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P R O C E E D I N G S

DR. FERRIS: My name is Beth Ferris, I'm a Senior Fellow here at the Brookings Institution and Co-Director of the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement. We'd like to welcome you to this event. It looks at public diplomacy and humanitarian response. Certainly in the last two weeks we've seen a lot of television coverage of two emergencies in Asia, both the situation in Burma--in Myanmar and China. And the way in which the humanitarian response is shaped by and contributes to understandings of foreign policy and institutional issues is one that we look forward to exploring today.

I'm very sorry to announce that Ky Luu who is the Director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance is not able to join us, primarily due to the fact that there are these two large emergencies that he and many others are responding to. We've noticed, you know, unfortunately in our field of work these kinds of cancellations are not uncommon. But I will step in and make a few remarks about particular concerns of non-governmental organizations and perhaps a word or two about the U.N. as well.

I'd like to introduce our moderator to you now, Frank Sesno who is a Professor of Media and Journalism at George Washington University and perhaps well known to many of us as former, and still a

little bit, CNN.

Thank you very much Frank.

MR. SESNO: Thank you very much and welcome. Certainly as we know by watching CNN, BBC, Sky News, FOX, Al Jazeera, and a number of news organizations when disaster hits the cameras are there and they are on both to record the events and the depths of the disaster and certainly the rescue efforts. Certainly one of the first questions that is asked and portrayed through the imagery and the information is who's doing what? Who is being asked to come in? Are people being kept out? As in the case of Burma.

And how do these decisions of assistance and national priorities ripple through the national and international consciousness? One of the things that I think will be very interesting today is to explore the extent to which humanitarian aid and response is an extension of or a magnifier of a national security issues, national branding if we can use a corporate term or more to the point public diplomacy.

You saw from your invitations and the information that was extended to you on what this event was going to be all about. Some questions that would frame the discussion and I would suggest to you that this is what we'll try to do in the discussion to follow. One, the extent to which humanitarian response is in fact affected by, shaped, molded by foreign policy or institution or even political concerns. What we can see

and learn and derive from previous experience?

And by previous experience I think today becomes especially relevant to talk about China and Burma and not just in terms of public diplomacy on the part of those countries that are trying to provide aid. But in a sense, and this is a slight difference but very relevant, the efforts, the political efforts internally as to how governments are conveying and portraying what is taking place or not portraying what is taking place on the ground. How do ways of delivering humanitarian assistance merge the needs of the victims and those most vulnerable populations and the interests of the nations providing that assistance or the NGOs for that matter or any other actor. And finally, whether public diplomacy in humanitarian crises can boomerang or have negative effects.

What we're going to go here today is invite our three speakerss up one at a time to speak to you for about ten minutes. Coming from the world of television as Gail Chalef will tell you I'm well accustomed to a producer in my ear saying wrap, being brief and succinct so I will gesticulate wildly if you go over time. I won't do that.

But to present to you briefly so each can present his or her perspective on this issue and then we will reconvene up here and have a conversation amongst ourselves and of course open it up to your questions. We very much want this to be a lively and interactive event and was mentioned one of our gusts is unable to be here with us today

and we hope that some others of you who are in or have had government experience may speak up and help to frame, ask, or answer some of the questions that come up in this regard.

I would kick this conversation off with the following; Karen Hughes, when she was overseeing U.S. Public Diplomacy efforts, used to say that the Diplomacy of Deeds, meaning the help that the United States gave people around the world -- Pakistan, after the earthquake, Indonesia, after the tsunami and a number of countries and places -- was our most effective public diplomacy tool. So with that in mind and as that as a broader frame for this conversation, I'd like to kick this off with Kristen Lord, my former and perhaps would be colleague former from the George Washington University, Elliott School of International Affairs, former State Department Advisor. Now she's here at Brookings, she'll be working on public diplomacy issues and with an additional focus on relations with the Islamic world and she will have some beginning comments.

So Kristin I turn it over to you with pleasure.

DR. LORD: Good afternoon everyone. Thank you so much for coming. I've been asked to talk a bit about the relationship between humanitarian relief and public diplomacy. And because I'm an academic, I haven't left the University very long I need to define what that means.

To me that means the promotion of national interests through efforts to inform, engage, and influence foreign publics. And I

want to be clear that usually when we provide disaster relief it's not with public diplomacy interests in mind, of course. But I think some of the incidents that Frank is referring to over the last few years. The 2004 tsunami and the relief that followed that and also the 2005 earthquake of Pakistan, I think those two events raised some hope that there might be some public diplomacy benefits that spilled over from providing disaster relief.

And even just in the last couple of weeks, I think it's pretty clear that relief isn't only about humanitarian interests. There are some other symbolic issues at stake as well. The fact that Japan not only offered but was welcomed in its assistance to China says something about the relationship and something about the state of that relationship between those two peoples.

But in my view, despite what I've just said we actually know very little about whether humanitarian assistance makes the recipients of aid feel better about the giver of that assistance. So I thought what I would do as a starting point for this discussion is layout what I think we actually know about this which I said is quite a small amount. First, I think we know this. Humanitarian assistance after a major natural disaster like the ones we've seen just recently, unfortunately, does seem to positively affect public attitudes toward a provider of that assistance.

So after U.S. aid to victims of the 2004 tsunami, the

percentage of Indonesians that said in polls that they held favorable views of the United States increased from 15 percent in 2003 to 38 percent in 2005 according to the Pew Global Attitudes Project. And similarly in Pakistan in 2005, the number of Pakistanis who reported favorable views rose from 21 percent in 2004 to 27 percent in 2006. And indeed, if you're a good social scientist you have to ask, well was this really caused by the assistance and indeed polls suggest that the improvement in attitudes was directly linked to the disaster assistance. Sixty-three percent on Indonesians and 78 percent of Pakistanis surveyed reported having a more favorable opinion of the United States because of that assistance according to a poll by A Terror Free Tomorrow.

So that's point number one. Point number two. We seem to know that favorable attitudes that result from disaster relief seem to have an expiration date. Any positive feeling that may come from seeing humanitarian intervention is not likely to last forever. By 2007 only 15 percent of Pakistanis reported favorable opinions towards the United States. And for those of you paying attention at home, that's lower than before the earthquake. Among Indonesians 29 percent now report a favorable opinion of the United States, that's down from a high of 38 percent after the tsunami but I'd also like to note that it's down from a high of 75 percent before the war in Iraq.

Point number three. Disaster relief seems to be something

of a special case when we're talking about public diplomacy concerns. There doesn't appear to be any clear link between other types of foreign assistance and improved public attitudes toward the provider of that assistance, at least as far as I've been able to see. As I said there's really not a lot of very systematic research on this.

But let's take Egypt just as an example. Despite receiving approximately $1.7 billion of foreign assistance from the United States each year, only 21 percent of Egyptians report favorable opinions of the United States and this is what concerns me actually much, much more than these sort of bell weather polls. Over 90 percent of Egyptians believe that the goal of the U.S. war on terror is to weaken and divide the Islamic religion and or to achieve political and military domination to control Middle East resources.

Now what explains these negative perceptions despite the high levels of foreign assistance that have been going on for some period of time? Well there are undoubtedly a lot of answers to this question. It's a very complex relationship but I would like to venture just a couple today.

The first is that perceived intentions of foreign assistance, why are you giving the aid, may matter a lot. And when the motivations may be suspect, is this some sort of way of exercising control or domination or exercising influence. That casts assistance in a very different light and will be perceived by the public in a less favorable

manner.

Second, assistance of any form is unlikely to overcome negative attitudes driven by other factors and so it may not be enough. Foreign assistance alone is not going to be enough to transform a relationship. In the wake of a disaster, it's a single big event but overtime that may explain why it also helps dissipates, the effects of it dissipate because lots of things affect a relationship not just assistance.

Point number four. We know that although there may be a lack of public awareness about aid programs, simply being more knowledgeable about foreign assistance programs doesn't explain why people have negative views. So for instance just as there is this view, why do they hate? Well because they don't understand us. There's a similar corollary that seems to go like this, why do they not have favorable opinions of us? Because they don't understand all we're doing for them. So if we just tell them then others will feel better about Americans.

I can't find any good data to support this unfortunately. So for instance December 2007 HELP Commission Report of Foreign Assistance Reform, reported that some publicity that U.S. Aid did about its foreign assistance reached 46 percent of Palestinians so that's a pretty high market penetration if you want to put it in those terms. And of those people 62 percent said that knowledge changed their perceptions of the American people and the United States, but consistently polls show that

fewer than 15 percent of Palestinians report generally favorable views of the United States.

So simply knowing that a country is trying to help and provide assistance doesn't automatically translate into more positive feelings about the relationship overseas. Obviously there's a lot more going on.

Point number five. Academic research in the field of sociology and psychology really cautions us not to assume that a gift of any form will be reciprocated with gratitude. In social interaction, a reciprocated gift is actually a little bit awkward and it puts a giver in a position of inferiority relative to the giver and that especially is true if that persists over time. I mean, imagine yourself if someone kept showering you with gifts and you can't reciprocate. We're told by scholars that this can be psychologically awkward and then actually resentment can be the response instead of gratitude.

So simply reminding louder and louder of all you're doing for someone is not necessarily the best way according to scholars to improve the relationship. And I'd like to point out that some other polls, and most recently in some Gallup surveys of the Muslim world done by Gallup and also the Georgetown Professor John Esposito, have said that a lack of respect, a lack of being on equal footing is one of the root causes for negative opinions towards Americans in the Muslim world. And so that

trumpeting foreign assistance may actually only reinforce this lack of mutual respect, lack of being on equal footing.

And this dynamic may only be reinforced further still if we consider that both Islamic and Christian traditions advocate quiet acts of charity and where the focus of the gift is on the recipient, not the donor. And by trumpeting what you do and how much you're giving actually may violate some fairly widely held social norms. And I'd like to point out that in polls about what people do and do not like about Americans, because of course there are many things that the world admires about Americans. One of the things that is not admired is arrogance. So I think that is worth bearing in mind as well.

So let me wrap up. What advice would I offer to policymakers and indeed aid workers based on these few small insights that I have been able to put together about what I think we actually know about public diplomacy and disaster relief. Well, the first thing is I think we need to know a lot more. I mean, it's really stunning how few people like me have sat down and tried to figure out and look at data and try to figure out what is the relationship between public diplomacy and foreign assistance including disaster relief.

And second, in the meantime, I'd say the United States government ought to proceed quite cautiously in terms of trying to actively use public, foreign assistance or disaster relief as a way of achieving

public diplomacy gains or any other kind of foreign assistance by the way.

Not only is there very little evidence of sustained public diplomacy benefit from disaster assistance, but also I think there's quite a lot of room for error and there's an opportunity to undermine any short lived improvement in public attitudes, especially if the intentions for giving that aid become suspect. And trumpeting disaster relief could put these benefits at risk by leaving populations to question American motivations.

So I think Americans don't provide disaster relief or humanitarian assistance because we think we're going to benefit from it. We do it because it's the right thing to do. There are people who need help, they have very immediate needs and we step in. And that may be good, but I think as a policy it may also be wise. Based on what little we do know about humanitarian assistance and public diplomacy, the approach that satisfies our collective conscious may turn out to also satisfy our collective interests.

So with that I'll turn it over to our next speaker.

DR. FERRIS: Thanks Kristin. I'd like to shift the focus a little bit and talk about non-governmental organizations as some of you know I worked with NGOS for about 20 years in different kinds of humanitarian operations and reflect a little bit on the ways in which responding to disasters can not only be a compassionate response to people in need, but also a very useful way of building up an organization itself.

Humanitarian ideals stress the need to respond to victims solely on the basis of need and not on the basis of other kinds of interests. And yet you look at the humanitarian world today and it is a very, very crowded field. There are lots of new actors, NGOs multiply almost on a daily basis. There are military actors, for-profit contractors, there are humanitarian arms of political parties and militia groups as we've seen in some parts of the Middle East.

There are a variety of U.N. agencies, bilateral donors, who are mobilizing a response as well. So lots of different actors and it is a very, very competitive field. Now I come from an NGO tradition and believe passionately in the many benefits that NGOs bring. They're quick, their flexible, their creative, their staffed with tremendously committed people working often in very difficult circumstances. But there is a measure of self interest involved, particularly in responding to high visibility disasters. When the news coverage is focusing on, as it is right now on China and Burma, NGOs want to make sure their people are on the television camera. Visibility is important not just for the institutional growth and development, but it's also a key issue in fundraising; fundraising from both public sources and from private contributions. The more often you're covered on the media, the more likely you are to trigger a generous response.

There are questions about how non-governmental are

governmental organizations. Many NGOs in this country and elsewhere receive substantial amounts of money from the government and many times are faced with the dilemma of how to meet expectations of their donors that in fact their assistance activities will support the foreign policy interests of those who give them lots of money. This is perhaps most dramatically illustrated in 2003 when Colin Powell said that he saw NGOs as an important force multiplier in Iraq. Now for many NGOs who cherish their independence and talk about their neutrality constantly, there is a certain amount of tension in accepting government money.

Organizations deal with this in different ways. Ideally you want to have a diverse funding base so you're not so dependent on one particular government. And ideally you'd like to have lots of individual supporters who trust you to do the right thing. It's important in this competitive field for NGOs and U.N. agencies I would say, to distinguish themselves from the rest. You want to be seen as unique, as having a particular value added of my organization. Again, that's often reflected in the competition for media coverage.

Branding is becoming increasingly important. Many NGOs have branding departments, branding strategies, ways in which the name, the logo, the purpose of your organization is widely known. Again, that translates into increased funding often though it conflicts with some of the government donors who also insist on a particular brand. So for example,

funds given to an NGO to distribute to needy people by say USAID or DIFID the British Agency for International Development, will have a requirement that it should say in your materials a gift from the American people or from USAID and very concrete, how should we say, requirements as to the size and positioning of the logos.

Now after the tsunami I remember seeing one Indian NGO, a very good one called KAZA (phonetic) that had on its materials at least 30 different co-brands. You know, in a joint imitative if USAID and ECHO the European Commission Organization and OXFAM and a bunch of other international NGOs. International NGOs also want their brands visible when the channel money through local NGOs and so, again you have this competing branding if you will, that comes mostly to the fore in these high visibility natural disasters.

Now some of the consequences of this emphasis on visibility during disasters are quite serious. First of all local NGOs are often left out. You rarely see, even on, in recent times local NGOs who are usually the ones who save the most lives right after an earthquake for example. They're there to pull the bodies out. But they're not so frequently shown on international media. Sometimes it's the problem of language, sometimes it's the problem of security. It'd be difficult now for certain Burmese NGOs to be visible on the international media. But it also reflects the interests of dominant Western news coverage where the voice

of somebody speaking with a clipped British accent from a British NGO may have more resonance, if you will, than someone in halting English explaining what a local charitable organization is doing.

It makes it much more difficult to coordinate actions between all these different actors when everyone's trying to position themselves as unique. You want the cameras on my organization showing what we are doing and not necessarily to reflect the collective efforts of a lot of different organization, each with their own mandates, funding, and priorities.

I think this emphasis also makes it more difficult to provide what we often call the relief to development gap to provide sustained funding once the TV cameras move on. You know the stories are legion of hundreds of organizations positioning for media coverage right after an emergency and then when the next emergency comes, a lot of those NGOs are no longer to be found. And some of that has to again, with the need to be develop your brand, your market, your strategies in responding to humanitarian issues.

There was some very positive things that happened after the tsunami where there was lots and lost of money with organizations having five-year or even ten-year goals as timeframe for spending the money responsibly. And we've seen the importance, I'll note the example of the American Red Cross of being very careful that you spend the money on the issues for which you're raising the money. The consequences for an

organization of not doing that, particularly in the response after September 11th where the American Red Cross raised, I think almost a billion dollars and felt like it couldn't spend the money responsibly on the victims and therefore wanted to improve the blood supply and other issues leading to a real backlash among many of the donors.

Messages that NGOs put out for advocacy purposes can also backfire. Some of the work being done on Darfur for example may make a lot of sense to address the problems or the causes of the Darfur, but may make it more difficult for organizations who are actually working on the ground and have to depend on cooperation with the government to get things done.

Finally, the political consequences of emergency relief or humanitarian assistance are legion. We know from history that a government who responds well to a natural disaster can enjoy increased legitimacy and vice versa. I remind you that Juan Peron's rise to power was largely based on earthquake response and Anastasio Somoza found it very difficult to remain in power response to the earthquake there in 1972.

But do you know when there's humanitarian assistance pouring into a country that is a resource that governments can use. It's no secret that the Burmese government is happy to accept cash that it wants to distribute, because of course it wants the credit for giving out the

assistance. Similarly after Hurricane Katrina, the U.S. wasn't too excited about having foreign organizations bringing in money. And imagine if the Chinese had come and said this is a gift from the People of China the kind of response that would have occurred at the State Department and other institutions of our government.

And certainly we see in the case again of the tsunami, the different effects of the international relief on the political conflicts in both Ache, Indonesia and in Sri Lanka where it seems like the international presence, international press of the response in Ache contributed to a political solution or political agreement. You can never, you know, trace a direct cause and effect, but it seems to have certainly contributed in that way. Whereas the failure in Sri Lanka, to have a coordinated mechanism for responding to the tremendous amounts of money coming into the country, in fact it lead to the current standoff, stalemate and continued suffering of many Sri Lankans.

Thanks.

MR. SESNO: Since you haven't yet met our next speaker, I'm going to provide a brief introduction. Major Shannon Beebe is a Senior African Analyst and with the U.S. Army Staff based at the Pentagon. He is considered to be a leader on issues of human security and the impact of climate change on issues related to security. And he currently serves, as I said as a Senior African Analyst. He's focus on

environmental security as an engagement strategy as an issue of engaging populations is something that I think we'll be hearing from today and he has a simulation that he's going to share with us, so I'd like to welcome Major Beebe.

MAJOR BEEBE: Thank you all very much. Thanks to the Brookings Institute for inviting me to be a part of such a distinct panel as I'm not an expert on public diplomacy or humanitarian response and I didn't even stay at Holiday Inn Express last night, so what to talk about here? As Frank mentioned, my role as the Senior Africa Advisor on Army Staff has been mainly to look in Africa and particularly looking at ways of engaging in security aspects in Africa through a lens that the Africans understand with human security and 21st Century military interactions.

What I'd like to do today to talk a little bit about, is to rewind the discussion and look at what happens before a disaster happens. What are the ways that we can engage countries? What are the ways that we can engage NGOs, communities of interest before these catastrophes turn to crisis and crisis turns to combat? I think the more relevant question is not only to look at it in that respect from the organizational theory of efficiency but also from the standpoint that these types of engagements have more relevance, truth or believability if we're doing interactions beforehand and it doesn't look like it's just a one off kind of publicity stunt which I think is critically important.

I'd like to, sort of truth in lending here. These are personal views. They don't necessarily represent the views of the Pentagon. They wouldn't be sending a Major if it were an official view. But I'd like to talk a little bit about the research that I've done for the Chief of Staff of the Army. What I'd like to talk about and my thesis for the discussion today is confidence building measures enacted as part of an on-going proactive dialogue before catastrophes have a far greater long-term benefit to our national interests and engender sustainable security which provides for more powerful and coherent strategic narrative, a more positive type of public diplomacy.

Now to answer this question and to look more further into it, I'll take you back to a little bit of the research that I did do for the Chief of Staff of the Army when we started looking at the concept of Africa Command. How do Africans view their security? So we went out, we conducted over 80 interviews. My background is a political scientist. And how Africans, we interviewed about 80 folks or 80 different organizations, academics, NGOs those kinds of groups. A couple Somali taxicab drivers here in D.C. as well. And asked them how do you view your security?

It was shocking the coherence of the responses. We thought we were going to get a very diverse group of responses, but there were mainly four responses that we got. Security in Africa is security sector reform. Security in Africa is poverty. Security in Africa is health,

and security in Africa is environment, environmental shock, and climate change. So this really posed a challenge for us military guys because this wasn't the response that we were really looking for.

So how did we go about looking to frame a better and more coherent strategic narrative? That's when we came about investigating the concept of human security. Human security started out in 1994 with the United Nations Development Report saying that, you know, as the tide of the Cold War, the shadows rolled back you were going to start to see that security wasn't truly, on state types of engagement, but security was internal. Intrastate-types of concerns and there were seven basic components; the political component, economic, personal, community, health, food, and environment.

And we started investigating those more and in particularly as it relates to the developing world and again, my reference is Africa but I think that you can transfer it over to other parts of the developing world. These are very much inter-related kind of issues. These are also issues that fall along the strategic seams of our understanding the strategic seams of our bureaucracies here. Who owns food securities in Africa? Not that that's an issue right now. Who owns environmental issues? Not that that's an issue right now, going on in Burma. Who owns these kinds of issues? And they fall along those strategic seams, so the powerful thing about the human security narrative is it allows for a proactive

inclusive-type of approach that opens the doors to non-traditional security actors.

A lot of the time, particularly as it relates to Africa Command there's been a concern that the military is, it's militarization of foreign policy or it's an invasion of humanitarian space. And it could very well be that if you don't look at it through a human security narrative which is the opening of this space for not traditional security actors.

So, now a little bit about – okay, that's great. That's all, that's well, that's good. We can sit around, sing Kumbaya, hold hands but how do we enact this? How do we create those confidence building measures that allow us to work together? That first off doesn't cost a lot of money. Second off it doesn't require a lot of travel, and third, allows us to start developing collective types of knowledge for these types of disasters, these types of interactions.

So what we try to do is, we looked at this and we said how can we leverage high-tech technology and low-cost ways to bring folks together? And this is what we came up with. It's a concept, it's virtual reality. In essence what I'm going to show you right now is a thing called the Africa InfoSphere. It's a way of bringing folks together, this is off-the-shelf technology. You can get onto the site for free. I'd be more than happy to give you the link to it.

You can get on the site for free. What it allows for is

connection of people. This runs on a 56.6k modem so you can use this pretty much all over the world, but what it allows for is people to interact from across the world in various communities of interest so you're breaking down those silos of excellence. Those Faberge rice bowls. So we sort of learn how to work with each other in a non-hostile environment. You can sit there at your desk and use this. And so, what this allows for is you can communicate through -- and I'll show you here -- you can communicate here through chat. You have here the ability to do voice over internet protocol. You also have the ability to do teleconferences right here.

Now, as it relates to humanitarian disasters, let's go ahead and take a look. One of the greatest challenges is how do we train. How do we bring folks together in a low cost kind of way to train for response in natural disasters before this happens because, again, going back to organizational theory, what we understand is these ad hoc organizations tend to have there's a lot of friction and there's a lot of confusion on who's doing what, who's on first routine.

So one of the things I'll show you right now, which is this is actually being used in Calina, Texas, right now is this type of crisis reaction room can be set up in an hour. You can plug in from all over the world. You don't have to travel anywhere. You can be sitting at your desk. You still have all of your references. You still have all of your rolodex there. You

still have all of your contacts, but you can plug in and feed into this crisis reaction center. So what that allows for is more effective, more efficient use of times and energies and knowledges to pull those together for a more powerful response.

You can link this in, as the British have done, in Sierra Leone with PDAs and feed this information back up as well. So what you're looking at here, in essence, is about if you were to do this on a regular web site, you're looking at about 70 days surfing the web, 17 hours a day to get to the information that's right here at your fingertips. And so, again, ways of working together, ways of coming together before these catastrophes become crisis -- these are the challenges that we have to face in the 21st Century, and this is what we're trying to do.

By the way, is there anyone here from the GAO? Hopefully not because this costs the United States Government a whopping two bottles of wine, three pots of coffee and a couple cigars to create. So, again, the technologies are there. We can leverage this kind of stuff. It's time to start looking at these types of interactions and training on these kinds of things and starting to build bridges amongst the communities of interest.

So I'll leave it at that and welcome any questions that you might have on this or anything else that I might do.

So, Frank.

MR. SESNO: Take your seats, left to right. I'm just going to ask

everybody to take their seats and plug in the mics, and I'll do the same, and we will take your questions after we chat things around for a little bit.

So, as you're plugging in, you have a mic behind you there, and I'm going to just set this first one up as something of a jump ball and then join you.

Kristin, perhaps you want to start this off, and that is take us right to the discussion. Actually, as you were talking, I was reminded of when I give my kids, presents. You know what you were talking about. If I force them enough to say thank you or to write a thank you note, maybe they will grudgingly around to it, but if they really see their own benefit in the gift or they've asked for it themselves, it's a totally different response.

But what I'd like to do is turn the conversation to the question of humanitarian response shaped by foreign policy. Start us off in talking about the role that foreign policy on the way going in.

MS. LORD: Well, I think obviously decisionmakers are very mindful of who they're dealing with. So, for instance, with earthquake in China, I'd be very surprised and I'm not part of these discussions, but I'd be very surprised if decisionmakers in Washington weren't be extremely careful about how they handle this situation because of the larger geopolitical concerns and the same with Burma.

I mean it's very hard for politics and foreign policy considerations not to intrude especially when exactly the things that the junta has been

criticized for, the lack of engagement with the world, the lack of transparency are actually hindering the ability to deliver foreign assistance. I think it does become very hard not to link those two things in that circumstance.

The question I think that's very challenge, though, is to what extent do you perhaps let up on that sort of pressure, especially in the case of Burma, in order to make sure that the aid gets through and how much do you continue to reinforce the message to make it clear that you're not looking the other way at what has been a very devastating situation?

MR. SESNO: Elizabeth?

MS. FERRIS: I think it is a tough call. How hard do you push in a country like Burma and can there, in fact, be a negative reaction that may actually make it more difficult in the future to get involved?

But you know there's a whole field of study called disaster diplomacy that looks at efforts of governments to provide international relief in the aftermath of a disaster with a hope that that will improve relations. Some of the response, for example, to the terrible earthquake in Bam, in Iran, had kind of an underlying message of hey, if this goes well, maybe we can relations going better. Yet, so far those don't seem to have been terribly successful.

MR. SESNO: In your years, in your 20 years of working with NGOs and being in the field and knowing what the dynamic is, how did you see

the overlap of humanitarian aid and national self-interest?

MS. FERRIS: I think the main thing that I've seen both from the U.N. and the NGO side is this desperate struggle to keep the humanitarian principles alive, to create some humanitarian space, to disassociate yourself from political interests, to be aware of others trying to use you.

This whole concept of humanitarianism, it's really under siege. There's something, I think, that's still very precious about responding to the people on the basis of need and not with those underlying objectives, but it's a difficult struggle to find that way among all the different competing interests in the aftermath of a crisis.

MR. SESNO: In a post-9/11 construct too, where the winning the hearts and minds is a much higher priority and considered a much more challenging priority. When we were talking about in a Cold War construct, there was a very institutional way to win hearts and minds. You turned on the Voice of America and listened to shortwave. You weren't allowed in for humanitarian work in any case. It's very different, especially in the Muslim world now.

Do you want to comment on that and whether you've seen a big change in how that plays?

MS. FERRIS: Very much so. Yes, I think that the whole word, "terrorist," has really complicated the humanitarian endeavor. The naming of groups which may or may not be terrorist groups is such a fear that

people are just much more careful, much more cautious about their approaches because of a fear of being labeled as terrorist or supporting terrorists and so forth.

MR. SESNO: Major Beebe, I'd like to ask you because this is quite interesting. If you're providing humanitarian relief and you're wearing a uniform, you are, by definition, an expression of national policy and public diplomacy in a sense.

MAJ. BEEBE: I would agree, and I think that's where it goes back to looking at the concept of human security because that allows for a broader and a higher level of strategic narrative than simply just a national interest. These are things.

I agree that the concept of terrorism -- and I get in trouble all the time at the Pentagon -- I don't believe that is a system. Terrorism, if you look at it as an expression of political exclusion, there are drivers to that type of thing. If you look at the tenets of human security, there are reasons people become terrorists. They don't wake up one day and just decide that they don't like the United States. There are things there that are not being provided for them. And so, again, looking at the coherence and the consistency of a foreign policy that allows for those kinds of things, that's critically important.

I saw a bumper sticker the other day that says: We're creating terrorists faster than we can kill them. That has a lot of relevance in how

are we dealing with the core drivers of this insecurity in the developing world.

MR. SESNO: When then do you all make of this principle, this notion of humanitarian assistance as a principle, a humanitarian gesture? That should come first before the public diplomacy.

When there is, by most account and most renderings, an increasing role, at least in U.S. humanitarian assistance, of the military, does that further complicate this issue and, if so, how?

MS. LORD: I think it does and it has to, but it presents us with a real dilemma because in our system the military are the ones that can do the job. These are the people. This is how you get the boots on the ground. This is how you have the impact.

But regardless of how we may view our own military, in a foreign context, seeing someone in a uniform may have a completely different connotation. The humanitarian aspect of that may be lost. It may reinforce existing suspicions about what the motivation of aid is. From the U.S. standpoint, this presents a real dilemma then because there's a balance between, in some cases, who is well placed to do the job quickly and what the perception is going to be on the ground.

There are ways to try and square the circle. I mean I think in past cases like with the 2004 tsunami, a friend at USAID mentioned to me that it was very clear in the talking points after the tsunami that the military was

only going to be talked about as playing a support role as necessary, but we were very careful to put the civilian engagement front and foremost.

I think trying to emphasize that civilian role, having the civilian leaders up front, talking about the assistance in a certain way. It helps to square the circle, but it's almost impossible to do extremely well.

MS. FERRIS: I think in terms of the military, when you look at military response to natural disasters, particularly logistical capability to be able to move goods quickly, some of the infrastructure, communications and so forth, there isn't a whole lot of controversy. There's a bit of controversy but not a whole lot.

The controversy comes when the complexities come in situations of conflict, particularly when the military is perceived or is, in fact, a part of that conflict. It's very difficult in Iraq right now to even talk about the principle of humanitarianism on the basis of need, humanitarian access, security and so forth if assistance is being delivered by the military. The military has military objectives. It should.

MR. SESNO: But it goes beyond Iraq. I mean let's say, for example, God forbid, another horrible earthquake in Iran, is it conceivable that given the current circumstances that we could fly a C-130 into Iran and have American uniforms step off that airplane?

MS. FERRIS: It's a little hard to imagine.

MR. SESNO: So there are ripple effects to this.

MAJ. BEEBE: I would agree. Again, it goes back to the consistency of coherence and also working together beforehand. If we're waiting until after the fact, there are those friction points.

Again, I agree that it's an inverse relationship with NGOs and the military after a crisis, after a conflict, after combat. There is so much less willingness with the NGOs and rightfully so because they are then viewed as instruments of intelligence-gathering and those kinds of things, and they have to keep their separation from the military.

But to work with them beforehand in areas that aren't in conflict to develop those confidence-building measures allows for a better coherence when there are crises in other parts of the world, but again these are things, these are solutions that we haven't looked at. We need to do that beforehand because otherwise we're going to continue to reinvent the wheel. We're going to continue to relearn every crisis that we go in.

MS. LORD: Frank, it also gets to the point that we also need to build up our civilian capacities and the civilian instruments of power. I mean we're now at a point in our history where the Secretary of Defense is effectively lobbying for the State Department and other civilian agencies. We have really hit a particular moment in time when the Secretary of Defense feels he has to do that. Indeed, Secretary Gates, I think to his credit, has really talked about the need to find other ways besides a military instrument of getting our message across and trying to

achieve some of the goals that Major Beebe has discussed.

MR. SESNO: Well, what I'd like to ask about in that regard and in the nature of institutional concerns and institutional obstacles is over the past several years USAID has been brought increasingly into the State Department. Many groups are now saying that that course should be reversed and that USAID should be an independent cabinet level agency. How would that affect the delivery and the projection of humanitarian and development assistance but humanitarian assistance in particular?

MS. FERRIS: I think it would depend on how it's set up. It would give more visibility to assistance questions, perhaps lead to more awareness among both the U.S. public and other publics about what the U.S. is doing, but I think that it would still be influenced by U.S. national interests and State Department concerns. I don't think that just creating a separate post or agency would lead to necessarily diminution of the political influence.

MR. SESNO: You don't think so. You don't think that the conflicts and the streamlining effect would result.

MS. FERRIS: Not in how it's set up. If it were given real authority or real independence, then yes, it could help that.

MR. SESNO: Kristin, do you have thoughts on that?

MS. LORD: I just feel like the transaction costs are so high of merging and demerging organizations. I mean USIA still hasn't really

been merged into the State Department, and all you have to do is walk into their building to know that it's not part of the same culture yet. This is almost nine years later at this point. So there's a real cost that comes to do doing these kinds of organizational changes.

I'd just be very wary. Even if there are good intellectual merits for doing so, I'd just be very wary about going through all those transaction costs again.

MR. SESNO: Let me turn the conversation a little bit to: We have a disaster. We're going to provide humanitarian relief. We'd like to pretend that we're all going to go forward, and we're going to provide the relief, and nobody is going to be crass enough to say hey, how do we get something out of this? But that happens.

What are the ways? Are there good cases to look at where you can see an effective projection of public diplomacy and national interests with the humanitarian relief which is still presumably doing what it's supposed to do, get to the victims?

MS. FERRIS: I think the response to the Pakistan earthquake was a very positive example. I think it was a positive example of good cooperation between the military and civilian actors, if you will. I think it was a pretty good example of good cooperation between U.N. agencies, and sometimes there's terrible competition between the U.N. groups on the ground as well. So I think Pakistan is a good example.

MR. SESNO: How does the word get out? If you're going to have this impact on public opinion, what's the best way, is there a best way to get that word out or do you just let the dust settle and hope for the best?

MS. LORD: Well, I feel compelled to say that there's no good research on this, but you want me to wing it, I will.

I do think that part of it is how you talk, letting the actions speak for themselves, and how senior leaders, the President of the United States, for instance, talks about the assistance does matter. It does frame the assistance so that it's perceived in a certain way. If the focus is on the recipients and not on the generosity of the giver, I think that can only help.

When I say that foreign assistance shouldn't necessarily be trumpeted and blared from the rooftops, that doesn't mean that you have to conceal it either. Especially in the case of a humanitarian disaster where there is a lot of media coverage, people are paying attention. When the military comes in, everybody knows that it's the Americans who are coming. You don't need to trumpet it.

Talking about it is sort of like giving someone a great gift and then saying, see, didn't you like? Wasn't it great? Didn't I do a great job picking out the gift, et cetera. Let the assistance speak for itself.

MR. SESNO: What would you say we've learned on the ground, hands-on?

MAJ. BEEBE: Well, again, I would go back to saying that the power

of our actions rests in preparing, whether it's regional type of groups or within those states, preparing them, making them stakeholders in their own future.

Train with their militaries, for example. We want to preach about democracy and good governance, those kinds of things. Why not practice it by training the militaries to show the rule of law, military under civilian rule of law, and being able to work within their own confines and their own governments when these types of disasters happen? After we have trained with them, then we come in as a reinforcer, as a support team.

MR. SESNO: In other words, you're saying the humanitarian assistance then becomes a secondary gesture, not a primary gesture.

MAJ. BEEBE: Absolutely. We are reinforcing that government or that group of states or whatever.

MR. SESNO: It's unlikely, though, that that action that you're talking about is going to have as high or urgent priority as the humanitarian relief itself.

MAJ. BEEBE: It would be a complementing type of action because again what we have to understand is yes, you're right, there's a lot of publicity at this time, but also our message is being blended with a higher volume of other types of strategic communications from other governments, other agencies and those kinds of things, that we can say we have worked with them beforehand and we are supporting their efforts

for their relief and in favor of their people.

I think that's much more powerful than us, again, coming in and saying: Good little country, now we'll take care of it for you, and then we'll leave within a couple of weeks.

Again, it's the power and the empowerment of that group of people, that military, those governments to do things for their people which I think is critically important, particularly in the fragile and failing states parts of the world.

MR. SESNO: It brings me back, Kristin, to something that you were talking about in your remarks, though, in observing changes in public opinion but being unable really to make the causality connect across the provision of humanitarian aid. We have a lot of other things going on out there. So you can pave the way all you want, but you have all these other policies that go way beyond this that are shaping the battlefield of public opinion.

How do you move beyond that if, all of a sudden, you have to? How do you turn that into a public debate?

I mean I think that's what we're wrestling with. I think that's precisely what the country is wrestling with because we're operating on these two separate planes right now, trying to turn humanitarian assistance into a positive public diplomatic experience while recognizing and trying to counter a sort of relentless negative stream of attention that's

being directed toward the United States and its policy.

MS. LORD: Well, if you ask me quite simply, should the United States try and take advantage of a humanitarian disaster in order to improve its public diplomacy, should we do that, my answer would be no, please don't because it's likely to do more harm than good. There's good no evidence it will have an effect, and it's just a poor way of getting our message across about who we are because I think who we are is actually people who actually care about the suffering and relieving the suffering of people, no matter where they live.

In terms of how do you affect it, if you can't do that, what do you do? I think that's part of your question. Actually, I think some of the things you're talking about building long-term relationships, building working partnerships, talking about shared norms, about cooperative decisionmaking, cooperative approaches to climate change, these are valuable things that can be done, but they're all pieces of a much larger relationship.

I think that's why we do see these opinion polls that show maybe a small positive blip after a disaster relief, but then they settle back down because it's the totality of the relationship that matters. We need to pay attention to the totality of the relationship instead of trying to hope that we can get a quick success just because we happen to have intervened and tried to assist people after a disaster.

MS. FERRIS: I think the global unpopularity of the Iraq War is going to have much more impact on public perceptions of the U.S. than public diplomacy initiatives or polls or particular actions.

But I actually had a question for Kristin and that is how do you feel about the branding issue? Should USAID require its partners to, front and center, put its brand on objects?

MS. LORD: I think this is a good question to actually look at seriously. We have all these assumptions about whether it is good or whether it is not good, but there are just very little data.

I think that if we were to study this very seriously, we would also differentiate between different kinds of branding. I mean it's one thing to say does it have a small logo on a bag of rice that says this is from the American people, and it's another thing to have a huge publicity campaign with mirrors and lighting, trumpeting how much you're doing to rescue a foreign society. There's a huge amount of space between these two things. So what works and what doesn't, I see as being a very, very open question.

What disturbs me a little bit is there is a lot of convention wisdom, especially in Washington, about all we have to do is do a better job of getting the word out that we're providing assistance and then we'll be much more popular and well liked in the world when everyone sees our true nature, but I think it's just a much more complicated situation than

that.

MR. SESNO: Why shouldn't the stamp on the bags speak for itself and why shouldn't it be big and prominent?

MS. LORD: I think maybe the stamp on the bag makes a certain amount of sense. I mean people also like to know where their food is coming from. So there's something about just honesty in labeling.

I think it's how it feeds into a much broader branding campaign and the assumption that I worry about, that all we have to do is publicize that we're giving it and it will have these effects. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't label things or say who they're from, but it's a matter of how and what our expectations are about what that kind of branding is going to deliver in the end.

MR. SESNO: Well, let's talk for a few minutes about what does and what hasn't worked or what you think does and doesn't work in regard with the branding and specifically how organizations, be they NGOs, government, military, what have you, what should your media campaign be? How much does the media campaign matter?

What do you think?

MAJ. BEEBE: I think internationally it matters quite a bit. But on the ground, I mean having been in national disasters and worked there, they don't care what's on the bag. They care what's in the bag. That's critically important to understand as you have to have a strategic level on

a campaign but then also on the ground, very tactical.

People are needing basic services. Being able to provide those, I think, is critically important for the identification of the United States and what we're able to provide.

I would wholeheartedly agree that the military should not be the face of this, that it should be our civilian organizations and we should be in a supporting role, but as it stands right now, it will be. It's critically important that they understand that this uniform is not there with some kind of GPS in our heads that have tomahawk missiles attached to them and spy satellites.

MR. SESNO: So how should you use the media?

Let's make a distinction among which media. I mean there's media that coming back to the United States for public opinion here, okay. People want to know that their tax dollars are at work, feel pretty good about that and continue to support it. There's media that's going to the affected country where you may or may not want to just inform people as to what's happening but do some opinion-shaping as well. Then there's media to the larger, wider world where we always want to look like good guys.

MAJ. BEEBE: I think first and foremost is the transparency of what we're doing there, allowing the media in and allowing the media to be with us to see exactly what we're doing on the ground.

MR. SESNO: Which is the most important media, do you think?

MAJ. BEEBE: That's a good question. Internationally, I mean the international media is important for the area that's not directly impacted of forming opinion of the what ifs, if something like this happens in another area of the world.

But the local media, again, it depends on what area of the world. The area that I work in with the local media, whether it be Nigeria or wherever, is very sensationalized. There's no way. You don't' want to control that. Some of the stories that come out of there, you have to just let it run its course. Regretfully, that's the answer.

MR. SESNO: You have sensationalized stories about what you're doing there?

MAJ. BEEBE: Absolutely.

MR. SESNO: Like what?

MAJ. BEEBE: The first example was the Africa Partnership Station ship that was doing some really great work off the coast of Africa. When it was getting ready to pull into Nigeria, I mean this was our invasion for our basing of AFRICOM in Nigeria. There's no way really to counter that other than -–

MR. SESNO: Your presence was announced as an invasion?

MAJ. BEEBE: It was very much so.

So, how do you counter that? Should you counter that? I would

say probably not. You just continue along the path and show through your acts and deeds what you're doing. You can't react to those kinds of things because it pulls you off of what your set goals and objectives are.

That is how, again, it's the truth and the transparency in saying: You can report what you want. This is what we're truly there to do.

Staying with that rather than going from one story to the next, trying to counter that. Stick center of course and work toward that.

MR. SESNO: Are you saying that in the midst of this operation, you see a story like that? You can't not care about how that's reported.

MAJ. BEEBE: No, absolutely not, and I'm not saying that you don't care because you very much do. I mean you sit here and you just rub your head and go –-

MR. SESNO: What's that do for branding?

MS. FERRIS: It makes it really tough.

I think one of the big questions in the media strategy is what's the story? Is the story the disaster, how many people are suffering, what the needs are or is the story what your own organization is doing? There's a balance between those two aspects in terms of what message you want to get across.

If you get across the message, I think that there's probably a tendency to accentuate the suffering in order to attract more money. I mean the bigger the disaster, the bigger the response.

And, we haven't talked at all about all of those nonvisible disasters. There are hundreds and thousands of them every year which are the flooding in a particular community, and the level of response is much slower.

MR. SESNO: Kristin, what do you think about this question of media and how the media should be used?

MS. LORD: Well, when somebody close to us dies, we give our condolences to the family and we ask is there anything that we can do to help. Of course, you mean it, but the people aren't surprised by the statement that you make. It doesn't have a great deal of novelty, but you say it anyway.

I think when there is a humanitarian disaster, just because it may sound canned to say we really care about the suffering of the people, we really want to help and provide what relief we can, just because those are talking points and that it sounds like a canned response doesn't mean it's not the right response, just the way it's the right response to offer your condolences in the case of a death of someone who is close to you.

So I think part of it is speak to the media and say what people need to hear you say, especially the President of the United States or especially the Secretary of State. It's not about us. It's about we'd like to express our condolences and our solidarity and offer help. It's just the right thing to do, and you just do it. So that's part of the media strategy.

Then I think also it's countering. I was going to mention countering disinformation because whenever there's a chaotic situation and people are frightened, there is a tendency for rumors to spread. It can have very damaging effects. The example I was thinking of wasn't a natural disaster. It was polio vaccines in Nigeria where the idea spread that they were actually giving people polio and AIDS rather than helping to prevent polio.

It's really essential to try and work with credible messengers and the media to get those messages across because it's vitally important. So you have to be posed to counter the rumor, but that's at a different level of operations, if you will, than the President or the Secretary of State, the national leader level.

MR. SESNO: I'd like to give you fair warning that I'll turn to you for your questions. As you're formulating them and getting ready to go in just a minute, one question to ping off of, and then we'll turn to you for your questions.

One of the nightmare scenarios in discussing connecting humanitarian aid and public diplomacy is when that aid goes to places it's not supposed to go or was not intended or is used in bad ways. Burma actually comes up as an example where the aid is being hoarded by those who are not the intended recipients and therefore could actually have a boomerang effect, a negative effect on when you see that stamp on the

bag and now it's in the hands of the people who need it least. As a member of that society, how do you feel?

How serious a problem is that and do we have any sense as to what impact that is having in these places on these efforts of public diplomacy?

MS. FERRIS: I don't know that we have very good data in terms of how prevalent it is. Certainly it varies a great deal from country to country. In some countries, you just kind of know that a certain percentage of relief will go to grease the wheels to allow the goods to enter and so forth.

But I've been really surprised actually over the years about how little of that money is, in fact, siphoned off and how much assistance can be used to leverage local resources as well that never gets reported. You know the soup kitchens run by the Ethiopian resident churches and so forth.

Some of the worst cases, I think, have happened in the U.S. Some of the scandals around the Katrina relief were really quite shocking. It certainly isn't a problem that's just confined to one particular region of the world.

I think it does damage both in terms of the credibility of the relief effort, in terms of the integrity of the organizations involved, in terms of how much funding is made available. If people believe it's all corruption, they're not likely to give at all. The disinformation that can happen in some countries can be quite sobering.

MR. SESNO: Do you want to take a crack at that?

MAJ. BEEBE: I'm thinking of what happened in Somalia with food and the aid as a weapon. I don't know that I necessarily have an answer to that, but it's critically important that the aid is getting there.

Again, it goes into having somewhat of an understanding and an appreciation of the training before the crisis happens. Again, the discovery learning is not the way to go about that. That requires a lot of engagement, of reaching out, knowing whose in these areas, working with folks and organizations beforehand to understand who is credible and who the actors are.

MR. SESNO: What do you think we should do with Burma?

MAJ. BEEBE: That's a good question and way outside of my area. I could answer with Africa.

What we understand with Burma is there is a very strong military presence, and the concern of our military trying to work with their military is something that probably is not going to have a good solution for this problem. What the answer is, I couldn't tell you frankly.

MR. SESNO: Let's come to questions out in the audience. Let's start over here on the side, and then we'll come back and work our way back in the room.

If you could identify yourself and if you want to address it to one person, feel free.

QUESTIONER: Larry Luxner, News Editor of the *Washington Diplomat*.

If the Burmese military regime continues to refuse admission to international aid workers and insists on controlling the distribution of these aid supplies, at what point should the U.N. take military action, maybe a possible invasion of some kind? Is that out of the question?

I'm addressing that to all of you. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: I think it's out of the question. It's the responsibility of national authorities to respond. It's terrible what seems to be happening, but you know it isn't quite as absolute as it's perhaps depicted. I mean people are getting in. Those visas are coming terribly slowly and in small numbers, but there is some assistance going in. I think it's a good initiative that ASEAN and the U.N. are working together in terms of providing some assistance, and there are some possibilities there.

I'm just terribly afraid of this unilateral intervention. Where would you draw the line in the future? How bad would it have to be? Is it just a few people dying or does it have to be on the scale of tens of thousands?

How do you judge the competence of governments? Are we using western standards to judge what others are doing?

I'm not saying this in any way to defend the Burmese regime but just to say that going that route, I think, opens just a whole can of worms.

MR. SESNO: Anybody else? No? Here's your chance.

MAJ. BEEBE: The only thing I would add to that is, again, you don't want to take a bad situation and make it worse. We can't force the solutions. I don't know when we decided that we had the copyright on right across the world and, of course, we don't. We have to understand that. So, again, as tragic as it is, the last thing we want to do is go in and force the solution that's going to just amplify other issues and foreign policy challenges that we have right now.

MR. SESNO: You can play devil's advocate with this one, though, in a pretty direct way. It's like: Excuse me. We've done it throughout our history, and we have gone to war with far fewer people in danger and in peril than this for a much lesser outrage. So what is the cutoff point?

MS. LORD: That's precisely the point, though. If you intervene this time, it sets a precedent. I would just worry in the future.

I mean as tempting as it is at some level, it's extremely frustrating not to be able to deliver food and water to people who are starving and don't have clean water to drink. At the same time, if you think about all the humanitarian disasters that unfortunately are likely to unfold in our lifetime and you think about what the response of governments is likely to be to offer outside assistance, if in this instance it actually leads to military intervention, the long-term costs of a policy like that could be so staggering even if they satisfy our immediate urge to relieve the suffering of these people.

MR. SESNO: How about -- go back to his question -- even if it's not an invasion, having this be a much more, just for the sake of following it through, U.N. multilateral approach rather than the kind of country by country unilateral approach?

You talked about NGO self-interest. Well, lots of countries have the self-interest to look like the good guys here. Maybe we need to rethink this whole process.

MS. FERRIS: Again, as I said, I think that the involvement of ASEAN as the collective offers some new possibilities that we haven't seen in the past.

Here, you come back to the question of public diplomacy. Why would a government prefer to act on its own rather than through the U.N.? It may be some skepticism about how effective the U.N. response is, but I submit that it's usually more about presenting your own self-image and acting in your own direct interest.

MR. SESNO: Let's go to this gentleman here.

QUESTIONER: My name is George Peek. I'm an independent scholar.

I have a comment on the prominent labeling issue. I was, unfortunately, behind the Iron Curtain for 10 years, and I have experienced disasters. Every time there was a bag of rice or a bag of food, it had always a big label: Thanks to the Great Soviet Union.

Of course, we knew by the Voice of America, for example, that it was really American help, not Soviet help. So it can be used for propaganda purposes.

I have two questions on the NGOs. One is that some NGOs are already posting, please, for money for Myanmar, and I wonder if it is ethical. I am concerned that we know that we cannot send anything right there to Burma, and they already are trying to collect.

The third idea or third question I have is that I heard from NGOs that buying local food would help the farmers a great deal and would lower the costs, and yet there are some rules and regulations that we have to ship our food supply from here.

So those are the questions.

MR. SESNO: Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: In terms of NGO presence inside Burma or Myanmar, there are about 36 international NGOs that were working here before the crisis emerged. InterAction, which is the coalition of NGOs here in the U.S. altogether had about 2,600 staff inside Burma before all these visa questions came up. Most of those are Burmese that have been working in different kinds of programs, but there are ways of getting relief items to the countries.

In terms of local foods, this has been a big issue in disaster relief. It depends a lot on the situation, but often it makes more sense to buy food

locally to stimulate the economy and so forth than to pay the cost of transporting foodstuffs from different parts of the world, but that depends very much on the availability of food and the market situation of the country concerned.

MR. SESNO: How about the ethics of NGOs posting solicitations, send us your money?

MS. FERRIS: I actually went online this morning and looked at a number of the large international NGOs. Most of them have staff inside Burma that can, in fact, channel the relief. But if you read them carefully, you see some of the web sites will say: Donate now to Burma. We will work through local partners.

You think, huh? Who are they working through? Now the names are never there. Does it mean that they're hoping to get in? So there are some ethical issues around raising money if you're not sure that you'll be able to send it.

But look at the web sites carefully because a lot of the large ones say we have so many staff. CARE, International has 500 staff inside Burma now. Therefore, the funds are needed to provide relief.

MR. SESNO: In the back, sir.

QUESTIONER: My name is Paul Clark, and I'm just here on my own.

My question is, well, it's not really a question. It's a comment and

perhaps a commentary on a comment.

Traditional diplomacy has been somewhat ignored in many of the humanitarian incidents in the past several years. We talk about public diplomacy. Everything has its limits. Certainly public diplomacy is among them.

I've always wondered in humanitarian crises, such as Darfur or Burma, why it is that we don't tend to go towards the pressure points that could actually make a difference in diplomacy. I think that the one common pressure point for both of those terrible incidents is China. If we're going into an Olympics this summer in China, why is it that we haven't used more pressure on the Chinese to intervene in two situations that obviously can't be resolved through traditional public diplomacy?

MR. SESNO: Kristin?

MS. LORD: I think the answer to that is likely to be, and I can't answer definitely, that we have a very complex relationship with China. It's a complex web of interests. The United States is not holding all the cards in that relationship at this point in time. So I'm sure there are a lot of conversations going on about Darfur with China, but I am sure diplomats are trying to balance well, if we do pressure too hard on this, we're likely to get hit back on that.

The other thing is I suspect that American diplomats are trying, and I'm not advocating this approach. I'm telling you what I think is happening

here. I think there is an idea that if you press the Chinese too hard in public on Darfur that it could be counterproductive. I think you're seeing a similar strategy with the Olympics, that it could actually backfire if you condemn the Chinese too much in public. So that's my guess about what is happening with Darfur.

MR. SESNO: Actually, it's good to go back to your question about the old Soviet days to look at how the Soviets were pressured through time through the Helsinki Accords on through the Reagan years where there were specific names, specific lists and there were very tangible items, but there was a great deal of pressure brought to bear, obviously, on the Soviets.

At the time of the invasion of Afghanistan, I was based overseas. I was supposed to go cover the Olympics in Moscow, and that assignment quickly changed.

There is a much different, deeper, more intricate and now we're debtors to China, and that does change those pressure points very dramatically when you start talking about really bringing the pressure to bear.

Next question on the side here, yes.

QUESTIONER: Dave Fitzgerald, retired foreign service and now a private consultant.

I had a question, I guess more for Major Beebe, having to do with

this model you have. It seemed to me that a lot of that sort of begs the question whether you should be working for FEMA rather than for the Defense Department because your counterparts presumably in these other countries would be something like a FEMA equivalent or whatever they want to call it. Is that just a dysfunction in our own government, that FEMA seems to be buried somewhere in Homeland Security, and when you talk about Homeland Security being overseas you're talking about defense?

MAJ. BEEBE: As far as this model goes, are you talking about the model I showed up here?

QUESTIONER: Yes.

MAJ. BEEBE: This was a self-initiative, and we hope that FEMA is going to get involved. We hope the State Department is going to get involved. We hope that the NGO community is going to get involved because, again, the power of something like this is the collective synergy.

And so, this is something that we had developed literally on the weekend just to show that this sort of came from the idea of the Google maps and Darfur and showing, transparently showing what is going on in Darfur. We wanted to show that the security of the 21st Century, again, doesn't fall solely in the lane of the Department of Defense. So how can we broaden the aperture, if you will, and get more folks involved, talking, dialoguing before things come to crisis and the way to do that?

We have the power. We have the technology right now to do that. This is just a very simple step in getting folks. You're more apt to come into a cyber type of atmosphere or a cyber type of environment than you are to travel over to the Department of Defense from Stockholm, Sweden or something like that.

So, at least these small steps that start to build the confidence amongst different organizations and particularly with the NGOs because, again, there are certain NGOs that I'll walk in the room, and they instantaneously break out in a rash when they see this uniform. That's because there's been very little interaction.

So, again, how do we start to lower those levels of angst and find ways of working together, and I think that is the challenge and that is the solution for the 21st Century.

MR. SESNO: Front row.

QUESTIONER: Thanks. Gary Mitchell from the *Mitchell Report*.

Two things: One, in the earlier part of the conversation where you were talking about the role of media, I didn't come here with that intention but to put in a crass commercial plug for Dr. Lord's book on global transparency, there's a very interesting table or chart that she does during the end of that, sort of a nine-point table. I could test her and see if she remembers all nine but anyway. I thought it really addressed the question that you were asking about how to use the media and what's the role of

the media.

The question that I want to ask, I think, builds on the question that was asked earlier by I think his name was Mr. Fitzgerald, and that is it seems to me that whether we're talking about disaster relief or post-conflict reconstruction kinds of activities, there's a real challenge that the United States Government has in front of it that it doesn't appear to be dealing with. That is how and in what ways can we organize the government and particularly its relationship with NGOs to deal with disaster relief and post-conflict reconstruction kinds of things?

I guess a question within the question is what's the thinking on I'm sure all three of you have dealt with the thinking that's going on up on Capitol Hill about a sort of civilian version of Goldwater-Nichols?

MR. SESNO: Anybody? Elizabeth, do you want to start?

MS. FERRIS: Just to observe that it's easier to raise money and to mount operations for a natural disaster than it is for post-conflict situations. I think it's really sad to look at some of the post-conflicts, for example, in Africa - Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire -- which are very fragile and need more support and more humanitarian response that's very difficult to raise money for.

QUESTIONER: If I could just add on, what I was trying to get at is at the moment, if it's a typhoon, a hurricane, a you name it, where we look as to the military basically. It seems to me what we know is we have to

find alternative ways of dealing with these kinds of challenges. So, therefore, is there a way, a sort of civilian version of Goldwater-Nichols or something of that sort that will allow us to be more effective in dealing with kinds?

MR. SESNO: Be more effective and to have more of a civilian front end on it.

QUESTIONER: Right, demilitarizing.

MS. FERRIS: Well, I might just add then that there are already good examples of cases where there are rosters, for example, civilian experts who can be called in at short notice. UNHCR, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, has a roster of people who can respond to protection problems. The government of Norway has a very long roster of people who can be deployed immediately. Creating that kind of capacity in the U.S., I think, would be terrific.

MS. LORD: I'll just add that, first of all, thanks for plugging my book. The envelope of cash is under the chair as we discussed.

But in terms of responding to disasters and post-conflict situations, actually I think the military is always going to be the organization that's first on the ground because they are always going to be the ones that have the capacity to have rapid large response.

What I'm much more concerned about are other areas where the military has effectively been forced to fill the vacuum, and one of the key

ones is public diplomacy. The military has way more resources to do public diplomacy and strategic communications than the civilian instruments of government, than the State Department, for instance.

Even the military, when you talk to officers and civilians in DOD, they'll say: We don't really want to be doing this stuff. We don't think we're the best people to do this but, hey, we're the ones that the Congress keeps funding because we have a reputation for getting the job done and we have a good constituency of supporters.

That is what worries me much, much more when you have someone who's wearing a uniform and, rightly or wrongly, there is an allergic reaction in some cases because it sends a message, that it's a potentially militarized voice when actually that may not be the case or the perspective or from policymakers. It's just that these are the folks who have the resources to do it. That's a big, big problem because it can undermine your success in the long term.

MR. SESNO: It seems it's a very big problem. From the polling and the Pew level attitude survey, people are, in many parts of the world, much more worried about the threat from George W. Bush and invasion than they are from Osama bin Laden and destabilization. This is a big problem.

When that plane, as I say, comes in, whether you're carrying bombs or rice, the people are going to see it the way they want to see it. How we

deal with that is a gigantic challenge.

MS. LORD: Well, there are some polls that have come out from the Program for International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland, from our colleague here at Brookings, Shibley Telhami, that show very clearly that the United States is perceived as a threat and in some cases as a primary threat, not China, not Iran, not North Korean, not Al-Qaeda.

So when the United States is perceived as being the major threat to people's security, it's very, very hard for the military to effectively play a humanitarian or civilian role. It's because it always becomes suspect and seen as a instrument of the military policy even if that's not the case.

MR. SESNO: We have a couple more. Well, we have a few. Let's see. There's one in the back. The mic is right there. Go ahead.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. Dan Handfling, Inova Health System.

I'd like to, first of all, thank you for the interesting discussion this afternoon.

I'd like to ask you to project forward in the context, not of a single one-off catastrophe, but the potential, for example, of pandemic flu where all countries are equally affected simultaneously. What preparations do you think the United States Government needs to put in place on the public diplomacy front to prepare itself for the situation where people in those countries that are lesser resourced will be looking for assistance, any and all assistance that may be available?

MS. LORD: Actually, when I was at the State Department, one of the things I worked on was pandemic and avian influenza, and communication is a big part of the problem. If you want to try and stamp out an infectious disease, you have to know what's happening around the world. You have to have good surveillance capabilities, and you have to have people in foreign countries who believe that there's a threat and they know how to respond to the threat and they should report cases of when they see them and so on.

So public diplomacy is actually fundamental to succeeding, and it has to be overseas. It can't be here at home because when viruses spread, it was the Secretary of Agriculture who said it's sort of like throwing a match into a forest fire. A tinderbox situation where you have dry pine needles lying around you, light the match, and it's easy to stamp out if you stamp on it right that second. But if you wait a minute, two minutes, three minutes, an hour, you're going to be engulfed in flames.

And so, the message is we have to be transparent. We have to report cases when they exist. We have to work with international responders in order to respond to outbreaks of influenza. I mean that's the public diplomacy message. The U.S. Government knows that.

But the challenge is the willingness of local populations and national populations to admit that they have cases because there is an economic cost and also to local populations to admit that they have an outbreak. In

the case of avian influenza, the problem is then someone comes and kills your chickens. If chickens are your livelihood, then there's a disincentive. International health groups try and work around this, compensate victims and so on. It's fundamentally a public diplomacy challenge, but there are also some obstacles.

MR. SESNO: It's actually one of the things that's cited in China's experience with SARS that may be driving some of its coverage decisions and its transparency decisions with respect to the earthquake.

Did you have something, Elizabeth?

MS. FERRIS: I was just going to say I think that it's also an example of a case where there's lots of action of planning going on now, lots of contingency planning at different levels. The U.N. has a big program to plan and so forth. Whether or not it will be sufficient if the threat does materialize is another question.

MR. SESNO: How would you extrapolate from that question the issues in what you're working on with climate change and working with populations because it's a similar thing? It's a transnational, global kind of thing where either you're in it together or you're not very effective, right?

MAJ. BEEBE: I think it goes into the question of transitioning for the 21st Century, transitioning from a national defense strategy where we're concerned about our defense into understanding that a lot of these issues are international. They affect us domestically.

I can't remember who wrote the book, (inaudible), but they coined intermestic. These are issues that affect domestically and internationally but moving from a national defense to an intermestic security and being able to get out and to engage populations.

Very much in Africa, the Africans look at us as the cause of climate change. What has been our counter to that? What has been our work with them on adaptations, mitigations, those kinds of things? It's been minimal.

So, being able to get out there to talk with the people, to work with the militaries, to understand that yes, these natural disasters are going to happen, and they have very little capability and capacity to mitigate these types of impacts. The meteorological services are nonexistent in most countries. It's one guy in a weather tower, sticking a finger in the air. So, being able to work with them, again, in the education part, bringing them along now because we can't wait. If we wait until this has happened, we have lost.

MR. SESNO: The same applies for the flu.

MAJ. BEEBE: Absolutely, very much. I think of the avian bird flu and the impacts. If this were to hit a Nigeria or if this were to hit even -- and this is something that most folks don't realize, but in southern Sudan, the migratory bird patterns have changed going into southern Sudan.

Why is that? Because of the oil. The oil. They're blowing out the

water. The water is creating these lakes, those kinds of things.

And so, again, these are positive ways that we can go in, the military, the United States Government to work with these populations, work with these governments in a proactive, inclusive kind way before things happen rather than in the late nineties as we talked about the military, that the military is not the world's policemen.

Well, I would argue it's probably better to be the world's policemen than sitting around and waiting to be the world's firemen until things break out and then, in the process of trying to stamp out the fire, create more fires. And so, that's important to think about as well.

MS. LORD: What I wanted to point out is how hard it is to do exactly what you're saying. I mean whether you're talking about food security or infectious disease surveillance, it's so logical that you build up the infrastructure. You engage with people. You keep it going so that you're prepared when the threat comes.

But from a political standpoint, it's very, very hard to justify the commitment of resources year after year after year when nothing is happening. I mean I can't tell you the ribbing I've taken from my friends for working on avian influenza because they say: Well, gee, Kristin, good thing you spent a year working on a communication plan for avian influenza because I just see that that's turned out to be a real problem.

I always argue back and say: No, you need to have those plans in

place. You need to have the infrastructure in place.

But when there are immediate needs, when people are dealing with immediate natural disasters, when people are living in poverty, don't have clean water, when children don't get the nutrition they need, I mean there are real pressing political pressures on resources. It's hard to make the case that you need to sustain the commitment.

As we're seeing with agricultural research in the developing world with food, we're now reaping the costs of not maintaining that infrastructure over time. It's easy to say, but it's a very hard thing to do over time.

MAJ. BEEBE: Could I add something to that?

Back to the military, we like sexy things. We like threats. We like stuff that we can shoot, that kind of thing. That's been our mentality in the past.

What we're seeing in the 21st Century isn't necessarily threats right there in our face in the form of the former Soviet Union or kinetic state types of threats but the creeping vulnerabilities, these things that, over time, develop and interlock and interweave and become hyper types of threats. Once they become threats, it's too late. It's done because they're so complex and it's such a system of systems that there is nothing that we can do as a military or as the United States Government.

I think that's going to be the tough sell to Congress is this isn't right

up on top of you. Tell me how food security in Africa is a threat to the United States. But you couple that with the disease, you couple that with the poverties, and you start realizing that this is where a lot of these people who have no other outlets start turning to the extremist types of groups, start turning to they have no hope left. There is nothing left to live for.

That sounds, again, a very mushy argument coming from a guy in a personality restraint costume, but nonetheless it's critically important that we understand that's the way the world is in the 21st Century.

MR. SESNO: It's a paradigm shift.

MAJ. BEEBE: Very much so.

MR. SESNO: Very much a paradigm shift.

Sir?

QUESTIONER: I'm Mack Lovell, George Washington University.

Madeleine Albright was here at Brookings about a month ago, and one of the comments she made was that it's vital that we have an international Marshall Plan to fight poverty. So the United States could encourage that and support it. I think what a number of you have been saying would move in that direction. Is that something that you think the United States should encourage?

MS. FERRIS: Yes. I think if you look at the relationship between poverty and both so-called natural disasters and political conflicts, there's

a very clear relationship there. It would make good development planning would also include good environmental or disaster risk reduction measures and so forth. It would make humanitarian assistance, in the longer term, not needed as much.

MAJ. BEEBE: I would add to it that yes, poverty is critically important for security. Again, I tend to be the lone voice on a lot of this in the Pentagon, looking at alternatives to the traditional types of security. If a person can provide for their families, if a person has a willingness and a hope to live, that there is a going to be a tomorrow, they're going to be far less likely to want to pick up a weapon, far less likely to hate the United States because they have something to focus on and live for.

But it's also important how we go about alleviating this poverty. Just sprinkling lots of money over the top and going, here, governments, take it, that's not the way because you're giving a man a fish. You're creating sycophants for our aid. The Millennium Challenge Corporation and having some types, I applaud it. The idea of micro finance, I applaud it because you're making stakeholders of the people in those countries. You're not treating them as some type of paternalistic children.

These people know what they need to do. These people don't choose to live in poverty. I just came back from Ngoma where the standard of living is about 50 cents or 25 cents a day. They don't choose that.

If we can work through organizations, and I did not say that the Department of Defense is responsible for this. But at the end of the day, if these things don't happen and they become security concerns, the 911 call comes to us.

So we should have some level of concern, working with organizations, Kiva.org, and the micro finance organizations and those kinds of things as supporting them, not supported, not leading the way. I think that's critically important, working with. I always talk about coordinate, compliment but never conflict with what's going on. That's critically for us to understand as 800-pound gorillas.

MR. SESNO: Anybody else?

All right. Let me ask the last question, and then we'll be on our way. It's a very simple one, maybe with not such a simple response.

What should this country's role be with respect to this global food crisis that we're seeing?

This is not any one place. It's not triggered by any one thing, but it seems to be spreading. If we come back to our original premise, humanitarian assistance and public diplomacy, it would appear to be an opportunity. Thoughts?

MS. FERRIS: The global food crisis didn't happen yesterday. I mean it's a long time coming, and there have been voices sounding concern about some of the complex causes of it that should have been

listened to earlier perhaps. But now I think that the U.S. is in a good position to play a leadership role both in understanding the complexity of the issue, addressing the variety of causes such as ethanol and biofuels and so forth, as well as the fact that we are still a very large producer of food in the world.

The answer is not, I don't think, large amounts of food assistance for a long period of time but rather working with the international community and affected governments so that food security can be improved, country by country.

MR. SESNO: So what are you suggesting we should actually be doing then?

MS. FERRIS: I think we should be supportive of the U.N. effort. There's a new U.N. task force on food security that is working to coordinate.

I think we can be self-critical in looking at some of the policies that haven't been very successful in the past in terms of the emphasis on rural issues.

I think we could make this a priority in our own assistance programs in terms of ensuring that the assistance we provide does increase food security in other countries and perhaps not being afraid to address some of the tough issues. Like Zimbabwe, we haven't talked about, where the food crisis is compounded by a terrible political situation.

MR. SESNO: Kristin?

MS. LORD: Well, this is where I, someone who focuses most of my time studying public diplomacy and talking about public diplomacy, says I wish we would take public diplomacy out of this particular set of issues. If we really want to have a big impact on our national interests over the long-term, which is actually what public diplomacy is all about in the long run anyway, I'd rather have us and ,of course, there are going to be some immediate responses that we need to deal with but also deal with some of the longer term responses.

Why? I don't want a Marshall Plan for global poverty. I want us to reform our agricultural policy and our subsidies so that people in the developing world can make money from growing crops and have market incentives to do it. I want to see us lean on the Europeans and the Japanese, and maybe public diplomacy will come to the fore if we can try and mobilize publics in those countries, and say that we should really be ashamed about talking about poverty really while we're propping up our own farmers.

I'd rather see us deal with some of those really root issues that are going to solve the problem in the long run and take public diplomacy out of the question with the exception that I just thought of, though. Maybe it would be a good place for shaming to come into play, but it wouldn't be directed at the developing world. It would be directed much closer to

home.

MR. SESNO: Okay. I'll give you the last comment.

MAJ. BEEBE: I would say that, particularly as it relates to Africa, there is so much opportunity. There is so much potential in looking at the developments in democracy. It's not perfect, but again we didn't coin democracy, and we don't have a right to define what democracy is. There's a transition towards that in certain areas. Zimbabwe is not one of those areas.

But looking at the Tanzanias, looking at the Kenyas even, it's not that we are maxed out at food production. These are lands that are lying fallow, and it is very much looking at food as security. Had we looked more of a human security narrative, we would understand that in Africa food is security.

Again, I was in RUSI, and David Shooter was talking about we have robbed Africa of the right to define their own security, yet we expect somehow that through our definition they are going to do our will. It doesn't make sense. So, again, looking at it through their eyes, through their perspectives, I think that's where some of the answers will come.

MR. SESNO: Well, I would like to thank the panelists today and thanks to all of you for attending, for a very interesting and stimulating conversation.

On behalf of everybody, have a good day. We hope this was

informative, interesting, and we hope it helped. Thanks.

(Applause)

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