

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

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Doha, Qatar

Wednesday, June 3, 2015

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MRS. WITTES: Ladies and gentlemen, can I ask you please to take your seats? Please go ahead and take your seats, so that we can welcome our final keynote speaker for this year's forum. Thank you very much.

MR. JONES: Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen. My name is Bruce Jones. Welcome to day three. It is my honor to introduce our keynote speaker, General John Allen, who is a retired U.S. Marine Four Star General, now serving as Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL.

General Allen joined the Marines in 1976 and has had a long and distinguished career in the Marines, commanding at every level, including at the level of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade. He also has a distinguished academic career, holding a triple Master's, in national security studies, strategic intelligence and national security strategy from

Georgetown National Defense Intelligence College and the National War College. Later in his career, he was the first serving Marines Corp officer to be inducted as a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and we'll forgive him for that breach of good judgement.

He served as the principal deputy assistant secretary for policy on Asia Pacific in the Department of the Defense, but since that time, his career has played out primarily in this region broadly described. In 2006 to 2008, he was deployed as part of the Operation Iraqi Freedom, serving as the Deputy Commanding General of the Multinational Forces West in Al Anbar Province. He then became Commander of the N.A.T.O. International Security Assistance Force and U.S. forces in Afghanistan, where he had a prior major experience in leading a coalition force.

General Allen has tried to retire not once, but twice from the Marines. The first time he retired, he was pulled back into service and worked as senior advisor to the Secretary of Defense on Middle East Security where he worked closely with Secretary

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John Kerry and our own Ambassador Martin Indyk to push the parties as hard as they have ever been pushed towards a framework for a peace agreement. That effort didn't succeed of course, but I would like to reserve judgement and say perhaps it hasn't succeeded yet.

When he was retired for a second time, Brookings was very pleased to appoint him as Distinguished Fellow and Co-Director of our Center on 21st Century and Intelligence. Within a number of days of that decision however, and in the exact opposite of Americans pivoting away from the Middle East, General Allen was asked to serve again, and is now serving as Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL. He's just been in the Paris meeting of the coalition. I'm very honored to have him here to say a few remarks about that effort. General Allen. (applause)

GENERAL ALLEN: Well Bruce, thank you for your very generous introduction, and I want to thank Salman (inaudible), Will McCants, Tamara Wittes, and

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the entire team here, for hosting such a significant and comprehensive dialog. Ambassador Al-Rumaihi, Ambassador Smith, Excellencies, it really is a pleasure to be with you today and to see so many familiar faces and old friends in this audience. I arrived here today from Baghdad with a brief stop in Paris. Not your typical route to Doha, but one in keeping with the theme of this conference, which is, Changing Assumptions. Of course the Brookings Doha Center is one of the magnificent institutions here in Qatar, institutions that from their very beginning have challenged the way we think about exchange and partnership between the United States and the Islamic world. It is centers of excellence like this one, in addition to this city's world renowned cultural institutions which makes Doha an increasingly important meeting place between east and west.

In few other places across the world can you see a rufco in the morning, attend a lecture on the history of Gulf security in the afternoon, and listen to Stravinsky's symphony that evening. In fact, it is

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these kinds of opportunities that Igor Stravinsky himself, the great Russian American composer, accredited with his creativity. And he said that it was through exposure to his own false assumptions, not to the fonts of wisdom and established knowledge, that he developed as an artist. And indeed, these are communities, both Doha and Brookings, that have invested in the difficult work of rethinking assumptions and imagining our world in new ways.

Now when it comes to this region, the relationship between the United States and the world and even the nature of the global order, this is a time when assumptions are rapidly changing. As President Obama said last September at the U.N. General Assembly, this is a moment where the world is at a crossroads, a period where the old order is passing and a new order is coming into being. Tragically, and often horrifically, the rise of ISIL has upended many of our assumptions, and in deeper ways than regional security or in politics. As someone who spent nearly four decades as a United

States Marine, I've come closer than many to the reality of inhumanity, and I've never seen before the kind of depravity and brutality in this region that ISIL represents and in fact, that ISIL celebrates. While few of us could have imagined the rise of such a divisive force, there is potentially another set of lessons we can learn from the global response to ISIL, which I'll henceforth refer to by its Arabic acronym, Daesh.

Several years ago, few would have assumed that so many nations from so many different traditions, with different political systems and faiths and interests, could come together as a coalition over multiple lines of effort, to confront a shared threat. For the past nine months, in my role as the President's Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter Daesh, I've been privileged to help to lead this collection of strong and diverse partners, as we've sought to build and to bind us all together in this common and important cause.

From the outset of this campaign, we have

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understood that countering Daesh would require an enduring effort and indeed success will require us to persist, to adapt, and to constantly reassess our activities in light of both victories and setbacks -- setbacks such as we experienced in A-Ramadi last month. Having arrived in Doha from a ministerial of the Coalition's small group in Paris, where yesterday the ministers from the campaign's leading partners discussed the way forward, I'm confident that Ramadi has actually redoubled our resolve and in Baghdad last week where I met with senior government officials and security officials, I saw how the same was true for our Iraqi partners.

Now having been part of four previous coalitions over the course of my career, and having commanded the coalition of 50 nations in Afghanistan, I've seen how important it is to understand the ups and the downs of a campaign within the context of strategic objectives. And yes, it is vitally important that we learn from the experience of Ramadi, and that we learn the right lessons. But it's also

imperative that we see the direction of our campaign from the more expansive horizon than just last month, or next month. Today we're nearly a full year from the series of horrific events in Iraq which compelled the United States to act and ultimately to convene a broad global coalition. It was at this time last June that Daesh fighters began pouring down the Tigris River valley. It was a moment where Iraq was under siege and largely isolated in the world. Multiple Iraqi cities fell. Entire Iraqi divisions collapsed and the northern approaches to Baghdad were exposed. On 10 June, Mosul, a city of more than 1.5 million people, collapsed under the hammer blows of Daesh. And a few weeks later, it was from that city's grand mosque, Nur al-Din Mosque, that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, also known as Abu Du'a, would proclaim the so called Caliphate.

To the west, Daesh broke through the border town of al-Chaim and poured east along the Euphrates River towards Baghdad. Daesh's spokesman, Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, vowed "the battle will soon rage

in Baghdad and in Karbala." Shortly thereafter, launched a series of multi-pronged attacks further into northern Iraq massacring minority populations, enslaving hundreds of women and girls, surrounding tens of thousands of Yazidis on Sinjar Mountain and opening a clear route to Erbil, the region's capital. All of this together prompted the United States to act.

First we surged intelligence assets over Iraq from one ISR sortie a month to 60 per day. The aim was to gain a very granular picture of the ISIL network to begin the process of targeting. It would be essential to future operations. Second, we established the joint operation centers, both in Baghdad and Erbil, restoring critical relationships that we had had before with Iraq's central government and Kurdish commanders. Third, we deployed our Special Forces teams to assess Iraqi security formations, which a focus on Baghdad's defenses, ensuring that those defenses could hold and that our personnel and those of the international community

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could be protected. And fourth, we focused on helping the Iraqi's maintain their political process, following national elections, to stand up a new government.

These actions were absolutely essential in the immediate term but were by no means sufficient to counter the scope and the scale of the threat. At route, Daesh is not an Iraqi problem, it is not a Syrian problem, Daesh is a regional problem that is trending towards global implications. It was out of a keen awareness of the global implications of this emergency and the unthinkable human implications if it were to be allowed to go unabated. President Obama and Secretary Kerry resolved to build a Global Coalition last September and it was then that the White House asked me to assist in organizing and consolidating and coordinating this coalition as the President's Special Envoy.

In my service over the past nine months, I've now traveled to 24 capitals, many of them repeatedly, and during that time, we have assembled a

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global coalition of more than 60 states and entities and unlike other coalition campaigns I've been part of, we've had to build this coalition out of whole cloth. When I was the commander of our N.A.T.O. forces in Afghanistan, our authorities derived from a United Nations Security Council resolution and our framework for organization rested upon the North Atlantic Council. We had neither of those present in the organization of this Coalition, and we've had to build it from the ground up.

Last December in Brussels, the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL's objectives and commitments were first outlined in a joint statement agreed to by 60 partners, who declared their unanimous commitment to counter Daesh along five mutually reinforcing lines of effort. But as I often say, while it is the Coalition's kinetic actions, its military actions that receive the most attention, it is the aggregate effects of the Coalition's activities across multiple lines of effort, that will in the end, determine the Coalition's success. That is why in every visit I

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make to a Coalition capital, and in every conversation I have with a Prime Minister or a King or a President, I describe our campaign as organized across five lines of effort.

First is a military component to deny safe haven and to provide security assistance to our partners. Second is disrupting the flow of foreign fighters. Third is disrupting access to the financial resources available locally to Daesh and through the international financial system. The fourth is providing humanitarian relief and stabilization support, and finally, counter messaging or defeating Daesh as an idea.

Over each of these five central lines of effort, coalition activities are directed by specific working groups, co-led by two or three Coalition partners. For example, the counter finance, the counter ISIL finance working group is co-led by Italy, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States. The foreign fighter task force and working group is co-led by the Netherlands and Turkey. The counter ISIL

messaging working group is co-led by the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States. The military support working group, by the United States and Iraq. And for stabilization support, that working group is led by Germany and the United Arab Emirates. And each one of these working groups is heavily populated by member states, all of whom are involved either in planning or providing resources ultimately to achieve our objectives.

The kind of diverse and robust global leadership and activity we have enjoyed within this coalition is in my experience unprecedented in both its scope and the level of activity in so short a time. And as we work to operationalize and indeed intensify our activities that result directly from our consultations yesterday, we have an opportunity to challenge assumptions about what a collection of committed nations can make possible. Briefly, let me provide an overview of the Coalition's progress over our central lines of effort and some of the ways that the Coalition is evolving to confront an adaptable

enemy.

Our first line of effort is focused on providing security support for our partners on the ground, and while these efforts are the purview of the U.S. Central Command and its partners, it is the task of the Coalition and our leadership to ensure that the Coalition's activities over each of the lines of effort are synchronized and mutually supporting. As I indicated, Ramadi is a loss we must understand. But we should not forget that Daesh has also been defeated in many places in Iraq -- in Babel, in De'alla, in Ninua, in Kirkuk, along the Mosul Dam and Mount Sinjar and Rabia Crossing and in its assault on the KRG. In Kobani, in Syria, where Daesh hoped yet again to achieve a media spectacle in front of the entire world, they were defeated. In Tikrit, when Prime Minister Abadi asked for the help of the Coalition at a decisive moment in the assault and the clearance of that city, the Coalition delivered and the Iraqi security forces were able to clear that population center. Today Daesh has lost over 25 percent of the

populated territory it once held in Iraq.

The Coalition has played a vital role in helping local forces make these gains. Fifteen partners are helping to build the Iraqi security force's capacities and six partners are contributing to the Coalition's Advise and Assist Mission. Building the capacity of Iraqi security forces will take time, and it is only recently that our four building partner capacity training sites became fully operational. And with each passing week, these camps are producing more and more of the Iraqi security forces necessary to recover the territorial integrity of the country. Daesh's operations in Ramadi also highlighted the vital importance of the Al-Anbar province, not simply as a part of the shaping operations for the recovery of Mosul, but as a strategic priority in the campaign. It is one-third of Iraq's territory. It is of great significant importance to Jordan and to Saudi Arabia. Heading east out of Al-Anbar, it is the gateway to Baghdad, to Karbala and to Najaf. Headed west, it's the means by

which Daesh's resupply and sustainment are recovered from the Syrian border. And unlike his predecessor, Prime Minister Abadi believes in functioning federalism, in decentralization of authorities to the provinces. So through the central government of Iraq, a strong effort is underway to arm the tribes, to provide resources and to empower Sunni's and Anbar to address a Sunni threat in their midst.

We also want to support the decisions of the legitimate local leadership in Anbar -- the Anbari Provincial Council, who, working directly with their governor, Governor al-Rawi, and the Prime Minister and the central government, have unanimously decided to permit the deployment of popular mobilization forces into the province for the purposes of supporting the security operations that will be necessary to recover al-Ramadi and ultimately liberate the province.

These Anbari leaders do not view these forces from strictly a sectarian prism, and understand that PMF forces can play a vital role in holding the line against Daesh. Indeed, many of the PMF fighters

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are not Shi'a hardliners but Iraqis who volunteered last summer, answering Grand Ayatollah al Ali al-Sistani's fatwa, to defend Iraq against Daesh. But we also remain very attentive to and concerned about extremist militia elements frequently influenced and led by Iranian leadership, where Iran may play a significant role in their presence, in the battle space. As we said many times, it is critical that all forces in the battle space fall under the command and the control of the government of Iraq in order for the counter ISIL operations to be successful. Prime Minister Abadi reaffirmed this at Paris at our Ministerial less than 24 hours ago.

As more territory is taken back from Daesh, we must also ensure we are poised to power the Iraqi government to act in relief of the liberated populations, and as one of the Ministers said yesterday in Paris, when a population is liberated, it has to feel liberated and something has to change to their benefit. And so we're working closely with the Iraqis with the support of our Coalition partners and

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in particular, the Arab states of the region, to help Iraq develop stabilization and recovery plans. The UAE and Germany are leading these efforts and Italy is playing an important role in developing police, who are vital to the process of the stabilization effort.

On stabilization itself, the U.N. Development program, in coordination with the Iraqis, has created a funding mechanism that channels contributions from international partners to Iraq to complete rapid projects in the immediate aftermath of the liberation of populations in the campaign. This fund is focused on restoring basic services and governance and providing the essential rescue if necessary for the liberated populations, and in particular for women and children. At the Ministerial this week in Paris, several partners joined the United States in committing substantial sums to this effort.

Now squeezing Daesh across, and its access to, its financial resources is one of the most effective mechanisms we have to disrupt operations and the management of the so called Caliphate. We're

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sharing information to block their access to the global financial system. We're uncovering points of access in the region and abroad for financial support. In the recent raid on the compound of Abu Sayyaf in Syria, we collected substantial information on Daesh's financial operations and we're gaining a much clearer understanding of Daesh's organizational construct and its business enterprise. Daesh still maintains financial resources and they're diverse. Beyond its oil enterprise, which we have shrunk through military activity, there are other aspects of its portfolio which include massive criminal extortion of populations under its control -- looting, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking, slave trade, potential profit from the sale of plundered antiquities. Daesh also operates in territory where there is an extensive criminal infrastructure to support illicit financial activities, much of it dating back historically to smuggling routes or to efforts by the Saddam regime to subvert sanctions in the 1990's.

The Coalition's counter messaging line of
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effort also is contesting Daesh's narrative across the platforms and languages. It's important that this key aspect be supported by credible Muslim voices and scholars and they have spoken out and they have rejected Daesh's ideology. In the Arab world, it's important that the voice discrediting Daesh be a Muslim voice and the face discrediting Daesh be an Arab face. And to that extent, the United Arab Emirates has established a joint center in Abu Dhabi to help coordinated as they counter Daesh messaging, not just in the region but helping us globally. And we're also discussing with other partners around the globe, the potential for the establishment of similar regional messaging centers.

The final line of effort that I'll mention today, and the area where I'll devote the most attention, involves almost all of our countries in this room and that is the countering of foreign fighters. This is an issue of prominent concern at every Coalition gathering including yesterday in Paris and nearly all of the conversations I have in capitals

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across the world, and rightly so. While Turkey's 900 kilometer border with Syria is the main point of entry into the battle space, the burden of meeting the foreign fighter threat and challenge clearly cannot rest with the Turks alone. In fact, the Turkish border is the last line of defense in this equation. Comprehensive approaches to reduce the foreign terrorist fighter flow must function as a strategic defense in depth, starting at the point of radicalization -- the point where someone chooses to be -- to fundamentally alter their life onto a path of radicalization. Last year's United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 calls upon all nations to strengthen their borders, share information, adjust their laws to criminalize traveling for terrorism. Within the Coalition we've begun to make important progress in that regard, working to share information and to harmonize our practices. More than 30 Coalition partners have now made legal and justice reforms intended to make it more difficult to travel to the battle space. But we also face a new reality.

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Potential foreign fighters need no longer leave their home countries or even leave their homes to be radicalized or be recruited, and then to be missioned and then to be committed. And the potential for radicalized individuals to conduct attack in their own countries is becoming an increasing concern as the so called lone wolf attacks continue to grow. This is why we need nations working together at each link along this chain, at every border, between a potential foreign fighter, and the battle space in their home communities and at the point of recruitment and radicalization, which is often a personal computer or a cell phone.

The journey to become a foreign fighter is a journey of transitions, transitioning to radicalization, transitioning across borders, transitioning into the battle space. And between each transition is a flow segment. And our mission must be to understand and to impede and disrupt the movement of foreign terrorist fighters in each of these segments. While the majority of foreign fighters

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travel to Iraq and Syria by air, there is no one route that they take. And foreign fighters increasingly use circuitous routes known as broken travel to avoid detection. There is also no one type of foreign fighter, no one single method of recruitment, no one source of financial support for travel, although we're gaining greater insights into all of those networks now. Within the global coalition we're establishing mechanisms and partnerships to address the diverse and multi-faceted nature of this threat. In fact the coalition's foreign fighter working group is organizing coalition activities across nine fronts, ranging from border control to information sharing to mapping travel, to post offensive foreign fighter flows. One critical issue we need to address is how we reach and how we rehabilitate and how we re-integrate the potentially thousands of young people who have become known to us and who will need our help returning to their societies as productive members.

From the point of radicalization and recruitment, to the process of rehabilitation, we as a

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coalition of, and a community of nations, must work together to confront this true generational threat. This is a great challenge and there's no denying that many societies find the idea of rehabilitating foreign fighters objectionable. And indeed those who have broken the laws of our lands must be held accountable. But long term detention cannot be the sole means of dealing with foreign fighters. I believe we must strive to be a coalition of compassionate states, especially when certain coalition partners have experienced success in this area, the promise of rehabilitation and re-integration is one that we should study and we should consider embracing. Earlier this year, I met with key Muslim leaders and social scientists in Singapore, who have successfully de-radicalized young men and in so doing supported their successful return to society. Now the numbers are not high for Singapore as they might be for other countries, but their success is notable. Out of the 57 releases from their de-radicalization program, there has been only one recidivist. Belgium and

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Austria and Germany have also developed successful reintegration programs and lessons to provide in a Western context. For its part, Saudi Arabia has developed a set of effective practices for the specific cultural and national need of that country, the Kingdom, at the Mohammad bin Naif Center.

So there are examples of successful rehabilitation and reintegration processes and we will be exploring those as time goes on. To confront this challenge, there will be no one size fits all. Any successful approach will have to respond uniquely at the local social and conditional and religious realities that ultimately govern the societies in which foreign fighters return. At the same time, some of the forces which compel young men and increasingly young women to become foreign fighters are thoroughly global and modern in nature. It's a horrible irony that such an anti-modern force as Daesh has such a deft understanding of certain insecurities that come with being a young person, in a modern multi-cultural world. Daesh is practiced at exploiting a sense of

rootlessness and separation that many young people feel in their communities, whether in minority communities in the west, in certain Arab societies, or in Southeast Asia, the feeling of disenfranchisement and otherness is present and powerful for many. There is a separation between these young people and what is defined as mainstream or majority culture. There is a separation between the opportunities that young people see on their smart phones and those they believe that are truly available to them in their own lives. There is a separation between these young people and the true depth and the richness of the Islamic faith. We must save our children. We must guard against the manipulations of these separations and these anxieties, while at the same time, working to address the root causes. Truly this is no small task. It is a matter of our working together as a coalition and as a community of nations, to ensure that the promise of modernity is available for all to achieve.

In my discussions with Islamic scholars and Imams and Mullahs over the years, I've been told that

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it is by embracing modernity and connecting with the world, not through its rejection, that a Muslim can fully appreciate the richness of his or her faith. And whether my own, during my own service in al-Anbar and Afghanistan and within units under my command, I have seen the kind of Muslim faith practiced and lived to its fullest. It is an experience that has challenged me to be a better Christian. And I'm grateful for my exposure to the rich and the true nature of the faith of Islam.

Developing this sense of shared understanding and mutual respect strengthens our ability to act in a shared purpose which is absolutely essential in the fight in which we are now engaged. When Daesh seeks to divide and conquer, we must draw strength from the diversity of our Coalition. When Daesh seeks only, when men succeeds only when men and women feel little connection to their governments and to their society, it is necessary for all of us to work together to fashion better models. When Daesh defines itself by what it seeks to destroy, we must

define our ultimate efforts by what we seek to build together. And when we see groups and individuals seeking to affiliate and align themselves with Daesh in several parts of the world, we see clearly how these challenges are not unique to one region. Indeed the growth in the number of Daesh affiliated groups is a challenge that the Counter ISIL Coalition is beginning to confront.

When the Coalition coalesced last fall, partners came together to counter Daesh in Syria and Iraq, not forces which were affiliated with them globally. They were not apparent to us at that point. Since Daesh declared the Caliphate nearly a year ago, we have seen organizations in several countries seeking to become an affiliate or a, as is known, distant province of the so called Caliphate. But not every group that raises the black flag represents the same threat. Many of these groups are made up of simple criminal organizations or contained insurgencies. But at the same time, there are certain affiliates who could present a clear danger to our

coalition capitals and our respective homelands. As a coalition we need a sound strategic framework for judging both the sophistication of these groups and the scale of their connection to core Daesh, that core element in Iraq and Syria.

In trying to determine the threat of a potential Daesh affiliate, I find it useful to ask a series of questions, which helps us in our own analysis. First, what command and control does core Daesh have over this group? Second, has Daesh leadership decided to link itself publicly with this group and coordinate their propaganda and messaging in a shared narrative? Third, can core Daesh and this potential affiliate exchange resources, including funding and foreign fighters. And fourth, and most importantly, can this group threaten a Coalition homeland? If the answer to most of these questions is yes, the Coalition has ways to mitigate the threat, primarily along the three lines of Coalition effort which is countering finances, countering the movement and the threat of foreign fighters, and countering in

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the messaging realm. And those contributions would build on local, regional, bilateral and multilateral actions that would be underway.

We must also not forget that Daesh's legitimacy is tied to the so called Caliphate, a proto state with a specific geography. And that means our overarching objective must remain countering core Daesh within Iraq and Syria. Squeezing and defeating Daesh there, strikes a blow at the distant provinces as well. So as a Coalition we cannot eliminate every rivalry, whether between different nations or different faiths or those who hold different political or historic grievances, one against another. In coordinating to counter Daesh, imprising a spirit of mutual interest and mutual respect over differences, we can change assumptions about how nations work together, and I have seen that within this Coalition already.

Over nine short months, we've come together with dozens of partners to confront the current emergency, while at the same time, creating structures

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and organizing mechanisms to hold together strong partners over an enduring campaign. Having commanded a theater of war and a major coalition effort in Afghanistan, I'm beginning to see strategic momentum building. But sustaining that momentum takes daily attention across the coalition and within the lines of efforts in the working groups. And it means learning from setbacks and letting them not define our long term campaign. And this will be a long term campaign. Aspects of it like defeating Daesh's ideology will likely take a generation or more. But we can and we must rise to this challenge. In an age where we are more interconnected than at any other time in human history, Daesh is a global threat, and if we do not defeat this threat with strength and unity, our collective future will hold more groups like Daesh, who use the tools of modernity like the ease of world travel, our global financial networks and the openness of the internet, to wreak havoc upon the progress of humanity, which has been achieved at such a high cost by all of us, over centuries.

The leaders and the experts who are assembled today, assembled in this room, arguably no better than anyone else the importance of the unity of this effort, the sustained pursuit of peace and the need to adapt and thrive in challenging circumstances such as these. As we continue to fight to degrade and defeat Daesh, we all in the Coalition hope we can count on you for your wisdom, your advice, your energy and your efforts in support over the long term. Thank you very much for your time this morning. (applause)
Thanks very much.

MR. JONES: Are we on? Can you hear me? Can you hear me now? Thank you General Allen for that. Before I ask you a couple of questions, let me just ask you to clarify something that you touched on. You seem to draw a distinction between nationally mobilized, however inspired, nationally mobilized Sunni militias serving within or at least in coordination with Iraqi forces on the one hand and Iranian backed Shi'a militias on the other. Did I get that right? Did you draw the distinction?

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GENERAL ALLEN: You did. It's an important distinction and it's seldom reported at all and often when it is, it's not accurately reported. And it's worth taking a couple minutes to talk about it. Last year as it appeared that Iraq was really in serious trouble, Grand Ayatollah Sistani issued a fatwa and mobilized the Masuria in a call for Iraqis to come defend their country. Obviously at that particular moment, much of what we would consider Sunni Iraq was off the table and it was beleaguered. It was largely completely under threat and not many of those individuals were able to rally to the flag, and many chose not to. But many of the volunteers as we call them came from the south where one day they were a teacher or a mechanic, and the next day they were handed an AK-47 and organized into these organizations called the popular mobilization committee, of which then the operational component was a popular mobilization force.

That organization is part of the broader term Shi'a militia as has been applied to them and to

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the more extremist elements that we have seen and come to know, Suba Haq, Kitab Hezbollah, Promise Day Brigade, Badar Corps, others. But they are now distinct from them. And Prime Minister Abadi and the Grand Ayatollah have called for those elements both to submit and to take command from the central authority of the Iraqi security forces, and they're now doing that. Where that process began to unfold most graphically was in the fighting at Tikrit where at some point in the early portion in the fighting in Tikrit, many of those elements bogged down in the defensive positions of Daesh and Prime Minister Abadi ultimately ordered the PMF elements to submit to the command and control of the Iraqi security forces, and it was for two reasons. He's been very clear. He was clear as recently as yesterday, that all armed groups in Iraq must ultimately come under the control of the central government or disband. Now obviously we have those problematic groups that have built up their own synergy over time and they have their own alignment with Iran and that's a problem. But those other

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elements which convened because of the fatwa, there will be at some point, the subsuming of those into the National Guard brigades which I just had the chance to speak with the speaker of the Parliament, Salim Jabouri who is working hard to get the legislation through the Iraqi parliament, approving the National Guard legislation. They will be subsumed into the National Guard brigades or they'll be demobilized and sent home. So in that case, and I think we all recognize that with the collapse of much of the Iraqi security forces, there will be a need for the popular mobilization forces, for the clearing of the population, the clearing of and liberating of elements of the population for some time to come. It is the Prime Minister's intent that the preponderance of the fighting and the liberating specifically of the population centers being conducted by the regular forces -- federal police, Iraqi army, the counter terrorism service and other elements within the regular forces, and that the popular mobilization forces stay outside the population centers, control

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roads, set up checkpoints and that sort of thing, which is actually happening now around Ramadi as the squeeze begins to occur. So it really is important to understand there is a distinction between the two and the Provincial Council of Al-Anbar, and I don't know necessarily all the members today, but if that group as a body voted unanimously to accept the presence of PMF elements in Al-Anbar, for the purposes of recovering Ramadi and the liberation of the province, they have made the very clear distinction in their minds, and it's important for us to understand that distinction as we go forward. All right, thank you for that opportunity.

MR. JONES: I'm going to stay on Iraq for a moment. Then I'm going to walk you across the border into Syria. You talked about the mobilization also of the Sunni forces, popular forces, in Anbar. Do you worry about what Ken Pollack has called disastrous success, i.e. in a moment in time, maybe some months down the road, where we decisively push back ISIL or Daesh from a particular territory, but then there's no

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real Iraqi governance structure, there are popularly mobilized forces, competing forces potentially, and a potentially disastrous scenario there?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well I think there is the potential for that scenario. But we've recognized that and the conversations that we have had with the Iraqi national, the political leadership and the security leadership, is for all of us to fully understand what's going to be required for this counter offensive. And I'll just take a second with you on this because this is important as well. The counter offensive really has four components to it and as we move in the direction of a populated area, small town or large municipality or Mosul, which will be probably the climactic battle, the first phase of the counter offensive is the clearing phase. And that phase is the portion of the offensive that moves Daesh out of the population. What's then important to understand is, that's immediately in the aftermath of that is when the stabilization phase begins. And there's a very important component to the

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stabilization phase. And it's one that Prime Minister Abadi has, to his credit, recognized and it's one that he's grappling with and there's limited capacity but they're working at this. And that is that if you liberate a population with a force that is largely or even predominantly Shi'a, and that liberating force ultimately for some reason sits on top of that population for some period of time, we may well expect that tensions are going to emerge, and then we have the consequent tragedies that we have seen in places. So inherent in the process of the counter offensive, and we're actually working this very hard -- is the requirement that in the immediate aftermath of the successful clearance of the population, that we secure that population, in Al-Anbar for example, either with Sunni tribes or with the recovered, reclaimed and redeployed Iraqi police of the Al-Anbar province. This is an intentional aspect of the counter offensive. We'll have to do what we have to clear Daesh, but then we have to secure the population, and that should be done with Sunni police or Sunni tribes

and we're trying to invigorate both of those. There's a brand new provincial chief of police in Al-Anbar. He is taking the steps to recover the police now. They're starting to collect, Italy, to its great credit, is putting together a group of states that will begin the process of training them, so that they are immediately available to be part of the stabilization process. The next part is the installment of the governance element. There has to be a governance element that immediately begins the process of working the stabilization effort and the implementation of the stabilization fund so that this quick reaction application of money, this high speed development of projects to support the liberation of the populations has both a governance element to control and a police element to stabilize it. So it's not an insignificant process, and part of what we have sought to do is to describe it in all of its components and nuances and take it apart and begin to work at each one of those components, either specifically working with the Iraqis to build

capacity, or energizing components of the Coalition to provide support. And I think that's a really important point. So Ken Pollack's theory is really important. And we have certainly paid attention to that potential catastrophic outcome. And it is in this effort, and Ken and I first met in Al-Anbar frankly, in a diwan, it is in fulfilling this envisaged aspect of the counter offensive, as this minister yesterday said, from one of our Nordic states, when a population is liberated, it's got to feel like it's liberated, and something has to change dramatically for them. This is our hope.

MR. JONES: Let's go across the border and let me just ask you this bluntly. Can we ultimately defeat ISIS or Daesh without a substantially more robust Syria (inaudible)?

GENERAL ALLEN: First we have to understand that the work of my effort is focused on Daesh but in the end, it ultimately supports a Syria policy which seeks to create within the Syrian people the capacity ultimately to make a decision about their future. The

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U.S. policy in the end is that however that transition occurs, and we've got ideas on that, and you and I talked about it briefly this morning, and I think those ideas are evolving potentially in some pretty important ways. However that process unfolds, the outcome in Damascus will not include Bashar al-Asaad. How that process unfolds, the modality of that process, what that road map looks like, is under some pretty intense discussion right now. There will clearly be a Russian component to it; there will probably be an Iranian component to it in some form or another. But it is very clear to the United States and I think it's very clear to most of our partners that the agony that we have seen unfold in Syria over the last several years, horrendous casualties that have emerged, largely because of Bashar al-Asaad, but in second and third order effects, other activities. We're not going to solve this in a military sense. However, military capacity for the moderate Syrian elements, which is something that we hope to improve, something we hope to better support, as it relates to

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Daesh, can also help to secure large portions of Syria, which can give us the platform ultimately for the Syrian people, with a Syrian political leadership, to have a role ultimately in the political diplomatic track that we hope can emerge from this that can ultimately end Bashar al-Asaad's presence in the government and move on to the next phase. Lots of nuance to that, but I will tell you that there is a really energetic discussion about that now.

MR. JONES: Okay. We're going to go to the audience for a very quick round of questions. I'll just take two or three questions, and I'll come back to you to answer. This gentleman right on the front row.

MR. LAMANI: Thank you very much.

MR. JONES: I can hear you sir. I can hear you.

MR. LAMANI: Okay. My name is Mokhtar Lamani. I used to be the representative of the U.N. in Damascus seven years ago, Special Envoy in Iraq. I thank you very much for the illuminating presentation

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about the steps to have a proactive action about what should be done against Daesh, but there are two things that you did not (inaudible) Iraq. We know that one of the problems of Iraq -- Iraq at the occupation was divided in two major groups -- a group of people who accepted to do a political process, and the occupation. And another group who refused everything and they were ever resisting. All the efforts are done with the first group, and we know even the group of resistance that joined in the beginning when Daesh moved one year ago to Mosul, and we know that a lot even of officers of the old Army are joining and working there, and we know also that it's a reaction, that the rest of the world forgot about us. Nobody was taking care and especially (inaudible), the sectarian regime of (inaudible). And these people that they were helping, it's not the speaker of the parliament, it's not the Council of al-Anbar. Are there any steps to be done? And the people, when you talk to them in that part of the world, of Iraq, they keep telling you, you know, we used to see during the

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last years, the Iraqi army, it's as an occupying army, not as part of us. Is there anything to include, to be very inclusive for everybody? And people also don't -- the last thing I would like to mention -- they didn't forget the very bad experience of the awakening forces and what happened for the 120,000 people that defeated in 2006 the al-Qaeda. Thank you.

MR. JONES: Okay, I'll take one, perhaps two more questions, if they're very brief, because we don't have much time, so I'll go to the back.

MR. TELHAMI: Good morning General. Shibley Telhami from Brookings and the University of Maryland. With regard to the rebuilding of the Iraqi army, you said making progress, but there's an immediate mission obviously particularly in Ramadi. The Secretary of Defense made the statement about the Iraqi army not fighting. And obviously it became politically sensitive, but in the meanwhile, the Iraqi army's mobilizing more as a Shi'a army with the slogans that they have because that's really to generate the excitement into fighting. The mission that you face

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is not just to retake Ramadi, but also holding onto it. Can the Iraqi army succeed if it is seen to be implementing in a Shi'a mission in Ramadi, given that the population obviously will not look favorably upon that, so how do you deal with this emotional issue at this time, beyond just the mission of you know, retaking Ramadi, but also holding onto it and getting the population to support?

GENERAL ALLEN: Let's just talk about these two.

MR. JONES: Okay. All right, so back to you General.

GENERAL ALLEN: Sir, your question is really important and the answer to that question is going to define the future of Iraq, frankly. Obviously the Sunni population in Iraq has for a number of years felt disenfranchised. You talked about the disaster of the sons of Iraq. I was present, standing next to Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha the day he announced the Sahawa. And the Sahawa really played an important role. It was the mobilization of a population not

just to liberate itself but to defend itself. And in the aftermath of our departure, what happened to them is in fact a tragedy.

This is going to take a long time. But I have found in Prime Minister Abadi an individual who understands that there is no future for Iraq is there is not an enfranchisement of the Sunni's in the process. And he has a difficult political moment. He has to accommodate the political energies of his own constituency but aggressively reach out to the Sunni leadership but very importantly, the Sunni population at the ground level in order for them to want to be participants in a unified Iraq but also in fact achieve a capacity to be participants in a unified Iraq. To that extend, and I mentioned it briefly in my remarks, he is a believer in something that we did not see in his predecessor, called functioning federalism. And I think it's important for scholars who are studying this to understand what he means by that, because it is his intent to devolve power from the center, in this case to the Sunni governors, and

to the governors and the provincial councils, to give them more capacity with greater shared revenue from the center, to provide for the actual governance of the Sunni populations within the Sunni provinces, the application of resources which will be fair shared from the center, but very importantly as well, provide their own security. The concept of the national guard law is that within the provinces, a brigade native to the demography of that province, so in Anbar's case, which is almost entirely Sunni, it would be a Sunni brigade which would answer first and foremost to the governor and so he would have his provincial police, led by the provincial Chief of Police and the national guard brigade. And there may be national army units in the province, but those units which may have a very substantial Shi'a population within those units, those will largely be training in particular training areas. They will not be in the cities, they will be in their own bases, so the intent is ultimately for the central government to devolve more authority and more power to the governance across the country, but in this case to

the Sunni areas and to provide them their fair share of the revenue, to provide them their own capacity to defend themselves, and that's a very good start. And so your point is, how does this happen? It happens in the parliament, but it also happens in how the liberation occurs. If it comes from top down, you know, we've got difficulties with the legislation, getting it through the parliament, and that's going to be the case we'll have to face for some period of time. But there's another means for reconciliation, and that is what he's doing, which is empowering, in Anbar's case, Governor Rawi and the Provincial Council and the Sheikhs and those local municipality leadership -- he's empowering them to be key components in the recovery of al-Anbar and Ramadi at large. And if we do take care of the populations when they're liberated, if they do take care of them, that creates a process of reconciliation from the ground up. So this is not easy. Your point is well taken. It's been something that has been underway now for a very long time. But I think that the vision of the

mechanisms of this are at least visible now. With regard to Ramadi and the liberation of populations, as I said in my remarks, it is Prime Minister Abadi's intent first and foremost to, in the long term to integrate more successfully the sectarian and ethnic nature of the people of Iraq into the federal forces, whether they're police or army, or the CTS. It's his intent to do that. It's also his intent to use the PMF elements outside cities, clear the cities with the regular forces and immediately have local security forces move in to protect the population so that Sunni's are protected by Sunni's. And I think that's an important distinction that has not been properly explained, and that's the best I can do given the fact that I'm completely out of time now. So thank you for your question.

MR. JONES: General, thank you for your service, and thank you for taking time to come talk to us here today.

GENERAL ALLEN: It's good to be with you.

Thank you so much. (applause)

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