



Diplomatic Security Past Lessons and Future Outlook

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Diplomatic Security: Past Lessons and Future Outlook

The latest turmoil and violence in the Muslim world and elsewhere underscores the vulnerability of the facilities, personnel, and operations of diplomatic missions. The panel of practitioners and academics will discuss the historical lessons and the future outlook of diplomatic security for the United States and the broader international community.

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Ambassador Charles Ray

Well thank you for a brief introduction, when you get to be my age the problem with being introduced is that usually the person introducing you talks longer than you plan to talk and if they read my whole bio it feels I should be lying on a platform with flowers on my chest.

You know, there's a tendency to think of the need for enhanced security for our diplomatic establishments concurrent with the increase of international terrorist events over the last couple of decades, the fact is, though this problem has existed far longer than al Qaeda or some of the other groups we know

There is a tragic history of attacks on US embassies and establishments and other nation's embassies as you just heard that predates 9/11 even before the attacks on our embassies in Lebanon, Kenya and Tanzania. In 1964, for instance, our embassy in Gabon was bombed, and three years before the 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam which saw armed enemies enter our embassy, that same embassy was bombed. In 1979, in addition to the embassy in Teheran being taken over by radicals and many of the staff held hostage for more than a year; our embassy in Tripoli was burned. In 1986 in Jakarta and 1987 in Rome, our embassies were attacked by elements of the Japanese Red Army.

In most cases, except war zones like Vietnam or in places like Lebanon, our response to these attacks has been to beef up security for a period of time, and curtail movements of people; but very quickly, unfortunately, we're too often back to business as usual. Only after really serious incidents, such as those that happened in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, did we adopt a more or less permanent effort to provide better security and make this part of our policy.

My own experiences with diplomatic security predate my entry into Foreign Service in 1982. I recall well in 1968, during my first tour in Vietnam; which began just a few months after the Tet attacks; visiting the embassy in Saigon with its barricades, its blast shields, and armed guards all over the place. Now, this was admittedly a war zone, and the facility had already been attacked twice, but the diplomats and others who had to work in that fortress-like structure were just harbingers of things to come.

When I finished my last tour in Vietnam in 1973, I went on to Korea where I spent several years with a number of military commands there. In Korea we didn't have quite the same security problems as we had in Vietnam, but we had problems. There were fewer problems at the main embassy compound, because the Koreans who were lining up to get visas didn't like to have their wait disturbed but our old USIS libraries – I don't know how many of you are old enough to remember USIS libraries - were a favorite targets of young Korean whenever they were ticked off at the US about anything. During the six years or so that I served in Korea the USIS library was burned; - I think it was three times.

Despite these instances of US diplomatic establishments being targeted over several decades, what I noticed, from a military point of view, was at that time that security in these places was remarkably light. It was a joke in most cases.

When I retired from the army and joined the Foreign Service this was still the case in all too many places. When we had incidents we would tighten up security for a while, but by and large, things would be back to business as usual within days. Our embassies and consulates remained relatively open and accessible until the devastating attack in Kenya, Dar as Salaam, and the 9/11 attacks on U.S. soil. These incidents, along with the bombing of our embassy in Beirut that claimed the lives of hundreds of Marines caused our policy makers to take a new look at diplomatic security. So now bollards, setback, searches, and delays in getting into facilities became the rule rather than the exception.

From place to place and time to time it varies for a number of reasons, not many of them having to do with security. In places like Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, tight security is clearly justified as long as we insist on having so many unarmed civilians posted there. But, if you ask anyone who has tried to enter one of our embassies or consulates in a less dangerous place what they think about the process, I advise to put cotton in your ear before they answer.

In order to do what we're ostensibly sent abroad to do, we diplomats need to have access to local populations and local officials. If our aim is to portray a positive image of the U.S. to foreign audiences, locals must have a degree of access to our diplomats and our facilities. At the same time, it is absolutely essential that we provide a secure place for our diplomats to work.

The Dilemma is, how do you do both?

Now I have to set the record straight here. I'm not arguing for a return of the 'good old days,' when our embassies were relatively open to anyone who wanted to enter at any time because the world is a much too dangerous place. And, I also have to confess that I don't really have an answer to the question of how do you do both and I can't predict the future of diplomatic security for this country or any other.

I can tell you what I've done in my own diplomatic postings, two of which have been war zones. And the fact that I never been kidnapped nor has a building that I worked in been bombed or attack since Vietnam is probably due to as much to incredibly good luck as good security, but I still think that during some rather dicey times I was still able to advance U.S. interests in a positive way.

And I'll give you an example, not very recent, since I'm still processing Zimbabwe and for those of you who've ever been to southern Africa you know that's going to take some time. When I was ambassador to Cambodia, we faced the danger of potential attacks from Jamah Islamiya, an Indonesian-based - I call them an al Qa'ida franchise. Now the problem is, at the beginning of my tour in Cambodia in 2002, the state of our relations with the Cambodian

government was dicey. I mean we weren't allowed to deal with the Cambodian military and dealing with the police was restricted to those who were put on our gates as guard. I had no contact with senior police officials which made it a bit uncomfortable, especially when we found out that Jamah Islamiya has our embassy under surveillance for a full 8 months, planning a bombing attack and the only thing that kept that attack from coming off was because a bunch of Cambodian students got spun up because a Thai soap opera actress insulted Cambodia in a Thai TV show. They rioted and burned the Thai embassy and JI thought that the situation wasn't right for an incidence so they would put it on hold. When we later picked up the chief strategist for JI through a total other happenstance and we found this out you can imagine that my sleepless nights became even more sleepless. And I realized that we faced a real problem where the issue of carrying out what people perceived was U.S. policy; and that is arm's length relationship with the Cambodian government; conflicted with my duty to protect our people and our facilities. Clearly, if we didn't have a good working relationship with local security forces, anything that we did on our own inside the embassy was just a stopgap. And so what I felt became essential was to improve our relations with the government, particularly the security services in order to carry out what I thought was actually my major mission and that is protecting the lives of American citizens and the Cambodians who worked for us.

This took a lot of arm twisting here in Washington. The one thing that I learned over 50+ years of government services is that people at headquarters have a hard time understanding what their people in the field are talking about. Their interests are paramount and it doesn't matter if the bad guys are kicking in the door and lobbing grenades at you they have to get their paperwork done first. And the only way to get around it at first is that you make to make an incredible nuisance of yourself; or as Colin Powell use to say, you have to be the dog poop at the picnic. After some arm twisting though and thank goodness for my DoD connections, I had a little help here, we were able to get permission to change the dynamics and what I discovered from that is that as we worked to improve the relationship, which led to improved security, we were also able to leverage that improvement to advance other interests as well. And that's just one example; I was in Sierra Leone during the war back in 1990's with a military coup and a rebel army being funded by Charles Taylor from next door in Liberia, those were interesting times. And a group of South African mercenaries using Russian equipment it was like something out of a Ludlum novel adapted for the big screen. It was absolutely incredible, and I loved it every minute of it.

But from this one example - I think most of you who have worked in this business can think of a lot of others, and I came to this conclusion: while I can't predict what the future course will be there are some things I think are absolutely necessary if we are to balance security with advancing our interests; and they don't have to be mutually exclusive, even though they will often conflict. There is a need to follow, I think, an assessment process to ensure that we keep the proper balance. And the starting point is determining US interests in the area where we send people and you might think "don't we do that? You'll be surprised at the number of assignments

I had where I been in a country where no one really knew for sure why we were there. I'm not going to name the countries but it happens more often than not. It goes something like this; we're there, we been there a long time, and we just continue doing every day what we always done without stopping to take a step back and determine what US interests are really at play here? Why are we in a country in the first place? To me this is the starting point for our personnel level, our budget, and the nature and structure of our facilities and for the security procedures that need to be in place to ensure we carry out and we adjust those interests.

Our next question is our threat environment. Are the threats imminent, latent, or rare? There's a big difference. If threats are rare from a practical standpoint it will be easier to brush hen's teeth than to get money out of this town to address them. That's just a given.

What are our relationships? What's the nature of our relationships with the local government, with our allies in the country, what are our relationships with the local population? What are the likely flashpoints that could cause our relationship to take a dive? And what are local interests, and by this I mean government interests, that could conflict with US interest. This is very important when it comes to security. I served in one country where the government had a very cozy relationship with Iran on one hand but they liked our investment flow on the other. Now normally, from day to day this really has no impact, but if you start talking about tightening security or taking a closer look at certain Iranians who are traveling back and forth you can see where that could create problems. It's best to know that going in.

What are your sources of information about your security situation? How reliable are they and can they provide us with information far enough in advance so that we can put procedures in place to ensure security is adequate?

Resources; I sort of hit on that on the interest part but you really need to have a spreadsheet of money, training, personnel, equipment, infrastructure are available to support your security requirements? What are the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of your infrastructure and your personnel? And after you have done an objective assessment of all these comes the real hard part; deciding what to do about it.

Because, I know some of you probably heard the buzz over at State about ambassadors, our chiefs of missions as CEOs... yeah you know what a CEO is? I haven't quite figured out what it really means in State. I mean, I think this is more rhetoric than reality. The fact is as an ambassador on the ground there are so many rowers with the oars in the water to call yourself a CEO is delusional. The fact is that bureaucratic realities, budgetary constraints, and political factors will all conspire to tie the hands of the people on the ground to be able to just do what needs to be done. If we are to in fact have chiefs of mission as CEOs, to be able to not only carry out their mission of advancing US interest but to respond effectively in protecting their facilities and their personnel and other Americans in the country, we have to empower chiefs-of-mission with more than just words. They have to be given clear mandate that they are in fact in charge

and then they have to be given the resources to enable them to implement the decisions they make. Now what are the prospects of that happening in our lifetime, I'm not going to answer that one I think I'll let you do that. Thank you.

Daniella Pletka: Let me start with a little story. I went to work on the hill in 1992 and I had a background as a journalist and so I had a wide range of people that I worked with both in journalism and in government and various areas of the State Department. And in 1993 as I'm sure many of you will recall, was the first World Trade Center bombing. Obviously it was a small event in comparison to what happened eight years later but I think that most of us who look at Al-Qa'ida agree that it was symbolic. Not only in that moment but also in the decision to return to the World Trade Center on 9/11. And what happened? There were a number of perpetrators, there was a pretty serious investigation, and there were some names that were discovered to have been part of it. Some of the individuals involved had fled the United States. Now how do you manage a situation like that? Remember, most of the terrorism that we had addressed had not been on American Soil. We're not Israel, were not Israelis. So when we faced up to the thought of terrorism in places, for example, like Lebanon where we had the most experience where our CIA bureau station chief had been killed. Where our embassy had been bombed, and where we were really familiar with some of the terrorist groups that operated there. We were dealing in a foreign environment. There was never a question of it being an issue of law enforcement. So one of the people who had been involved was out there and I got a call from a friend of mine who's in diplomatic security at the Department of State, calling me on the down low. He said "I need your help. There's a statute in US law that allows us to offer an award for acts of international terrorism to get information that could lead us to the arrest of the perpetrator or information that could help solve the challenge." But he said the State Department legal office wouldn't let diplomatic security offer this reward for one of the perpetrators of the first World Trade Center bombing. Why not? Because this wasn't an act of international terrorism, according to the Department of State.

Now, once we threatened to amend the law and we had several unpleasant conversations with the Department of State we finally got them around to the right side and I'm sure you're all aware that the rewards program is now an important part of our fight against terrorism and we actually pay out rewards. It's not unhelpful to us. It's often unhelpful to the people who receive millions of dollars from their local village because they have a hard time explaining that away. But that's a different part of the problem. But I think it encapsulates the challenge that we face, which is really that there are a lot of different perspectives on how to deal with the problem of terrorism. Unless you can identify what it is you're fighting, you often have a hard time defining adequate strategies to face up to it. So yes we can talk about the vagaries of embassy security, you can talk about the challenges that are faced and believe me our embassy staff and our own citizens who have to visit certainly don't like it. It is for their safety and security, but as you learned in the last month this isn't in any way uniform. So for example, while our embassy in Tripoli has substantial protection, our consulate in Benghazi was under lock and key. Why when Al Qa'ida and sympathizers and related groups are known to be operating in Benghazi, would you have a facility that is clearly identified as an American facility under lock and protection is mysterious to me. But the first part of the answer is again I think, very revealing.

Now we're in a political season and though the Ambassador was very graceful in not talking politics at all, I am in no way graceful, for those of you that know me will agree quickly. So what you have seen recently is a fairly robust discussion about what happened in Benghazi. Well what happened? What happened is, on 9/11 the anniversary of the attacks against the United States, there was a coordinated and prepared attack against our consulate, which resulted in the death of our Ambassador and three other Americans who were in service to the United States people and to the government. That's what happened. But you'd never know that. Instead what you had to hear was that this was all about a film. Now...I haven't seen the film, I don't really care about the film, and I'm not a big believer in these kinds of excuses because there was no film before 9/11---the real 9/11 in 2001. There haven't been a lot of films before other terrorist incidents. There was no film that inflamed Hezbollah when we were in Lebanon. Jemaah Islamiyah is not that interested in these films. These are excuses but they go a long way when trying to explain away what is at the root of the terrorist attacks against American targets and against Western targets as well because of course we can't forget that even though Chris Stevens and others were killed, our embassy in Egypt was attacked, the German embassy was attacked, British embassies were attacked from places as far away as Sudan to Yemen and local nationals were also killed both in our defense in some places, but more frequently against us.

So what was this all about? Was this really about the fact that we had angered a local Muslim population? Or was it that we are in a long war against an Islamic-extremist movement that is targeting the United States? It seems to me that a lot of our answers are not answers the President has given. He has not used the word "terrorism" once to describe what happened in Benghazi. When you are incapable of describing the problem, it's really hard for you to figure out the solution.

Let me give you another favorite story of mine from back in the day. The USS Cole, the attack on the USS Cole. We lost almost 20 American servicemen on that. That was a brazen terrorist attack. Many of these actors were working with the government in Yemen, they certainly felt comfortable with the government in Yemen. Nonetheless, our Ambassador there and the then head of Central Command. I can't remember what we used to call him...

Ambassador Ray:

...They used to like being called Commander-in-Chief, it was not commander in chief. We only have one of them

(laughs from panelists)

Danielle Pletka:

...that's right....in their wisdom they decided they wanted to work more closely with the Yemeni government. They worked close with the Yemeni government and really chose not to see the problem that the Yemenis were still involved with in terms of their relationships and harboring extremists and financing extremists and allowing them to have safe passage and an operating theatre. So what happened? This attack took place, certainly not the fault of the ambassador or of the commandant commander. On the other hand, we were in that area because

our assessment of the threat was inadequate. Now what happened? The first thing that we did was we sent FBI investigators and we sent a bunch of Marines. The Marines were greeted with a quite indignant ambassador who was appalled that the Marines were carrying side-arms through the streets of Yemen who were making her entire outreach to the Yemeni government really unpleasant. Because how am I going to explain that our relationships are improving if your guys are all out there carrying side-arms and wearing body armor? Again you know, just a sort of a failure to understand what it is that we are fighting and what the nature is of the threat. It becomes difficult to detect people in that kind of a situation. What happened to the FBI? Well the head of the mission was denied country clearance so he couldn't come in to the country to continue the mission. Sadly he left the FBI and he was actually killed in the World Trade Center on 9/11. But I certainly remember very fiery conversations with him about that. So, I think we need to come back to the root cause of this. Which is that we need to protect the people who are paid by our taxes and working for our diplomatic service to keep us safe, to service us overseas, to maintain relationships with foreign governments.

But we also need to understand; we are not just in a localized war. It's not a war in Iraq, or a war in Afghanistan. This is a larger conflict with a group that seeks to target the United States wherever it can. And when you do things like leave your embassy and your consulate under lock and key, then what happens is, your people get killed. And there's really no excuse for that, it's a failure. You should be protecting American citizens and we should be protecting people who are out on the front lines for us. Everybody's always indignant when our soldiers don't have body armor. This is the moral equivalent. And we need to remember that every single one of our folks who's operating in an environment like that. And we need to be alive not just to the local government but to the threat that we face everywhere. So that's what I would underscore and I think it's a good moment to move on and talk about the next topic.

Thank you very much!

Dr. Judith Yaphe

Well actually I was in.. Where are we on now? (laughs). I was in Abu Dhabi. It's 14 hours to get out there, you go to work, night and day, and two days later, you're on the plane coming back again. And I haven't slept but I'm wide awake now. I'm also going to try this new technology stuff because if I don't do that I'll forget where I am.

Well we've heard a lot of interesting and different things and I just wanted to make one comment that I was interested in as I listened to Eric. Because I'm going to talk to you about my... It's all going to be very personal. What I say will reflect experiences I had both in my time at CIA and since then and my long time covering this area. When I was listening to Eric describe the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the last projects I did at the agency was a global look at Islamist organizations. And what is amazing is that you really have only two models. One is the Muslim Brotherhood, which goes back to 1928 in Egypt, for the Sunni world. The other is Hizballah for the Shia. They are similar in organization, structure, and codes of conduct. They had—and may still have—overt and covert branches. They use the same procedures to recruit loyalists: you are

spotted and vetted for loyalties within the mosque; you are recruited through family, tribal, clan connections and that is where you do your work. It's very hard to penetrate them from the outside or to try to put somebody inside to report on it. This is not the mafia in the United States or the communist party in the 1950s but I think we needed to learn that and I think we did.

But it also reminds me of their similarities in structure and indoctrination, and determination of loyalty to secular extremist organizations. Instead of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizballah, think about the Baathist party as defined by Saddam Husayn in Iraq and Hafez al-Assad in Syria. I think maybe, and again this is a politically incorrect comment, it's the Tea party because you find loyalties are very deep and if you don't follow the doctrine, you're out. That's a scary thought. So I want to talk about, and I call this sort of a David Letterman look: Ten lessons I learned about Terrorism and Diplomatic Security.

As Yonah introduced me, I spent 20 years at the CIA, actually a little more than that, before wandering off to National Defense University where I was first a visiting fellow and then a was hired as a senior fellow. I liked working in and for the government that had educated me, in a think tank that was long in view, independent in analysis, and protected by academic freedom; having been "inside" and "outside" it was hard to go back into that other environment. My area of expertise was and still is Iraq-Iran and the Persian or Arabian Gulf, depending on your perspective. But my time at the CIA included 3 years in the Counter-Terrorist Center, which was established in the mid-1980s by DCI [Director of Central Intelligence] Bill Casey. And this was to be a new kind of center; Casey and by extension the US Government was tired of reacting to something that had already happened. We were to be pro-active. Counter-terrorism has become a growth industry since the events of 9/11, everyone has a counter-terrorism program. It quickly became a growth industry in this town for public and private sector profit. Despite the proliferation of centers, however, I don't think it's made us any smarter or any better, but it employs a lot of people and has sucked up a lot of money. I think much of the money and effort has been duplicative and has probably been a waste but that's just my personal opinion based on let's just say...an instinct. That sixth sense that all intelligence analysts are supposed to have and which warns them of possible deception or, worse, irrelevance.

The point is that CTC was intended to counter those planning to attack us. It was designed to be pro-active. I was still part of the Intelligence Directorate, but within the broader inter-agency context. So I got to learn a lot about collecting and managing intelligence on fast-moving and potentially dangerous developments. I also got a new appreciation for how information is vetted, or not vetted, and the non-intelligence influences that can shape warning about warning. There is a Peter Principle involved--the more quantity or volume you had, the less quality you had. And terrorism can be one of the worst ways of measuring quality or reliability of information, sources and methods. Everybody wants to tell you something about a

bad guy, but whose bad guy is that and why? “You see that guy over there? I don’t like him. He hurt my family. He’s a terrorist!”

I am reminded of a cartoon, and it transfers nicely. It goes back to the Iraq war, two soldiers, one Iraqi and one American, are driving around Baghdad, and the American says to his Iraqi counterpart ‘See that house over there, we are going to take it down tomorrow, there is a real bad guy in there, terrorism and all that stuff’ and the Iraqi looks at him and goes ‘Ahhh, yeah I know who lives there’ ‘You do?’ ‘Yea, he deserves it’ ‘Well, what do you know?’ ‘He has done some bad stuff, he killed a member of my family’ ‘Oh yeah, when did that happen?’ ‘1387.’ Well, there are long memories and there are measures that we do not quite understand, and there is a perfect willingness if you want to understand how good the information is.

I also teach at George Washington University and I tell my students “I do not care if you are an Intelligence Officer, whatever you are covering; you are reading a newspaper or a journal article, or anything. You have to ask yourself why is this person telling me what they are telling me? What do they want to convince me of? Oh, they are not doing it for money they are doing it for love, or hatred of what. There is always a motive.

But I have to tell you that, especially when I was in the CTC, my whole career has been on Iraq, Iran, Hizballah, Lebanon and I am going to get into that in a minute, but I also have to tell you that not a day goes by that I do not think about what brought me to that job in counterterrorism. In that place, at that time, and what I saw, and what I learned there, and I am going to go through a little of that today, because I think that history repeats itself. Much of what we have seen today, those lessons that needed to be learned, the mistakes we made, problems we have, they haven’t changed. They get fancier, more complicated maybe, but basically they are still there.

So I said I would come to this talk from a very personal perspective. I worked on Iran after the 1979 Revolution, on the period of the export of the Revolution and what that meant, and the seizure of our Embassy and the hostage crisis of 1979-1980, what I call the first post-modern diplomatic act of terrorism, at least for my area. At that time I had a relatively straightforward job as an analyst. I needed a reliable schedule, I didn’t need any phone calls in the middle of the night, I had little kids and I wanted a private life, but let me tell you something happened in 1983 that changed all that for me, and for people I worked with that sent me in an entirely different direction. It sent me into counterterrorism.

I worked for Bob Ames, some of you may have known Bob Ames, he was killed in the first embassy bombing in Beirut in May, 1983; the second bombing was April 1984. He was there on a special mission for then Secretary of State George Schulz. Bob was the head of my office at the CIA, which was an overt position, head of what was the Near East South Asia

office, I did a lot of special projects for him, including on Palestinian and Palestinian-Arab relations. He was the target of that 1983 bombing, and that event had a profound impact on me and others in the organization. Several of us found ourselves in the newly created CTC. I have to say there was a mission sense that went beyond other organizations; it was not just your average job. I know people who spent years dedicated to tracking that Hizballah target, who could describe to you every suspect house and family. They were really good street men, let's just put it that way. They knew what they were doing, they dedicated their lives to it.

When I left CTC three years later, some of them had died. At least two of them died on Pan Am 103 because they were serving in the Middle East and they were coming home for Christmas. So, as I said, this is kind of a personal thing.

While I was in CTC I covered many attacks on US interests and assets, including hijackings, bombings, and especially the taking of American and western hostages in Lebanon. You cannot imagine how much time, attention, and resources were devoted to these events. The fate of the hostages in Lebanon was an especially high priority for President Reagan; and it became one for me since from that point my life was never my own again. I worked for three years around the clock, coming in at all hours and days of the week, following every lead possible. So what I am going to say reflects a mixture of these things I have seen, and I will try to do it fast. I do not know how my time is going, but I will be quick.

Let me say first that some of my points in retrospect may seem silly, but I don't mean to be silly.

- First, one must keep the basic lesson in mind, that the US should never negotiate with terrorists. We all know that, we know we never do it, Reagan said we never did it, every president says we do not do that---negotiating with terrorists, paying off hostage-takers, only encourages them and demeans the United States.
- My second point is, if the United States does negotiate with terrorists, it should deal with them directly, not indirectly with so-called surrogates, or alleged representatives of real people. I think you know what I am referring to—Iran contra is the classic case study. Same applies to dealing with foreign governments, and in this sense the Israelis led us down a dark path here into a disaster. I recently researched the background of the Reagan Administration's role in the 1985 arms for hostages deal with Tehran. One policymaker described the arms-for hostage deal as a virtual comedy of errors—we replaced American arms that Israel had provided Iran but the arms to Iran had Stars of David on the missile casings, not a good idea if we wanted to get our hostages out of Lebanon. There was a belief, and Ronald Reagan was convinced, that if only we could find the right Iranians—meaning so-called moderates (I still have trouble saying “moderate Iranian”) or radicals, people that you could deal with, that everything would be fine. Well they don't do

moderate when you flaunt unacceptable things in their faces; you lose control over the operation which will almost certainly fail.

- If you are taken hostage, however, a word of advice: compliment your captor on his choice of car, color of the blindfold, the size of the trunk, and never complain about the food or the lack of room service. I went through so many debriefings, and discussions about what the hostages were going through. It stays with you. My only regret was that I couldn't hang around until 1991 or 1992, when after seven years Terry Waite finally came out. You have no idea how you get tied up with that, how personal it becomes.
- I think another thing you have to tell American politicians, hear this on the Hill and in the White House, that an emergency on our part, demanding the immediate release of a hostage for example, does not constitute an emergency on the part of the hostage taker or whoever he is doing it for or whatever his reasons are. Is it for personal or national honor, money or to get support for Iran in its death struggle with Iraq, or whatever the reason is.
- Here is one that President Carter I think learned well: regional events are never wrapped up neatly for the nightly news, "This is Ted Koppel on day 395 of the hostages in Lebanon," some of you may be old enough to remember that. I'm appalled when I think I have students, graduate students, that don't know the Vietnam War, I mean what a shock to me, but I guess that I'm just an old person. So, be prepared. Events, as critical as they may seem to be for us, are never tied up just in time for presidential elections. We think that everything revolves around our elections, that we can control foreign policy. Well, you do that at your peril, as I think we also found out. Be prepared for extended, convoluted and failed negotiations, and remember the long years American journalist Terry Anderson, one of the first hostages taken who was held seven years, and Anglican negotiator Terry Waite were held, much of the time in isolation. When we thought we had negotiated that great release with Iran, Hizballah, released three Americans, having received their payments, only to take three more, because they always kept a stable dozen American and French hostages. It's not a game that ends, my first point. It never ends.
- Information on terrorists plans and operations is easy to get and hard to confirm. It is also likely to be part deception, part revenge. It is true that in the past ten to fifteen years we have seen incredible advances in the amount of information available out there. I cannot imagine how analysts today deal with the sheer quantity and duplicity of sources. Who could read and synthesize it all? And so much is rumor, innuendo, redundant, and/or irrelevant. You have the IT Revolution, Facebook, Twitter. I don't even know what Twitter is, but let me throw that in there, and you can catch a lot of these things. You can set up operations, like that teen-ager in Chicago who was arrested by the FBI in a sting operation this summer. He was eighteen years old, angry, and he wanted to blow up a bar, and the FBI set him up with false explosives. Great, I am glad they got a potential terrorist off the street, but you know I am not sure if this does much for the overall problem.

The 9/11 plotters made a lot of mistakes, as you may remember. I testified before the 9/11 Commission and I think we are familiar with how many clues were missed. Local people, local law enforcement, people in flight schools, people just on the streets were picking up a lot of stuff, sending that information in. There was information passed to the White House, including the famous President's Daily Brief of August 2001, warning that al-Qaida was planning an operation on U.S. soil and what happened? Nothing. 9/11 happened anyway. Which again reminds me, what do you do with them? There will be many clues in the information to come out of Benghazi. I believe that had to be a very cleverly and long arranged plot. Al-Qa'ida or its wannabes, its look-alikes, who think they have some kind of affiliation, or pretend they do. They are good at this, and they can plan ahead. It doesn't take a lot money, there are few complications. The information on where the enemy is readily available to them.

Imagine Libya after the revolution. The Street: "Oh, you want the American? Yeah, the Ambassador is over there, the CIA safe house is there." The Street knows these things. They are locals, and they know these things. I would agree with the point that Danielle made, things don't really matter except to journalists, to the media who want to say today is the eleventh anniversary of fill-in-the-blank, and now we are waiting to see what is going to happen. That is silly. Why is it silly? It is silly because terrorists plan, well the smart ones, the ones that have been really effective. 9/11 was planned long in advance, so where a lot of other operations over the years. Real terrorists act when they are ready, and when the opportunity arises, then you can fill in the blank for what the reason is. It's because this is happening, or Israel did that, or some movie or speech insulted my religion or culture or leader. You can find a reason; it is really easy in an area where popular opinion is at a flash point for a small number of people a lot of the time.

So who determines when a threat is a threat? I have covered some sensitive topics, including terrorist threats and compliance with UN Security Council or Congressional resolutions, and I thought I understood what and when a violation had been committed—for example, when Saddam Husayn violated the no-fly zones in the 1990s or a vague report was received that a previously unknown group planned to hijack an airliner. These, however, were threats to be determined by policymakers and not by monitors. To be told by whatever administration it was, and there was several that would say this, "Don't worry about it, we will decide when a violation is a violation," "we will decide when a threat is a real threat". It does not matter which party is in power. But the thing is, we in the CTC had to fight the airline industry, powerful business interests and when we were trying to warn, we. "What do you mean you have what sounds like a reasonable threat, a warning that there is going to be an airline attack? You can't do that, business will be terrible." Does this sound kind of silly, especially after 9/11? Maybe it does, maybe it doesn't. But you are running against a lot of vested interests that don't want to see the public upset, or worried, or afraid to do whatever, and that is just a reality.

We all grieve for Ambassador Chris Stevens, Bob Ames, and all the other civilian and military personnel lost in the war on terrorism. At the CIA, we were a family, and we worked closely with people. The work—analytical and operational—brings people together in a joint mission and we are responsible for each other. Our people overseas who are at risk in diplomatic missions abroad have to feel secure if they are to carry out their mission and protect U.S. interests. They must develop a rapport, a sense of shared interests with the government. Is our ambassador always the best person to determine what the security is and how best those interests are protected? Maybe he or she is, maybe not. I think Ambassador Stevens was just the kind of person that is so successful in the region. Let me tell you the true sense of the word Arabist, he understood the culture, the language, the politics. He loved it all, he related to the countries he served in, to the people he served with, and that's what you want the best of your ambassadors and diplomatic servants to be able to do, without losing their focus. I doubt that he ever did, but the point is you get comfortable and you have got a good relationship with a new and untried government and you do not want to show the people that you do not trust them. Ambassador Stevens knew the Libyans with whom he was working, he was a friend of the revolution, a popular person. He was also a prime target for al-Qa'ida, or any terrorist eager to strike "the Great Satan." One should not be surprised in that sense that he was probably targeted for awhile.

Some final points.

- The simplest operations are the most effective. Isn't it amazing that in the 30 years since the Beirut bombing that killed my boss, trucks bombs are still so effective and that some of our leading politicians cannot travel in an airplane because their name is somebody else's identity that is on the terrorist watch-lists?
- Making counterterrorism the top priority of U.S. national security policy does not make us safer, does not strengthen our national security, and does not give us a smarter national strategy. It has not helped in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and it has not worked in Yemen where countering terrorism is not their prime interest, they don't want to be ours, they have three civil wars going on. A lot of complicated issues in terrorism to them is one sidebar, there are so many things that threaten what is happening there.
- So, why do they hate us? Is it about Israel? Of course. Is about our oil imperialism, our neocolonialism? Of course. Is it about our culture? They hate our culture, absolutely. Is it about our denial of history and values? This is a much more complicated issue, you have to peel away all the layers, the Middle East is like an onion anyway. So everything has to be peeled away.

Let me conclude with a couple of thoughts. Would the risks to U.S. interests and people be less if we changed policy on Israel, if we recognized a Palestinian state, if we withdrew all of our military personnel, every American from the region? I don't think so. There are a lot of reasons, and sometimes you do not have to have a reason when it comes to terrorism. It is the impact it will have within the regime, within the domestic context, as well as internationally

what we did to those guys that is just so important. We once were seen in the Middle East as people who had a revolution against colonialism, the American Revolution. We came to the East not for territory or hegemony, or power, we cared about education, we established schools teaching the local literature, language and history. We did a lot to establish what became the Great Arab Awakening and the revival of Arab Nationalism beginning after World War I. Those were our schools that the elites of those societies went to, they became political, military, civilian leaders. Now a lot of them are gone today, but Robert College in Istanbul, which is now Boğaziçi University, the American University in Beirut (the site of so many of our hostage takings), the American University in Cairo were all founded by American missionaries with no sense of colonial destiny. But that was long ago, we became a superpower, we abandoned our democratic ideals, we joined with autocrats against the people because of oil, or the Cold War. Maybe it was spheres of influence; we used balance of power politics, and anti-communism to gain leverage and hegemony with what we saw as very stable societies.

Now, how do we change this perception of American power in a region, whether it's true or not? The point is perception is more important than reality. We are dealing with conspiracy theories in a region that invented the art-form and relies on them for validation. How else can you account for your national weakness, victimization or marginalization? Taking responsibility is not easy reason for why you feel weak. Those are complicated issues, best left elsewhere. We are looking at why terrorists use these reasons. There I think it is difficult for us to really reach to a few angry men who are misled by visions of martyrdom, sacrifice, power, greed, or personal crime. There are a lot of different reasons that lead people to use terrorism as a tactic, but you cannot fight a tactic, you have to fight the people, you have to fight the terrorists.

So, there will always be risks for our diplomats, danger for our military and civilian officers, and personnel deployed in the region, as well as for the many American scholars and students who have made their affection for this wonderful region and its people part of their lives. We cannot as a nation expect to be loved or admired for our actions, or our benevolent "superpowerness." We are, I think, a generous people in spirit, many Americans have gotten a lot smarter about the region, its people, its religions and traditions. Many Americans, for whatever reason, whether it is family, faith or history, love the region. YouTube, Facebook, CNN, Fox, have made the world smaller and riskier than could have been imagined ten or one hundred years ago, when it was still assumed gentlemen did not read other gentlemen's mail, and distance or expense would keep America safe. I often wonder, in my darker moments, what would Bob Ames have made of what has happened since 1983. Thank you.