



Al-Qa'ida: Quo Vadis

Marking the First Anniversary of "Operation Neptune Spear"

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Transcript: Al-Qa'ida Quo Vadis. Monday April 30, 2012

Dr. Matthew Levitt: Good afternoon, thank you Yonah, and thank you for accommodating my teaching schedule at SAIS. It's a pleasure to be here.

If you read about the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point's releasing of seventeen documents confiscated during the Abbottabad raid, you may come to the conclusion that the war on terror is over, that Al-Qa'ida is contained, and that we are on the right trajectory. I agree that we are on the right track, but we are not yet where we need to be. In the not too distant future, people will claim that the al-Qa'ida core has been defeated. But the global insurgency that Bin Laden created is something we are going to be dealing with for some time to come. I do not lose sleep at night over whether we are facing al-Qa'ida, an al-Qa'ida affiliate, or an al-Qa'ida affiliate want-to-be. Instead, I worry about the capabilities of those who intend to cause the U.S. and her allies harm. Across the spectrum, we still have lot of deal with.

It has been a fantastic year for those involved in counterterrorism. We are about to celebrate the one year anniversary of the takedown of Bin Laden, and its importance cannot be stressed enough. From the treasure trove of intelligence that came out of Abbottabad, we know that Bin Laden was very involved in every aspect of al-Qa'ida. Many of us, me included, were mistaken when we believed that Bin Laden himself wasn't as deeply involved in logistics as has been proven by the information from Abbottabad. Although his day-to-day communications were limited due to his use of a courier that was gone for days at a time, the evidence suggests that among other things, Bin Laden reached out to Boko Haram, developed new ideas, and generate support for new plots, such as those targeting the President of the United States and those targeting trains. Killing Bin Laden was important not only because he was so crucial to the organization but because we removed the face, the man, and the name behind al-Qa'ida. Bin Laden's death was extremely detrimental to al-Qa'ida's foot soldiers as well as those seeking to radicalize others in his image. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden's replacement, is the human equivalent of sandpaper; he is an unpleasant individual without Bin Laden's magnetism. There is good reason to hope that he will push some people away from the al-Qa'ida core and create fissures both within the movement and among its affiliates.

Perhaps the Abbottabad raid's greatest achievement was the capturing of invaluable intelligence. Speaking to The Washington Institute for Near East Policy on May 12, 2011, U.S. National Security Advisory Thomas Donilon revealed that the Abbottabad raid yielded "the single largest trove of intelligence ever collected from a senior terrorist leader. The intelligence community says it is equivalent to a small college library worth of material. It is remarkable: based on what we know now, we have tens of thousands of video and photo files, and millions of pages of text." The seized

material has been culled for actionable intelligence over the past year with bits and pieces just now coming out.

In the coming weeks, we are going to hear about how much more there is to do, but we are also going to hear how far we've come. All of this will have to be taken with a grain of salt. Personally, I am much more interested in what the career people, who tend not to speak to the press, have to say regarding al-Qa'ida's status than I am with what the Secretary of State says one day and then subsequently retracts.

Beyond the take down of Bin Laden, a much larger story from the past two years has been the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring has presented a direct challenge to al-Qa'ida's ideology. The simple fact is that for years, al-Qa'ida maintained that the only way to dismantle regimes, like Mubarak's regime, is through bloody violence. They upheld the claim that individuals must not only engage in near *jihād* against Egypt but also engage in far *jihād* against the United States (which supported the regime). The Arab Spring proved this untrue. In the end, a relatively small group of liberal minded Arab and Muslim youths and college students took down Mubarak's regime not with weapons but with iPhones. In other words, there is an alternative. I wish that the U.S. and her allies would do better at promoting this and other alternative messages, for promoting successful alternatives to violence is the future of counterterrorism efforts.

Due to my experience as a counterterrorism analyst at the FBI and a Deputy Chief at Treasury, I am convinced that our tactical counterterrorism efforts are strong. There is no such thing as being perfect at counterterrorism; there will always be attacks that get through. However, while we are increasingly good at disruption—at taking down individuals trying to carry out the next attack—we are still painful behind with strategic counterterrorism efforts. We need strategic initiatives aimed at derailing the radicalization process and contesting the violent ideologies that drive terrorism.

When I think about the terrorist threat today, I don't only think about the al-Qa'ida core or even al-Qa'ida affiliate groups. Frankly, I lose patience with people who are only interested in assessing where the al-Qa'ida core is today. We in the United States, in particular, and the West, in general, need instant gratification. We want to know, right now, what al-Qa'ida is. The fact of the matter, though, is that our adversaries work on a much longer timeframe. Right now is one thing, but tomorrow, next week, and next month, the situation is going to be something very, very different. Today, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula is most capable of targeting us at home. Consider AQIM, an al-Qa'ida affiliate. AQIM has found a new and creative way to raise money—kidnapping for ransom. Originally, AQIM was floundering; it was working on a budget of only a few thousand dollars. After a few kidnappings for ransom, however, they suddenly had tens of millions of dollars at their fingertips. Whether al-Qa'ida affiliates, al-Shabaab, or Boko Haram in Africa, there is going to be a growth industry for counterterrorism.

The rise of homegrown violent extremism is the most serious threat we face today. My time in the intelligence community and law enforcement leads me to believe that we are best capable of tactically thwarting the next attack when its participants set off the tripwires we have in place—whether it is travel, communication, or moving and receiving money. But if we are now trying to deal with people who are unemployed, who have been dumped by their girlfriend, and who are

looking for meaning and find it online in radical extremism, we have no way of knowing about these people until it is too late. This is because they are most likely sitting in their mothers' basements, have never crossed law enforcement's path, and don't even have a jay-walking ticket to their name. This is what keeps me up at night.

I will simply end by saying this: of all the topics we are discussing today, recent events indicate and remind us that we not only face a threat from radical Sunni extremism within the Islamic context but we face a rise in Shia extremism. The threat is not only from Iran but from Hezbollah. Look no further than the attacks in India, Georgia, and Thailand to see that this is something we will deal with in the next year and well into the future. Thank you to the Potomac Institute for inviting me to participate in this panel discussion.

BGen. David Reist: The title of this program is Al-Qa'ida Quo Vadis. As a marine, I had to look it up just to make sure and it means "Where are you going?" We need to ask three questions: Where does al-Qa'ida want to go? Where can al-Qa'ida go? Where do we want al-Qa'ida to go? First, let's address what the death of Bin Laden meant. I am not sure, but am sure the pressure -- the military and economic pressure, etc -- has caused al-Qa'ida to adapt, morph, and mutate. Most view Bin Laden's death as a good thing, but we must ask if his death now causes us to deal with a new strain of al-Qa'ida and what does that strain look like? When you have a game plan set, and the other team changes, you need to adjust. War, and life, is about adaptation. Especially in war, he who adapts quickly will have an advantage. If al-Qa'ida under Bin Laden looked the same after his death, there is no adaptation required. Attempting to extrapolate what al-Qa'ida will look like, what al-Qa'ida will do, what al-Qa'ida will become, is uncertain. As Yogi Berra stated, prediction is hard, especially about the future. Second, where does al-Qa'ida go and where can they go. Assuming that they have not shifted from their original views and methods, we are dealing with people on the fringe. They believe in their cause and we believe in ours. This gets to truth, and truth can be relative, almost digressing to myth, and myth is powerful. Degrees of the fringe vary from country to country, we have some fringe people in our country, and they exist throughout the world. When truth can't be agreed upon, especially between nations, violence invariably results.

Third, where do we want al-Qa'ida to go? Of course, we want them eliminated because of the damage they are doing. But is there any way we can shape the future of al-Qa'ida? Unfortunately, the nature of the world right now does not offer many alternatives. Global economic woes, expanding population growth, poverty that results in ignorance and want, reliance on oil, and an emerging culture in some arenas that believe you can reason with anyone and everyone complicates matters. Two examples come to mind in shaping actions. In the book "In the Ruins of the Empire" that deals with the Japanese surrender in the battle for Postwar Asia, members of the OSS met with Ho Chi Min in 1945, and received assurances that the Vietminh were ready to cooperate with Americans in fighting the Japanese. Major Allison Thomas parachuted in near Hanoi, remained with the Vietminh for two months arming and training select forces against the Japanese. In Anbar Province in 2004, Sunni sheiks and U.S. Marines engaged and looked at alternatives to war. These meeting sought an alternative to AQI, and the sheiks saw no goodness in al-Qa'ida coming to Anbar

and Iraq in general. The Marines who made this outreach were civil affairs Marines, reservists, names that no one here would ever know. They were exceptionally creative. They, along with their sheik counterparts, believed that people wanted a lifestyle just a bit better for themselves, and a better future for their children. Fundamentally, all realized that poor men want to get rich, and rich men want to get richer and war in their backyard did not bring about that end state. It was not until 2006 that the US was not able to embrace this concept, and it was termed the Awakening. It is important to ask ourselves who was awakened: us or them? In closing, let's discuss some fundamentals in dealing with AQ. Be blunt, be brutal, be decisive, separate religion from their cause, and take advantage of the opportunities. In being blunt, leave no doubt between what you say and what you will do, and then do it. When you do it, being decisive and brutal -- it is the only way. Some today has lost sight that war is cruelty, there is no use in trying to reform it, and the crueller it is, the sooner it will be over. General Sherman stated this at the close of the US Civil War in 1865 and it remains true today. When the dogs of war are released, don't be surprised at the resulting carnage. In some ways we are pollyannish in our country. Our fight is not with the Muslim faith, but we have muddied this water. When a person is bad, they are bad regardless of their skin color, or their religious affiliation. Be decisive and brutal at this point. Opportunities will exist, but they must be realized and exploited, and this is exceptionally difficult. Imagine the difference if Ho Chi Minh had been given a different path, or the Awakening would have happened in 2004 instead of 2006 in Anbar. I do not want to trivialize the complexity of these matters, but we will have opportunities.

Transcript: I'd like to begin by apologizing for my early departure as well; like Matt, I need to teach immediately afterwards, so we are actually going to be parting together, Matt. And I'd like to apologize because I feel that I am going to throw some rhetorical bombs here and then run out the door. But I'm not leaving because I'm avoiding the discussion, because it is an important discussion. I'm going to have some very strong views though and I think especially the person to my left is going to disagree profoundly with me. If I'm not able to stay here for the entire discussion, please forgive me. I am happy to engage some other time.

So let me begin by saying that I agree with Matt and others who have said that the death of bin Laden is extremely important. This was after all, the founder, chief inspirer, radicalizer in chief, a guy who had so much charisma that he was able to convince a whole lot of people to go out and kill themselves for a cause. So I don't want to minimize what the death of bin Laden has meant. But as with others I don't believe that it has killed off al-Qa'ida or even that it has led to the strategic defeat of the group. Nor do I think that the Arab Spring, as it has developed, has led to the death of al-Qa'ida. There was a point last year, that there were a lot hopes, including some that I had, that this might point out a different path, especially in places like Egypt. But as it has developed I don't think it has led to a strategic defeat of al-Qa'ida. And this is because I profoundly disagree with an accepted, settled view of what al-Qa'ida is. In fact, my definition of the group, mine and a very tiny group of experts, is that I don't think it's a terrorist group at all. It was in the 1990's. I agree that in the 1990's that was all it was able to be. It had a few hundred followers, it had these wacky dreams and fantasies about what it was going to accomplish. And it was confined to Sudan and then off to

the wilds of Afghanistan where it could do basically nothing right. So in the 1990's I agree it was a terrorist group, but it always had these aspirations for bigger things. So if you take a look at these captured documents that we have in our hands from our War in Afghanistan in 2001-2002, what you see is that they were spending 90% of their money on training mujahideen and regular combat troops and only 10% of their money on what they called special operations--that is the attacks on the United States. So even back in the 1990's they had aspirations, although unfulfilled aspirations for bigger and better things. And they were spending a lot of time and most of their effort on developing those, rather than attacking the United States.

I would just also like to say right here at the beginning that one of the things that has profoundly distorted this entire discussion is our views of 9/11 and how we believe it is all about us. It's not about us really. 9/11 made us think that everything that is going on out in the world that has the name al-Qa'ida attached to it is about us. But it really wasn't. The fact that 8 times as many Muslims have been killed out in the world since 9/11 versus Americans, should tell us something about where al-Qa'ida is focusing its attention and its main effort. I think 9/11 distorted the discussion quite a bit. That's because I think also we misunderstood what al-Qa'ida's objectives are. We believe that the main objective for al-Qa'ida core is to attack the United States, when in fact that's a means towards an end. We've confused means for objectives, which in strategic thought and strategic planning is one of the most basic mistakes you can make. It leads to all sorts of confusion about what needs to be done and the kinds of policies you need to adopt in order to take on and defeat a group. The means were "attack the United States;" get the US out of Muslim countries entirely. Bin Laden had this complete fantasy that was in fact disputed by a lot of members of al-Qa'ida back in the 1990's that the US was a cowardly country, that you could simply carry out a few attacks and the US would run for it. But then what was he planning on doing afterwards? That was the real strategic plan because that leads to his real objectives, which I think are four-fold and which they have expressed multiple times, not just in opening statements and articles written by al-Qa'ida analysts, but also from the few captured documents that we have from Iraq that are public. These objectives are expressed multiple times. First and foremost, to overthrow all the rulers of Muslim majority countries. Secondly, to impose their version of Sharia on all Muslims in all those places and around the world if they are able to do it. Thirdly, to create what they call emirates which are basically states but they have very specific sorts of characteristics. And eventually to set up something they call a Caliphate. And beyond that they actually have a fifth objective which I don't talk about because this really fits the fantasy mold: world conquest. So there are really 5 objectives, although there are only 4 that they focus on repeatedly. They call the fifth objective making the word of God the highest. And to them that means world conquest. So those were the fundamental objectives, sort of the grand strategic objectives of al-Qa'ida right from the start and things that they've spoke about repeatedly. The important point is that these really have nothing to do with terrorist attacks on the United States. Repeatedly when they talk about their objectives they don't say "oh and by the way, one of our main objectives also is to attack the United States."

I think that attacking the United States before 9/11 was about bin Laden's kind of fantasy about what this would do and after 9/11 it was about recruiting and about showing people they were still relevant and about lots of other things, but not about those main objectives any longer. So that is why I call al-Qa'ida not a terrorist group, because by definition, a terrorist group is a small secretive

group, a few hundred people, that does not have either the capabilities, or the desire to expand further. They are unable to recruit people into their organization fast enough to replace losses and are incapable of holding territory and governing it. When we look at al-Qa'ida core, one could say well that's certainly what we are dealing with. But in fact al-Qa'ida's first term for them was the High Command, something that is repeated also in captured documents from the 1990s. The High Command of something they hoped would be bigger and after about 2005-2006 it begun to live up to these aspirations of the 1990's. They set out to create sub-organizations that we now call franchises, but they actually call branches of their organization. They believe the branches are an integral part of their organization and are carrying out their orders and they are not off there on their own, they believe, simply conquering territory and doing all kinds of things they shouldn't do.

I should interject that at least that's what they thought until Zarqawi came along and suddenly they couldn't just count on these groups to agree with them ideologically, to agree with them in a sort of general way about objectives, to agree with them about strategies, and then to go about achieving them. Zarqawi was a huge lesson to al-Qa'ida's leadership and what happens in a global insurgency when one does not have tighter command and control. So before about 2005-2006 they were slowly creating a global jihad, but with very loose command and control, and then Zarqawi showed them what would happen if they allowed someone to completely destroy their name. Since that time, I think they have kept a much tighter sort of command and control than was possible before that time. I do not think it was any coincidence that about the same time, bin Laden moved into a house in Abbottabad. Because as you pointed out, the way we knew about communication before last year suggested that they used couriers only in order to carry their orders around. This method of command and control turned out to not be very helpful, as exemplified by Atiyah's orders to Zarqawi, back in 2005. Zarqawi could simply say, "no thank you I'm not going to do whatever you suggest."

For me, finding that Bin Laden was in a mansion in Abbottabad, and not in a cave in Waziristan answered a huge question that was raised with my assertions of greater command and control. Before Abbottabad, there was very little evidence about tighter command and control. We could see people doing what they ordered. From captured documents in 2005, we could see the High Command putting out orders and people actually fulfilling them. But how precisely are you going to organize something like this on a global scale without some kind of tighter command and control I could neither understand myself, nor explain to critics how they were doing it. Although I should point out that command and control in an irregular war is a very different thing from command and control in a regular war, it is always much looser, always have a chance for splintering and people disobeying orders and things like that. In an irregular war, there is general strategic guidance from the high command rather than specific daily updates required and things like that. Even before I heard about Abbottabad there was this recognition at least by me, that we were not talking about the kind of command and control that for instance, the Pentagon exercises on combatant commanders around the world.

So in 2009-2010, I had some really rough conversations with people, in which they attacked this notion of command and control at all and I began to change my mind because the one thing that I couldn't answer was how is he going to do this from a cave up in northern Waziristan. I had to

agree, that's right, I can't imagine how he could do this in northern Waziristan. And as soon as I heard he was in Abbottabad, I understood that he was in a position to have better control over the branches. And once I understood that this was a town with good communication connections to the rest of the world, I believed that answered an awful lot too, because perhaps the group did not have to depend entirely on some sort of courier system, there might be other methods that they could be using for this.

I would like to finish by saying, that I understand by making this assertion, that this is not a terrorist group but is in fact, the headquarters or high command of something that is attempting to become or is in the process of becoming a global insurgency, has an awful lot of policy implications, some of which are tremendously unpalatable. But I do not believe that we should ignore what reality is telling us, because one, we cannot afford it or two; we just do not like what reality is telling us. Because the fact that we cannot afford to carry out a global counterinsurgency the way we did in Anbar province for instance, should not make us flinch from recognizing at least the scope of the problem we are dealing with. I repeat: I understand that there are huge policy implications from everything I'm saying. And first and foremost, it argues that attrition is absolutely the wrong way to go. If this is an insurgency, attrition will in fact encourage radicalization and recruitment; our main method for combating these guys is probably adding to the problem rather than helping to solve it. I know the arguments for attrition: there are many places where it is the only thing we can be doing, where we don't have partners, where we don't have capabilities ourselves. We believe that this is it—the only way forward. Maybe that's true maybe that's not, but to engage in a practice that is in fact worsening the problem for us on a daily basis, it is not the way to go. If in fact, we are not dealing with a terrorism problem, but are in fact dealing with an insurgency problem. I would just like to stop there and please forgive me again for leaving early after throwing out these rhetorical bombs.

Thomas F. Lynch III: Thanks very much, and thank you for having me here today. As Yonah mentioned, I am a research fellow over at the National Defense University. So let me just offer this opening comment: The remarks I'm about to make to you here neither represent the position of my host institution, the National Defense University, or the Department of Defense, my ultimate employer, but in fact are the product of my own research and individual conclusions. Again, I'm delighted to be here today, as we near the one-year anniversary of the operation that eliminated bin Laden. I'm here to contend, perhaps not as starkly as Mary has offered about my diverging from her position, but I'm here to contend that rather than over-estimating the death of bin Laden, we still underestimate and under appreciate the degree to which bin Laden's death has really clarified and made more understandable, here's where I do disagree with Mary, what is *not* a global insurgency, but rather has been a radical ideology that has prospered under the leadership of a core and unique organization which tried to bring life to five separate dimensions of that particular diverse ideology and has attempted to get its arms around and channel it in a direction of the aims that Mary also eloquently pointed out in her remarks.

What I'm here to contend to you is bin Laden was a personality no less relevant than Lenin was to the global communist ideology in terms of being able to fuse it and bring it together. We misappreciate badly if we think bin Laden's death is not the equivalent of Lenin dying in

Switzerland before making it into Russia. Much like Lenin, there was no other organizer of victory for Marxism who brought together the charisma and fundraising ability and now as we know, and I was like Mary, believing that bin Laden was a strategic relevant communicator with various and disparate outfits. And to a certain extent I have to confess that I had insider knowledge. While still in uniform, I worked in U.S. Central Command (USCENCOM) and I worked in Afghanistan and I worked with the problem of Iraq and we knew that bin Laden personally was involved in communications from South Asia that were trying to corral and bring under control the activities of Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq. We knew bin Laden was making outreach early on to al Shabaab in Somalia, we knew he was involved in all these types of things, working through mediums and other individuals; but we knew he was there and as a consequence and no surprise when you are talking about a global ideology, bin Laden was relevant. Consequently his death changes, or evolves, or morphs al-Qa'ida in what it represents. But it also leaves extant, to what I think Mary referred to, Shareen and Matthew referred to, which is this wider issue of ideology: The global Salafi jihadi ideology, which I will content to you in a second, remains extant, and that really is the issue now far more than al-Qa'ida. But like a boulder being "rubbled" into small pebbles, when you take away the cohesion and the glue and when you are left with, and I agree with Matthew here, sandpaper, as the substitute for charisma and zeal, and when you take away bin Laden from the bin Laden/Zawahiri that made al-Qa'ida what it was in terms of a global terrorist organization as the vanguard of a Salafi jihadi ideology, then you are left with a different managerial problem and one that I will content needs an altered, less stark western vocabulary to understand. Not that Salafi jihadism is any-less relevant as a toxic ideology, but rather that without bin Laden's critical al-Qa'ida role, this movement is no longer properly understood – or pursued – with the language of a global conflagration or a quest against the global insurgency movement. Instead, western policymakers must focus a lot more on bringing down overseas military footprints so these aren't the metastasizing regional Salafi jihadi element in a lot of different places where it doesn't have to be present to effectively counter-act the Salafi jihadi activists.

Second, bin Laden's death confirms that you must focus more on Special Forces operations and working with partner nations, some of whom may not share your particular proclivities about democracy in the short term, but whom in the long term wish to see banished this kind of metastasized violent threat that al-Qa'ida represents. And third, that you spent a lot more time on your intelligence and police cooperation, because the "rubbled" Salafi jihadi elements that al-Qa'ida has failed to coalesce into a truly catastrophic whole are less of a threat to do, what Mary has correctly referred to as the outside-in approach, an approach that bin Laden / Zawahiri uniquely brought to al-Qa'ida. This focus on striking globally to set the conditions for success against Muslim governments in the world of Islam came from the al-Qa'ida notion that Salafi jihadis were are failing in trying to overthrow corrupt Muslim governments in the period of the 1990's in Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, and other places; and that all such jihadis to succeed in their national and regional aims first must come together to strike massive blows of violence against the buttressing influence of western nations in support of the corrupt Muslim governments. This indeed was the spark of al-Qa'ida that was the most significant to altering the organization from what was the kind of disparate and unsuccessful chaos of violence from the Salafi jihadi movement that

metastasized in the 1990's into something that was a truly menacing focus on catastrophic international terrorism.

I argue here - as I will go into in more detail in a couple of seconds - that our interests right now lie in recognizing this change; in backing off of the rhetoric of trying to "take out" any one of these affiliate groups as though they are some kind of an inherent threat to put on the mantel that bin Laden and Zawahiri represented; or that Zawahiri himself, just because he proclaims he is influencing Syria or that he is involved in some type of plots in Yemen, really has anything other than a steering wheel disembodied from this bus of a wider ideology. Because we make a policy mistake if we move in that direction. In reality it is the voices of the Islamic world - where I have had the privilege of living in Qatar, in Saudi Arabia, in Afghanistan, and in Pakistan - it is those voices ordinary Muslims that at the end of the day are going to find a path forward that moves toward meaningful political and economic in a moderate way without the resort to the dramatic violence of al-Qa'ida. This conviction that only violence can change polity in the Muslim world is the underpinning of Salafi jihadism and the element which al-Qa'ida opted to globalize, moved and organized and band together in a very global form and therefore a very dangerous set of activities that did galvanize our attention on 9/11 - probably should have a little before- but did galvanize us on 9/11. But this specter of violence does not need to galvanize us in the same way right now. So what is it about al-Qa'ida that I say has changed? Indeed I have written on this and I have argued that bin Laden's death really is the 80 percent solution to the unique and acutely problematic nature of al-Qa'ida for western security.

The unique and acute problem posed by al-Qa'ida was its effort to graft itself on top of the wider Salafi jihadi movement. Its tremendously effective effort at co-option of a violent ideology brought al-Qa'ida to the forefront of the jihadi ideology. I argue - as most reputable scholars have - that there were five elements of al-Qa'ida, an organization as Mary correctly notes, has been oriented towards trying to fuze together these diffuse elements that are revolutionary and are insurgent based inside the Muslim world. First, it aspired to be a core-organization dedicated to planning, recruiting and training for and organizing, and this is the important word here, *catastrophic* global terrorist events against Americans, and other western 'Zionist-crusader' targets -- especially in their homelands. As Mary has correctly said, and I think Matthew as well, for the purpose of getting Americans and westerners out of Muslim lands so that Salafi jihadists then would have free reign to topple these corrupt, what they believe to be insufficiently Islamic, autocratic Muslim regimes. Second, it was to serve as a vanguard for organizing and coordinating already existing, regionally focused jihadist groups towards acts of violence against American-Zionist crusaders in the Muslim lands, where their presence was believed defile Islam and bring it to a level that was unacceptable. Third, and this is important, although lesser included, an aim to serve as an inspiration to the disaffected 'lone wolf Muslims' worldwide to act out on their frustrations through violence against symbols of perceived oppression against Islam. Fourth and very important, to serve as a brand name, representing the kind of highest level of this Salafi jihadi ideology in bringing successful violence against the so-called crusader governments, in which most senior al-Qa'ida leaders of the jihad remain free from serious punishment, penalty or harm. And here indeed was this kind of mystical notion of al-Qa'ida, prior to the raid against bin Laden, was this notion of impunity --- that bin Laden and Zawahiri were immune from justice. They could go, they could find succor, they

could find a way to hide out beyond, you know, this long arm of western justice. And fifth, that they, that is al-Qa'ida, would serve as a 'base certain' for the conquest of Afghanistan and included in that is western Pakistan in the name of global jihad. This is particularly important and I write about this in the paper I mentioned. Because the mystical origins, as Shireen and Matthew have pointed to, about where al-Qa'ida came from and how it built up in the end of the anti-Soviet period of jihad in Afghanistan and how it turned itself towards first these local jihadi activities and then eventually towards the galvanized framing and bringing together Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamist jihad with bin Laden's al-Qa'ida in the focus on the foreign enemy first in order to get and defeat the near-enemy second.

Now of these five elements, three of them have been totally castigated by the raid in Abbottabad. This notion of al-Qa'ida as a brand name that was free from retribution, or had impunity against being captured or attacked, that was brought to its knees a year ago this week. And most of us who follow Jihadi websites, we saw that clearly over the following two to three months after the bin Laden death, this notion of "how could this have happened?" followed by this claim and desire to have revenge. But the notion of al-Qa'ida's undisputed leader living with impunity and living above and beyond the law came crashing down by the way of this raid. I would argue too, that the Zawahiri in particular as well as several other of the limited number of remaining al-Qa'ida core-group elements, still feel the impact of that, because they are no longer being seen as impugned. And we have made it clear to Pakistanis and others that any obvious intelligence on Zawahiri's whereabouts would produce the same type of response, and I think that is to the good despite some of the hostile rhetoric about it from Pakistan.

That is exactly where we need to be on this. Because even though Zawahiri is sandpaper to bin Laden's al-Qa'ida glue, he still controls a cohort of well trained and well capable Egyptians and to a lesser extent Algerians who are capable of international terrorist attacks and should not be taken lightly. Second this notion of al-Qa'ida as the premier core-organization able to plan, recruit and conduct successful overseas terrorist operations that has been put asunder in the last five to six years. We can all point to things that have been part of a plan in western Pakistan and indeed as our intelligence has correctly identified that since 2006. But we have also shown an ability to intercept plotter communications, adapt and work with partners to intercept the plotters – and that includes the much maligned (and often deservedly so, but the very janus-faced) Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) in Pakistan – which we have partnered with to corral and arrest a number of these al-Qa'ida affiliated folks who were plotting very massive attacks in Western Europe and in some cases against the American Homeland. Or, an ability to find the critical bits of information that allowed us to deny mission inception to those plotters. So al-Qa'ida as a core-organization, I would argue to you, no longer has that kind of caché or that kind of capability for catastrophic global terror. Nor do I think it can be re-acquired based upon who is left alive. A monograph I published with New America Foundation in February this year had a list of those who are left out there who I argue, other than Zawahiri, have limited capability to organize this kind of a credible core international terrorist group.

Finally, there is this critical notion of al-Qa'ida as a 'base' for certain conquest in Afghanistan. It too has been dashed. Here I argue particularly that the relationship between bin Laden and the

Taliban's Mullah Omar and the Haqqani Network and several other Taliban groups was really a personal relationship between the leadership. I think we are starting to see more and more of this coming out when people are releasing the information captured from bin Laden's lair in Abbottabad. Not that Zawahiri was irrelevant here, but Zawahiri and the Egyptians never swore and oath to Mullah Omar and my read of the situation, having lived in that part of the world and done a lot of work with thankful assistance of Peter Berg, Steven Call and others, suggests to me very strongly that it is not the ideological linkage to al-Qa'ida anymore that matters most of Omar, Haqqani and Hekmatyar – among other Taliban leaders -- but rather it is the strategic linkage to Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment and how far Pakistan wishes to see notions that the jihad from Western Pakistan is being fermented into an international problem either for Americans, the Chinese or others, and that is the constraining break right now on al-Qa'ida's global aspirations from that particular part of the world.

So where does that leave us? Well I think it leaves us with kind of half the other two of the five key dimensions of al-Qa'ida that are left out there that we do legitimately have to worry about. But these worries are different than those of a decade ago, and we need to take a different tactical approach to the relevant residual dimensions of al-Qa'ida's failed effort to co-opt Salafi jihadism on a global, industrial scale. Fortunately, I believe that we are beginning to see the United States taking an altered, less alarmist state already, but with a ways to go. The adaptation in tactical approach features reduction of the footprint of American military and Western militaries in the Islamic world. With such a reduced presence, we can re-orient counter-terrorism activities against the regional and local Salafi jihadi threats around Special Forces activities, indirect strikes featuring advanced technology, improved police and intelligence coordination. This is kind of where I think we are headed in Yemen and Somalia, maybe a little slow for some of our liking, but on the route to where we need to get to. Also as a consequence, we should expect that al-Qa'ida's efforts toward inspiration, really toward trying to co-opt these regional Salafi jihadi groups will continue, but with ever-poorer results.

But again, I return to the bus driver analogy. Let's be careful before we breathlessly validate that the steering wheel al-Qa'ida claims it holds is really connected to the bus of global Salafi jihadi terror, and not just a claim or an attempt to claim virtual ownership of something that has a lot more local roots and origins that can be addressed much better at that more local level. Second, the issue of the lone wolf terrorist attackers is where I think we, even in the United States, are finally beginning to come to grip with this. I will refer you to the most recent counter-terrorism strategy where the phrase "resilience" comes up a lot. Over and over, in fact. And that word is relevant because it has to do with the fact, that no matter how good we are in counterterrorism activities, we are never going to do away with the lone wolf or the suddenly inspired individual who shows up regrettably at the recruiting station with the claim of self-professed internet activities that caused him to read al-Qa'ida website, one of the several hundred thousand or so that are out there, to claim they are affiliated and go off and do something violent. These lone individuals are harder to identify, but they are less catastrophic in their effect and their orientation. I think it is time that we follow the mantra resilience and looked at our own capabilities and say we got more enough capability to handle these types of lone individual violence spasm so long that we keep connected with the parts of the world where these folks are likely to be over the next couple of years.

And so the prescription one year after the fateful and important raid on Osama bin Laden is to stop overemphasizing or hyper-inflating the degree to which al-Qa'ida brings together a dangerous, but not a global catastrophically dangerous, Salafi jihadi movement; to recognize al-Qa'ida's uniqueness historically was its attempt to bring together the ideologically similar but tactically and organizationally divergent nature of that movement, and that's what made it conspicuously dangerous. Bin Laden's death has dramatically reduced the danger of his historically unique group and this truly menacing effort. Our policy needs to reflect that going forward.

Thank You.

Professor Don Wallace: I'm sort of overwhelmed by how much I've heard. I'm a civilian and I respect generals, I think General Gray put it well. The title of this program is al-Qa'ida: Quo Vadis?, and really the issue is, American Thinking: Quo Vadis? In other words, what are the challenges facing us. I have a friend sitting in the back of the room, Nick Rostow, who is a colleague of Mr. Lynch. He uses the term "Grand Strategy" as did Shireen Hunter, as has Brzezinski. I think we have to have a grand strategy. The problem is this is not the Cold War. I've heard reference to Lenin, Marx, the Comintern. The desire for the caliphate, and by the way, we've it heard it more recently than the Shi'a, I lived in Turkey and I know they had one in the '20's. I think we need to dis-enthral ourselves from Cold War thinking. What's interesting is, there's so much knowledge, I was really overwhelmed today by all of my neighbors, by how much they know and yet, as Shireen Hunter said, we don't know enough about countries and their histories. So how do you take this objective requirement, that the United States think big? The Brits talked about the "Great Game." Is it a great game, or is it a lot of little games? And I think that is the nature of the challenge. We had a very good program here on Nigeria that was referred to before and it was interesting to listen to. We have the local terrorist group, Boko Haram and there is some al-Qa'ida there, and of course there are lone actors there as well. How can we, in our own minds, aggregate all these phenomena, just to get a grip on them intellectually and then somehow relate them to our long term national grand strategy. I think that is the challenge, and most of us have learned more about this subject today than we'd heard ever before. As much as we've heard today, from people who know a lot, it may be that we still don't know how to get our calipers around this subject.

Don Kerr: For those that don't know me, I'm Don Kerr. I've been associated with a number organizations over the years. But I think one of the things that came up here that I feel is most important is the need to pay greater attention to Pakistan and be realistic about what it is. Some of you recall when we got to exploit some of the sites in Afghanistan, what we found was of course was the evidence at Tarnack farms and other places of a long term interest that al-Qa'ida had in other kinds of weapons and other kinds of technology. Not only that, people that supported that effort were in fact mostly retirees from the Pakistani nuclear program. If the retirees felt it was important to support al-Qa'ida, one might ask whether people currently in the program share those views in some manner. It's something I think we need to root out. We also need to understand that when we leave Afghanistan, it once again becomes part of Pakistan's defense in depth against what they consider their real enemy, India. It has healed a bit as a consequence of the Mumbai attack.

They talk once in a while now. But in fact, we're a pawn in the game they've been playing in terms of two nuclear armed neighbors and what each might be able to get from the United States depending on what our interests are in that region. So, I think Pakistan is the lurking devil in the background here. It's the place where more technology would be available to al-Qa'ida and those who would emulate them and it's very poorly controlled. It's as close to being a failed state while still remaining a state, as any as we must deal with. So I'll just leave you with that thought.