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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BYMAN: Good morning, everyone, and thank you very much for your patience. My name is Daniel Byman. I'm the research director at the Saban Center here at Brookings.

I think the issue of terrorism has been on the agenda in various forms in the United States easily since 9/11, but, of course, for people like our speakers today way before that.

At the end of the first term of the Obama Administration, it seems like an appropriate point to look at the track record so far and also to look ahead at the challenges remaining. I'm delighted that we have two speakers who can do that extremely well for us today.

Our first speaker and our main speaker today is Ambassador Daniel Benjamin. He is the coordinator for Counterterrorism at the State Department. He has held numerous government positions. I'm also quite pleased to say he for several years was a senior fellow here at the Brookings Institution. He is also the author of two noted books: *"The Age of Sacred Terror"* and *"The Next Attack."* And I would say to the loss of the public, he is leaving public service, but he is going to teach and head the research institute the Dickey Center up at Dartmouth College starting in the coming year and I'm sure that the Dartmouth students and I would some more broadly academia is delighted that he'll be joining them.

To comment on Ambassador Benjamin's remarks today, we have Bruce Riedel. Bruce is a 30-year veteran of the intelligence community. He has also served in numerous senior positions in DoD and in the White House. He is the author of several books here at Brookings, where he is a senior fellow. I could actually spend a fair

amount of time simply listing his publications, but I will say that they have covered Al Qaeda and Pakistan in particular in recent years and he is one of the most distinguished commentators and thinkers on counterterrorism today.

So, please join me in welcoming both our speakers and we look forward to hearing from Ambassador Benjamin. Please. (Applause)

MR. BENJAMIN: Well, thanks very much, Dan, and thanks for the very warm welcome. It is wonderful to be back at Brookings and here in the Falk Auditorium and see so many old friends. I particularly want to thank Dan for inviting me and Bruce Riedel for joining as a discussant.

As Dan mentioned, Brookings was my home before I entered the Obama Administration. Looking back, I'm deeply grateful I had the chance to think many of the policy issues that I would confront before reentering government and to have a chance to try out some thoughts on the truly outstanding scholars of the issue and practitioners I should add who are here, such as Dan and Bruce. Indeed, it was in this room that I spoke a little more than four years ago in a paper entitled *"Strategic Counterterrorism."* I know I speak for many of my colleagues in the government when I say that Brookings is a national treasure and it deserves our gratitude for incubating so many of the smarter things our government has done.

As we move from the first of President Obama's terms to his second, it is a fitting time to take stock of our fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Of course, to do so, we need to remember how things stood when the president took office almost four years ago.

At that time, the Al Qaeda corps was a formidable and dangerous organization deeply dug into the federally-administered tribal areas in Pakistan, and capable of committing a catastrophic act. Yemen, a country where we had

been largely disengaged for several years had become a worrisome hotbed of terrorist activity. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula had established itself as the first AQ affiliate with the determination and the capability of striking the United States, and we saw that clearly at the Christmas season, in fact, in 2009 with the attempt to destroy and airliner bound for Detroit.

The following year, AQAP tried again with a plot to destroy several U.S.-bound airplanes with bombs timed to detonate in their cargo holds. We should also remember that in Somalia, al-Shabaab controlled all but a few blocks in Mogadishu, and much of South and Central Somalia.

Against this backdrop, we begin our tenure with some thoughts about what we needed to do to be more effective. In general, we believed we had to have a more comprehensive and a more genuinely strategic approach. We had to invigorate our diplomacy to strengthen the foreign partnerships that are absolutely vital to our success. We knew moreover that while the military intelligence community and law enforcement agencies were all firing on all cylinders, civilian agencies here in the U.S., but also in governments around the world were not yet sufficiently engaged. And we recognized clearly that kinetic action was not enough to reduce the threat as much as we wanted.

With that in mind, we put a high priority on two key areas. One was capacity-building so that countries around the world could do a better job dealing with the threats within their borders and in their regions and recognizing that we had to address what Deputy National Security Advisor John Brennan had labeled the “upstream factors” of radicalization, we resolved to strengthen our work on countering violent extremism or in the government par when CVE so we could blunt the attraction of violence and reduce the number of recruits to our enemies’ cause.

Today, four years later, things look different both on the ground, as I’ll

discuss a bit later, and what the U.S. is doing, especially on the civilian side of the house.

In South Asia, AQ's corps has been seriously degraded. Without a doubt, Osama bin Laden's departure from the scene was the most important milestone in the fight against Al Qaeda. The removal of AQ's founder and sole commander for 22 years was a testament to the work of countless intelligence and counterterrorism professionals across the government, and that operation further demonstrated as never before the extraordinary proficiency our military and intelligence communities have achieved in the realm of counterterrorism and as someone who had been director for Counterterrorism at the White House in the late '90s, I have to say that the leap in capabilities was nothing short of astonishing.

And of course it was not just bin Laden. We have removed more than 20 of AQ's top 30 leaders. Now the corps finds it difficult to raise money, train recruits, and plan attacks outside of the region.

In Yemen, the fight against Al Qaeda and the Arabian Peninsula is a work in progress, but I'm glad to say that the trend lines are positive. In particular, the resolve of President Hadi and the Yemeni people has made a major difference. After holding a considerable swath of territory, AQAP has been rolled back from the gains of last year. Yemen illustrates the value of a truly comprehensive approach. So, while we are training Yemeni security forces to combat terror, we're also addressing the needs of the Yemeni people by assisting their political transition and delivery humanitarian and economic aid. We're also working with the international community to double its support for that impoverished country. We do this not only because it's right to help a country that has Yemen's challenges, but also because this work addresses human needs that left unmet can accelerate radicalization and because our partners need to know that we are in it for more than our own security.

In Somalia, after more than two decades of strife, this marked the end of Somalia's political transition with a new provisional constitution, parliament, and president. These are the hopeful signs of a new era is Somalia. That long-suffering country could reach this point because the Somalia national forces and the AU mission in Somalia, AMISOM, had strong financial support and training from the U.S. and western partners and because of that, it could expel al-Shabaab from major cities. While the group will undoubtedly try to carry out a tax against the new government and against neighboring countries, al-Shabaab is fragmented by dissention and much weakened. I think we can all agree that's good news.

And, in short, the Al Qaeda corps is on the path to defeat. The two most dangerous affiliates, while still posing serious threats, have suffered their worst setbacks in years. If we only had a set of challenges, we'd all be feeling great.

But, as everyone here knows, the tumultuous events of the last couple of years in the Middle East and North Africa have added a lot of complications to this picture. In Mali, the terrorists of Al Qaeda and the Islamic Maghreb are attempting to consolidate their safe haven. The return of exile fighters from the ranks of Gaddafi's army to Northern Mali in the subsequent Tuareg Rebellion dispersed weapons from the Libyan stocks in the coup in Bamako have all brought a dangerous instability to the Sahel. In Libya, the aftermath of the revolution has provided more opportunities for extremist groups to operate, as we saw so tragically in the deaths of Ambassador Chris Stevens and three others in Benghazi on September 11.

Weakened domestic security institutions and especially civil strife we know from hard experience create exactly the kind of environment that terrorists are drawn to. Libya has provided one such case where extremists can cause real problems for states undergoing difficult transitions to democracy.

Another example is Syria. There, Al Qaeda in Iraq seeks to establish a long-term presence under the pseudonym of al-Nusra Front. By fighting alongside armed Syrian opposition groups, al-Nusra members are working to hijack a long-repressed nation's struggle to suit their own extremist needs.

Last week, we designated al-Nusra Front as an alias of AQI which is already, of course, listed as a foreign terrorist organization. As they try to wrap themselves in the legitimacy of the opposition, we have called the terrorists out as a warning to all who wish to support the legitimate opposition of the Syrian people and not help a terrorist group put down roots in the Levant.

To add to this list of new challenges, in West Africa, the loosely-organized collection of factions known as Boko Haram, who have some ties to AQIM, continue to carry out attacks in Nigeria, exploiting the historical grievance of Northern Nigerians to win recruits and public sympathy. The number in sophistication of Boko Haram's attacks is increasing and while the group focuses principally on local Nigerian issues and actors, there are reports that it is developing financial and training links with other extremists and wishes to operate on a bigger stage.

Now, at this point, I need to make something of a detour because while non-state actors such as Al Qaeda remain at the top of our priority list, we have witnessed a resurgence of state sponsorship of terrorism, as well, especially in the dangerous and destabilizing activities of the Iranian regime, which is done through the Iranian revolutionary guard corps Quds Force and Tehran's ally Hezbollah.

In addition to the critical support that the Quds Force and Hezbollah are providing for Syria's Assad regime, over the past year, there has been a significant escalation in Iranian-backed terrorism. In fact, Hezbollah's activity has reached a tempo unseen since the 1990s, with attacks plotted in Southeast Asia, Europe, and Africa, and it

appears the group has carried out an attack in Bulgaria, as we saw with the airport bombing in July. The Quds Force is also thought to attack in Georgia, India, Thailand, and most brazenly here in Washington, D.C.

Taking steps to crack down on all of these activities has been a top priority and we've launched a whole government approach to counter Hezbollah and IRGC activities, including increased law enforcement, intelligence, and diplomatic initiatives. We're targeting Hezbollah's finances, including through the seizure of $150 million from the Lebanese Canadian Bank, which had facilitated a vast narcotics and money laundering scheme.

We're urging countries to take a wide range of steps to crack down on Hezbollah and the Quds Force, including through sanctions, increased law enforcement and intelligence focus, and through strong public messaging. We've been engaging with our partners in Europe, and we are cautiously optimistic at last about the prospects for an E.U. designation of the group. We've been regularly working with our partners in other regions in countries where Hezbollah has a significant presence and infrastructure, including in Southeast Asia, South America, and West Africa. We're pleased with the progress we're making and we will continue to take action so Hezbollah recognizes that its behavior is unacceptable and it can no longer operate with impunity both at home and abroad.

So, as we've seen the world of counterterrorism is changing fast. Some of the most dangerous threats have receded noticeably, but new ones are emerging. And while perhaps not as threatening now, these cannot be viewed with complacency. The political transformations in the Middle East and North Africa are having a profound effect on our foreign policy and including our counterterrorism equities. AQ, it's important to underscore, was not a part of the popular uprisings that led to democratic transitions

across the Middle East and North Africa, but violent extremist across the region are looking for opportunities to exploit the transitions underway.

Well, we never expected this to be a painless process, revolutionary transformations are by their nature dislocating and unpredictable. There are risks particularly in the short run and we must seek to reduce them even as we work to help these states in transition find long-term success. So, we need continued engagement and we need strategic patience. We need to work towards our long-term objectives despite the surprises and the setbacks that we encounter. We greeted the revolutionary events of the last two years with the belief that the turn to democracy and accountable government would ultimately deflate extremism and marginalize its advocates and I strongly believe that that logic remains valid. These are still early days and we need to see these transformations through.

Diplomatic engagement right now is essential. We have been clear in our dealings with the new governments that violent extremists pose at least as great and probably a greater threat to them and their people's aspirations than they do to the United States and the western interests. Preoccupied by the difficult economic developments and political and constitutional reforms and hobbled by weakened security institutions, some of these governments were slow to recognize the challenge. But the attack on our facilities in Benghazi, and extreme violence elsewhere in the region began to change that, and these governments increasingly show the political will to tackle the terrorist threat. In many cases though, they lack the resources and expertise to handle this complex and difficult challenge. This is a unique opportunity for the international community to help build the capacity of these nations which are eager and willing to take on terrorism. This task comes with great urgency. We must address is now before the threat, which is proving durable, becomes more serious.

Some of these governments have doubts about U.S. counterterrorism objectives. Some seek to implicate us in repressive acts carried out by former regime security services. We'll have to work through those ideas and, in fact, we can agree with these new governments that a rerun of their predecessor's regimes is not what we seek nor what is needed.

On the contrary, though there are numerous factors that feed into the phenomenon of radicalization, repressive measures by security services were surely among the most potent. The goal of our counterterrorism assistance is and must be to help countries move away from repressive approaches towards developing true rule of law frameworks. Let's be clear, the better our partners are using their criminal justice agencies to prosecute, adjudicate, and incarcerate terrorists, the less they will resort to extralegal methods to crack down on a domestic threat.

Moreover, our security benefits when countries deal with threats on their own borders so that those threats don't balloon and demand that we act and so that we don't need to take the kind of dramatic steps that inevitably cause a backlash and radicalization. That's why we're working closely with our interagency partners, the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and DoD to help foreign partners develop their law enforcement and justice sector institutions and to secure their borders.

Our anti-terrorism assistance program is the U.S. government's premiere terrorism capacity-building program for criminal justice agencies of partner nations. From bomb detection in crime scene investigation to border aviation and cyber security, ATA builds capacity in a wide spectrum of counterterrorism skills, offering courses, seminars, and consultations.

In just the last fiscal year, ATA trained more than 9,800 participants for

more than 50 partner nations. This is indeed a whole of government effect. Working with the Department of Justice now, our bureau at the State Department deploys resident legal advisors to U.S. embassies to develop host country government and law enforcement sector capacity specifically to deal with terrorism. The RLAs, as we call them, will also provide the more basic mentoring skills and bring prosecutors and law enforcement agencies up to a point where they can pursue more complex types of cases including those involving terrorist crimes. We have these advisors in a growing number of countries.

These are just two of our capacity-building efforts and there are others. For example, in the Sahel and the Maghreb, the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership has helped build the capacity of 10 countries across the region with training and support so they can tighten border security, disrupt terrorist networks, and prevent attacks. The program brings together civilian criminal justice and military experts to pursue a comprehensive approach to counterterrorism.

Now, capacity-building, we all know, has come in for criticism at times, but when a country has political resolve, it can make extraordinary strides with assistance from others. Let me cite one example.

Indonesia, perhaps my favorite example, there, the government has dedicated itself to creating the civilian legal structures and law enforcement institutions to fight terrorism effectively, comprehensively, and within the rule of law. Indonesia has scored more than 100 consecutive convictions in terrorist cases and then national police has had major successes in breaking up terrorist cells linked to Jemaah Islamiyah and other violent extremist organizations, and anyone who thinks back eight or nine years or even a decade will remember that many of us thought at the time that Indonesia hung in the balance and was unlikely to survive its battle with extremism. No one thinks that now

and in any discussion of the CT landscapes, Southeast Asia is frequently omitted. The point here is that capacity-building can work and we must continue to innovate to improve our efficacy.

I said at the outset that at the beginning of the administration, we were determined to do a better job at countering violent extremism. So, let me tell you about our efforts to delegitimize the terrorist narrative.

Under Secretary Clinton's leadership, we established the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications. The CSCC, which is housed at the State Department, is a true interagency endeavor with a mandate from President Obama in the form of an executive order. The CSCC does many things, including working with our embassies on a range of activities to undermine extremist discourse. Its digital outreach team pushes back openly against AQ propaganda online in Arabic, Urdu, and Somali.

In one effort, it conducted an extended campaign, much of it focused on Yemeni tribal Web sites to counter messages from AQAP in 2012. This campaign, which included nearly 1,000 online engagements, together with banners and videos that mimicked AQ's own messaging style with our CVE messages clearly rattled the extremists which saw how anti-AQ Yemenis were picking up on our messaging and our themes. The extremist through one of their online front groups expressed concern about what he called the new U.S. policy of "intellectual and ideological challenge to the mujahidin" in the general and jihadist forums in the social media Web sites.

These were not the only AQ supporters to take note of CSCC. Earlier in the year in April, the global Islamic media front, a great well-known to all scholars of the subject and a leading distributor of AQ propaganda warned participants on pro-AQ forums to be careful in their discussion of Somalia, to avoid playing into the hands of CSCC's digital outreach team. More recently in October, another prominent pro-AQ

forum hosted an extended discussion of the threat they see emanating from CSCC's efforts.

It's still early to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts, but we can say that they have made the enemy sit up and take notice of the simple fact. The AQ propagandas can no longer spread their poison uncontested in virtual safe havens.

In our CV efforts, another area we focused on is identifying and addressing key nodes of potential radicalization. One priority area for us has been prisons. Many incarcerated prisoners, of course, will eventually be released and we need to take steps to decrease the likelihood that they will return to violence. Second, prison is a time when individuals are cut off from their previous extremist contacts, and, so, making them effectively open to positive change. Third, there are real concerns about radicalization in the prison setting and effective prison management and good correctional practices can help reduce these risks.

To deal with this challenge, we've worked with the U.N.'s Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and a Dutch NGO, the International Centre for Counterterrorism, to develop an international initiative on prison rehabilitation and disengagement. Now more than 35 countries, many multilateral organizations, and leading independent experts have participated in this initiative, which is providing policymakers, practitioners, and experts a chance to compare notes and best practices in this critically important area. Uniquely, that is the U.N. agency we work with and other implementers are using a set of best practices to shape the technical assistance they're offering to interested governments. We believe we've made an enormous amount of progress in tackling this vital CVE issue over the past several years, but there is still much that can be done and should be done in this area.

As I hope I've made clear, there is a critical role for diplomacy in the

broader counterterrorism effort. Whether it's creating new partnerships with transition countries in the Maghreb, strengthening older ties with traditional allies, expanding capacity-building efforts or countering violent extremism in the many different contexts in which it flourishes, the State Department has a central role to play. This recognition led Secretary Clinton last year to transform the 30-plus-year-old Office of the Coordinator of Counterterrorism into a full-fledged bureau, thus fulfilling a key recommendation of the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review. Creating a bureau has given us a real boost, but it's only a start, and if there's one thing we've learned, it's that our approach if it is to gain traction and truly be sustainable, well, we can't do it alone. Instead, we need a broad coalition of foreign partners to press a common agenda, especially on capacity-building and countering violent extremism.

So, last year, we launched a major initiative and established the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the GCTF, thereby advancing the president's goal of building an international architecture for dealing with 21st Century threats. The GCTF, 29 member states in the European Union, brings together traditional western donors, Muslim majority nations, and major powers from around the globe. It offers counterterrorism policymakers and experts something unique, a dedicated platform to compare practices, identify urgent needs, and strengthen programming around the world.

The group has already developed best practice documents in the areas of rule of law, combating kidnapping for ransom, now the preeminent means of funding terrorist groups, and prison de-radicalization and disengagement. With its core goals of strengthening civilian institutions and countering violent extremism, the forum is ideally suited to play a central role in our collective response to these challenges in the Sahel, in the Horn of Africa, and in Southeast Asia, the forum's three key regions of focus.

Just last week at the GCTF ministerial in Abu Dhabi, we marked the

opening of the first ever Center of Excellence for countering violent extremism. The center, based in the UAE capital, will serve police and educators, religious and community leaders, policymakers and NGOs. It aims to give them the necessary training and practical tools to design and implement effective measures to defeat extremist ideology and blunt the spread of radicalization.

At last week's GCTF meeting, we heard from a range of members about the variety of ways they continue to contribute to the forum's success. This includes mobilizing more than $150 million in programming to help strengthen the rule of law institutions. The GCTF is also supporting the creation of another international center of excellence that will form a kind of twin with the CVE Center, an International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, which we expect will open in Tunis, in the heart of the Arab Awakening by the end of 2013.

The institute will provide foundational advanced training for police, prosecutors, judges, prison officials, and parliamentarians to help countries transitioning to democracy. More broadly, we believe the institute can play an important role not just in ensuring that national criminal justice officials have the necessary counterterrorism training and skills, but in contributing to wider rule of law institutional development and reform efforts in the region. Its mission should not only be to provide training, but to educate a new generation of criminal justice officials so that the training and tools that are used and the reforms stick.

The GCTF is making a real difference, but we're only scratching the surface in terms of its potential. At least now we can look forward to the day when countries around the globe have more of a common understanding of the nature of the terrorist threat and a common playbook for tackling it. That's because if we keep this effort going, our practitioners and policymakers will have shared their expertise, trained,

and networked together through the Centers of Excellence, through the forum's working groups, and other GCTF-sponsored activities.

Well, I've gone on for quite a while and I thank you for your patience. But let me just conclude with a few observations.

First, there are clear indications that the Al Qaeda message continues to wane in popularity. We see this, for example, in the election of moderates in Libya in July and the protests by Libyan citizens against militia dominance and extremism after the attack on our facilities in Benghazi. The violence and chaos on offer from the extremists simply does not resonate with the majority of people. We see similar signs elsewhere.

That's not a reason to relax. We know that in terrorism, small numbers can have outsized and even enormous impacts and that with strong leadership or an influx of funding, groups can revive, expand, and cause great damage. This is a moment for leaning into the problem of violent extremism for continuing to degrade terrorist groups and to shape the environment they operate in to our partners' advantage.

Make no mistake; the United States will continue to use all the tools at its disposal to protect itself from terrorism. But as we go forward, capacity-building, countering violent extremis, counterterrorism diplomacy, these are the growth areas for the future. Propagating what we and others have learned throughout the international community and establishing a durable coalition of likeminded partners is vital.

We've spent the last few years with both our domestic and foreign partners cutting a path forward along these lines and I think we have a lot to show for our efforts. To achieve the success we need and the security we want for the American people and the global community, we'll need to push farther ahead, expand our efforts, and, yes, devote more resources and attention.

As I prepare to leave government, I'm convinced we can do this and we

really can make a difference for our common future. I want to thank you very much and I look forward to your questions. (Applause)

MR. BYMAN: Thank you, Ambassador Benjamin.

I'd like to turn it over to Bruce Riedel for his thoughts and comments on these remarks.

MR. REIDEL: Well, thank you, Dan and thank you, Dan. It's a pleasure to be here with the two Dan Bs. It's particularly a pleasure to be able to salute Dan Benjamin's service to our country. I had the pleasure of working with Dan in a previous administration. He is a remarkable partner to work with and I think you saw today the wealth of ideas and enthusiasm that he brings to this effort.

He gave you today a remarkable wealth of data about the Obama Administration's strategy in dealing with counterterrorism. He was, as I would have expected, rather modest in talking about his own role and that of SCT. I'm afraid I'm still stuck in the pre-bureau terminology. SCT, for those of you who don't know, is that part of the U.S. government that tries to bridge diplomacy and espionage or as I like to say tries to bridge diplomacy with skullduggery. It's not an always easy bridge to make. The diplomats often look a bit askance at the role of espionage and kinetic action and the skullduggers, of course, always look with great deal of weariness at the role of the diplomats. But it's an increasing important and vital role that we make this bridge. We cannot kill our way to dealing with the problem of Al Qaeda, and I think this morning you've heard an awful lot about the kinds of programs the Obama Administration has put in place.

I'm going to focus a little bit more on the enemy since you've heard an awful lot about our side of the equation today and naturally being in a think-tank business, probably look at the challenges we face ahead a bit more than the programs

we have in place to deal with them.

On the bottom line though, Dan and I, I think, are in violent agreement on most of these points. So, you're going to hear a lot of amen choruses out of me. I hope to put in a few nuances on two particular issues that may spark more discussion and controversy.

But let me begin where Dan began, four years ago. Four years ago this December, we were on the edge of calamity in South Asia. Not only was the Al Qaeda corps virtually under no pressure whatsoever, we had just seen the worst terrorist attack, I think, since 9/11, the attack on the City of Mumbai. We now know a great deal more about that attack. We know that that attack was a combo platter, if you like it, between the group that everyone gives credit for, Lashkar-e-Taiba, the so-called army of the pure, as well as the Pakistani intelligence services. We know that from the testimony of one American and one Canadian in American courts. And we also have good reason to believe that there was a third player in the planning of that operation which has maintained a very low profile at the time and since and that was Al Qaeda itself. This attack underscored just how dangerous the situation had become in South Asia four years ago, and I think Dan is right in emphasizing that this is where the administration can rightly claim to have made its greatest progress in dealing with the Al Qaeda corps.

The Al Qaeda corps, of course, is an American phrase for talking about it. The more proper term the jihadists use is Al Qaeda al Umm or Mother Al Qaeda, and they still see it very much as the mother ship.

The mother ship and its associated allies in Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Taiba and a host of other groups remain the epicenter of the global jihadist movement. And despite the blows that we have inflicted on hit, it remains in my mind the most serious and most dangerous group because its objective, its core plan is the most dangerous in

the world, which is to prompt a war between two nuclear weapon states. And efforts to keep that from happening have to remain the gold standard of all counterterrorism efforts.

President Obama has every right and so does SCT and Secretary Clinton and Dan Benjamin every right to be proud of the damage that we have inflicted on Al Qaeda's corps. Not just the elimination of high-value target number one, which I'll come back to in a minute, but the very successful prosecution of the drone war.

Now, for understandable reasons, the Ambassador didn't use the d-word. I'm fortunately in a position where I can use the d-word. The drones have proven to be remarkably successful. Of course, they come with a price. But what is most striking about all of this when you look at it is that the prosecution of this conflict has come with us keeping the government of Pakistan as much as possible in the dark and over the objections of the government of Pakistan.

President Obama made an extraordinary decision in 2011. After he and his predecessor have provided the government of Pakistan with over $25 billion in military and economic assistance to fight Al Qaeda, when the moment of truth came, he decided we couldn't trust the government of Pakistan. And he was, of course, right. And the reason we've been more successful in dealing with the problem of Al Qaeda and Pakistan for the last four years is because we've taken a more confrontational and a more hostile approach to the government of Pakistan.

Ambassador Benjamin rightly as a good diplomat said none of that and probably won't confirm what I've just said in questions and answers, nor should he. But I think we should have no illusion that we've come to certain new conclusions about our Pakistani partner.

And Secretary Panetta underscored that again this weekend. For the third time in a row, he went to South Asia and he decided to skip one stop, Islamabad.

We have a very difficult ongoing relationship with Pakistan. Trying to get that right is going to continue to be at the heart of the diplomacy of fighting counterterrorism. We need to work with Pakistan, but we also need to realize that Pakistan is often on the wrong side.

Let me turn secondly to the Arab Awakening, which Dan rightly illustrated as the new challenge that has emerged over the course of the last two years.

If two years ago on this stage Dan Byman and I had been doing an event and we had said that within two years, four Arab dictators would be toppled, a fifth would have been saved by Saudi tanks, a sixth would be struggling to hold on to staying in the country, and a seventh would probably be on his way out, you would have all said the Brookings Institution clearly doesn't know who to hire. They've got some crazy people up here. No one predicted what would happen in that Arab World that we've seen going on over the last two years; no one could anticipate the space that it would create. And Al Qaeda, as Dan rightly notes, did not anticipate it either and was caught so badly on the back foot for the first six months that it seemed completely irrelevant to the whole structure.

But Al Qaeda is a learning organization, an adaptive organization. It doesn't seek to be popular; it has never sought to be popular. It understands that terrorism is not a popularity contest. It's about killing people and that's usually never a very popular thing to do. It has sought to exploit the failed spaces that have opened up and Dan laid them out to you quite nicely: Mali, Libya, Syria now, Yemen, we've made some progress in closing some of those failed spaces. It's a daunting challenge and it's a challenge that he rightly points out has to be met by getting our new partners in the war on terrorism to react in ways different than our old partners in the world on terrorism.

We were the most enthusiastic supporters for 50 years of the

Mukhabarat states in the Middle East. Every one of those tinhorn dictators with few exceptions was our close partner and the ones who survive actually are still our close partners and handling that difficult juggling act will be a significant problem for Dan's successor. But the strategy of trying to persuade our new partners to do it in a different way is, I think, absolutely right on the mark.

The most difficult of all of those may in the end prove to be Al Qaeda in Iraq. That's the one which if there's one that gives me nightmares more than any other is that. This is an organization which we have successfully decapitated through kinetic action over and over and over again and it's like the Energizer Bunny, it just seems to keep running back on stage. And now it's found a new front in Syria, which is a very dangerous development ahead.

Let me conclude briefly with what I see is three big challenges ahead for Dan and Secretary Clinton's successor. One, the Arab Awakening is not over. It may have stalled temporarily in Damascus, but the days of political change in the Arab world have not run out and the Arab Awakening in my view is likely to continue to claim more victims, and in those victims, there's likely to be more empty spaces in which Al Qaeda and associated terrorist groups move.

Second big concern I have is the Israeli-Palestinian front. Israeli-Palestinian issue is the narrative heart of Al Qaeda. It has always been the issue that Al Qaeda has successfully exploited over the years to recruit. Ayman al-Zawahiri in his book *"Knights Under the Prophet's Banner,"* noted "Whenever we're in trouble, we can always raise the Israeli issue, and that will always produce more jihadists." Well, the problem now is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is deadlocked. More and more observers, including myself, believe the two-state solution is dying in front of us this winter. And all the efforts we can do on countering narrative are going to have a big hole in them if we

can't find out a way to get something moving on the Israeli-Palestinian political process.

And last and not least is the Afghan end game. How we manage the departure of the transition in Afghanistan will be crucial to how we deal with the first problem, the problem of the Al Qaeda corps. The drones, despite all their brilliance, can't operate on missions flown all the way from Nevada. They have to have a base and there's only one base nearby and that base is Afghanistan, and for the foreseeable future, we need to find out a way to make that work and that challenge, I think, is going to be one of this Obama's second administration's most difficult ones to manage.

And on that note, I encourage you all to ask really hard questions to Dan and give me softballs. (Laughter)

MR. BYMAN: Before I open it up to everyone for discussion, I'm going to ask a question of my own that will probably be a bit of a softball, but I hope not too much. It's really a question for both our speakers, which is: What we've seen happen in the last decade is even as there's been progress against the corps, we've seen the spread of the ideology and really the spread of operational connections throughout the broader Muslim World at times to places at least I didn't anticipate. Mali being a recent example, Boko Haram in Nigeria.

What makes some of these cases especially difficult for me is the linkages to "Mother Al Qaeda," as Bruce would say, are to me they're there, but not necessarily terribly strong. And, so, there are questions to me on whether if we engage and treat these organizations as all out enemies, are we actually making enemies, are we going to turn them into groups that are going to be actively targeting the United States, U.S. personnel, and even the U.S. homeland? But if we don't do so, are we simply allowing them to become strong and only after there is a serious problem dealing with it? And I'd welcome both our speakers' thought on kind of how to tackle these groups that

are halfway there or halfway pregnant, if you would.

MR. BENJAMIN: Well, first of all, let me just say that, as always, Bruce's analysis is brilliant and spot on and I look forward to coming back when I no longer have the government badge so that I can discuss many of those issues.

Regarding your question, Dan, which is something that I think you and I discussed over a number of years, the longer I've looked at this, the more I agree that we need to have as a central aspect of our strategy the detachment of those elements that aren't focused on striking us and the continued application of pressure on those that are.

I think that if we look, for example, in Africa, where most of the activity is going on these days, certainly outside of Syria in terms of growing threats, we see in Northern Mali two groups that are definitely terrorist in orientation and probably we can be pretty confident that they want to strike us and that is Al Qaeda and the Islamic Maghreb, which does, I think, harbor long-term ambitions to do what all Al Qaeda affiliates do, which is, yes, they have local agenda, but striking the foreign remains a constitutive part of their identity. And Mujal which is really a splinter group from Al Qaeda run by a former AQIM commander.

But there are also two other groups that are Tuareg groups that we ought to pry away if we can and this is a key part of the strategy that is emerging from the discussions in New York over the international communities' approach to Mali and also in the region, which I've spent a lot of time in lately. And there is a strong feeling that Tuareg tribes live there, they're going to be there for a long time, and they don't actually have an ideology of wanting to strike the United States. They have out of a set of grievances, some of them legitimate, some of them not, they've gotten bound up with some bad actors, but that it's in our interest to pry them away as best we can and that's why establishing a dialogue with the north is a central part of the U.N. Security Council

resolutions on Mali.

I think that in general, it is wise to limit the number of enemies you have and not to create new ones. But at the same time, I would say all of those who have taken on the AQ affiliate status do have that thought. I will point out though that, for example, in our treatment of al-Shabaab, we always tried to distinguish between those who are East Africa Al Qaeda and those who were al-Shabaab, recognizing that lots of al-Shabaab is only concerned with what goes on in Somalia, and that had an important impact on how we treated that group.

Similarly, when we look at Boko Haram, we see a group that is completely heterogeneous, a lot of its elements are maybe interested in criminal activity, some of them may be interested in terrorist activity, and a lot of them are just interested in the traditional political and economic grievances in Northern Nigerians. So, we try to take cognizance of that in our policy. Sometimes, it's tough to have a scalpel as fine as you need, but the general rule that you shouldn't increase the number of people who want to kill you is, I think, a very wise one.

MR. REIDEL: Well, I think we're very much in agreement on the new nature of the problem. I've written in other places that what we're seeing is AQ3.0, which is the third generation of Al Qaeda. The first generation was the founding generation that planned the original attacks. Second generation is the post-9/11 generation, and this one is the post-May 2011, post-Arab Awakening generation.

One of its features is, as you suggested, Dan, a more decentralization from the corps. Another feature that I find quite interesting is they seem to have read the memos that we brought out of the hideout in Abbottabad, Osama bin Laden's own memos about how to change and how to -- maybe they never got those through the mail, but, fortunately, thanks to us, we now made sure that they got delivery.

Now, one of the messages they've learned is that the old branch is toxic and don't call yourself Al Qaeda. Make sure if you can, try to come up with a different name and that's what, of course, we're seeing in Syria.

Now, they're still helping us because they may have given up the name, but they continue to use the old flag, so, it's relatively easy to say that if they're using the flag that they still are Al Qaeda, but that's a mistake that they will probably overcome some time in the future. It makes for a more difficult challenge and here, obviously, Dan's core point, let's try to use the scalpel is the essence of the smart strategy.

Now, we no longer talk about the global war on terrorism because we don't want every terrorist and bad guy around the world to be our enemy. That was an understandable mistake made in the rush of the first days after 9/11, but it took us really seven years to self-correct from that, and I think it's long overdue and I'm glad to see that this administration early on made that self-correction.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. Now I'd like to open it up. Please wait for the microphone and please also identify yourself before you ask your question.

Yes, sir?

SPEAKER: My name is Hamar (inaudible) from (inaudible) Foundation.

I hate to ask this question, but let me ask you, this program has been called a counterterrorism report, but given the way the United States has ratcheted up the whole war, I mean, now the Obama Administration, looking at George Bush and Dick Cheney look kind of (inaudible).

So, given that, shouldn't it be called Super Terrorists Report because that's what the United States really has engaged in? Other than those little things that you said providing diplomacy in this and that, but the use of the drone is a new dimension in this whole process and I hate to see that come to haunt the United States because

we've got shooters in school, shooters in malls, and so on, and hopefully, some drones won't land on these public places.

MR. BYMAN: To put that in a slightly broader context, what we've seen in the last four years, to me, is some of the Bush Administration policies be discontinued, but in some ways be accelerated and the drone campaign being obviously one of them. I'll say both is that an accurate reflection, A, and, B, are there other areas where you'd like to see further acceleration?

MR. BENJAMIN: Well, let me begin by saying that there's very little I can say about those programs, that as you all know, but I think there's a significant difference between a policy that involves the conquest of a very large Southwest Asian country and some of the other means that are under discussion. So, I think your description is not really apt and I think that we really have worked, as the president said and as many of his chief officials have said from the beginning, we have worked so that counterterrorism is part of our foreign policy, but it is not our foreign policy. It's not the totality of our foreign policy, and all of our foreign policy does not serve our counterterrorism goals.

I think that after 9/11 -- I'm going to answer your question this way, Dan -- the great and creative springs of American ingenuity were set into force and an awful lot of very interesting technology and tactics were developed and for those of you who are writing up there and some I see in the back have already written part of this story, the great leap forward in special operations in the United States is one of the major developments of the last decade-and-a-half. So, undoubtedly, there will be continuations along those lines.

I would like to leave office thinking that we have innovated a fair bit on the civilian side and that, in fact, the programs that I was discussing and others like them that need still to be begun will be an important part of the solution over the long-term

because, as Bruce said and as I've agreed and said for many years, the kinetics are not going to win this for us. They may degrade the groups and cause them lots and lots of problems, but the violent extremism, the ideology, the networks, they're not going to go away or even be sufficiently diminished until there's a lot of pressure from the communities in which they are located and the governments that control that territory, until there are truly durable rule of law in countering violent extremism practices embedded in these governments' practice.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you.

Go right here.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks very much. I'm Garrett Mitchell and I write *"The Mitchell Report."*

And I want to ask a question of both Ambassador Benjamin and Bruce Riedel, but it's particularly triggered by listening to Ambassador Benjamin's characterization of the current state of affairs.

Last week, the NIC introduced its new report, *"Global Trends 2030,"* and I was surprised in reading through the report at what seemed to be a relatively minor portion of the report that focused on this issue, number one. And, number two, there were some observations made in the report that feel like they might be somewhat in opposition to what's been said here this morning. So, I want to ask about a couple of particulars.

One is that Islamist-based or Islamist-driven terrorism, and remember the focus of this is out to 2030, that Islamist-based terrorism is on the wane and may well end, be a relic of the past by 2030. That may be a slight exaggeration, but they suggest that.

Second, they suggest that the sort of narrative as the U.S. as the devil

narrative is also on the way out and that in general in the report, there were lots of other things that got a lot more attention than this and I think my question is: Assuming that I'm giving this report a fair evaluation, and there are a couple others in the room I know who've looked at this, I'm curious to know whether you think that the NIC's observations are based on fact or whether they're based on hope and whether they jive with the world in this regard as the two of you see it.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you.

MR. BENJAMIN: Well, I'll start off with a half punt. I was in Abu Dhabi last week. I haven't seen the report. But I will say this: Looking at what we saw in Tahrir Square, what we saw in Tunis, what we've seen in many places, it certainly seems that the populations that have historically produced lots of extremists, that those populations are not interested in violent extremism, but in building better lives for their families and for their communities within the international system and there's always the dangerous threat of the frustration of rising expectations, but at the same time, that fundamental orientation I think was pretty clear and that is the basis for the NIC authors' relative optimism, then I concur with it. And those big trends in human events are the ones that are going to have a profound effect on what people think in the future. At the same time, I remain concerned that as long as there is increasingly dangerous technology out there, dangerous ideologues will get ahold of it and try to use it. So, this is sort of your dialectic, if you will, and it's something that we need to worry about.

I don't want to say any more about a report I haven't written. I'm saving that privilege for when I'm out of government.

MR. BYMAN: Bruce?

MR. REIDEL: Well, first of all, I'm impressed, Gary. My attempts to download the report off of the NIC Web site have yet to succeed in a breakthrough. But I

did read the key judgments, which I was able to download. And my answer is maybe a quarter punt. It all depends. What we're seeing going on in the Islamic World today across the Arab World and in Pakistan is a battle for the soul of the Islamic World. There are progressive forces which are fighting very hard to change at least a half century if not multiple centuries of politics. Politics for decades in these countries has been about the police state and the police state was unaccountable and it could do anything it wanted to anybody any time, and, naturally, that produced anger, resentment, and since the west, not just the United States, but the west in general supported all those police states with lots of money and lots of visits to the Oval Office, there was hatred produced against us.

We're now seeing profound effort at change in places like Pakistan, Egypt, and Tunisia, and how that battle goes will, I think, determine whether there NIC's prognosis of the less-violent, less-extremist Islamic World turns out to be right. The stakes here are huge. The reality is the decision is not an American decision. We can help and the kinds of programs fighting violent extremism that we've heard about here today can help.

We can also be a real hindrance to this and the path of history tells us we're actually better at being on the wrong side than the right side and we need to decisively change that. And it's the opportunity we face and it's the opportunity we need to seize.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you.

Sir?

MR. HOSENBALL: Hi, I'm Mark Hosenball from *"Reuters."*

I wanted to ask you about Qatar, which seems to me to perhaps embody some of the dilemmas that you have to deal. In Qatar, you had a state which on the one hand poured all these arms into Libya to help the rebels there depose Gaddafi, but then

as Mr. Benjamin said earlier, a lot of those weapons disappeared, made their way into the hands of potential bad guys.

From what one hears, the same sort of thing is happening in Syria. Qatar is heavily financing rebels in Syria, supplying them with arms, and from the sound of things, there's reason to believe that some of those arms are in the wrong hands. In Qatar on the one hand, people tell me the United States and its allies find a government that's very sympathetic and does want to help. On the other hand, Qatar is also the host to Sigit Qurdowi, the chief ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood, and is host at least sometimes to the leadership of Hamas. So, their role at the very least externally seems rather ambiguous.

How do you deal with this and how do you make sure -- because from the sound of things, you can't make sure given the Libyan experience that what they do really is in the interest of the United States. Of course, they have their own interests to protect, but how do you manage this?

MR. BENJAMIN: Let me just say this: We have a very strong and lively relationship with Qatar. Qatar's involved deeply in most if not all of the major issues of the day in Libya, in Syria, and many other places, and both the emir and Hamad bin Jassim are good friends of the United States, and we talk to them frequently, and I personally have had very good experiences working with the Qataris.

As I said earlier, we designated on this front as part our outreach to demonstrate to partners around the world that there are groups that should not be supported, that do not share the same kind of vision of Syria in the future that we do, and we have accompanied that public designation with lots of private discussions with officials from a range of different countries that have been concerned about what's going on in Syria, and that have been in connection with the opposition.

I think that's probably as far as I want to go and it's an ongoing issue. I think that the problem of extremism in Syria is a very serious one that we need to pay a lot of attention to.

MR. REIDEL: Very briefly, I'll just say this: The challenge American diplomacy faces is that on the one hand, we want to see the revolution succeed, we want to see them develop in the positive way with the rule of law, accountability, but at the same time, we're also very much in bed with the old regimes that are still around. Qatar, even more importantly, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Dan mentioned the foiling of AQAP plots. Well, the lost two AQAP plots have been foiled thanks to Saudi intelligence playing a very critical role.

American diplomacy often looks like it's hypocritical because it's on both sides of the fence. One of the challenges of the second Obama Administration is to actually design a policy that's on both sides of the fence until the Arab Awakening becomes a more clear and worked out phenomena. We will need to continue to be close allies of key partners like Qatar, like the UAE, like Saudi Arabia.

Now, in a perfect world, we would all like to see them reform and change. Don't bet on it.

MR. BYMAN: Okay.

MS. KURTH CRONIN: Yes. Hi, I'm Audrey Kurth Cronin, and I'm at the School of Public Policy at George Mason University.

I see a little bit of a difference between the two of you and I want to see if I can tease it out. Ambassador Benjamin started out talking about the changes of the last four years, many of which I think you have the strong right to be proud of, but one of which was the waning support for Al Qaeda broadly. And Bruce Riedel then talked about the fact that Al Qaeda does not seek to be popular, that it's trying to kill people, and it's

looking for areas of failed states.

So, what I want to ask the two of you is: What do you think is the significance of the indicators that we do have of the popular support or lack of popular support for Al Qaeda?

MR. REIDEL: Al Qaeda had a brief moment of I wouldn't say popular support, popular enthusiasm, unfortunately, after 9/11. That waned pretty quickly.

Al Qaeda from the beginning has always made one great strategic mistake; it kills too many Muslims, and that's counterproductive to an organization which says it is trying to defend the Islamic World. And I think one of the things that we've been very successful in doing and actually the Bush Administration started this, so, I think they deserve some credit, is highlighting the fact that Al Qaeda' principal victims are Muslims.

But, as I said, the question of popularity is a long-term question which has to deal with trends in the Middle East, trends in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, trends in South Asia. But for terrorists, those things aren't all that terribly relevant on a day-to-day basis because they don't need to recruit 50 percent of the population; they're not trying to win elections. All they need to recruit is 19 individuals who are willing to cause mass murder and kill themselves for a perverted political version of a religion, and that's the challenge of counterterrorism; we want to dry up the swamp, but, at the same time, we have to realize that some parts of the swamp are not susceptible to being dried up.

MR. BENJAMIN: I think Bruce and I actually do disagree a little bit on Al Qaeda's view of its own mission, and I thought as far back as when I co-wrote *"The Age of Sacred Terror"* that they aren't interested in being a revolutionary vanguard; they do want people to follow that vanguard. And I think it is important to them that they gain broader acceptance in the Muslim World and I think some of the documents that came out of Abbottabad suggested that they felt isolated, that history was passing them by, and

that they didn't have the kind of message that was going to attract the supporters they want who want ultimately help them create a caliphate as they've discussed and run it.

So, I have some sympathy for Bruce's perspective because a lot of terrorist groups have at their core a lot of people who are addicted to violence and maybe don't spend a lot of time thinking about how they become a broader movement, but I think that for bin Laden, for al-Zawahiri, and for others, that has always been an important thing. I think they probably enjoy some of the romance of isolation, as well, but it's a complicated picture.

I do think that they feel that they need to win ground and have a broader support in the public and that's why I think that the overall trend toward unpopularity is a good one and I think it's also good from the perspective of counterterrorism because, ultimately, it's communities on the front line that are going to play a decisive role in terms of picking up the phone, picking up their cell and saying there's a guy here who's doing something that we don't like. And we find this across a wide array of different societies. We encourage that kind of community resilience in our own country. We have seen it built extensively in Saudi Arabia, and in their efforts to deal with extremism.

So, I think the popularity issue is a significant one. I wouldn't ever confuse it with how people feel about us because those are very, very different things.

MR. BYMAN: Sir?

MR. MARTEL: Hi, my name is Charlie Martel and I was most recently with the Senate Homeland Security Committee, where I worked among other things on the Fort Hood inquiry. So, I learned a little bit about extremism in the course of doing that.

I want to thank all of you on the panel for your presentations and for your service and preface my question by agreeing with Bruce's observation that the

continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute or conflict more properly is a huge drive of anti-American extremism. And not just in terrorist groups, but in the population at large in a lot of places where we want friends.

So, I have a three-part question. One, what can we do to encourage a resolution or force a resolution if necessary of that conflict? Second part is how likely is it that we can do that successfully? And the third part is what are the strategic benefits if we can succeed?

MR. BENJAMIN: I think given the scope of this, I'm going to ask Bruce to begin and then I'll stand to comment as appropriate.

MR. REIDEL: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is, of course, an extraordinarily difficult one to resolve. I've spent an inordinate amount of my life with Israelis and Palestinians trying to reason together with them and can't claim any measure of success. That said, I think where we are today is substantially different from where we have been in the past. We know the contours of an agreement between Israeli and Palestinians. President Clinton laid them out 12 years ago. There's been a lot of work since them that lays them in greater detail.

Then the question becomes: What are we prepared to do to make that happen? And that's a question of political will. There are huge obstacles on both sides. The forces of peace both in the Israeli camp and the Palestinian camp have been on the defense for the last several years and are likely to continue to be on the defense if there is no serious effort to do something about it.

The question of political will comes down a question of how important is it, which was your last question. Well, I'll answer it this way: I think if we do nothing about this, the next generation of Americans are going to look back and say what were they thinking? What were they thinking? They knew this drove terrorism, they knew this

is the driving force behind so much extremism. They knew how many Americans and others have died. They knew how many Israelis and Palestinians have died. They knew what misery it produced and they chose to do nothing or to do the least.

President Obama made a very powerful and compelling speech on Sunday night. Much of that speech could be made about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well. We know the price, we know what's at stake here. It's a question of political will. Do we have that political will or don't we?

It won't be easy, but there is a difference today from when the last great effort was made in the waning days of the Clinton Administration. We at least know where we want to go and it helps a lot if you know what the destination is if you start off on the march.

MR. BENJAMIN: Well, it's not an issue I really want to say an awful lot about. I think Bruce and I do disagree a little bit on the role that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict plays in motivating violent extremists in many disparate parts of the world.

There's no question that the narrative makes good use of this conflict as an example of western domination, colonialism, and the like. I think that if you look in Yemen and North Africa and Southeast Asia, where people have very strong feelings about the conflict, still, you would find if you had enough social scientists that that was not what was attracting people to terror. And the reason I think that that is important is that it is vitally necessary that we continue to pursue all the things that we're doing in counterterrorism, whatever happens to the peace process, and I do think that there's an awful lot of containment, management, and diminution of the threat that we can achieve regardless of what happens between Israelis and Palestinians. I think we all have concerns about security in that region, but I don't think that that ought to certainly condition our counterterrorism policies.

MR. BYMAN: Yes?

MS. PETERS: Sarah Peters with the Center for American Freedom.

Mr. Benjamin, you mentioned the Global Counterterrorism Forum. This organization is founded upon the goal of producing the vulnerability of people everywhere to violent extremism.

Is Israel still excluded from this and are there plans to include them in the future, if so?

MR. BENJAMIN: This issue was on the agenda in Abu Dhabi, and the group has agreed that the co-chairs are going to put forward a proposal not specifically on Israel, but on how non-members are engaged by the GCTF in the future because different parts of the organization were embracing sort of different practices, if you will. We strongly believe that Israel has an important contribution to be made in the various working group activities and we have certainly spoken at length to the Israelis about it and we just simply will continue working this issue and we're determined that we'll get a positive outcome on it.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you.

In the very back row.

MR. BENJAMIN: I should add, by the way, that setting aside the issue of involvement in GCTF activities, we strongly believe that the activities of the group are benefiting everyone's security in a very material way. If there are stronger legal institutions, better, more effective CV efforts, then that has to be in everyone's interest.

MR. FANUSIE: Thank you very much. My name is Yaya Fanusie. I'm with the United States of Africa 2017 Project Task Force.

Ambassador Benjamin, I am concerned about your statement that Boko Haram is having a terror connection or they plan to expand. I would suggest to you that

you publish your evidence as soon as you can so we could take care of that. Taskforce, which I am the Special Operations Division's lead, which is basically intelligence work, gathering information (inaudible) we don't have any information with that. So, if you could provide us with it, we'll be able to make sure that African remains for African interest, not for any foreign land. Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: I'll make a broader plea that all your information be publically available because scholars like me really want to use it. (Laughter)

MR. BENJAMIN: Well, alas, there's a lot of information that can't be made public, but I would point out that the U.N. mission in Nigeria was bombed by Boko Haram, and that certainly suggests a broader agenda than a narrowly Nigerian one.

MR. BYMAN: Sir?

SPEAKER: Thank you very much. (Inaudible) work for Voice of America (inaudible) to the border region service. We have nine hours of (inaudible) broadcast to Pakistan (inaudible) border regions. I myself come from that region.

My question is primarily from Bruce Riedel. You know much about Pakistan. What do you think in comparison to last 10 years or say 15 years how much the relationship between the Pakistani-based militant organization, especially those in Punjab, that are intact with the international Al Qaeda or say other because, today, on the floor of the parliament, one of the Pakistani federal ministers said that the Islamic (inaudible) that have relation with the Punjabi's extremist organization, they (inaudible) and they pay them. He has provided whatever evidence he has and also there was talk from the Pakistani official when Peshawar Airport yesterday was attacked and the Uzbek, the terrorists involved were Uzbek said by the ISPR.

So, in your comparison, what do you see? Have the relationship been broken or have they been getting stronger and stronger?

MR. REIDEL: That's a big question. I'll try to be very brief. The connections between various extremists jihadist groups in Pakistan and Al Qaeda remain deep. As I suggested, I think the Mumbai plot, if carefully studied, underscores some of those connections between a very Punjab group, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Al Qaeda. I think we've seen it in other things.

People tend to give away their real feelings in moments of grief, and for the jihadist groups in Pakistan, the death of high-value target number one, Osama bin Laden, was a moment of grief. And all of them came out with statements mourning his loss. It's pretty had to say they don't have a connection when in the moment of eulogy time they come out and say we are terribly sorry to see him go.

One thing I want to say here, SET has led the effort, as I understand it, in this government to try to broaden our approach to dealing with terrorism in Pakistan, away from a narrow Al Qaeda focus, and to put some of these other groups on the agenda for really the first time. And Lashkar-e-Taiba in particular and its leadership is much more on the agenda of the American counterterrorism community today than it was four years ago and from where I sit outside the government, I think the State Department deserves 99 percent of the credit for making that happen.

MR. BENJAMIN: I think I will follow that. Well, thank you. Thank you.

We certainly have tried to put LeT on the agenda in a significant way and it's been a subject of dialogue with Pakistan, but also with a number of other partners, and I will just say, follow up what Bruce said by saying that one big item of the agenda going forward is undoubtedly going to be militancy more broadly in Pakistan because Al Qaeda is on a path to defeat, but there's still an awful lot of extremism. We've had a failed attack here in the United States that was driven by the TTP. We have a number of other groups that are quite potent and quite dangerous and they should not escape

attention and we'll need to raise the level of discourse on them and do what we can to help Pakistan deal with them.

Bruce made some remarks about Pakistan before. I would only add to them that it's still the case that more extremists have been taken off the street by Pakistan than anywhere else and while it is a difficult relationship with lots of ups and downs, there have also been lots of successes in that counterterrorism relationship. A challenging relationship, as my boss has said, but an essential one.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. With apologies for those of you who are still on my list with questions, we are out of time.

Before we thank both speakers, I'd like to offer my particular thanks to Ambassador Benjamin for choosing Brookings for some of his closing remarks during a service in government and in particular for the excellent job he's done while he's been with the State Department. Those of us who follow counterterrorism closely know that he came in with significant challenges and I think our country is much safer and we are much better off due to his service.

So, thank both of our speakers and thank you all very much for coming today. (Applause)

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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