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AFTER BIN LADEN - WHAT NEXT FOR AL QAEDA AND THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM?

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PARTICIPANTS:

Introduction:

MARTIN INDYK
Vice President and Director, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

Moderator:

DAVID GREGORY
Anchor, *Meet the Press*
NBC News

Panelists:

DAN BYMAN
Senior Fellow and Director of Research, Saban Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

VANDA FELBAB-BROWN
Fellow
The Brookings Institution

SALMAN SHAIKH
Senior Fellow and Director, Brookings Doha Center
The Brookings Institution

ROBERT KAGAN
Senior Fellow
The Brookings Institution

MICHAEL O'HANLON
Senior Fellow and Director of Research, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: (in progress) -- for the past decade. And the removal from the earth of this particular source of evildoing is something that we can welcome with some satisfaction.

But it inevitably raises a question of "What next?" And what to do about it. And that's what we're going to focus on this morning.

We have a panel of experts from our foreign policy program who have been working long and hard on these issues. And I will introduce them in a moment. But we're particularly grateful to David Gregory for anchoring the session. He, of course, is the anchor of the famous NBC Sunday show "Meet the Press." And we are very proud of this collaboration with Meet the Press at Brookings.

We're also very glad to welcome a distinguished audience, including the Ambassador of Georgia and the Ambassador of Finland. Welcome, this morning, gentlemen.

I'll just quickly introduce the panel and then hand it over to David.

Dan Byman, at the far right, is the Director of Research at the Saban Center of Middle East Policy here at Brookings, and an expert on terrorism and counterterrorism.

Vanda Felbab-Brown is a fellow in the 21st Century Defense Initiative and Brookings, who is an expert, in particular on counterinsurgency and the war in Afghanistan.

Bob Kagan, a preeminent expert and commentator on American foreign policy, he's a Senior Fellow in the Center for the U.S. and Europe.

Mike O'Hanlon, who is an expert on just about everything -- (laughter) -- but, in particular Afghanistan and Pakistan. He's just come back from Afghanistan. He's just about to leave again for Afghanistan. And he is the Director of Research in the Foreign Policy Program and a Senior Fellow in the 21st Century Defense Initiative.

So, David -- do we have Salman?

SPEAKER: Yes -- Salman.

MR. INDYK? Yes, I know, we see him. But apparently we don't have him. So I gather we're not going to be able to bring Salman in.

But, if we do, he is the Director of our Brookings Doha Center in Qatar. But we have some technical difficulties this morning, and I'm afraid we won't be able to hear from him. But we will in the future.

David.

MR. GREGORY: Thank you all very much, and welcome. What an incredible morning. I don't know about you, but I am still sort of processing the details and the news. And even for somebody like me, who covers these events -- and I've covered some big events here over the past decade -- this is just huge. To be able to have reported that Osama bin Laden was dead, as I did a couple of nights ago, after having accompanied President Bush to Ground-Zero on September 14, 2011, in that bullhorn moment, was really a moment of great significance.

And that's where I want to start with Bob Kagan, which is -- put a frame around this, Bob, as we're processing this, how significant it is.

MR. KAGAN: Well, I think it's very significant. I mean, this has been -- it's symbolic, but symbols are important. And the goal of catching Osama bin Laden has been the goal since September 11th. We know the failures that we've had.

And I think, I would say, for the country as a whole, it's a great success. It wasn't easy to do. It required incredible intelligence capabilities. It ultimately required incredible specialized military capabilities.

And I think, quite honestly, it's going to be -- it's a kind of shot in the arm that I think we needed at this particular moment. Things haven't been looking good, obviously, on the economic front. But overseas, it seems like nothing we do quite works the way we want it to. I think this kind of success will help, with have a spillover effect on our attitude towards a lot of problems that we're dealing with.

MR. GREGORY: Dan Byman, there details that are emerging, that we're learning about al Qaeda, that we're learning about Bin Laden. Sum that up, as far as what we know at this point.

MR. BYMAN: Well, we know that the raid that was done was truly daring and risky, because it could have gone wrong in about five different ways.

But what we're learning about al Qaeda is, to me, the more remarkable. We're learning about how deep its bench is --

SPEAKER: (Off mike)

MR. GREGORY: Excuse me. The microphone is apparently not working.

It's on. We'll --

SPEAKER: (Off mike)

MR. GREGORY: -- can you -- you can hear this mike, yes? Yes, this is on. Okay.

MR. BYMAN: I can project.

MR. GREGORY: Yes, try to do that.

MR. BYMAN: One of the biggest problems that we're going to have is trying to understand where al Qaeda is going to go next. And that's in part because they themselves, I don't think, know. They do have a succession plan. Zawahiri is obviously the heir apparent. But he lacks Bin Laden's charisma. And it's very difficult to do a smooth succession when there is a constant hunt for senior al Qaeda leaders with U.S. predators. That's going to make communication difficult, and that's going to make it hard for the organization to stay relevant. And this is particularly important at a time when the revolutions in the Arab world have challenged the relevance of its narrative.

So it's got an organizational challenge, and a broader narrative challenge that it's going to face in the months and years to come.

MR. GREGORY: Dan, what about, in terms of information that they have actually gathered as part of the raid -- what we seem to have known up until this point is that Bin Laden was significant, but did not have a centralized command-and-control.

Is this going to shed some light on how al Qaeda actually operates currently?

MR. BYMAN: From the initial media reports that have come out, we've, the United States has captured hard drives, as well as personnel. And presumably this is going to be a huge intelligence haul. Obviously I, at least, don't know at present what's been learned.

There has been a debate about how important Bin Laden has been since 9/11 to the day-to-day operations. Before 9/11, he was very important in kind of micro-planning some of the more important operations. And the sense is, after

9/11 that that's diminished, but there is a debate as to whether he's still actively involved, or more of a symbolic figurehead.

And so we're going to learn the importance of the al Qaeda core, and we're going to learn which leaders matter most in which circumstances -- I think -- from this information.

MR. GREGORY: Vanda, let me turn to you and bring up the very controversial topic, right now, of Pakistan.

Is it possible that their level of involvement in this raid was larger than it appears? What we're being told is that, you know, they were not told prior to the raid.

Do you question that at all?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: The relationship with Pakistan has been extraordinarily challenging for the United States. And we have been constantly frustrated by the not-quite-robust level of cooperation we have received from Pakistan in pursuing major counterterrorism objectives.

I think it is sort of extraordinary where Bin Laden was living. And it is equally extraordinary that Pakistan, as it claims, did not know that that was the case. Worrisome on two levels: either Pakistan doesn't understand that even as important target as Osama bin Laden is, it's not something that they should share with the United States. Or, equally worrisome, if they indeed didn't know, very much in the heartland of Pakistan, in the area where they have so many intelligence and military assets, we really need to worry about their capacity.

MR. GREGORY: Well, right -- a question of capacity or, as John Brennan, the President's chief counterterrorism advisor said this morning, it may be

an issue of someone in the Pakistani establishment knowing, which would separate it out from “the government” -- could become the intelligence service or the military.

What does your level of expertise tell you about where that knowledge may lay?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Indeed, I will be surprised if the civilian government knew, and the military and the intelligence services did not know. My suspicion would be, my expectation would be, that if anyone knew, it would be someone in the ISI, and possibly at the very highest levels of the military.

And that’s part of our challenge with Pakistan, the bifurcated government that there is -- the fact that the civilians often only nominally hold power.

But even the ISI, even the military, need to understand that if someone knows, they need to share that with us.

MR. GREGORY: So, Michael O’Hanlon, what are the ramifications of that? This Administration is going to continue to investigate that, and there are going to be some very difficult questions asked. But it is incredible that you have Pakistani officials -- the Ambassador, the leaders of the country -- saying, “Look, we simply didn’t know.”

MR. O’HANLON: Yes, I’m going to be a little blunter in some sense. I think that the United States, collectively, is beginning to doubt how truthful Pakistani officials attempt to be with us, in private and in public.

Now, you could say diplomacy always involves some blurring of the margins of the truth. And occasionally even friends mislead each other temporarily. But it’s getting beyond that with the U.S.-Pakistan relationship.

I think the basic possibility of trust -- even at a personal level -- is at risk.

Now, we know that at a broad, historic strategic level there isn't much trust. To use Teresita Schaffer's line, "We've already had three marriages and two divorces with Pakistan in the last half-century. And a lot of people are just wondering when the third divorce happens."

But, personally, there has been an effort to build up ties and connections and communications channels where people trust each other. I think those, even, now are fraying. And Pakistan has to be a little bit careful here not to get to the point where their word is no longer much good with us.

MR. GREGORY: But, Bob Kagan, are we in the media and the public, do we have a kind of purist streak about us, saying, "Look, you're either with us or against us. Pakistan should fall in line."

I spoke to intelligence officials over the last couple of days who say, look, in this business, you grind it out, you get what you get. You move on. There's nobody perfect in this business. And the Pakistanis are certainly not perfect. And they've had their moments where they've been helpful -- this, apparently, not being one.

MR. KAGAN: Well, this is, unfortunately, not to be helpful.

I would say, in not demanding purism, telling us where Osama bin Laden is probably would fall into the things that you ought to do, even if you're not going to do some other things.

No -- I mean, I think there is no trust between the United States and Pakistan at this point. I think this is going to be a pivotal moment. And we're going to

start looking in that region as if Afghanistan is the place where we can safely operate and deal with radicalism, and Pakistan is going to be the place where we can't -- which raises an interesting question about our continuing presence in Afghanistan.

After all, this raid was launched from Afghanistan. And if Pakistan is now going to be a completely untrustworthy place, where radicalism is on the rise, you begin to wonder, "How are we going to deal with that?", that becomes the primary focus, not "How are we going deal with Afghanistan?"

MR. GREGORY: But there's still the question that we've been wrestling with, Vanda, which is, you know, after 9/11, why didn't we put 200,000 troops on the ground in Pakistan, and really flush that area out -- of al Qaeda, of Bin Laden, and Zawahiri, and all the rest -- because we were concerned about the stability of that country, about their sovereignty. General Musharraf said publicly, after 9/11, "I can't just go into the FATA and try to go take out Bin Laden, because of the ramifications it would have, you know, for my own regime."

Is that still not a concern?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Part of the reasons that Pakistan is such a challenge is that it is a country that's both extraordinarily important, but also extraordinarily difficult to fix. We cannot fix Pakistan. Only Pakistanis can fix Pakistan.

But it is a country that's facing a major collapse of institutions across all levels of political institutions, economic institutions. Even the military itself, the most -- the strongest, most robust, most important element of the Pakistani state is deeply challenge. They cannot count their own militancy.

There is, unfortunately, very little that we can do from abroad. Look how difficult our operations in Afghanistan have been. Imagine that we were mounting any sort of more robust, other than limited operations, in Pakistan. It would be an absolutely nightmare -- and one that would be likely lead to -- tailor, or only very limited objectives.

MR. GREGORY: Dan Byman, go inside the conversation right now, inside the White House, and among the national security team.

You've got pictures -- presumably, gruesome photos -- of Osama bin Laden, of his corpse. He was shot through the eye. These are not going to be pretty pictures.

Do you release these photos?

MR. BYMAN: In my view, absolutely you release them.

I'm still having microphone difficulties, excuse me.

Yes, these pictures should definitely be released. Conspiracy theories are manifest in much of the world. And especially in the Arab world there's already skepticism that I've heard of whether the United States really got them. A burial at sea -- and I understand the logic of that -- added to the conspiracy theories.

So what you want are pictures. And I believe al Qaeda will, at some point fairly soon, confirm his death for their own reasons. And hopefully that will put to rest some of the conspiracy theories.

MR. GREGORY: With "their own reasons" being what? That, yeah, he's dead, but, remember, we didn't do it? Remember, it was the Americans that did it.

I mean, what are their reasons for wanting to confirm this?

MR. BYMAN: al Qaeda makes a point of trying to commemorate its own dead -- both in terms of trying to show those who served deserve honor, and to create a cult of martyrs. And that's part of its deliberate propaganda campaign is it takes the dead, it makes videos about them, it lauds their accomplishments. And Bin Laden, as the giant of this movement, is going to get, I think, extreme treatment.

MR. GREGORY: Well, what about the other view, Bob? I don't know if you have another view -- which is why hand the conspiracy theorists a grisly photo that they can use to make a martyr, and T-shirts and placards and all the rests?

MR. KAGAN: Well, I was thinking about this. I think that conspiracy theorists in the Arab world won't believe any photograph that we produce, anyway.

MR. GREGORY: Right.

MR. KAGAN: They assume -- and possibly correctly -- that we can create any photograph that we want, in the modern era.

I think, in a way, it's more for Americans. I think it's more for the victims, the victims' families, who want to -- they want to -- they want it. They want to see that kind of justice done.

I don't think we should have any illusions that conspiracy theorists won't be able to have their --

MR. GREGORY: Well, is that the right decision? What's the difference between rejoicing and gloating if you're an American right now?

MR. KAGAN: I don't think it's a matter of "gloating." I don't think people who, you know, go to the execution of the person who murdered their daughter are "gloating." I think they're looking for closure, and for finality.

It's a difficult -- I don't think it's an -- I certainly wouldn't say you can dispel conspiracies. There's going to be conspiracies. And so -- I could argue that. But I have heard -- and whether this is true or not, I can't confirm -- that the victims' families want to have some kind of, they want to have some kind of proof. But that needn't be the determining factor in this decision.

I think burying at sea was exactly the right thing to do. You don't want to -- you can't have a -- A, you don't want to have a grave somewhere where people can visit. You certainly didn't want to capture him alive -- I don't know whether he really fought back or not, or whether they just were going to shoot.

So we're down to this issue of the picture now.

SPEAKER: One more issue is that it's good for America because I think it reminds people on the Hill, who are debating how much money to appropriate for the war in Afghanistan and elsewhere that we actually know what we're doing at some level.

Now, there isn't that much doubt about the competence of our Special Forces. I don't think too many people were surprised that they did the raid very well.

But I think the broader effort to find Bin Laden, the intelligence effort, the broader sense of what we're doing in the region -- the occasional agreement with Afghan officials about some of what was going on here, which is nice to see, even if it's tempered and imperfect -- all of that creates a sense that maybe we actually are not totally wasting our time in South Asia, that we have some things going for us.

And I think that little boost of confidence may actually be important as we go into this crucial period when General Petraeus is going to recommend troop changes, and President Obama is going to decide on what to do.

MR. GREGORY: And I want to come back to Afghanistan in just a moment.

I want to hopscotch around a little bit, because there are so many angles -- and ask Bob Kagan about Presidential leadership. This President's leadership.

A colleague of min in *Slate* magazine, John Dickerson, wrote that Barack Obama's professorial image may never be the same. It just -- it was dealt a huge blow here by the President ordering such a daring raid -- at a time when I had Republican Senator Marco Rubio on the program on Sunday, he said he was disappointed that the President would simply not lead.

What does this moment mean to him?

MR. KAGAN: Well, every President benefits from this kind of action when it's successful -- and is in big trouble, like Jimmy Carter found out, when it's not successful. And I think that this does -- I mean, don't forget, we just started the "leading from behind" narrative. You know, that quote that somebody pulling out of the Ryan Lizza story in the *New Yorker*, which Charles Krauthammer wrote a whole column about -- and I could see Republicans just salivating at the notion of talking about "leading from behind."

It's a little harder now to make that argument. It may be a legitimate argument or not, but it's harder after he's ordered this kind of action and it's been successful.

And, you know, Obama -- I don't know, this is a guy who's ordered tens of thousands of troops into Afghanistan. This is a guy who has ordered a

military campaign against Libya. And now this. I think it's not going to be easy to say that he's just a professor who can't pull the trigger.

And what I always find interesting about America -- even today -- is how much we admire a President who is willing to kill somebody.

MR. GREGORY: Yeah. But it's true.

MR. KAGAN: It's true. I mean, you Americans should note this about yourselves.

MR. GREGORY: But let's also be blunt about American politics, too. I mean, Democrats have a particular challenge with this, being willing to demonstrate to the American people that they will be as tough.

MR. KAGAN: And they frequently have done somersaults to overcome it.

I don't think he, particularly, has. And this one, I think, any President would have done, you know, if given the opportunity, obviously.

But there's no question that it begins -- it cuts away at some of that Republican critique.

MR. GREGORY: Dan Byman, let me widen the aperture a little bit, here. Should we think of this raid, and this success, in a broader context -- that this is a 10-year effort, by two administrations that were both involved -- and the people really doing the work were professionals who don't change over when the politics change.

How much work, how much groundwork was laid in the Bush Administration for this successful result?

MR. BYMAN: We're still trying to -- I have an anti-microphone button, apparently.

We're still learning about the nature of where the intelligence comes from. And, as a result, you know, learning what came from the Bush era, from which particular techniques, from which particular sources is still up in the air.

But, clearly, this is the result of an integration process that's been ongoing, really, for -- in the pre-9/11 era but, of course, took off afterward, where you have much closer integration between intelligence and Special Forces, where you have much closer integration within the intelligence community. And as a result, what we saw was a very patient, very careful effort to gather intelligence, to further it, to act on it.

But there were some decisions made by this President that might not have been made in other circumstances. One option was a simple bombing strike. And that was much less risky -- and much less risky politically.

You could easily imagine this raid having gone south in a variety of ways, with Special Forces dying, with the intelligence being wrong and Bin Laden not being there. And a bombing campaign -- or, excuse me, just a bombing effort would have solved some of those political problems.

So I think you have to credit the Administration for taking, I think, a huge risk. At the same time you give everyone credit for the very careful, very professional effort that led up to it.

MR. GREGORY: Vanda, let's put this in the context of the region right now. We're in the middle of this "Arab Spring," revolutions throughout the Middle East.

The clean and neat way to look at this is to say “Bin Laden-ism has died at a time when a democratic revolution is under way.”

Do you think that’s how it will be greeted?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, perhaps in some parts of the world. I mean, clearly in the Middle East, al Qaeda narrative, as Dan said, is having a challenge resonating.

But I think a lot will depend on what actually happens with the Arab Spring, what happens with governance that emerges in those countries. Clearly, if robust, effective institutions -- hopefully, democratic institutions -- emerge, then that might very well sap a lot of the extremist, radical narrative throughout the larger Muslim world.

On the other hand, if we see institutions that are not performing, that are not generating jobs, that are not satisfying the massive expectations that the revolutionaries now have in the Middle East, we might see, very well, a resurgence of extremism -- lack of -- disillusionment with any hope that regular political processes can bring about change.

And then we have to look at Pakistan which, at this stage, is a democracy. They have an elected government. They are very much struggling to conduct reforms in any of the vital areas. They are very much struggling to conduct reforms in the economic areas. And there is very much a sense in Pakistan that democracy is once again not performing.

MR. GREGORY: Let’s -- yes, go ahead, Bob.

MR. KAGAN: I just want to say -- getting back to this question of the Administration -- I think historians are going to write, first of all, that two

administrations failed to stop a terrorist attack, and two administrations succeeded in fighting against terrorism -- that there's going to be much less of this, you know, "Clinton, then Bush, then Obama," and we're going to see much more continuity in the historical record. It's going to be much more about what America did, which I think will ultimately be a more healthy analysis.

MR. GREGORY: What is interesting about that point, and this point about continuity, is that there was this foundation laid throughout one administration, and failures and successes along the way -- and that it was not neatly tied up. You know, just because George Bush said, "I want him dead or alive," you know, he said his greatest regret leaving office was that they couldn't get him. And then a new leader comes in, from a different party, and is just as robust -- despite that fact that he campaigned against everything that the other stood for in foreign policy -- and ends up getting him.

So, you're right, it becomes, I think, kind of interesting in that way.

MR. O'HANLON: I don't mean to be partisan, but Obama was more robust than President Bush on Afghanistan.

MR. GREGORY: right.

MR. O'HANLON: And that was the launching pad for this operation. We might not have had the base in Jalalabad still in our possession if we had continued on with the policies of the previous eight years, in terms of Afghanistan, because we might have lost the war by the point at which that raid needed to be launched.

Now, having said that, I think President Bush was, belatedly, reinforcing the Afghanistan mission at the end of his presidency. But one real central

point is that this raid came from Jalalabad. And that's where we had our forces. We could not have overflown all of Pakistan from the sea with helicopters safely. So we needed to have a robust place in Afghanistan from which to mount this.

And I think Obama gets some credit for that.

MR. GREGORY: Right -- no, it's an important point.

Talk about Afghanistan -- 49 percent of Americans in a recent poll disapprove of the way Obama is handling the war in Afghanistan. There will be a temptation to say, "Okay, let's look at the scorecard here. We went into Afghanistan to get Osama bin Laden and to sweep the Taliban from power." Well, ironically, we got Bin Laden, but the Taliban is still knocking at the door there.

MR. O'HANLON: There's no doubt the Afghanistan mission is still in serious trouble. And as you point, also -- and others have pointed out -- you know, Bin Laden was not in Afghanistan. And so people can question how much the mission even matters.

I think what you're going to see, though, is you're not going to see a lot of big rhetoric about Afghanistan from this President, because even the believers in the mission -- like myself -- basically foresee an ugly slog to get to a mediocre outcome.

I think General Petraeus will -- if I had to guess -- recommend, you know, relatively modest reduction. Secretary Gates already foreshadowed that with his speech in March in Brussels, where he chewed out the allies for wanting to rush out, and said we were not going to rush out -- which was a speech that was under reported and under-noticed, but seemed to suggest that he knew where the President was headed.

And yet, there's not going to be any radical turnaround on the ground, I don't think, in Afghanistan, either. It's just going to be a gradual process of training-up their army so they can take an increasing fraction of the job over the next four-year process and period.

And so, you know, I think it's going to probably turn out okay, but certainly not spectacularly.

MR. BYMAN: Yes, but look -- I mean, Osama bin Laden decided it was safer to be in Pakistan than to be in Afghanistan. I mean, we all thought he was in Afghanistan because that was the safe place to be, because everything was in disarray. He made -- it was a life-and-death decision, and he decided to be in Pakistan.

So I think we should understand that that -- something we were doing in Afghanistan -- even when we weren't doing it well -- informed that decision.

And I would just hope that -- and I think this will generally be true, that success breeds a feeling that success is possible, and that we can now -- I think I'm a little bit more optimistic than Mike is that we're going to see some results in these coming months. And I'm hopeful that this operation, successful operation, will carry us through this one period of doubt, where we might turn back, give Obama confidence to see through the strategy that his military commanders have put forth and that he approved, and that we see this through to the next phase.

MR. GREGORY: The great challenge, though, for a president who said, "There will come a point when we'll have to conclude -- " -- you know, after more than a trillion dollars spent since 9/11 on wars in the name of the War on Terror, that

we can't afford it. That tension with the idea that we can't turn our back on the region.

Vanda, you wanted to make a point.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Afghanistan remains very important. It might very well be that Bin Laden and the critical al Qaeda is in Pakistan, but if Afghanistan disintegrates once again -- if it erupts in a civil war, if the Taliban controls important parts of the country -- this will once again provide opportunities for al Qaeda to use as safe havens.

And critically -- and, in my view, most importantly -- if Afghanistan is very troubled, it will be extraordinarily difficult to motivate Pakistan to focus on its own internal problems along a range of issues -- for many reasons, one of which is that they will continually fear that India will use Pakistan [sic] as a theater to irritate and operate against Pakistan, and also because they will fear spillovers of militancy from Afghanistan to Pakistan. To some extent we are seeing that already -- as much as a lot of the spillovers go in the opposite direction.

But perseverance is important. I am not sure that we have reached a point where we can say that we will succeed.

There are very many challenges, not the least of which is governance in Afghanistan, that hasn't improved at all over the past 30 years. In fact, I would argue, it continues disintegrating.

Can we create conditions to improve that? Big question. But, to scale out a lot right now would be a prescription for failure.

MR. GREGORY: Dan Byman, another rear-view question, though, especially when we talk about Pakistan -- you look at that spending figure, as I did

this morning, $1.28 trillion, only about $440 billion of which was on the war in Afghanistan, a larger number was spent on the war in Iraq

How much will history judge poorly the war in Iraq for failing to keep the United States government focused and resourcing a fight in Afghanistan and Pakistan that could have, and should have, been focused on getting Bin Laden sooner?

MR. BYMAN: Well, I think the war in Iraq is going to be criticized for about 30 different reasons, one of which is going to be the distraction it caused from what many people saw -- certainly from a counterterrorism point of view -- as events in -- or the war in Afghanistan, and also the broader struggle that was occurring in Pakistan.

When the United States went into Iraq in 2003, al Qaeda really was on the run. It had been kicked out of Afghanistan. Globally, its networks had been disrupted by a very intelligence and police campaign. And it was struggling to reestablish itself in Pakistan.

Iraq was both a distraction operationally but, I think even more important, it was a boost to al Qaeda's story. They were saying the United States is bent on dominating the Muslim world. And then almost out of nowhere, it seemed the United States invades the largest -- in terms of military power -- Arab country and occupies it. So it was a huge credibility boost, and also it gave them operational freedom.

So it was certainly big pump in the arm for al Qaeda at the time.

MR. GREGORY: Bob?

MR. KAGAN: I don't agree that it's that clear-cut. We heard for years throughout the Iraq war period, when Bush was President, that this was leading to an explosion of terrorist cells around the world, that this was making the country more and more dangerous.

As soon as Bush was out of office, everything seemed to start looking better. And now we're talking about how we've really beaten al Qaeda back to 300 or so. I haven't seen signs of that.

And let's not forget that, whatever the mistakes were made in Iraq, its goal was not primarily part of the War on Terror. It was primarily about Saddam Hussein. I still find it hard to say that I wish, I really wish, Saddam Hussein were still in power in Iraq. I don't think that would be a great benefit to us.

As far as the diversion from Afghanistan, the problem from the very beginning was that Rumsfeld didn't want to put any troops in Afghanistan. And this is before Iraq. This was, you know, one of the effects of Tora Bora. He wanted this to be done by remote control, with Special Forces only, using indigenous forces. That's also the strategy he wanted to pursue in Iraq.

So I don't want to -- you shouldn't overstate the degree to which the reason we didn't do what we needed to do in Afghanistan was because of Iraq.

MR. GREGORY: Mike O'Hanlon, what does this raid say about the future of our military? We have General Petraeus who's now going to run the CIA. Is this the future of our warfare?

MR. O'HANLON: Well, we're already very good at it. But the hard part here, as well as our troops performed -- was the intelligence piece, and it was working with local allies because as much as we've been talking today about how

Pakistan's been on again, off again, they were crucial in developing some of the initial contacts that led where we went. So I think that means that ultimately it's about politics and intelligence more than about military reform. In other words, you can make even faster helicopters, and you can put even better body armor on people, they're already great at what they do, though. And once they got in the air, knowing where they were going, there was little doubt that they were going to do at least reasonably well. I mean, some things could have gone catastrophically wrong. Dan was right. I mean, the Pakistanis could have shot down our helicopters. So I don't want to make it sound too easy, but nonetheless, I think most of us probably would have guessed that the military piece of this could have been pulled off pretty effectively once we knew where to go. And that's the hard part anywhere -- in Yemen, in Libya, in Bahrain -- it's working with local intelligence, local politics, to be able to get that actionable intelligence, and that's not been an easy --

MR. GREGORY: That's not quite how we got the intelligence this time.

MR. O'HANLON: No, no, we began with that kind of cooperation, and we certainly were in a position right next door in Afghanistan to be able to keep listening in and so on. And so local politics, local partnerships, were crucial, and those are difficult to forge just because you decide you want them to be a bigger part of your strategy.

MR. GREGORY: Dan Byman, how big of a concern that there's retaliation now?

MR. BYMAN: I think al Qaeda has two reasons for retaliation. One is some sympathizers or recruits will simply be angry. You know, their leader is dead; they want revenge. From an organizational point of view, though, they need to show relevance. If you think of al Qaeda, it's competing for money. It's competing for recruits

with a wide variety of groups, and this is, again, at a time when the revolutions in the Arab world lead to questions about its importance. So it's got to show it matters. It has to show it's active in fighting the United States. It has to show it's a player. And this might lead it to hurry-up operations and make mistakes. And there's a question really of kind of how much ammunition is in its gun, but I think there's a very strong incentive for at least some attacks to show that they're still playing.

MR. GREGORY: Let's turn it over to you, hear your questions. Let's try to stay to the point and keep the conversation moving because I'm sure there's lots of questions. Let's start in the back there. Yes?

MS. MCKELVEY: Hi. How's the microphone? My name is Tara McKelvey and I write for *Newsweek* and the *Daily Beast*. And I'm wondering if you can talk, ask, or tell or whatever why did they choose Special Forces and not a Predator?

MR. GREGORY: Mike, you want to start with that?

MR. O'HANLON: Well, I think Dan already got at this as well, and I would agree with his basic argument that we wanted, first of all, to minimize civilian casualties. Now a Predator might have done that because the bombs are small, but it might have missed. And we also wouldn't have had proof of what we had done in the aftermath. So I think the decision was impressive and correct and important because this could easily have gone badly with just a simple bombing campaign.

MR. GREGORY: Vanda?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: And, of course, we were able to get a load, a treasure trove, of information that we would not have been able to get if you resorted to a Predator strike. And the politics of it, playing out among the insurgents in Pakistan and in Afghanistan, are very important.

MR. GREGORY: But I guess this does raise the other question, which is this proof of death. I mean, which is why this conversation is going on about the photos because if it's so important to show the world that you got him, we still have the word of the President to believe that we got him. And for a lot of people around the world, that's not going to be enough.

Go ahead, Dan.

MR. BYMAN: And certainly, the United States is going to be doubted, especially official U.S. statements. But I think, again, we'll see some confirmation from the al Qaeda side and also this -- eventually bin Laden's just not going to be speaking, and he has to show up somewhere on the news to make the conspiracy theory become a reality, right? I mean, if he -- you could say it for a month, you could say it for two months, but after six months of not hearing from the guy, after a year of not hearing from the guy, you start to think, yeah, maybe the Americans weren't lying completely.

MR. KAGAN: Look, some of your leading colleagues think that the United States did 9/11 to itself. So, I mean, you're never going to be able to disprove that kind of belief.

MR. GREGORY: Some of my colleagues?

MR. KAGAN: Isn't there some prominent MSNBC host who thinks that --

MR. GREGORY: Not that I'm aware of, but I promised my wife that I would stop getting so defensive about media criticism so --

MR. KAGAN: Well, you'll have to keep working on it.

MR. GREGORY: All right. Right up front here.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks, Gary Mitchell from the *Mitchell Report*. I want to ask a two-part question. The first is if you had one poison dart and an opportunity to

aim it at Zawahiri or Mullah Omar, which one would you pick? And what does that tell us about what metrics are going to allow us to determine policy going forward from the death of bin Laden given Michael O'Hanlon's rather trenchant comment this morning about an ugly slog to a mediocre outcome?

MR. KAGAN: Well, the interesting part of that question is that Mullah Omar does not want to attack the United States and Zawahiri does. Is that fair? Maybe a little too generous?

MR. O'HANLON: I think Mullah Omar is a little more extreme than people give him. Whatever the geographic bounds may be, is unabated and --

MR. GREGORY: But the Taliban is still more of a movement, a nationalist movement that would like to take over Afghanistan rather than target the West.

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah, and yet the links with Lashkar-e-Taiba, with bin Laden, with al Qaeda, have been very strong, and they haven't weakened. Now we should try to see if we can weaken them. I'm not trying to suggest that there's an impossibility there, but there's not evidence there in my mind to suggest that so far. But I would personally like to see Mullah Omar out of the picture first because I think Zawahiri's future influence is going to depend on a better sanctuary than he's got right now and that's most likely southeaster Afghanistan if the Taliban can retake power. So my logical sequence means making sure that can't happen. Now, you could debate whether we're better off with Omar as a negotiating partner, but I've seen no reason to think that he's interested in compromise. So I'd love to see him gone.

MR. GREGORY: Dan Byman, you want to --

MR. BYMAN: I think there's a certain -- where you stand depends on where you sit on this. Al Qaeda is an unusual organization in that it has a number one

and a number two, but it's very hard to see who the number three is. There are a number of prominent lieutenants, but they're more specialized. And if they lose the number one and number two, we're down to a bunch of individuals who are not household names, who would not be well known, certainly not in the United States, but not even in many places in the Middle East that follow these figures rather closely. So there would be a huge leadership vacuum. A new person coming in would really have to reestablish not just communication, but the personal trust that is so important to how this group has functioned in the last two decades. So it's hard for me to say which is more important because they both are, but I would say that killing Zawahiri would be a huge blow to al Qaeda, especially at this time.

MR. GREGORY: Can I ask a file question that I've been thinking about this morning, which is if there was this kind of -- it's not that we weren't pursuing bin Laden, but we weren't on this sort of war footing against al Qaeda that we were post 9/11. If they're incapable of dynamic leadership, some kind of command and control centrality, is the notion of spectacular attacks against the U.S. off the table? Do we see a lot more targets of opportunity -- not to say that they wouldn't try to get on an airplane coming here -- but doing things in the Middle East, doing things in Europe, et cetera?

MR. BYMAN: In my view, if they lose that central command and control, they have two big losses. One is anything that takes long-term planning. Now putting a bomb on a Metro and killing a hundred people doesn't take years to plan. It's not easy actually; it's harder than it seems, but it's not something on the scale of 9/11. And so that spectacular attack becomes much harder. And the other is that an important part of this organization is actually now with affiliates in the Muslim world, whether that's in Iraq or Yemen or Algeria, and here the numbers get into the thousands of tens of thousands.

And these organizations all have somewhat ambiguous relations with the al Qaeda core. There is some exchange of people. There's some exchange of money. There is some coordination, but it's not a direct subordination. We'll see the affiliates moving farther and farther a field should the command and control from Pakistan diminish further, and that means the unity of this group and its overall effectiveness decline.

MR. GREGORY: Other questions? Sir?

MR. O'BRIEN: Yes, Robert O'Brien with the Brookings Institution. We've given a lot credit to those in the intelligence community that came out with the intel that lead to the raid. I'm wondering how would you grade the decisions made beforehand regarding what would happen when the raid took place, specifically to shoot him instead of to take him captive, to bury him at sea, and to bury him in accordance with Muslim tradition.

MR. GREGORY: Bob, what do you think about that?

MR. KAGAN: Well, I thought they were right decisions. They clearly were -- they'd had a lot of time to think about it, and I think they were the right decisions. I think you had to avoid, I think, in the first instance -- I can't even imagine what it would be like to have him captured, put on trial, what the dangers of that not in the least -- a pretty simple maneuver is kidnapping some Americans overseas and saying we're going to kill them if you don't release Osama bin Laden. How many times would we see that in the course of the multi-year trial of this guy? So that would be number one. And then as far as burial at sea, I already answered that. I don't think you want to have a shrine to Osama bin Laden that people can be traveling to and paying their respects and making him the kind of martyr symbol that I think al Qaeda would like him to be.

MR. GREGORY: The young lady in the back, yes.

MS. ISHAN: Yes, my name is Ishan. I'm a TV reporter with Voice of America. We do TV very important to Pakistan. My question is that some sources on the ground and some residents in the area are reporting that electricity was cut off or it went out at least two hours ahead of the operation. Is it possible that any role of the Pakistani intelligence agencies in terms of any intelligence sharing is being understated by the U.S. administration to prevent any backlash against Pakistan's government?

MR. GREGORY: Yeah, I wonder, Vanda, I mean there is -- there may be some moves here that are playing out that give the Pakistanis some deniability to even take some criticism from the West. Is any of that possible?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, we have seen that in other circumstances, but I would be really troubled if Pakistan felt vulnerable to criticism for cooperating in going after Osama bin Laden. I think that would show that Pakistani politics is so radicalized that even such a major terrorist figure, a person that was extraordinarily evil, that the government would feel vulnerable to that criticism. Given the problematic relationship with Pakistan, I would be surprised if there was prior intelligence sharing.

MR. GREGORY: Interesting. Yes, sir?

SPEAKER: Thank you. Assuming that Pakistan was complicit in some way, didn't share everything that they knew, as a practical matter, other than turning the other cheek and taking what we get from them and going on from there, what are our options? I mean, we can't cut our ties with them; they're too important to us.

MR. GREGORY: Vanda?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: That is absolutely the case. We need to persevere in a very problematic, very challenging relationship and be ready that we are going to be constantly disappointed. But nonetheless, that is the best world that we are

going to be living with Pakistan for a long time. U.S. policy tends to oscillate between very strong pressure, including sanctions that produce very limited concessions from Pakistan, to extensions of extraordinary levels of economic aid, military aid, our stating we understand your objectives, we understand your concerns, we understand your interests, we want to build a strategic relationship, and it produces either way very limited progress.

MR. GREGORY: I mean, we're also, Michael, making it very clear to the Pakistanis that when we see the need to breach their sovereignty, we will do so, and we'll ask you to get over it.

MR. O'HANLON: Although I wouldn't be surprised, David, if the first effect of what's happened the last few weeks is a little bit of a ratcheting back on drone attacks, not elimination, not a permanent change. But, of course, we had an unfortunate drone attack a few weeks ago where we actually killed a lot of civilians for the first time in quite a while. And so I think that raises the broader issue that we can try to do the incrementalism with Pakistan and give a little more or take a little away, what have you. We can also on both sides try to raise the stakes and think of things we can -- in other words, this is a crossroads moment, and one of the things you can do is pull back and assume you're headed for that third divorce. The other thing you can do is try to say what are the big things that each side can give the other, and can we have a conversation about a trade? And people want to get away from this notion of a transactional relationship. Maybe it's just not the right transactions that we're contemplating yet. What I would like to see is a consideration of the Pakistanis really shutting down operations in North Waziristan for the Haqqani network and our considering a bigger support for their debt relief because we helped create that debt in

the first place with our financial crisis, which shut down their economic growth. But I don't want to give them money for nothing. We've seen what that produces. So I want a bigger trade to be considered.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: But we have been in this bigger relationship, not moving away from the transactional strategic partnership ever since President Obama came to the office. That was precisely what we have been trying to do. We are trying to get them to move against the Haqqanis, but to the extent that they knew anything about bin Laden, they were not even willing to give us bin Laden. What else? This is the prize. This is the easiest relationship for them. This is the easiest transaction for them to conduct to carry out. I think it unfortunately shows the real limits of either trying to build a strategic relationship, elevate the relationship beyond immediate transaction ones, and the limits to the transaction ones. They continue to operate the strategic outlook that is still very much different from our interests. And we have not been able to persuade them that there is some alignment of interests possible.

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah, the smart money is on not being optimistic. What I'm suggesting is that we want to try to avoid that trend which we're on and which is really bad for both countries. Vanda's probably right if you're going to bet on where it's headed. I'm just suggesting that there may be a case here for trying not to let it go in that direction.

MR. KAGAN: I think we should consider tilting more toward India. That's what really bothers them much more than any of these other things. I would say you start making it clear to them that the one equity that they value most is what they're going to lose, whereas in general we've been tilting toward Pakistan on the issues that divide them.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: I would say that the Bush Administration actually very much tilted toward India and yet it didn't get the Pakistanis to do what you want.

MR. KAGAN: It didn't go far enough.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, perhaps we can play this game infinitely. How much more are you going to pressure them? Clearly what's driving their lack of cooperation is their paranoia about India with some good reasons. Their country is declining; India is rising. So the relationship with India is extraordinarily --.

MR. GREGORY: Okay, let me get back to questions here. Yes, ma'am?

MS. STONE: Andrea Stone with the *Huffington Post*. I want to go back to where he was living, and we know that he was living in a military garrison near their West Point. It's been described as a million-dollar house. I'm not sure who did the assessment, but can you talk about what -- I mean, we knew he was a millionaire, but what about -- whatever happened -- where did he get this money to build this million-dollar house and to live there for what we think is six years? And also can you talk about -- it seemed like there weren't that many people in the house, retinue and sort of -- obviously he didn't have a lot of people around him. But can you just talk about how this was possible besides the whole fact that maybe the Pakistanis knew he was there or helped him?

MR. GREGORY: It's not clear that he built it. It wasn't quite a teardown. It just looked like he made some enhancements.

MR. KAGAN: And he got a good, low-interest, mortgage, too.

MR. GREGORY: Yeah, but it's an interesting question about his ability -- where he kept him money and was able to do this.

MR. BYMAN: When al Qaeda was first founded, bin Laden himself came in with a lot of personal money, but he lost that. He lost it because the Saudis froze some of it. He wasted some of it in Sudan. His real accomplishment was to draw on and then greatly enhance and build a fundraising network that primarily drew on estates of individuals in the Persian Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, to fund his organization and to provide millions of dollars a year. The budget around 9/11, the estimate was around $30 million a year. A good chunk of that went to the Taliban. And that the amount given to the Taliban diminished after 9/11 as al Qaeda's ability to draw on funds freely diminished because of the U.S. and allied campaign against it. But it's still -- it's a network of donors who sympathize with either al Qaeda itself or the various causes it champions, and it uses this network of charitable works and so on for a variety of purposes: Training fighters, building complexes and so on. So to me this could have been property or something given by a supporter, but they do have money, and they've been able to keep that money flowing despite a very aggressive effort by the United States and other countries.

MR. GREGORY: The audience at Doha can be seen and not heard at the moment, but thanks to Marin Indyk's Blackberry, they in fact can be heard. And Bob Kagan, one interesting question emerged from our audience there, which is what about this house that we're talking about? What should happen now? I mean, could it not become a shrine. Obviously some damage was done there with the helicopter being blown up, but what should happen to the actual fortress there?

MR. KAGAN: I haven't thought that far in advance. I don't know.

MR. GREGORY: But these real estate concerns are very important.

MR. KAGAN: I think it should be put on the market and see what people get for it.

MR. GREGORY: Yeah, a lot of people would be looking for that. Where else? Yes, sir, on the corner?

MR. PAO: Chung Pao from China Sun Chi Media. I just wanted -- after bin Laden, what will be the goal of the U.S. antiterrorism war around the world, I mean, which could be years to measure the progress of this war?

MR. GREGORY: Yeah, it's interesting to be in that environment because John Brennan said in the last couple of days the goal is unambiguous. We still want to bury al Qaeda, which could be -- it could go on for a long, long time.

MR. BYMAN: Part of the focus is going to be on the al Qaeda core that remains in Pakistan. These are seen as leaders. They're trained. They're dangerous. They handle much of the fundraising. But also the effort against affiliates is going to increase. I think that's going to be especially true in Yemen where the U.S. has been concerned about not only the growth of this movement in Yemen, but its increasingly international reach. We saw two almost successful attempts on civil aviation come out of Yemen in the last couple of years. So I think there'll be a continuation of the effort on the core in Pakistan and that area, but also more attention to the affiliates, especially Yemen.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: And part of that needs to be stability of Pakistan itself, which is challenged by many reasons including terrorist and militant groups.

MR. GREGORY: All right. We're going to leave it there. Thank you all very much. Martin and I could have never imagined that the first several months of this Brookings and "Meet the Press" partnership would have resulted in just the incredible

volume of stories of great significance, and here we are in the middle of the conversation. So thanks for joining us this morning.

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