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CONFLICT AND STABILIZATION OPERATIONS: A CONVERSATION WITH U.S. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE RICK BARTON

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. UNGER: I know some people are still shuffling in, but allow us to begin in in the interests of time and having the most out of our conversation with Assistant Secretary Barton.

Thanks everyone for joining us. I'm Noam Unger. I am a Fellow with the Development Assistance and Governance Initiative here at Brookings and I direct our Foreign Assistance Reform Project. It's a pleasure to welcome Assistant Secretary Barton who was sworn in exactly 2 weeks ago and I understand this is his first public discussion in his new role and we are very happy to have him. His new role is as the head of the State Department's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. We have a great group gathered here today to hear about him, about his vision, his priorities and what are the priorities on his agenda.

In picking Ambassador Barton for this role, President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton selected someone who has been deeply immersed in the thorny issues surrounding fragile states, human security and the prevention, mitigation and transformation of conflicts. For at least 2 decades he has been a key figure at the center of related policy research advancing U.S. and international understanding in this area, and he has also led key organizational efforts. Despite having been sworn in a couple of weeks ago, Ambassador Barton has been in place gearing up for this new role for several months. He served for 2 years in his prior position as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Before that he directed the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He has also served as the Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees at the U.N. Refugee Agency (UNHCR). And he was the founding director of the United States Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). I believe if you want

further details, all of you should have his bio in front of you. It's illustrious and it makes you realize that he really is a great person for this role.

Today we're going to engage in a discussion. I'm sure we'll be talking about the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, how it relates, what's new and it's a real opportunity to hear from Ambassador Barton. It should be a wide-ranging discussion and we should have ample time for questions from all of you. Without further ado, please join me in welcoming Assistant Secretary Barton.

MR. BARTON: Thank you very much, Noam. One thing that I have to get used to is being called assistant secretary. I think I've heard that word more times with my name in the last 2 minutes than I have in my life. It's very nice of you to introduce me as generously as you did. Obviously to look out at so many old friends, I realize that there are people here who were working on this issue when I was back in Maine sort of just trying to go through "The New York Times" each day. So I really appreciate the work that all of you have done and the commitment that so many of you have made to these issues. A number of my colleagues are here from CSO and from the State Department and rather than recognizing everybody, I just really want to thank you for the wonderful work you've done in getting this to this point. I think heaving a bureau created at the State Department dedicated to this issue has been really on the minds of a number of you for some time and it's really a great honor to have the chance to try to bring it to life.

I think among our biggest challenges are really how to expand the community of people who recognize the centrality of these issues, they have dominated our foreign policy for the last 20 years and it's a fascinating area of challenge for us. We have to expand the circle of people who think that our work is possible, that we can actually make a difference because there is a healthy skepticism and a valid one on the

part of the American public that we haven't been as successful in this space as we had thought we might be. It's been necessarily because of a lack of money or lack of effort. We have obviously seen rather significant efforts over the last decade. So there is a lot of room for improvement and I hope that we can join in doing that together.

What I'd like to do today is to give you fairly quickly so we'll have the maximum amount of time for the conversation is to give you a sense of what I think this secretary of state, some of her predecessors and certainly a number of people on the Hill and in the field are trying to do. What is our ambition as we look forward? Secondly, how are we going about it right now at CSO? Then finish up with just a kind of brief summary of signs that we might be gaining traction so that we can leave with a little bit of sense of optimism.

The ambition I think is essentially to be more effective in an increasingly dynamic world. We have to be more effective. And as we look at the world I think the first thing we have to think about is that we're really looking at a very different set of cases. Those of us who got with this in the 1990s, we had literally dozens of boutique cases, small places with very, very serious problems and we could see that what was likely to be happening as we looked ahead is that we were going to have big problems in medium-sized places and probably then even big problems in big, big places, but that was too awful to think about so we weren't really preparing for that. Then in the last 10 years we've had huge problems in rather large places but not huge places and we've made the maximum effort. But now we're entering a period where we really popular uprisings, we have a range of global collapses that are not just economic and they're not just natural resource based, but they come in a lot of different forms. Then we really have the emergence of these compound crises like we had in Haiti and in Japan where everything seems to come together at the same time and it has an incredibly disruptive

global effect.

But another thing we have to do if we're going to be more effective is we have to obviously have better preparation and anticipation combined with genuine modesty. This is the toughest work on earth and we have to recognize the need for help. So if you ever hear me say we're on top of this, we've got it under control, give me a quick call or send me an email because we need all the help we can get. And that's true of the broader State Department as well and the secretary of state obviously recognizes that.

A third thing we have to have to get this ambition thing right is recognize that the U.S. is going to be a pivotal and vital player but not a dominant force. So we're got to really think about the length of stay and the resources available right from the beginning rather than kind of this, well, we'll get in there and then we'll make it up as we go along.

A fourth thing we have to do is we have to have the growing impact of local ownership. Everybody talks about it, but I still don't believe that we do it and it's got to be much, much earlier and it's got to be much more sincere. There are a lot of reasons for it. One, there are lot of places we can't go to any longer, we don't travel as freely as we used to, but we've got to make this much more genuine. Then we obviously have to expand our partners. We've got to be much more agile in who we play with and who we count on to do other things. I think one warning if our ambitions are going to be achieved is that we've got to be aware of the standard arguments. I too often here that we need more time, we need more money, there's an -- capacity problem, we know we have risk-averse bureaucracies, we over state our influence. There are a lot of things that we're guilty of that undermine our likely effectiveness, but I think we have a shot at it.

The second area I'd like to cover is what are we doing? What's

happening right now at CSO? Again I hope this will serve to provoke some of our conversation. What we're trying to do is we're trying to fashion an organization that can be influential in policy and in programming and have the maximum impact in the first 12 months of a crisis. This is our proof of concept here. When I went up to the Hill on my first -- unusual for the state statement. Before I even had my hearing I was sent up to the Hill to sell the bureau to the four key committees of the Congress and every one of then expressed let's call it a healthy skepticism about where we currently stood. My argument was that we would prove this concept over the next year. When I was back a few weeks ago to talk about the budget with the Senate appropriators, I did try to make it clear that the year did not start until I was confirmed, trying to link these two benefits, but I'm not sure we achieved the renegotiation of the timeline yet.

Essentially we told the secretary of state that we would try to do three things in this coming year. The first thing is that we feel that this new bureau has to prove its worth. It has to make a valued contribution in two to three places or real significance to the United States. We will dedicate 80 percent of our effort to the major cases and I'll describe some of those in a minute. Then we'll have probably another eight or 10 places that we'll be working in and I'd love to in the question and answer talk to you about some of the one-ofs that you can do in places that can make a huge difference by just sending the right person to the right place at the right time. It doesn't take all the night of the U.S. government to actually make a difference. The second thing we told the secretary of state is that we needed to build a trusted and respected team so we're going about that. The third is we said we needed to work in a more innovative and natural way.

To get there, we've been rather busy over the last few months in making a lot of changes and I'd like to give you a quick summary of some of those. We've hired an all-new leadership team of four senior people. We have new directors at every level,

several from the old SERS and we're trying to get a blend of the old SERS and also bring in some fresh blood so that we get a balance. We cross-walked 150 employees. We are restructuring the Civilian Response Corps right now, which is a very difficult conversation with many of our partners in the federal government. We're increasing the money for deployments at a time of decreasing budgets. We closed our Springfield warehouse and offices. We're on a glide path in Afghanistan and South Sudan. We're refocusing on key places. And we're rethinking about 40 percent of our budget. I sort of like to think that a radical change at the state department is around 8 percent, so I don't know what 40 percent is but it feels like warp speed sometimes.

What we're really going through is a start-up, it's a merger in a let's describe it as a change-resistant environment during tight fiscal times, so it sounds like a good case study for somebody who wants to write up a business school tract here. We're also trying to look at the way we are going about our work. We're insisting in every case on a center of gravity within the U.S. government and within the state department. There has got to be somebody who is kind of in charge of the case. Otherwise it gets really hard to do the work. We're doing that both at the state department and within CSO. And we're trying to use what you might call a board of director's model. Let's engage at the front end as many people as have an interest in the case so we don't end up with people taking a shot at what's going on later. As you all know, in almost every case within the department there will be at least these many levels of interest or engagement and if somebody holds their breath here or here or here, the whole thing doesn't work.

What we've tried to do, what we're starting to do at CSO is identify the 12 obstacles that we run into in every case, many of them are bureaucratic obstacles, so that we know what that journey is, and doesn't serve as an excuse for us not being able

to do something, that this problem arose or that problem arose, we do it beforehand, plan on it, anticipate it and deal with it. Then most critically, once you have that in place, when I was CSIS I had a talk that so depressed audiences that I had to change the title. The first couple of times I gave it, it was "The Three Chronic Problems of Every U.S. Engagement in One of these Cases." Those who stayed with me came up to me at the end and said, did you have to do that? I already was depressed enough without you telling me what the three chronic problems are. So I quickly refashioned the speech to be "The Five Critical Elements of Success" at which point I had American audiences that were willing to go through the struggle of what we were doing and among these were that everybody goes out there and does their own analysis. That's the first problem. So you have to have joint locally driven analysts who are really trying to push that and it's not going to dominated by CSO, it's any combination of people. We just did this in Burma. AID had I think three people out of the seven on the team. I think CSO had one. We ran it through Derrick Mitchell, the special envoy. We were just trying to make sure that those local voices are heard and they drive the thinking that takes shape after that.

That should then lead to an integrated strategy that has two or three top priority items. We know in these places that they need everything, but I'm skeptical of the state-building, nation-building model. I believe that what we have to do is give people the opportunity to make it on their own. We have to be catalytic. That's quite ambitious in and of itself. It's not to give up on the broader ambition, it's to let the people have the ownership of it themselves, but it starts with us having a focused strategy. Then the third point is to make sure that the resource flows go to the strategies. A place like Burma is an interesting case. It's exotic, it's safe and it's promising so that almost everybody is going to want to work there. For us to be coherent is one of our centerpieces of our being effective. So these are all ways of being more coherent.

Finally, making sure that there is constant, timely review rather than having evaluations 2 years after the fact, that we have real-time McKenzie like reports that say these are the things you should be changing today because they're not going right and that's something else that we haven't seen.

Finally let me finish up on are we gaining traction. I think in the four major cases that we're starting to work on, we're starting to see the kind of organizational structure that we're going to have to have if we're going to be effective if the U.S. is going to have influence. The ones that we're working on right now are Kenya, at the top of our pile, are Kenya, Burma, Syria and North Central America. Very different cases, very different in stages of development but each of them have tremendous potential both for opportunity and for heading in the wrong direction, and I'd be happy to describe more in our conversation of what we're trying to do there. I do think what we're trying to do is creative. We're getting great support from the secretary of state, the national security staff and our colleagues and I'm finding that we're getting growing recognition among ambassadors in the regional bureaus. Many of you who work these accounts recognize that those are critical partners. We are going to have an office in the state department for the first time perhaps ever and we'll have all of our employees within sight of each other by the fall. That may not sound that important, but it does really make a difference in terms of how cohesive our own team is.

We're bringing partners into the game much earlier and trying to show that this is not just the state department's game, but this is a shared responsibility. And we're working aggressively at changing the culture of what was SERS into CSO. SERS worked hard to gain a space and now we're trying to increase our impact. Some of the things we're trying to do in that space are we're trying to move we prefer the sins of commission rather than sins of omission, so take a risk, come up with ideas, and if you

don't have idea, come back when you do. We're trying to be much more rigorous in our analysis and show evaluative thinking. Don't just go out to places, but actually tell us what you've learned. We've had more people outside of the capital of South Sudan than any other part of the U.S. government for the last couple of years. So bring it together, what have we learned, what should the policy of the U.S. government be to reflect what we've learned out there and take ownership of that space because that's what's expected of us. That's what the bureau is about. Stick to the truly important. Don't get sidetracked. Be the antibureaucracy. Don't make the argument for what CSO should be doing but let's make the argument for what needs to happen. And I can almost guarantee that there will be a space for CSO within what needs to happen, that either because other people don't want to do it or because they can't get to it for the next year or a variety of reasons, and be the easiest bureau at the state department to work with. That may not sound like that high a bar, but that's part of it.

I think all of these things are taking hold. Our leadership team has been in place now for about a month, a little bit more than a month. The secretary of state called me the other day and at the end of the conversation she asked how are things going and I said, I think they're going pretty well. I've been using this cruise metaphor. I said that the first 4 months we spent getting everybody on board because there is quite a lot to do there. And now we're in the ocean trial, sea trial, shakedown cruise period and we hope too many people won't drop off. But in a couple of months we expect to be in a Caribbean port with pearl divers. And she laughed and she said, that's when I'd like to join up with you. So I think we have it in our sights. We know where we'd like to end up. There's an awful lot to be done. The world is going to keep producing crises for us. We have no doubt about that. And the internal bureaucratic challenges are substantial to really making it an effective organization. I hope that gives you a little bit of a taste. I'm

sorry if I've gone on longer than the conversation would suggest, but I'm hoping that it will also set up some questions from Noam and from all of you. Again, thank you all for everything that you've done in this space to really give us this opportunity. We're going to take it as far as we can and really appreciate your help. Thank you.

MR. UNGER: Thank you, Rick, and while we get set up, if you are sitting next to a seat that is open, please raise your hand because we've got some people in the back. If anyone wants to grab a seat, please grab one of those open seats. We don't need to have anyone stand through the whole discussion.

Rick, thank you very much for that introduction to what it is you're doing. Clearly you approach this with this I'd say maybe seasoned and reasoned approach. I have lots of questions and let me work through them.

MR. BARTON: Should I take four from you?

MR. UNGER: Why don't we have a little bit of a conversation and then I want to open it up to the audience? It sounds to me like underlying what you said, there's a bit of an assumption and I think it's one that many people share, but I want to have it be clear. What has happened in this space over the last 10 years has been at least in the most prominent fashion major stabilization operations on the part of the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq, the big money, big-ticket items. It sounds like the assumption is that this bureau should not or will not be in the game of preparing and planning for similar engagements down the road and that the focus is on short-term or transitional help in smaller cases. As you said, big problems in big places, big problems in smaller places. Can you flesh that out a little bit more in terms of the underlying assumptions?

MR. BARTON: I'm hoping that we will not as a citizen have too many more of the Iraq and Afghanistan types of engagements because I think they were really questionable in many, many ways, but that would be as a citizen. I do think there's a

chance for more complicated cases though. Probably the three kinds of cases that we're looking at right now are hotspots that exist. The ones that I mentioned are more in the hotspot category right now. But then I think there are big places that we're not really thinking ahead well enough on and that we will probably get into more. There are going to be major transitions in places like North Korea or you can name several others over the coming years and it would be good to know that our civilian perspective and our civilian planning is superior to our military planning which I don't think is the case right now. It's not even comparable. Those could be big and complicated cases, but again they will not be cases where the United States will own the case. Obviously the countries in the region will be the most influential I would guess.

The third kinds of cases that we are not touching as much yet but I think will show up on our menu as we go along as we get more established are these longstanding but almost forgotten cases. You could put Kashmir, you could put the Kurds in the Kurdish case and others that are out there. Some of them may be getting better with age, we hope they are, but that's not necessarily the case. So I think that our menu will get broader and get richer as time goes on, but we're new and we need to prove ourselves to our colleagues and to ourselves and then we will be called upon to do more and more. We find even now within the geographic bureaus, for example at the state department that are most familiar with SERS like the African Bureau in particular but also Bob Lake's bureau, that they're more likely to call upon us and we're now getting better known by the Near East and by WHA because we're working with them so that a lot of is just gaining the credibility.

In terms of the big places, I think there is an implied criticism of the big cases. When I was doing some of the work with my colleagues here from CSIS, some of the CSIS colleagues who are here today, I was particularly struck when I went out to

Afghanistan that almost everybody I spoke to in Afghanistan described to me how successful their individual program was. I wondered how 100 individual successes added up to one very questionable larger effort. There didn't seem to be any mathematical equation that I was familiar with, plus, plus, plus, plus equals a negative. It got me to thinking that everybody -- and of course almost everybody had a reason. If only the Germans would do this. If the United States wouldn't do that. If that NGO was up to this. If that minister was -- and so there was always a good argument for why it wasn't taking hold. But it also completely reinforced this kind of sprawling approach that we take to these places where we take on ownership and then we want all these things to happen. Also in my conversation with the secretary of state when she interviewed me for this job, we talked a bit about how when she goes to places she ends up almost inevitably the same list of deliverables irrespective of the case. Why do I always end up talking about counterterrorism, counterdrugs, AIDS, humanitarian refugees and food? Because these are the things that the U.S. has existing big-time pipelines, but it doesn't necessarily speak to what's needed in the place. So the first question that we're trying to instill as part of our culture is what is most needed as opposed to what can the United States do? The United States could do everything to some extent, but when it does that it lacks impact, it doesn't convert the case. I believe that there's a tipping point in these cases and I believe that if you drive hard enough to it the people of the place have a shot.

MR. UNGER: In your opening discussion you mentioned Haiti and Japan in the same sentence. Are you defining crises in a specific fashion or leaving it flexible?

MR. BARTON: I think in our case the crises are mostly conflict centered right now. That's we are taking our attention.

MR. UNGER: Let me ask you this because in my own experience I

worked in the last start-up phase of the predecessor organization.

MR. BARTON: So you're the guy.

MR. UNGER: You're sworn in as the coordinator for reconstruction and stabilization in addition to your assistant secretary title, I believe.

MR. BARTON: That's the longest title in history.

MR. UNGER: One of the criticisms of SERS was that relatively quickly the coordination function of the entity fell apart or fell off the map and this was a challenge for the predecessor that was created by PDD 56 in the Clinton administration. What you're talking about achieving requires both intensive coordination across the U.S. government and also coordination internationally with partners. What are you in your vision with CSO doing differently to tackle those problems?

MR. BARTON: I don't know. We have great awareness of the challenge. But I was lucky enough to have a boss once, Doug Stafford who many of you maybe were lucky to have known, who said never ever, ever, ever, ever accept the job of a coordinator and he probably had a few more evers in there so that I've never seized upon that word. The word that we've used is that we will drive this process. It's not that we necessarily need to be the coordinator, but we will drive to make sure there's a center of gravity. We will drive to make sure that the analysis is joint and it's locally driven. We will drive to make sure that there's actually an integrated strategy with two or three priorities. So we have an ambition in every space and we will make sure that somebody in every meeting is focused in that way, and my guess is that over time we will also be asked sometimes to be the center of gravity, to be in the lead. But for the moment we're quite happy making sure that when we see a capable person who seems to have the right combination of skills and personality that we are embracing that individual with as much passion as we can bring to it because we believe that that's the way that things

have a chance of getting done within our bureaucratic structure.

MR. UNGER: I think that will raise probably a lot of questions for our audience and we'll get to them after one last question from me.

MR. BARTON: That answer did not answer the question?

MR. UNGER: I want to be fair. To be fair as a conversation I actually think that previous efforts didn't lack success for a lack of ambition and goodwill.

MR. BARTON: That's correct. I'm sure of that.

MR. UNGER: And interest in driving things. People would look at more hard topics like do they have any resources to provide? What authorities do they have? What's the role of the White House?

MR. BARTON: We're doing that as well. I have to say we're spending a lot of time on -- somebody said that 50 percent of the diplomatic mission in this job would be within the state department and I don't know if that is proving to be correct or not but let's say it takes a fair amount of time and effort and we're dedicated in that effort. But we're also trying to create some liquidity and to have a little bit of programming money. Johanna will remember that when we were starting OTI we had a modest amount of money. I think it was $20 million. The first year it was 10 but it was only about three-quarters of a year. But I used to say to the people who worked at OTI go into every meeting as if you had $20 million in your pocket. Fortunately I'd worked for some real estate developers in Maine so I was really familiar with this. A guy owned a triple-decker and he suddenly was talking about a 10-story office tower downtown and you wondered how he made that leap. We're going to do the same thing. We're telling our people now to go into every meeting as if you had 10 million bucks. You're not guaranteed $10 million because you got to come up with the ideas that are going to convince us that you can make a difference, but I do think that it gains us some access. Expeditionary

diplomacy I stayed away from for some time, but now I'm starting to find maybe a way. It's coming into clarity in my own mind. It is not sending somebody who's very much like all the other diplomats to a place they otherwise wouldn't go to do what all the other diplomats are doing. It is not sending somebody to a new part of South Sudan to have that person report. That doesn't seem to me to be expeditionary diplomacy. That person is going to go out there and they'd really better be capable of doing the reporting, but they'd be able to also start addressing some of the kind of low-hanging fruit that exists in all of these places in terms of bringing people together, mediating problems whatever it happens to be. One way that you can do that is to have a little liquidity. I would like to have anybody who's out there on an engagement for our bureau thinking that they have a million dollar credit line back at the home office.

MR. UNGER: Walking around money.

MR. BARTON: It's going to have to be much more strategic than that, but I want them to at least have that mindset. That's an affirmative mindset that you actually have and the opportunity to solve problems.

MR. UNGER: You come at this job with experience from UNHCR, with experience at the U.N. ECOSOC and you were talking about expanding partners internationally and also about effectiveness. At the high-level forum on aid effectiveness in Busan, the U.S. supported an international new deal in an approach to fragile states. What's new about it? How does it affect the thinking within the state department?

MR. BARTON: I'm not sure that the intellectual content is that new because a lot of us we've worked in this space have gone through the pillars that they pretty much -- but what's really new about is one of the points that I tried to make in the opening of my remarks which is that local ownership piece, that assertion by these countries that we want to be in charge. By the way, we want them to be in charge. Is

there anybody here who wants to own any of these cases?

MR. UNGER: The problem is in the situation when the question is who's the "they," if you're talking about on the state side, on the government.

MR. BARTON: That's I think another mistake that we've made is that we've too often looked for our partners to be the governments and I think we always have to balance that and the balance has to be in favor of the people of the place. You can find the people of the place sometimes without sticking a finger in the eye of the government, but sometimes you have to stick a finger in the eye of the government. There is an element of this work that is subversive of the status quo. There was a great guy that I quote often, Bob Gersoni who used to talk about the status quo ante. The status quo ante in a lot of places is terrible and we would have no interest in the place if we were going to go back to what it was because that would be a reaffirmation of ruling elites or whatever they happen to be. For example, the work we're looking at in Syria right now that we're trying to advance is to help make the opposition within Syria more capable.

MR. UNGER: Lots of fodder for questions. I'll withhold any more of my own. I'll turn right here to the front. I'll take these two questions together.

MR. BARTON: Here comes a microphone.

MR. UNGER: There is a microphone coming, and please identify yourself and make it a question that will further the conversation. These two right next to each other in the front.

MR. HARBESON: John Harbeson, Johns Hopkins CSIS. Good to see you again. Kenya: given Kofi Annan's 4-year project In Kenya, what is your priority?

MR. UNGER: Let's take the second question together.

MS. FAGAN: A second academic. Patricia Fagan, Georgetown

University. Thanks for this talk. It's really refreshing. I have a concern, many, but there is one I want to bring to you.

MR. BARTON: Don't give me all of your concerns.

MS. FAGAN: No. I can't do that. Basically it's a very positive approach. Let's suppose there's success. There's a 12-month plan. It's comprehensive. It succeeds. There are partners on the ground. There's a sense of accomplishment. What happens in month 13? If in month 13 everybody goes away, then the accomplishments will surely be lost because local partnerships need a company of some kind. There has to be some kind of support strategy after the big blitz of U.S. will do it and now it's your turn ends. So I'd like you to comment on that.

MR. UNGER: Kenya and sustained support.

MR. BARTON: Let me take the second question first. When you started the question, Pat, I thought you were asking about this proof of concept in the 12 months of CSO and I was thinking in the thirteenth month we will rest. That would work also in the case of the country itself. My feeling about this is that these places, what you're really trying to do is to get things going and you start off in a fairly broad space, but what you're trying to do is to get everybody to concentrate efforts, concentrate efforts, concentrate efforts. But the initial provocations, the initial things that we do, should fit well within this broader highway that we're heading on. So it shouldn't be anything that's kind of these are not one-ofs that just take place by themselves, but they should fit within the broader strategy. We're trying to develop right now a strategic template for CSO that is essentially driven by the context, by what we think is going to happen and then by what stated U.S. policy is, so that's where we fit, then what most needs to happen, and this all onto one page so that everybody can understand, everybody can understand, what it is.

I've mentioned this to quite a few people in the state department and

they said when you get this will you share it with us? It's a pretty simple way to make sure that we're all on the same sheet of music. If we're all on the same sheet of music then whether we're there 9 months, 90 days or 3 years doesn't become as important because there are other players. In talking for example to Bill Brownfield, he said it really takes us about a year to get going in a place. If you talk to OTI, it takes them a couple months. They're faster. If you talk to regular development people at AID or state or the World Bank, we're talking probably a longer period of time. But we'd like to get everybody on pretty much the same highway so we don't have a thousand points of light. That's really our critical contribution, if we can then show that there are things that can be done.

For example, we're talking about North Central America now because a lot of people including the secretary of state are very concerned about the growing violence in the northern triangle of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. There are lots of people doing many, many good things. Some of the AID missions down there are celebrating their fiftieth anniversaries. There are people who I've run into who have been a lot of training in that part of the world going back a few decades. How do you create a sense of urgency when the answer is in 2 years we're going to have these three critical vetted police units and we'll have these 12 honest judges and we'll have this new court system? Things that Mark would be highly familiar with. What we brought to the conversation is those are all wonderful things. What can we show in the next 30, 60 or 90 days that might be evidence that some of them are taking root? Because the national narrative in a place like Honduras I've been told, I haven't seen this in writing but one of my colleagues told me, that 60 percent of Hondurans think they're going to be a victim of a violent crime in the coming year. Only 4 percent are likely to be victims, but what's the narrative? Sixty percent think that they're going to be victims.

What can you do? You've got this wonderful program. How many people are going to be arrested? How many people are going to be deported? How many people are going to be tried? How many people are going to be convicted? All of those things have measurable elements. What are you missing in that vetted police unit? You're missing a prosecutor. So in other words they can actually arrest somebody but what happens to the person? It turns out that there are holes. There are places that you can make a difference but it's not off the program. It's not creating a new program. It's not saying you got to come in and do something totally different. I suspect there are opportunities for that too, but that's one we're trying to get at, keeping it in a practical zone. I hope that answers that question.

On Kenya, you obviously, John, know more than I do about this so I'm going to make my answer really brief. I think there are some people who worry that there is still a very real opportunity for violence of the kind that was seen in the last election, and while the conventional wisdom right now says a lot of things are in train, some of us worry that that it's not necessarily going to come together in the way that we would like it to so that there's an opportunity here to maybe either help accelerate some things, draw more attention to some things that are taking place or to just again sound a little bit more of an alarm in this space if needed. We don't know that yet. We have a team going out that's going to be again a joint team that's going out at the end of this week for I think about 6 weeks in particular looking at some of the geographic locations and some of the communities and some of the populations like youth that we think may need more attention.

MR. UNGER: In the back I see a gentleman with his hand up right on the aisle there.

MR. WEINTRAUB: Thank you. I'm Leon Weintraub, the University of

Wisconsin, Washington semester -- international affairs. I'd like to ask you, sir, if you saw a role for your bureau in two different situations of West Africa. One is in Mali where we already have the specter of a separatist state and some degree of violence. The other would be in Nigeria where on the one hand it's a very strong ally but there's been an undercurrent of violence, of some separatism for a number of decades and the government just doesn't seem to have a handle on it. What if any do you see a role of your bureau?

MR. UNGER: Also why don't we take the question just across the aisle? Greg Hermsmeyer there.

MR. HERMSMEYER: Hi, Rick. Congratulations on your new role.

MR. BARTON: Thank you.

MR. HERMSMEYER: Greg Hermsmeyer -- Consulting. I wanted to follow-up on the liquidity question. Since the transition the Hill has cut some of the legacy SERS funding and programs. Section 1207, security stabilization assistance authority that allowed DOD to transfer funding to state expired almost 2 years ago. How will the CSO program officers and policymakers tap into that liquidity? And a related question, what role will CSO play in the new joint state department and DOD Global Security Contingency Fund and the USAID Complex Crisis Fund?

MR. UNGER: The pooled funds?

MR. HERMSMEYER: Right.

MR. BARTON: Let me take those two. Again let me start with the second question if I could. The Congress and this administration and the prior administration have created new funds and I believe that we're going to be one of the F bureau's critical partners in helping to direct those funds to the best cases. One of the things that I think is fair bout the 1207 funding was that it became a little bit of an

embassy plus up fund as opposed to a crisis fund and it turned out that that irritated some of the people on the Hill. So we look a strong look at the 1207 fund right away when I got there. It turns out it was about $450 million. We identified right away $105 million that had not even been obligated. So when you talk about a crisis and the money had been directed to an embassy 2 or 3 years ago, it doesn't have the ring of a crisis when it hasn't been obligated in that period of time. So we sent out a very direct cable just before Christmas that alerted all the embassies to the fact that we had an interest in this $105 million. We had some incredibly productive days that followed and much of that money found ways to be obligated to good use. But there is still I'd say $30 to $40 million probably right now that we're looking at and we've already deobligated $15 million and we will probably deobligate the other, but there are some delicate matters that we need to work out with embassies.

We also identified about another $110 million that had been obligated and had not been spent so that that is another area of opportunity. We felt that there were some missing pieces here. Where is the strategy? Why does it take so long for this money for the decision to be made? And how come there are no evaluations or the evaluations are not field driven? We're doing all of those things. Again we're not doing them across the board. We're doing them random sample, see what we learn and see if we can change.

We did this together with our DOD colleagues and we had a very productive first luncheon, which we hosted. We all agreed that we could be more strategic, we needed to be faster and we needed to do evaluations so that all of that is taking place. So it's DOD, AID, the F bureau and CSO. That's the core board of directors. I believe that these experiences are going to be helpful to these other funds as well. What we're trying to do is to make sure that the money that's deobligated is

redirected to some of the top priority cases that we're describing. Of the $450 million, it would be interesting for those of you who haven't studied it, about $100 million went to Georgia which suggested that there was a strategic focus and then the rest sort of went all over the place.

MR. UNGER: And Mali and Nigeria?

MR. BARTON: Mali and Nigeria. Northern Nigeria in particular is of real interest to us. We're just starting to do the due diligence on that. We're several weeks into reviewing and looking for opportunities, what needs to happen, what we might do. It hasn't turned into an engagement yet, but it's a place that we're -- Mali we have not -- one of the problems is that we're trying to and it could well be the case that we should be involved in, but we're trying to decide what places does the United States have really a critical function, a lead function, and we don't see that being a case where that happens. I've been dying to tell this Liberia story, so maybe I could do that.

MR. UNGER: Tell the Liberia story. Then what we'll do is we'll take two more questions and then a really quick response.

MR. BARTON: I'll save the Liberia story.

MR. UNGER: We would love to hear it if you're dying to tell it.

MR. BARTON: It sort of shows what you can do in a small place with just the right thing at the right time. We had a call from the U.S. ambassador at that time Linda Thomas Greenfield. The day before the election in Liberia there was a demonstration by the opposition a few blocks from the president's house on one of the few main roads out of town. At some point in the demonstration they tried to break it up because it was blocking traffic and one person was killed and eight people were injured with gunfire. There were eyewitnesses who said they thought the police that we had been quite involved with in training and preparing had been involved in the shooting. The

president got the kind of report that sometimes you get when you're the boss and she relayed that to the ambassador when she called the president. The ambassador was really quite concerned that all of the goodwill that had built up over the last 7 years would be put at risk.

The president appointed a commission of inquiry and it was particularly good group of citizens, but they were given a 2-week mandate and none of them had never conducted an investigation before. So when they finished their work they didn't come up with much and it was ridiculed for being insufficient. So it was one of these key confidence-building moments in a political system that you get it right or you don't. Linda called us and asked if we could get her somebody who could help this commission because the president was going to extend its change, but they clearly needed to professionalize their investigation. We had a guy named Steven Anderson who is on our Civilian Response Corps who's a justice department employee and he went over there and he right away hired a Liberian investigator and the commission then decided that he needed a second one to make sure there was a balance. These people immediately went out and interviewed 70 or 80 people and they got a pretty good eyewitness sense of what happened. They also discovered that there was a ton of video and still photography of the event because it was a big public demonstration the day before the election so everybody was there. In the course of the investigation one of these Liberian investigators spotted in a 15-second frame of the video that there was a man in a very distinct shirt and a heavy armband, they couldn't recognize his face, shooting the gun. You hear pop, smoke and the gun was pointed at the crowd. Then they had a ton of still photography and they identified the shirt and so they identified who it was and it happened to be a prominent police official.

They took that 15 seconds of film and he showed it to our lawyer, Steven

Anderson, who looked at it and in the same 15 seconds he saw a policeman in a gas firing a gun as well that the investigator hadn't seen. They then took the same 15 seconds and showed it to the commission and one of the commission members saw a third person, a policeman, in a gas mask again. The case was solved basically. And they came back and the commission has now written a report which the president has accepted and they have permanently suspended four members of the police force, they have temporarily suspended another group of officers and they're now looking at is as one of these great justice cases or rule of law cases. Will they prosecute? They have to decide all of these things. These issues are still to be played.

MR. UNGER: So this is an example of when you were saying we're going to be 80 percent in our priority countries but in eight to 10 countries it's about sending the right person at the right time.

MR. BARTON: You just might get lucky. You might get lucky this way. This is obviously sensationally fortunate. The president accepted the report and took responsibility for it. The report has not been released yet, but obviously the suspension and all of those things are public information. So it's just a phenomenal opportunity in a lot of these cases to help an ambassador, to help a country at a critical moment. In other cases we might get in in what looks like a small case might end up being one of our signature cases because you'd have to be crazy to think that you know how every one of these cases is going to unfold. We could be sitting and watching Syria for minutes or for months so that's why we're trying to focus on things you can do with the internal opposition from outside the country.

MR. UNGER: If the audience will indulge me and allow me to take two more questions, we'll do it really quick. How's that?

MR. BARTON: Sure. I'll try faster answers too.

MR. UNGER: We'll start right up here up front. And remember to please identify yourself.

MR. BARTON: There's a woman back here who looks she's been waving.

MR. UNGER: Yes. You're talking about the woman who's --

MR. BARTON: Yes. That one.

MR. UNGER: -- far from the aisle and difficult to get the microphone to? She will be our last question there. Please go ahead.

MR. SCHNEIDER: Mark Schneider, International Crisis Group. As you know, Rick, many of us who have worked with you are quite pleased to see you in this position.

MR. BARTON: Thank you.

MR. SCHNEIDER: We also feel sorry for you to some degree. But one of the thoughts that I had is that to some degree you're describing a diplomatic swat team approach where these four cases are very different in terms of the countries involved. Kenya, Burma, Syria and the northern triangle of Central America. I'd be interested in whether you see them -- obviously they're important to the United States for a whole variety of reasons. The question is do you see them in the context of what we're doing, the specific things that we're doing, are aimed at preventing the next conflict? That is, that while they're aimed in some degree, the Burma transition, et cetera, that there is something behind it in terms of avoiding conflict down the road. That relates to do you see yourself engaged more with the new whenever it happens and it's announced the Atrocity Prevention Board that's presumably going to come into existence soon. Finally, the two things that strike me as very similar to two of these cases, Kenya and Syria that you mentioned, Kofi Annan is a special representative. So on your board of

directors how are you going to get the right international people at the table in order to bounce your plans on what you want to try and do off them and get the benefit of their experience and wisdom?

MR. UNGER: Let's take the last question.

MR. BARTON: Should I answer Mark's six questions first?

MR. UNGER: If you'd like, and then we'll still take that one more question. That's fine.

MR. BARTON: Either way. I think there are enough questions on the table that it would probably be good to hit a few.

MR. UNGER: Sure.

MR. BARTON: Yes, there is a strong prevention bias here because we know in every crisis or conflict case, recidivism is probably the default position. So, yes, there is a real prejudice in that area. The way you said -- you didn't say good luck, but the two things heard the first few months after I was named to this job I heard the same two words said very differently. Half the people said good luck, and the other half of the people said good luck. It seemed to me a common message so the way you said it had some of that.

I like the thought of a diplomatic swat team. One of the things that Doug Stafford used to call OTI was the Peace Corps on steroids. There are all kinds of descriptions. I don't know quite -- but I think, yeah, if it speaks to urgency, if it speaks to using diplomatic skills, I'd like to use a lot of the stuff that you guys, that ICG for example is famous for. I'd like to have that really tough analytical view that we're almost overly dependent on you guys to deliver. How about the honest, frank assessment of what's going on? What's wrong with that? What's wrong with good creative tension? I'm a big fan of brainstorming, but there was this great story in the "New Yorker" that tried to take

on the idea of brainstorming, but I don't think it really did. It basically said brainstorming only works where there is creative tension. Okay, fine. Brainstorming isn't for everybody -- everybody's idea to be equally wonderful. There is a winnowing process that takes -- there is not enough of that in the government space and I hope we can do that again in a way that's so respectful of our colleagues that they don't just think we're taking shots at them and we won't get anywhere if we do that. So it's a pretty fine line that we have to tread but I think we can do it. Yes, of course the Atrocity Prevention Board is going to be a presidential initiative and makes a lot of sense. Why wouldn't we want to be thinking that way? And that's definitely motivating us in the work we're looking at in Syria and Kenya in particular. I don't think that the quality of the other two places yet, but hopefully it won't be, that every crisis won't have an atrocity at the end of the line. And the right international people, we're working hard at figuring out who our 10 key partners are and trying to again -- there are going to be 100, but we just have to make sure we do right by those who are most critical to us. I do think the multilateral space, you know I have a strong belief in it, we're probably going to do our best work actually in the countries working with the embassy and working with whoever else is there in that particular country. I would guess that will be our first test, but we'll see. We're trying to do it theoretically as well. I would like to have us have shared platforms. We're already in South Sudan. Our people are essentially residing with the WFP, the World Food Program, on their more or less secure bases. That's a good model. Why should we all rent the last remaining house in some town in -- those are the kinds of things that just have aggravated almost all of us whoever spent time in the countries wondering why do we hire the only six teachers to be our drivers and why did we take over the five houses that were inhabitable? I hope we'll get richer in our understanding.

MR. UNGER: If you have a brief question, I'm sure that Ambassador

Barton will try to answer it in his best two sentences to answer your question.

MR. BARTON: I'm very good at true or false and multiple choice.

MR. UNGER: And please identify yourself.

MS. STATO: I'm Mary Stato with the Friends Committee on National Legislation. My question is regarding actually some advice from you in terms of criticism that I often hear from appropriators and authorizers on the Hill when looking at the various conflict prevention capacities within state and USAID particularly with CMM, with OTI, with the former SERS and now with CSO, is how to avoid duplication of efforts but at the same time maximize coordination. So I'm curious as to how you intend to broach these issues with these various capacities and also how I as an advocate can message that to the Hill.

MR. BARTON: I think the point of a bureau is to make sure that we're getting coherent policy and we're bringing people together in the most productive possible way. My belief is that OTI for example is going to be much more of a programming organization than we are, but what they've been missing is a place at the table or early in the conversation. They've been extremely entrepreneurial in finding space and opportunities to do some really creative programming, but they haven't necessarily been part of the broader process early enough on.

MR. UNGER: Do you mean the policy process?

MR. BARTON: The policy process, yes. And that's a chronic complaint at AID that the state department shows up and -- now we've done the thinking, here's a way that you can spend some money. It's just not a relationship that's built on the best foundation. We're trying to do that, but if we can have that joint analysis and decide what's most important, then we should all figure out that two or three things need to be done, then we can figure out who can do them best. Who has the opportunity to do the

best work in that case? I think in most cases CSO will find somebody else who has the advantage in actually being able to do the work. But where we may be able to be most helpful is in the first 12 months, is when somebody else has never done something like this before, so maybe in kind of product development and early initiative is where we should be limiting ourselves to. But again, driving the analysis, driving the strategy, making sure that everybody is included, those are things that we can bring to it as well. One way to bring it is by having a little bit of money. It's not enough to just be a nice guy.

MR. UNGER: Judging by the hands that went up, this seems like a conversation that could and should go on in other fora and at other times, but we're at our time. Please join me in thanking Assistant Secretary Barton.

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