THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIANISM:

A CONVERSATION WITH THE ICRC'S PIERRE KRÄHENBÜHL

Washington, D.C.

Monday, November 24, 2008

PARTICIPANTS:

Introduction and Moderator:

ELIZABETH FERRIS

Senior Fellow and Co-Director, Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement

The Brookings Institution

Featured Speaker:

PIERRE KRÄHENBÜHL

Director of Operations

International Committee of the Red Cross

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. FERRIS: Good morning, everyone. My name is Beth Ferris. I'm a Senior Fellow here at Brookings and Co-Director of the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement. We're delighted to welcome you to this session with the ambitious title of The Future of Humanitarianism.

I've often thought that humanitarianism itself is under siege from lots of different directions. We have situations where governments, including the U.S. government, try to include humanitarian action as one component in pursuit of its foreign policy objectives.

From the United Nations side, we have the emergence of integrated missions in which humanitarian response is coordinated with or sometimes subordinated to issues of concern around politics, peacekeeping and in stabilization campaigns. In these situations, it's hard to uphold the traditional humanitarian values of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

On the other side, though, humanitarianism often feels like it's under siege from the many critics of humanitarian action where we've seen a whole spate of books and articles criticizing humanitarians for their naivety, their role in action prolonging conflicts and charging that they make the situation worse.

From the field, we have a number of humanitarian challenges: How to balance neutrality with security of workers? To what extent and how much can and should you negotiate with non-state actors in pursuit of humanitarian actions? A book that came out last year called *Humanitarian Diplomacy* talked about some of the agonizing choices that are made on a day to day basis in many field operations, trying to preserve a core of humanitarian action and principles at a time when the challenges come in very small ways in terms of negotiating access.

Some have suggested that the days of principled humanitarianism are over and what's needed is a more pragmatic humanitarianism. Those two words, to me, seem completely in opposition, pragmatic and humanitarian, particularly when you think of the classical humanitarian ideals.

Moreover, the international humanitarian community is a diverse and crowded assortment of actors. New actors are springing up, not just nongovernmental organizations which seem to form almost by the week, but increasingly different types of actors such as the humanitarian arms of militia groups or political parties, military actors and civilians embedded in military operations, provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan and Iraq, for-profit contractors. To what extent can these new humanitarian actors respect humanitarian principles?

Do we judge humanitarian action on the basis of intentions or of consequences?

In the words of a book that came out just this year, can Wal-Mart be a humanitarian actor when they deliver humanitarian relief even if they have a very different set of goals and objectives than traditional humanitarian actors?

And then there's the relationship between humanitarian and politics. It seems that when the international community is unable to prevent conflicts or often protect civilians, the response is to increase humanitarian assistance. Sadako Ogata, former U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, wrote a few years ago: "There are no humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems." In other words, the responses to these situations are often political, such as Security Council actions and so forth.

But this raises questions. In the absence of political action, how long can humanitarian action be sustained?

Darfur, for example, the most expensive humanitarian operation in the world, with an annual budget of some $1 billion, has seen a response since 2003. It's now 2008. In 2015, will we be looking at the same situation in Darfur?

Is humanitarian action, in a sense, letting political actors off the hook from resolving some of the seemingly intractable political conflicts in the world today?

Lots of questions, lots of questions that are not only political, but I think sometimes even ethical about the future of humanitarianism.

But today, we're fortunate to have Pierre Krähenbühl, who is coming to us from the International Committee of the Red Cross, and he will certainly give us all of the answers to these and other questions. He's been Director of the Operations of the ICRC since 2002, for the past 6 years, and has carried out assignments in El Salvador, Peru, Afghanistan and, most recently, as Head of Operations for Central and Southeastern Europe based in Geneva.

We're delighted you're here Pierre, and we're looking forward to hearing from you.

After his presentation, we'll have plenty of time for questions. So please begin jotting down questions and comments.

Thank you, Pierre.

MR. KRÄHENBÜHL: Well, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for this opportunity.

Beth, thank you very much for the introduction.

It's a great pleasure to have the opportunity of being here with you this morning, knowing

also the profound investment of the Brookings Institution into thinking and reflecting on humanitarian practice, on the specific nature of humanitarian action and its different dilemmas. I think what you've just outlined is a very able and convincing summary of many of the challenges that we face, and I'd like to illustrate precisely some of these issues in the next few minutes.

I'd like to start, based on the experience of the ICRC in recent years by reflecting on the fact that, as you said, some of the points I'd like to go through, that we really are at the time of transformation in the field of the humanitarian sector. I'd like to review and discuss with you some thinking on the evolving nature of vulnerabilities.

In other words, what is affecting populations that are caught up in situations of armed conflict or armed violence? I try to do this in order to describe the complexities of responding to many of these vulnerabilities.

Then look at some of the trends in situations of armed conflict today, again, not so much because I want to go through a very long list of these, but I think it helps to understand that humanitarian action in these environments are complex today and challenging today -- the issues of access, security, perception and relevance and the changes in the humanitarian sectors, some of the things that are new in the environment that we operate in, in that sense, and also reflect then on some of the ICRC's operational practice in that regard.

Now, beginning with the issue of human insecurity and the nature of vulnerability, what you see here is a brief attempt on our side to extract from our field experience and the work that our delegations carry out in 80 different countries, and there are now 12,000 ICRC staff members across the world in these different contexts.

It's a summary of the analysis of what really characterizes the situation of people caught up in armed conflicts because it sounds like stating the obvious, that the humanitarian perspective on armed conflict is about people. It's about people and the risks that they face, the vulnerabilities that they face, the violence and suffering that they experience, and then humanitarian perspectives about the types of responses that one can develop and devise often together with affected populations and trying to address their needs.

What is, I think, characteristic of traditional thinking on humanitarian action is in fact dealing with the direct and acute in situations of armed conflict. I mean the first thing that comes to mind when you have a war or a conflict going on is people are wounded and they need to be evacuated. Lives need to be saved. People are detained or families are separated as a result of the fighting. So these immediate needs were very often at the center and the forefront of humanitarian response and thinking, and I think it is absolutely legitimate and necessary for that to be the case.

But what we have seen now more and more frequently is in fact that we see, coexisting in the conflicts that we work in, the more indirect and chronic needs that are there. So let me give

an example.

If we refer to Darfur, for instance, you have many people who are caught up in the fighting, maybe injured and require surgical assistance and intervention that the ICRC and a few other organizations may provide.

You also have people that I may well be living with in my village in part of Darfur which is not currently immediately affected by actual fighting. But the problem is in my family several people have chronic diseases or chronic illnesses that they have to attend to, and simply because of the nature of the conflict they can no longer access the basic health institutions and infrastructure that exist. They cannot cross the front line to obtain the type of assistance that they require. And so whilst they are not direct victims of an act of aggression or the violence, they simply are unable to attend to their basic needs.

And, that may also be the case for people who want to go out and harvest their fields but cannot reach the fields because of problems of security and risk of aggression or violence against them.

So I think what is really to be understood is that this combination of direct needs and indirect needs is something that places a very heavy burden on the humanitarian response capacity because you cannot today focus exclusively on the emergency needs.

And, the chronic nature also refers to something that Beth was alluding to earlier. In the vast majority of contexts that we work in, we've actually been there for a very many years. Now again, beyond the discussions on whether humanitarian action has an effect on prolonging these types of situations -- we can come back to that in the discussion if you wish -- the thinking here is more around the difficulty of working over time and finding appropriate responses.

In Colombia, we've there been for four decades. Israel and the Palestinian Territories, it's four decades. Afghanistan, it's now three decades of ICRC presence and action. Sudan, it's at least two. Iraq, it's three.

And so when you start to think of that, you realize that while we often think conflict means an emergency, yes, it very often does, but in particular it also means how do you work over time on the needs that remain in these situations, that often are once in the media and then again forgotten for a longer period of time.

I can say just at the outset, one of the motivations of working in the ICRC is that we try. Everybody tries and everybody has trials and errors, but we try to integrate these different perspectives. That leads me to the second point.

Humanitarian action also very often focuses on the physical consequences of a situation or conflict, again, the injuries, the war wounded, the loss of life, obviously, but also the loss of

limbs and the orthopedic work that we carry out in many places comes to mind. But what is often under-attended to in humanitarian terms is the more psychological and lasting traumas.

One is saving lives, dealing with the immediate wounds, but then the mental effects are neglected. I think more and more we'll be confronted, particularly because of the chronic nature of many of these conflicts, with the more psychological effects of armed conflict.

Then you have the rural and urban. Again, traditionally or very much in the development field but also in the humanitarian field, much of the humanitarian practice over the last three decades has been heavily rural based. It's a very different thing to organize a humanitarian response in rural Darfur compared to urban Baghdad or urban Medellin or what is now left of urban Mogadishu or Kabul or other places of that nature.

Again, this requires different sets of expertise, different sets of thinking. You cannot approach needs in an urban environment with the same perspective as you do rural.

Then the last point here is something that we've found increasingly striking. It's, in fact, the interconnected and overlapping pressures on populations. Somalia is probably the most tragic example of that in the sense that the population in Somalia has now for almost two decades been affected by rounds and rounds and rounds of fighting. Population displacements are in huge numbers. People are displaced several times. So there's never a moment where they're actually certain about having reached a place of security.

Some of them leave in atrocious conditions, crossing over into Yemen, seeking asylum and better lives and at times losing their life in that particular process.

Then you have that context already terribly affected by fighting and the consequences, experiencing drought, floods and, more recently of course, the effect of the food crisis and now possibly also of the economic and financial crisis, though to a different extent. So there are the populations affected by these overlapping layers and pressures, something very characteristic of many of the environments we work in today.

Then the next point is really on the conflict trends and prospects. We work today in a world of armed conflict that is less predominantly ideological than was the case during the Cold War. The frames of reference that were all-embracing during the overall confrontation between the Communist world and the Western capitalist democracies is today less an overriding feature at a worldwide level.

You have things that are more broken down into local realities, driven very much by economic and resource-related questions, trying to secure access to strategic energy supplies and others, trying to secure access to strategic future water supplies and others of that nature, very, very critical in many places. The tribal, ethnic and religious dimensions being also important drivers in these contexts.

And then it's important to note a very strong diversity of situations and actors, and this might sound very basic in many ways, but one of the considerations is, of course, that the majority of conflicts that we work in today are internal. There was, this year, the conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia. There was a very short and brief conflict between Eritrea and Djibouti that was of international nature between neighboring states, but it is very much the exception in today's environment.

That has consequences in terms of how we work on the ground because we are confronted with very significant numbers of non-state actors. Their characteristic is that whilst non-state actors, whether they were in the past called national liberation movements, opposition groups, others, whatever, the label that they gave themselves or others gave them, in fact, these non-state actors today are much more fragmented and have a tendency to fragment and break into subgroups at a very regular rhythm and speed. You have as an example Sudan and Eastern Chad. Somalia is also a case in point today, even Afghanistan.

If you look at Colombia, that was probably a place which the ICRC could have described as being fairly classic in terms of its experience of armed conflicts, with the government on one side and two or three structured, well-established opposition groups with clear chains of command. Well, in 2008, that is essentially no longer the case. The FARC have broken up into different splinter groups and are more atomized than they used to be, and that is a reality that we face in many conflicts.

What that concretely means on the ground is because the ICRC is an organization that sets itself the criteria of working and being in dialogue with all actors that have an impact and influence in a situation of armed conflict, the networking work of our colleagues on the ground is very, very considerable.

If you take again Darfur, we began with two or three opposition groups at the beginning of the conflict. It then moved into essentially 25 to 30. If you're to keep up and to understand who is who and what their grievances are, how they operate, how they see you on the ground, what their perception is of your actions, that is a major issue to deal with and very important in this regard.

Then a point here on the asymmetry of means and objectives on the battlefield, I think we know that we can come back to it in discussion. The meaning here is that we very often face conflicts where there are very different means and methods of warfare or hostilities available to different parties. They resort to different means and are very rarely, in fact, in direct confrontation. It is much more a situation where civilians are very often caught up in the middle of the fighting when they are not themselves the very object of the political considerations of the different actors.

Now features that we find significant, looking ahead for 2008, this year and then for the next year, are in overall terms the shifting fronts in the fight against terrorism, which in this

context what I mean here is the potential shift of focus from where it has been in recent years, which has been very much Iraq, and now back to Afghanistan with Pakistan of course being an addition and all the issues that that raises in terms of the situation of civilians in these contexts, being our perspective on that and the way to operate in these contexts.

We then had, interesting, that there was around the Georgia crisis a sense that many of the states that had been allied on the issue of the fight against terrorism suddenly found themselves on two different sides of the line, in terms of the Russian Federation one side and part of the Western world on the other around the Georgian crisis, and also questions that raises about the future of the balance of power.

That's the bullet point on the multipolar world that we see emerging around us with no longer just one center of influence but multiple centers of influence from China, India, South Africa and Nigeria, Brazil and other places in addition to those that we have known in the past with the Russian Federation, Western Europe, the U.S. as predominant actors.

So in which way will that influence the conflicts that we operate in and how will that influence the way in which we work with different state actors in trying to address humanitarian issues of concern for us?

The food and financial crisis, obviously a very important theme, and I'd like to underline it here not so much from the perspective of the concerns that we may have about the funding base for the ICRC, although we can discuss about that later. But in particular the food crisis this year showed us that in fact the impact it had was to create new needs in populations that were already very severely affected by conflict. I spoke of Somalia earlier. Afghanistan is another example. The Ivory Coast was seriously hit by that.

So you have populations that were either just coming out of a situation of conflict, hoping to move towards early recovery, or people who are already affected by many other effects that I earlier described, resulting from conflict, and who now face the additional pressure of rising food prices or scarcity in some areas.

Now again, the last point here is the resurgence of the role of the state. It's really a question mark because at the beginning of this century there was much discussion about the diminishing influence of the state versus, on the one hand, the private sector or civil society and others. The question arises now: Is the combined effect of the security concerns that many states have had, and obviously very clearly here in the U.S. as well since September 11, plus the financial crisis, whether that is announcing a return of the more robust role of state actors in the international arena.

Again, our interest is what does that tell us about future forms of confrontations, notably state-based confrontations? I said earlier, they have been rare in recent years. Would there be a return to more classic interstate wars in the future or will we continue to see the types of

predominantly internal conflicts?

The paradox here and the reason why the question mark at the end of this -- you could essentially put questions at the end of each of these bullet points -- is that in many other parts of the world one does see a further weakening of state structures, state influence, and state sovereignty in some cases.

That leads really to the next round of points which I really don't want to go into any form of detail, but these are some of the key themes that we've seen have an impact in terms of the effort we have continually underway to try and understand the conflict dynamics that we work in at a local and a global level. These are some of the themes that are really impacting very heavily on the conflict dynamics of today.

Climate change and environmental degradation, as we know, are raising and putting new pressures on populations. Some of them move, and they put pressure on migration flows and population displacements. Therefore, people have to flee their areas of origin and go to other places where resources are scarce and where that produces new tensions between communities.

Land reform and access to water, of course. Fragile states. Urbanization, as I mentioned earlier. These are just a list, sort of a mental mind map that we consider very important when reviewing the conflicts that we operate in.

Now turning to the future of the humanitarian sector, I think Beth alluded to a number of points there. The first thing that we note, of course, is the emergence of a whole range of new actors in the humanitarian field. Now again, new being a relative notion because I think what we often underestimate or we don't speak enough about that the first responders in every humanitarian crisis are, first of all, the neighbors.

Long before any humanitarian actors are on the ground in principle, with a few exceptions possibly, when somebody is displaced, it's the neighbor or it's the neighboring community that actually is the first actor. It is the remittances received from diasporas around the world that actually are the lifelines in many cases for affected populations long before the outside intervention actually has an impact on it. So I think this is something very important to bear in mind when we speak about the actors in the humanitarian sector.

Here, the new actors are either new because they come from different sectors than would have traditionally been involved in humanitarian action. I think of the private sector foundations. That is certainly the case in your country, but it's also true with parts of Western Europe.

But then it's also the emergence of actors from different parts of the world that will increasingly play an important role in defining what humanitarian response is about. We saw it in the crisis in Burma, in Myanmar this year with the Cyclone Nargis, where the ASEAN countries regrouped and tried to define a primarily Asian response to that crisis which I think is

something we will see increasingly in years to come.

I think it's also something very important that reflects on a sense of rejection of the traditional way or a partial sense of rejection of the traditional way of doing humanitarian actions. Here, it says something very important for me in terms of how the ICRC approaches this.

What I mean by this is one has to consider that humanitarian response is traditionally something of a one-way street. You never consider it profoundly as something that could happen to yourself and what it would be like to be on the receiving end of the humanitarian gesture because, if one did that more seriously or significantly, it would be a very different way of reflecting on it.

The notion that I come to you and not only do I obviously analyze your needs very appropriately but I happen to also have the perfect response to your particular need is something that I think is creating resentment in different parts of the world. People are less open to that kind of way of doing things. If we don't consider that significantly seriously, those will be changes in the years ahead that we'll simply go by and miss and fail to address appropriately. So these are really important matters.

There is polarization around reform here. It, of course, refers to in particular the U.N. humanitarian reform process which we all engage in and discuss with our U.N. colleagues, but there is also their sense of the U.N. reform around the cluster system, the way in which humanitarian action is coordinated in the field.

It reminds me of this comment made in 2003 and 2004, I think, when the pressure was there to open up and integrate humanitarian agencies from different parts of the world. Somebody said, yes, we should now invite more people to our table. That was a statement made by a part of the humanitarian sector.

It's, in a way, if I put it a bit in stark terms, that's hopelessly outdated. That time is in fact, ironically, behind us. It is for us to go to many more tables and the different tables around the world that people want to invite us to as opposed to thinking we need the likeminded or the happy few to invite to our table alone.

One of the critical issues that is affecting perceptions of humanitarian action today is a growing gap between stated intentions and the actual response capacity on the ground. This is a very serious issue because whatever group you sit down with -- whether civil society in a country, whether a religious group that is also engaged in humanitarian action, whether a radical non-state group as is our experience or, for that matter, many state actors -- at the end of the day, beyond analyzing what our mandates are about and what our principles are about, what they want to see is whether there is or not an alignment between what we say we're going to do and what we actually do on the ground.

There, currently, humanitarian sector at large has a real issue on its hands because there are so many places today where more is spoken about than is actually done on the ground. That is a matter of concern. I can just say, for the ICRC, it is one of the matters that we follow most closely in terms of ensuring or trying to ensure a consistency as best as we can between what we talk about and we intend to do and what we actually try to do on the ground.

Now that was also referring to the U.N. integrated and state-based comprehensive approaches. In other words, the integration of humanitarian response into political military strategies as was experienced in the case of the PRTs, as is experienced now in the sense of including humanitarian response into the military doctrines, in many cases of state policy in different countries in particular today in the Western world, but I think that is certainly a trend that we will see go beyond.

I think our position on this -- and I tried to formulate it as simply in this introductory comment as possible -- is that the ICRC has in a way a much more limited focus which is the humanitarian angle per se.

Now we understand that the U.N. and, of course, the state perspective on any crisis is necessarily wider than the humanitarian angle only and that it will necessarily include thinking about political dimensions of the crisis, military responses, reconstruction, development. It goes far beyond what we address. So, in a way, we have a simpler mandate. It's not simple for our colleagues every day in the field to implement it, but it's a simpler mandate in its expression.

At the same time, we are very, very mindful about not being a part of integrated approaches ourselves. In other words, we understand where the thinking is coming from. We understand at times not only the temptation but the reality. We also understand that military forces, they have a responsibility when they deploy to not close their eyes on humanitarian needs that they encounter. I don't think there's any dogmatic view on that, but it is about the objectives are fundamentally different and necessarily so.

We do not have a political or military objective in deploying into a country. For us, in security terms and perception terms, it is very important that every group understand that. So when we were able, for instance, last year in Afghanistan to help play a role in the release of the Korean hostages that were held by the Taliban or when we negotiated with the Taliban for the Ministry of Health to be able to carry out vaccination campaigns in very remote areas. Our role was the facilitator role, but for that you need to be understood as being separate from political and military logics and dynamics.

So that's the way in which we look at this, and we do that and need that because of this statement here on a crisis of humanitarianism and a growing security concern around it. There have been at least 25 humanitarian workers killed in Afghanistan this year, similar numbers in Somalia. This is hardly referenced anymore in particular in public debates or other forums. It looks like, and it's very painful in this way, it's sort of becoming something that is part of the

operating environment.

Yet, it is essential for the security of our staff and our ability to access populations that, as far as ICRC is concerned, we be very clear about the specific role that we seek to play in this and the dialogue that we need for everybody. That now relates to some of the challenges that we face in the operations.

I'd like to just reflect, as I do, on a situation that we were in at the end of the year 2003 which was probably the most dramatic one that we went through in recent times with loss of colleagues in Afghanistan and then later in Iraq with the car bomb attack against our premises on the 27th of October, 2003. Many of the questions that came up in our internal debates were very, very pressing questions because the discussion at the time was really around is there such a thing as a future for a neutral and independent form of humanitarian action or was the time over when we could convince people and the different groups on a battlefield that there is an added value to let us work in the midst of that situation.

And so, we took several decisions at the time which were very important, and I think I am confident they have actually proven over time, but that was certainly not something we took for granted, that they were worthwhile.

The first thing was to confirm we want to continue to work as close as possible to the populations in need. That sounds very basic. But really, behind that, it means a lot because it's not as if you just get into your car or your truck and drive up to these places. It takes long networking, long discussions and negotiations with the different parties to convince them about what you're trying and attempting to do for the populations affected.

It meant that we kept a decentralized security management. In other words, it's not out of Geneva that we make the key security decisions. I say this because at the very moment when our colleagues in the U.N. further centralized their security management decisions to New York, and our sense is the closer you are to the events, the better place you are to actually make those very difficult judgments. And so, we kept that decentralized way of working.

And the notion that we would talk to all the actors is kind of a standard sentence for saying that you also sit down with some very difficult groups, people who don't instantly acknowledge your added value or don't necessarily immediately recognize the principles that you work with, and you have to build up that over time.

To seek to demonstrate the value of neutrality and independence, that's a point I'd just like to focus on because that's also referred to. What is in it? Why should people be interested in our neutrality? Here, I just push it so far as to say I think the ICRC has at times bored audiences to death in speaking about its neutrality just for the sake of it.

I remember very often being in internal discussions where people would say, well, you see

I am neutral. Therefore, I cannot tell you.

Or, I am neutral,herefore, we cannot go there.

And I always said to colleagues, there is no interest in a principle if you describe it by a negative. The neutrality is interesting only and should be something that people feel connected to, if I can actually refer to the fact that in Darfur, in Iraq, in Afghanistan today, in the key conflict zones of today, it is actually something that allows us to reach people that we otherwise wouldn't be able to reach.

And so, when we today work with 11 colleagues in the hospital of Mirwais in Kandahar where you have increasing numbers of wounded arriving over recent months and needing treatment, it is not only that we have been able to support the hospital there with the needed material and have our team in there to support the Afghan doctors and surgeons, but it's also that we have set up with the Afghan Red Crescent and its whole network to have these people evacuated to the hospital in the first place. Here is one of the biggest difficulties in Afghanistan today. It's to actually reach the people where they are and to bring them to the referral hospital because it's not as if there's huge capacity to do that.

To work in those kinds of circumstances, it is, for me, neutrality in action because neutrality in words isn't really very interesting per se. So it has to relate. You have to be able whenever you look at the ICRC's performance or what we do or what we say, I think that's a very important benchmark to test us against.

Are we able today to operate in some of the key conflict zones?

Do we make a difference for people?

I think we have been able to reassert the usefulness of those principles and the relevance of international humanitarian law in our conflicts today, but that takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of effort, and it's not something that you can ever take for granted in that regard.

That leads up to just a brief reflection on some of the things that I found very important for us this year in 2008, and that of course will be our big test in 2009. Here are some of the contexts in which we have had very significant improved access this year:

Afghanistan, which in 2003 again we lost colleagues there, it looked like would we be able to continue to work in that conflict? Yes.

Iraq, where we have increased permanent presence on the ground including Baghdad and Basra and Ramadi and other parts of the country, our team has really managed there a huge effort this year.

Georgia, where we were able to be present and active in the crisis in South Ossetia.

Pakistan, which is a huge new challenge because of the nature of the country, the nature of the conflict dynamics there.

Somalia, I referred earlier to, where we rely primarily on an extremely able team of national staff that for years now, together with the Somali Red Crescent, have been the backbone of our operation.

The Philippines, which deteriorated this year, the DRC, Northern Mali and Niger.

Then these are all contexts in which we have seen significant increase of access and response this year in addition to some other very significant contexts where we've had a stabilization of our efforts. Sudan which is our biggest operation worldwide, Chad, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Yemen and a few others.

In all this, important relations with key actors including, of course, our relationship with the U.S. which has historically been so critical in providing support to the ICRC, with outstanding levels of commitment by the U.S. over many, many years to provide the ICRC with financial backing to carry out work in this regard, but then also over the recent eight years a very demanding phase in the relationship around key issues related to detainee affairs and of course legal considerations, which we can come back to if you wish. But those are all part of managing our overall ability in the field.

My last points here are related because of the fact that at Brookings you're investing quite a bit of time and research into the very important issue of the needs of IDPs. Now here, just a couple of reflections.

We have, obviously, acknowledgements that the displacements today are a major consequence, if not the most significant consequence of today's types of armed conflicts, because civilians are very often caught up in the midst of the fighting and are at times the very target of the conflict groups.

We see ourselves, and there is a lot of actors involved on the ground in the IDP response, as a reference actor in terms of IDP response in conflict-related situations because of the Geneva Conventions, because of international humanitarian law that gives us that role to assist populations affected. It's an important framework.

And, we have multidimensional responses to it. What I mean by this is to understand very well that the first image that comes to mind when you think about IDPs are the camps. Again, a very big percentage of people who are IDPs today are with host families. Now host families can only cope for so long with the additional burden of having to welcome people that have had to flee a combat zone. And so, a response to IDPs means also a response to resident populations.

Responding to IDPs also means trying to prevent displacement. In Sudan, for instance, the vast majority of our responses in Darfur are actually aimed at fragile and exposed resident populations that, if not attended to, will continue to move or have the temptation to move into IDP camps which will swell further because basically there's the pull factor of knowing assistance is available in the camps.

While some organizations have rightly focused on that, we have tried to be complementary in working with affected populations in trying to prevent displacement. So it needs this multifaceted, multidimensional look at the reality.

In 2008, we supported altogether about 4 million IDPs in the world. Here, I just listed some of the emergencies during the course of the year that came in addition to other of our big IDP operations that we have. Again, Afghanistan, where we support about 50,000 people. Uganda, where it's 150,000, where we actually try to facilitate returns of IDPs back to their homes in early recovery phases.

And to highlight that, all the effort that has gone into the guiding principles that were adopted 10 years ago, which is an absolutely important text and fundamental need to remember that international humanitarian law is a relevant framework for the protection of the conflict-related IDPs, here you just have an overview of the countries that we operate in, in terms of response to IDPs. The blinking ones are those that we will seek to increase our response in, in the year ahead further. Some of them are quite obvious, from Somalia to DRC, Colombia and others that come to mind.

I'd like to finish this overview before we open just by saying that it is really both a very big privilege to work in the humanitarian field and has been in recent years, but it's also something extremely demanding. I can say, based on my experience with these six years now in this position, that there is rarely a day when you can just sort of say you take something for actually achieved for granted because things turn so quickly. First of all, the risks that the populations face, but also the risks that our colleagues face cannot be underestimated and require permanent attention.

I'm personally very positive about the overall scope that we've managed to reach. I'm personally very motivated by the fact that the ICRC is an organization that focuses not only on the current top crises but that we don't neglect our commitments over time in the more forgotten or neglected conflicts like the Burundis of today, the Haitis, the lasting consequences in Nepal or in other places. We don't. We try really and assume responsibility over time.

But it will, and this is the final point here, require of us a better integration into different parts of the world, a better anchoring into the different cultural and political realities of the world of tomorrow in an emerging multipolar world, if we are to secure the lasting support from state, non-state, but also civil society to our operations and make them understood.

So this is, obviously, one opportunity to try to reflect on that, and I'm very grateful for the fact that it was possible. Thank you very much, Beth. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. FERRIS: Okay, we have time now for questions.

Let me begin, Pierre, with thanking you very much for your comments. I thought they were very thought-provoking and certainly far-ranging, that challenge us all.

If I could pick up on the very last comment you made about the need for ICRC to anchor itself in terms of the many different networks and actors and situations that you find yourself in. How do you balance that with maintaining your traditional neutrality and independence?

ICRC has been the guardian of international humanitarian law and, for many, the guardian of humanitarian principles. How do you bring that together with anchoring in these wider networks and situations?

MR. KRÄHENBÜHL: That point, I think, is very important to me. It's something that we're working on and trying to develop, and so what I'm going to say now is certainly not the end of the story. That's why it's also interesting to exchange around it.

The sense is that, and you already have it in language terms, traditionally, when you have the expatriate staff of the ICRC going to a context, the name, the title that they carry is a delegate. We're all delegates. What it means is you're sent by Geneva. That was how it was historically. You go to a country, and then you analyze the situation in that country on the basis of your frame of reference which is based on your mandate, on your principles, and then define a response to the needs in that context.

All that is absolutely necessary and remains vital, but I never liked the image of a framework very much because it's as if you impose your framework of reference on the situation and you think that's the only response to the situation.

What I like more is to say to my colleagues is what is very important is that our backbone is very solid. It's not the frame of reference that you impose on others. It's the backbone. It's the confidence with which we move in very different and demanding environments.

If your backbone is solid, first of all, in principle, you don't notice it until it hurts. But in particular it's, at the same time, solid and flexible. It's solid because it holds together the fundamentals. It holds together the mandate and the principles.

You cannot just bend too far your principles, and you can't be too pragmatic on that. Otherwise, even the backbone will break. But the backbone's flexibility should allow you to

then make a meaningful response contextually based on your fundamental principles and mandate requirements.

And then the other part of the anchoring is that historically I think humanitarian action has been where we've come from. It can be true for other parts of the world, but now I just speak about it in the ICRC terms.

We come out from Geneva, and we go somewhere, but we've never really reflected on how can we bring back from those countries. I think, here, as vastly different as Nigeria and China and the U.S. and other places, an actual more profound thinking on how the countries themselves, their governments and their people think about the key issues that humanitarian action is about. We've always gone to tell people about it.

I never forgot the minutes of a meeting I once read from a very able and experienced head of ICRC office in the field, and you could read the minutes. He had met a senior religious leader in the context, and they were reflecting around neutrality. An ICRC colleague said, well, neutrality is, and then gave the standard sort of description of what neutrality is as far as we're concerned.

This religious leader was saying, that's interesting, but I've given quite a bit of thought to that, and for me neutrality could also be, and he gave his description.

And then the standard response rephrased by the ICRC delegate a second time. You can actually read it very clearly in the minutes of the meeting, yourself, like you were there. The interlocutor says, no, no, I understand that. But, just, I'd like to add my perspective on it, and a third time the ICRC delegate gives the standard response on what neutrality is.

I always use this internally in our discussions to say that what would be really interesting is to read the minutes of the meeting from the other side because my assumption is at the bottom of the page would be written in handwriting: The next time he calls, please tell him I'm on a trip.

The inability to engage into real dialogue, confident because the backbone is solid, that we won't just simply adapt to what everybody thinks we should be saying but sufficiently confident also to have a real investment into a true dialogue.

In other words, being receptive to what comes from the other side in genuine ways, not just acknowledging it in passing, is a huge, I think, evolution and a very necessary one. It's one that sounds straightforward and easy. I think it's very demanding to lead, but it's very necessary for the future credibility of our organization and humanitarian action in general.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you.

Questions? Comments? If you could identify yourself before you ask the question.

QUESTIONER: Hi. Scott Wilson from the *Washington Post*.

How has the General Assembly's acceptance of the Responsibility to Protect Principle affected your work?

Has it helped you gain access into areas that you otherwise wouldn't be able to work and do you see it as something that eventually is going to be pretty important to the way you approach things?

MR. KRÄHENBÜHL: Okay. I don't think it has had an immediate impact on the way we work or necessarily the access possibilities, but let's just try and test that assumption for a second.

The first thing that I think, also at a personal level, is very important is the recognition that there are certain types of crisis in which the nature of the suffering and the risks and violations that populations are confronted and exposed to or have to endure require other things than just sitting on the side and saying: Well, we'll see and we can't really do anything about it or we don't know what we should do about it.

I think that makes a lot of sense.

What I thought was also very important in this approach is that it lays out something that is different from what was previously called the right to intervene or the right to interfere because the right to interfere essentially was, again, this very unilateral one-way street thinking which says, essentially: I am -- and I speak outside of the humanitarian framework -- I, as a nation or as a coalition, am legitimized to intervene in your country because there's a mess in your country and you're obviously unable to resolve it.

But again, never thinking what that would mean if that happened in one's own country and what it would mean if one were confronted with that kind of argument by others. I oversimplified the point probably a little bit on purpose.

The interesting thing in the Responsibility to Protect is that it says, first of all, to the extent that, nationally, something can be done that is good. If it can't, there is a complementary mechanism. That would be action.

Now I think if we look at today's state of international relations, the one question that comes to mind and here I reflect in general terms. It's not an ICRC position on that in formal sense. There is a deep feeling in different parts of the world, whether we agree on that or not, but the feeling is there, that in fact much of the international community's approaches have been characterized by double standards, that in fact the same rules don't necessarily apply in the same

way.

If the Responsibility to Protect was confronted with that, I think there is a very serious issue because if it is always the same countries that are the receiving end of forms of intervention, and they can be of different nature. They can be legal. They can be military. They can be political. Then, of course, it already potentially upsets the very foundations that I think the General Assembly wanted to lay down.

Now in ICRC terms, again, what is of course very important is we are also very much about protecting civilians caught up in armed conflict. But of course we also understand, and I think that was one of Beth's comments earlier, that there are limits to what the humanitarian response can achieve. I mean we will always be about more of the saving lives and the dealing with consequences and not about dealing with the causes and the roots of the confrontation which others have to focus their attention on. The others are then actors of more political nature, which we do not need to be a part of.

So, as in many of these things, we will openly interact with and exchange with those who would operate under the Responsibility to Protect. But we would maintain and seek to be clear in the eyes of all of the actors that we maintain, once again, our independence from those processes because, should they fail, we'll have to continue to work in that context. I think that's a little bit how we see it.

There's not a country that comes to mind where I could say because it's now in place, it has helped us per se, but it's certain a very important element in the international landscape and that we are also prepared to interact with and obviously be aware of.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. Michael Kleinman; I'm a researcher with the Feinstein Center.

To what extent do you think that PRTs in Afghanistan and Iraq or AFRICOM in East Africa have actually contributed to blurring the lines on the ground?

And, furthermore, how do you think that humanitarian actors should respond to outreach by the military, whether it's coordination or something more involved?

Thank you.

MR. KRÄHENBÜHL: In the relationship with Feinstein, I acknowledge the comments in one of your reports on the "Dunantists" which we sometimes feel we are definitely part of that interpretation of humanitarian action.

The relationship with the military issue, and I'll just try to start by saying in the humanitarian sector you have different types of attitudes and responses and relationships when the issue of the military comes up. One can be to say we don't want to have anything to do with the military at all. Others can be to say we want only to benefit from the security support that the military might provide in the sense that it's good of the military provide armed escorts or secure an environment, and therefore we can then operate in it more and more easily. Others will say it's fine to be part of integrated approaches within the military logic or the broader mandate of political military action.

Our view is different from, I think, all of those, and I'll try to describe it.

The first thing is you have to remember, if there is one thing that the ICRC has no problem whatsoever in relationship to the military is dealing with the military. I mean we've dealt with military in every form or thinkable fashion for the last 150 years. So there is no problem of sitting down. That's what we're about.

In fact, we do sit down with every type of armed actor from the most structure and technologically advanced and sophisticated armed force down to the smallest group, mixed political, criminal actors on the ground because that's the way in which we work and interact and seek to.

It's not only around our security. It's also because we talk to these different groups about the way in which they conduct their operations, the hostilities, whether there are violations that we can document and refer to them. It's one thing to do that with a structured armed force. It's another to do that with a loosely set up outfit. As a basis, we don't have a problem of interacting with the military.

We don't ask for military escorts because we don't think it's something useful. There are very, very rare exceptions in ICRC's history of engaging with armed escorts. We don't, for instance, operate with armed escorts in Iraq today, which is not an easy choice but a necessary one because we can't see which of the armed forces that we would use would be seen as neutral or nonpartisan in that environment. So that is a very fundamental issue for us.

Now coming to the blurring of lines, I think it is very clear in my mind that there was a blurring of lines resulting from the initial phase of the PRT. The issue is not so much about the PRT in itself but what was some of the statements and the issues around them.

Originally, when they began, there were statements -- and I refer now to what is in the public domain in terms of statements that were made -- and there were uses of humanitarian response of the following type: There were distributions of humanitarian material and assistance in villages of Afghanistan that were accompanied with distributions of leaflets saying in exchange for assistance, if you provide information on the whereabouts of so and so, you will get more and things like this.

That is, for us, profoundly unacceptable in terms of our humanitarian ethic because it then really means that the humanitarian component is in fact part of the counterinsurgency strategy.

Now setting myself outside of the ICRC framework for a second, I can understand where that temptation may come from. I can understand the hearts and minds logic, that you say you're in a country and you want to contribute also to the environment and you don't want to overlook the needs.

But, for us, that was a major issue in particular because it was the same period when we had public statements to the effect that there was no future for an independent, neutral humanitarian response. One quote that came to mind was from a senior officer, saying, there is no neutral space between democracies and terrorism.

Well, the paradox is that the more a situation is polarized, the more there is precisely a space for a neutral and independent actor because when you have such levels of polarization in a conflict, it's exactly the moment when you sometimes need an actor that is independent and neutral and understood as such. There were prison riots or other situations, again, the hostage release, the medical that I referred to earlier that required a neutral and independent response. There, we will be extremely firm when we feel that that is at stake.

So, again, the issue is not about the fact that a government or an armed force should overlook humanitarian needs. Even the Geneva Conventions are clear about that. You deploy with your armed forces. There are wounded people there. There are needs among civilians. You have a responsibility to attend those.

It's a different thing to have it then explicit and visible in the context of a counterinsurgency strategy with the risk then that every humanitarian actor in the context be identified as being part of that. That was the big risk for us.

Now, of course, the risk was two-fold. I mean we had forms of instrumentalization of humanitarian action of that nature, and we had clear forms of rejection, groups that would attack deliberately, and this was in some cases the opposition groups in Afghanistan and Iraq that targeted deliberately humanitarian actions. We felt we were caught there in the middle, and that's why in 2003 we had these really profound debates around will we be able to prove over time that that neutrality and independence is going to be accepted again.

We feel today that that is the case. We feel that some of our comments on, for instance, the PRTs and not only ours, but others, were taken into account and that the issues were addressed. There's serious respect and consideration for the added value that we bring to a conflict zone. But it's true, the acute phase of 2003 was clearly a very demanding on all of us.

I think we should be honest about the fact that it is understood by us that there are integrated logics, but we want to be understood in our own terms on our own grounds and for the

merit of neutrality and independence. If that is well acknowledged and if, in public terms, there is no temptation or attempt to make us look as being part of something that is political, then we can live with the reality that there are other ways of doing humanitarian work.

Humanitarianism doesn't have to be neutral and independent. You can think of humanitarian action in other ways, theoretically. But, for us, if ours is, in any person's mind, seen or thought to be different from neutral, independent, apolitical and others, I think our whole concept is in jeopardy. So we really try to emphasize being understood for what we are, and I think today we feel much more comfortable.

If I look at, again, Afghanistan is a case in point where our colleagues are today achieving results for people that are much, much better than they were a few years ago. I think part of it comes from increased levels of acceptance of that neutrality and independence.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you.

Right in the back, please.

QUESTIONER: Hi. I'm Bryan Gilkupski from Mercy Corps, and I wanted to pick up on your last point and maybe get your advice, given your perspective.

I'm curious. It sounds like you feel like ICRC has actually clawed back its neutral positioning in Afghanistan, yet there are still considerable areas of the country where you can't operate, in the south in particular and the east.

But I guess I'm curious if you could expand a little bit on how you felt the erosion of, say, humanitarian space or the image of humanitarians as neutral or impartial actors has effected your operations and then maybe suggest some strategies that organizations like humanitarian NGOs or development NGOs might use in trying to claw back some of our own impartial image in the situation where, perhaps because of our somewhat different mandates and ways of operating, we have seen a considerable blurring of the lines that many of us feel really is starting to impact on our ability to work in a lot of these spaces, even where we overlap with the ICRC.

MR. KRÄHENBÜHL: I think at the end one always has to be very humble around assessments that one delivers on one's performance and whether I think others will then, over time, probably also be better placed to judge. But let's just take Afghanistan and try and compare different phases.

I worked in Afghanistan from '93 to '95 which was the time when the Mujahideen were fighting for control of Kabul and the Taliban took over in Kandahar and that was the beginning of that process.

It was a time where, historically, the ICRC had a well-established presence in Kabul,

Jalalabad, part of the north of the country, Herat clearly, but the south was always difficult for us. We had people, colleagues kidnapped in 1991 around Kandahar, and it was always difficult. We never managed over those years to have proper routes in provinces like Helmand, which may not have been the most acute at the time, but of course today are some of the most difficult ones.

So I would never, ever pretend that there is a situation in which neutrality and independence is simply the one guarantee and door-opener because I always remember something that a member of a fairly radical Middle Eastern group told us, gave us.

You just asked for advice. We also asked for advice when the situation became very difficult in Iraq in 2003. We said, okay, what can you say about things that are going to now happen, particularly with non-state groups in Iraq that could be helpful for us to think of?

And he said one thing which I found very interesting at the time. He said, well, when you arrived in our context, it took us -- his group -- four years to get used to you because every time you said neutrality, we said that doesn't exist in a conflict.

Every time you said independence, he said, we look at your list of top 10 donors and we said how does that work? The U.S., the U.K., Switzerland and all the others are there. So you have this huge support from the West. How do we reconcile that?

And he said, and that's very important for me, in fact, it's observing the practice over time that will be the key to the answer. So it's the consistency perceived.

One thing is what you try to do, and it's the perception of your consistency over time that makes a difference, if people then can refer to the fact. It's not just you made a statement and said, I'm neutral and independent. They need to verify. First of all, they want to hear from you what does it actually mean, and then they get feedback from their people. This is sometimes very difficult feedback, but this is very important to know about.

And so, in that particular advice, well, there's the good news and the bad news. The good news is if you manage over time to keep that alignment or to have people recognize that you what you say is actually what you do, there is hope there. The bad news is, in that case, it took four years.

When I send colleagues into some of these contexts or when you have to make those decisions about whether you leave people in a difficult situation or not, that means you know that gaining acceptance is a medium, long-term effort.

And, it's much more easily lost than gained. It's very easy to lose levels of acceptance. It needs one perception issue. It needs one impression. It needs just the behavior of a staff member that is inappropriate in the cultural environment or it needs a meeting that went really poorly on whatever you were trying to discuss with a given actor. That could put you into a

situation where, for 12 or 18 months, you don't know what way do I come out of this again.

So maintaining that over time is very difficult, but I think that's where the investment is. That really requires, I think, that one has a great level of honesty with one's self. That's why I say I don't think there's just one response.

I think we should acknowledge, as you've said, that there are different ways of interpreting and of living our different mandates and ways and approaches, and that is also something that is very positive and rich about the humanitarian community, but it really means we have to be very honest.

We can't have it all, all the time. Some humanitarian organizations feel it is a good thing to be part of a call in 2002, 2003, 2004 to broaden the scope of ISAF's mandate and to say to ISAF: You should really not be only in Kabul. You should go to Kandahar, Helmand and all the other regions.

Maybe that's okay, but there are consequences of those types of statements. On the side of those who are opposing the ISAF presence -- whether we like it or not or whether we agree with it or not is beside the point -- that is going to be read in the context as a political statement. Either one does it in full knowledge of the fact that it will be read like this, and that's I think what you said. One shouldn't be naïve about that.

One has to decide for one's self: Am I now going to join that particular message and is that going to help me in obtaining access or what does it say about other abilities of the organization?

I think that's where a kind of very rigorous process is required in each of our organizations. It's a very difficult one, time consuming, because of course there are also different sensitivities among staff on what is right and what is wrong. But I really think that to progress there and to make inroads, that is necessary.

That's also why we don't want to pretend and it would be wrong to say that the humanitarian community at large is one consistent block. There are so many sensitivities. Some think social change is something they should promote. Others think, no, we're not about promoting social change.

Yes, we all think, for instance, the situation of women in Afghanistan is a big issue. But we think, as the ICRC, that is not part of our mandate to introduce change on those particular matters. Our focus has to be rigorous on being able to access populations. If we start to debate those issues, it may very well limit capacity.

But it raises other dilemmas. There is no single position that just is comfortable per se or that everybody will feel at ease with. So I think it's around those types of themes that we really

need.

And the one thing I can add to that, that is very important in today's security environment, is that maybe 10 years ago, certainly 15 and 20 years ago, if you had a problem locally somewhere, you either dealt with it locally or didn't deal with it locally.

In other words, when I sat with Bosnian Serb commanders and if they had a complaint, I mean the biggest problem I could face apart from the security issue is that they would make a statement in the Bosnian Serb media and criticize us for something we did. That could be read in Belgrade, and if you were really unlucky it went all the way and was read in Moscow.

Today, that's completely different. If you have a threat against your organization placed on a web site somewhere, you're threatened everywhere potentially. And so, you cannot deal with that threat locally alone anymore, and that monitoring of what people say about us and what people think about the organization is a constant effort and not just simply in terms of what you think about the reputation of your organization but actually the security parameters that you confront your staff with.

So these are some of the considerations. Obviously, it would require more in-depth exchange, but I am certainly available for that.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you.

Other questions? Yes, please.

QUESTIONER: Hi. Marian Pratt from USAID. I have two short questions if I might.

One is that what are the criteria that you use to pull out of a situation, security aside? I think there was a situation -- I don't remember what country was -- where ICRC was accused of moving arms, for example, and they decided to pull out quite quickly. So that's one question.

The second question is you were talking about addressing root causes and solutions. Given that your staff, the way we have some of our staff, are privy to information in the field that's very locally specific and crucial to perhaps addressing long-term solutions and root causes, to what degree do you pass on that information, if you do, to organizations that might work towards those solutions or do you keep it to yourself, again, because of your neutrality and independence?

MR. KRÄHENBÜHL: The first part was? Sorry.

QUESTIONER: When to pull out.

MR. KRÄHENBÜHL: When to pull out, yes. Let's take the one example that was the

most strongly debated internally certainly under my experience as Director of Operations which was the Iraq situation.

In 2003, we decided. When the invasion started, we determined to keep a team on the ground. It was a small team of six foreign staff and several hundred Iraqis. It was a small expatriate team and a very large Iraqi team because we had been there for two decades and we knew the environment and felt the discussions with the different sides led us to sufficient confidence to keep a team there, which was I think very useful also in that phase of the crisis.

We then very tragically lost one of our colleagues, a logistician, who was caught in crossfire in the very last days before your troops entered Baghdad. That was the first loss.

Then we had a colleague who was deliberately targeted, though we believe not for being a member of the ICRC necessarily but just because he was obviously part of the international presence on the ground. That was in July, 2003. He was killed in that incident in a drive-by-shooting.

Then we had, of course, the attack on the U.N. headquarters on the 19th of August and then later on, and there were many others, the car bombing attack against our office in Baghdad.

Well, that's about as difficult as it gets and also as tragic as it gets in terms of our experience. We have had loss of colleagues in other contexts before that, including to deliberate attacks, but that was a very difficult moment. We reached a point where the discussion internally was very, very strong about essentially feeling that we've sort of crossed the line there and beyond that it's really not possible to justify exposing colleagues to those levels of risks.

We did, however, manage to convince internally, and I say we in the sense of the operations inside ICRC pushed very strongly for maintaining a presence, maintaining a response.

It was the time also of the visits to Abu Ghraib, and we knew there were really important issues to deal with on the ground for civilians, for detainees. We managed to keep an operational profile that was very modest but was fairly okay until the early part of January, 2005, when another one of our colleagues, an Iraqi colleague was murdered near Abu Ghraib. That then really felt like that was more than what could be carried.

We argued and I, personally, also argued very strongly that we had to make up our minds. There wasn't going to be a perfect situation in this. Either we decided indeed we will withdraw and then feel a little bit more comfortable about part of our staff because when you withdraw it's also only part of your staff. It's always the question about what do you then do with all of your nationally employed colleagues and their families because they stay behind. And there is the issue about perception, their own security and just simply deciding to leave at that moment and all the messages that humanitarian organizations often have about leaving and pulling out.

Well, it's only pulling part of your staff out in reality, and the others are left there a little bit to cope for themselves, et cetera.

But we also argued that if we withdrew from Iraq at that time, it would take -- and I sort of purposely underlined that -- at least 10 years before you come back because you cannot connect with a situation that has changed that much by just simply saying one day you resume dialogue with people. They want to talk to you about something you're doing, not only about something you might one day again do. Or they might for the first few meetings, and then they decide that's too much.

In fact, I have really tried push forward something that we really withdraw only -- and the only here is in brackets because you can't say that ever, once and for all -- when there is something much more immediately deliberate of an accusation against you.

You referred to an example that came to mind. I mean if somebody said we have documented evidence that ICRC vehicles were used in the transport of weapons, et cetera, and we now announce that they must leave, something that essentially happened with CARE in Somalia recently. Well, at that moment, you really have to make a determination, and probably you do have to pull people out because you cannot just expose them to that risk.

But in our case, over recent years, we've never had a documented case of that nature to the extent that we could say we were being targeted for something that we are, have done or represent. It was more -- and that brings us back to the earlier question -- an impression that the ICRC was being targeted at times because of it being part of the broader international community and messages being addressed to the broader international community.

We never had a claim of responsibility that was deliberate and detailed in accusations, and I'm speaking about the recent years of experience, that this has been done because the ICRC was this and that. So that makes it difficult because you don't sometimes know why you were targeted, and that doesn't make it easy.

The other point that I think one has to keep in mind which is very important in this, I was often asked after 2005, including internally staff members asking me: Okay, but then in Iraq, we've lost now so many people. Will we automatically pull out at the next loss?

And I said, well, if that's the case, I have to pull the people out now because you don't let people if you're sure that at the next loss you're going to pull everybody out.

Either you think that there's nothing automatic and you're going to analyze it every single time something happens. You do a detailed and a critical review of why that happened and what you know about it. Or you pull people out because you can't leave people until the next one and say you kind of hope it won't happen. That's irresponsible management in security terms.

What I'm saying with this is there's no automatic set of triggers in our view that would simply say in that kind of a circumstance, necessarily you leave, because the pressures of what you know about the situation, what you know about people not receiving any more in terms of assistance and protection if you leave are all things that weigh in the decision. That's why we need to take it on a case by case basis.

MS. FERRIS: I want to thank you very much for joining us and sharing your thoughts.

MR. KRÄHENBÜHL: It's a pleasure. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: I wish you bon voyage. Thank you.

MR. KRÄHENBÜHL: Thank you very much. Thank you.

(Applause)

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

       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.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

Notary Public # 351998

in and for the
Commonwealth of Virginia

My Commission Expires: