. I'm a little worried that many of these are not yet institutionalized. And as personalities change, people rotate, we could lose a lot of the ground that we've gained over the last several years. So working through the interagency mechanisms and I thought, again, Ambassador Pickering made a great point, the international mechanisms to get a coherent regional strategy for a given problem set. That's really key.

Third is a very strategy-based portfolio scrub for SOF capabilities. If you were to think about all that we're investing in both the sort of near-term operational. out to trying to – the seed corn for the capability of the future, I think we need to really, in a budget-constrained environment, really scrub, are there areas where we can divest either because they're lower priority or because the job is largely complete so that we create some headroom to re-invest in priority initiatives that will be very important for the future.

And lastly, and this is kind of the big über question, what's the model of SOF that we are resetting to on a global basis? Going back to what we were before the wars doesn't quite make sense. But I don't think we have a fully articulated vision of what that model is. I think the closest thing to it is what Admiral McRaven has put out there, but there are lots of questions in the details of exactly what that will look like and the balance of resourcing that will be needed to support it.

So again, kudos to our conveners for giving us a chance to have this conversation, and I look forward to hearing from you all in the Q&A. Thank you. [applause]

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

DR. ROBERT PFALTZGRAFF: Now, I realize that we face not only declining resources, but also declining time. And therefore, we have decided to extend this session by fifteen minutes. I hope that will be satisfactory to you because you will get a break at eleven-thirty or so. So, I would like to begin the process of getting questions, and I'd first of all suggest that we aggregate these questions. Let us know which panel member you would like to have answer the question. And then when all the questions that we have been asked within the short time that we have, we will then turn to the panel and allow hopefully very succinct answers from each panel member. That would maximize the time available for questions. So who would like to be the first? Please identify yourself before you ask your question.

AUDIENCE: Hi, my name's Christina Wong. I'm a reporter for the *Washington Times*. My question is for Michèle Flournoy. I wanted to ask about the recent idea of a bridging force as laid out in your CNAS report recently for Afghanistan. How is that bridging force different from the enduring force? What's the size and what's the feedback you've been getting on that? Thank you.

AUDIENCE: Hello, I'm Adam Kredo from the *Washington Free Beacon*. I was curious if the panel, particularly Michèle and Ambassador

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Pickering, might comment on the shakeup in the Obama administration's national security team today? I'd like to hear their thoughts.

AUDIENCE: Yes, good morning. Carol Quintero from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, also Fletcher grad. This is a question I'd like either, well, Miss Flournoy and Ambassador Barton to answer. And this really goes to how does a security cooperation, security systems practitioner, successfully navigate the challenges with the interagency process? And really, how do we reconcile all of the differences of interest positions and variations of who wants what versus the combatant commander needs one thing, Congress wants one thing, State Department wants one thing, the practitioner wants one thing. How do we navigate all of that to try to come together as a whole-of-government approach or bringing all U.S. assets to bear on U.S. foreign policy? Thank you.

MICHÈLE A. FLOURNOY: So, I was asked about the bridging force versus the enduring force. Just for a little context, this last week CNAS published a short piece by myself, General John Allen, former ISAF commander, and Mike O'Hanlon from Brookings arguing that it's still possible to achieve our strategic objectives in Afghanistan and there is a path towards a positive outcome if we take the approach of locking in gains versus cutting losses. Part of that was providing our support and sort of vision for what an enduring force would look like.

The enduring force is the force that in accordance with the strategic partnership would continue to advise, assist the Afghan forces, would support joint counter-terrorism operations, and so forth. The notion of a bridging force is something we put on the table for people to think about. And that is as the building of the ANSF has really focused on churning out, first and foremost, infantry units, there's a lot more capability that needs to be built in terms of logistics, intelligence, counter IED, some of the specialized capabilities. And the idea of the bridging force is a temporary additional forces that would really be focused on training up those supporting elements for the ANSF. So it would be temporary forces specifically oriented on filling capability gaps through additional training. So that was the idea there. We will see if that gets any traction as the discussions go forward.

The question about navigating interagency process and challenges, I think one of the biggest lessons I learned from my time in government was the importance of stakeholder management. No matter how much authority you may have via your position in a hierarchy, the truth is that you can't get anything done without working horizontally and collaboratively. And so understanding who are the stakeholders in a given decision, not only the people who will drive the strategy, but the people who will actually be responsible for implementing that policy or strategy, understanding their goals, their point of view, their constraints, their red lines, and engaging in a process where you really bring people to the table whether it's working one on one or working in a more collaborative group.

The best example of this I ever saw was when President Obama having received the new guidance from the Congress with the Budget Control Act that said DOD go find half a trillion dollars over the next ten years, rather than going through a closed-door process on how we're going to do that, he basically invited the secretary of defense, the chairman of the joint chiefs, all of the chiefs, all of the combatant commanders, for multiple multiple-hour sessions at the White House to have a discussion as a sort of corporate team of how are we going to protect the nation's defense while meeting these new constraints.

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And my point is, it was a beautiful exercise in stakeholder management. And at the end of the day, you got a better product in the strategic guidance and real buy-in. I mean, no kidding buy-in from people because they felt they'd been heard, they'd been heard multiple times. They were at the table, they were taken seriously, they were engaged as partners. So I think for your question on navigating the interagency, that would be one of my most important lessons learned that I would share.