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P R O C E E D I N G S

GENERAL ALLEN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Brookings.

My name is John Allen, and I'm the president of this Institution. And it is a great honor to welcome you, and for those of you coming in over webcast, to welcome you as well.

Today we wanted to gather for an event that acknowledges the fifth anniversary of the formation of the Global Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State.

Five years ago I had just left my position as a senior advisor to the secretary of defense on Middle East security, where I worked with Secretary Kerry on the Middle East peace, and specifically the Israeli-Palestinian peace plan.

I was on my way to Brookings to be a scholar here, I use that term loosely, and I refer to myself, and I thought that my government service was over and I was really looking forward to working with colleagues here on some important issues.

It was about that time that I got a call from the White House, from Denis McDonough, the chief of staff, and asked me to, on behalf of the president, to come back into the government to be the special presidential envoy to the global coalition, a process that would start to build that coalition on behalf of the president United States and our allies to what would become an 81-nation organization.

I accepted that mission as quickly as I possibly could and in that dire moment the United States exerted exceptional leadership in the world.

We were still reeling, if you'll recall at the time, from the effects of the so-called Arab Spring, the Islamic State had exploded out of the instability of the region, and in particular as a result of the Arab Spring there were a number of states that had been destabilized with civil wars. Syria being absolutely the worst, it was horrific, a great humanitarian catastrophe.

And out of that maelstrom came the Islamic State. And it exploded into an

invasion in Iraq, and the United States and its partners quickly organized to deal with this issue.

Five years on, we thought we'd gather today to recall that moment and to reflect upon we learned and perhaps to recite a bit of the history.

I'm really honored today to be joined by the most recent special envoy to the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State, my former deputy and a cherished friend. Full stop, none of this would have been possible without his dedication and his leadership. And so today Brett McGurk who joins us is the Frank E. and Arthur W. Payne distinguished lecturer at the Freeman Spogli Institute and Center for Security Cooperation at Stanford University. And he'll begin teaching very shortly there for the fall semester. Brett it is wonderful to have you with us again.

And coming in via webcast from Jordan is Lise Grande, who at the time was the deputy special representative of the U.N. Assistance Mission in Iraq. And I don't use the word "hero" frankly very often, or lightly, but Lise is absolutely a hero in the history of this crisis. Her efforts were crucial in stabilizing Iraqi towns and cities, helping liberated populations recently under the subjugation of ISIL's horrific presence, and giving the government and everyday Iraqis alike the ability to contribute to their own rebuilding.

As if that weren't enough, Lise today is pursuing another critical mission as resident coordinator of the U.N. in Yemen. Lise, we're glad to have you with us. I think our web bridge is still up. We're glad to have you with us. We hope that you are safe and well.

And last but certainly not least, we are all joined by Susan Glasser who will be conducting and moderating the interview and the conversation this afternoon. We know her from her great work on The New Yorker and Politico fame, and during the time of the period of the conflict against the Islamic State, she followed it very closely and wrote about it.

So as soon as I've wrapped up my remarks we'll turn the stage over to Susan to conduct the run of conversation which will go for about an hour on the stage, and

then come out to you, the audience, for about a-half-hour. As a reminder we are live this afternoon. We are on the record, and we are going out by webcast.

So with that, if I may, invite Susan and Brett to the stage. We'll begin.

MS. GLASSER: Well thank you so much, General Allen. And thank you, of course, to everyone here who has decided to share a little bit of your afternoon with us, which is always a challenge in Washington, but it's a little bit more eventful of a Tuesday than some. So I'm also grateful to Brookings for tearing me off of Twitter, and I promise I won't be tweeting from the stage. But I hope any of you will interrupt us if additional events warrant it.

GENERAL ALLEN: If someone else is fired?

MS. GLASSER: Now, Lise, we can see you here, and I think -- oh good, everyone else can see you up there on the screen as well. Thank you for joining us too, it's always important I think to have ground truth from the region, and someone who's actually out there doing work, so we thank you for taking some time to be with us as well tonight.

You know, I was thinking about, well, this is such a great idea for a conversation, right. We don't have the ability to take our breaths, to pause and to reflect upon the hectic pace of the last few years, especially when it comes to really deep and ongoing questions about the U.S. role in the Middle East.

And so I was really grateful to have the chance to moderate this conversation. But I have to say that I've tried to think about how we might do this several times over the last few days, and events, as they say, keep getting in the way. (laughter) But I thought, okay, well we're going to have a little break first to talk about Afghanistan, because that's really in the news, and everybody's going to want to know what you think about that, and how that connects here.

And then I thought, well, also we are going to probably need to start first with just a little bit of what is our policy towards Syria and Iraq now. And then of course this morning comes the news that we are going to be headed for the fourth consecutive national

security advisor, calling into question once again what any of this means in an ongoing sense.

So, this is still, I think, a very important if anything perhaps a more important conversation now to talk about what happens when there's not only Washington dysfunction, but the rest of the world actually has explosive events that the United States and its partners have to figure out what to do something about.

And when I was speaking with General Allen to talk about this panel, I think this is a good starting point, yesterday, we were trying to conjure up just what a crisis moment it was five years ago, and I think that does tend to get lost in a lot of the inward-looking political drama, not only here in the United States but elsewhere in the intervening last few years,

But I'm hoping that we can actually start out by going back in time to that. We will have questions, and we can talk about, and I'm eager to hear what, not only General Allen, but Brett who worked with some of these folks what, if anything, you can tell us about that.

But let's all try to take a moment in time, and walk ourselves backwards five years, and why are we -- why is this something we're still talking about five years later?
General Allen?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, Susan thanks very much for consenting to do this. I never thought after that long list of challenges that you just list off that it would be -- the easiest part would be ISIS. (Laughter)

We're still talking about it because in many respects ISIS, ISIL, we'll call it ISIS today, ISIS remains a very virulent threat in the world whether it's in that area that we previously called core ISIL which was in Iraq or Syria, or whether it's the broadened, what we would call the provincial expansion of the Islamic State as it gained greater traction it would ultimately spread out into provincial areas like Boko Haram, and Ansar al-Sharia in Libya, and even into the Philippines, Meroe, which was the city taken by, supposedly, the

Islamic State, and then occupied for nearly a year.

And then we have the third function or the third manifestation of this entity which is on the Internet today. And so we have a residual presence on the ground, in the core area we have the provincial presence of Daesh or ISIL in these Salafi Jihadist organizations more broadly located around the world. And then we have it in social media and on the Internet, and that's the reason we still talk about it.

It wasn't sufficient to defeat its main force units in Iraq and Syria, and I have to be very quick in saying that the Iraqi troops that were involved in this were very brave, they worked very hard, they suffered enormously, the Iraqi population, the Syrian population suffered enormously from this. But the defeat of the main force units doesn't mean, as some would contend, that ISIL is defeated. It is still a very dangerous organization.

MS. GLASSER: We saw in just Afghanistan the other day in this attack, also credit being claimed by people who claimed affiliation to the Islamic State.

GENERAL ALLEN: Sure. It is one of the provinces the wilayats, as they call themselves, the Khorasan wilayat, which is the ancient Islamic province of that region which cuts across part of Afghanistan and Pakistan. And not surprisingly, many of the foot soldiers of this organization come directly out of the Taliban, and depending on where things go ultimately in Afghanistan, we may see this organization become even stronger, as we move towards a peace settlement. So, this is a very dynamic situation, and the organization is still quite virulent.

MS. GLASSER: Brett, do you agree that this is not a mission accomplished, a purely backward-looking exercise?

MR. MCGURK: Yes, and absolutely. I mean I've said that for some time. But I will say I don't think we should ignore or forget to draw the lessons on what we did starting at 2014. So, it's great to be here with General Allen, and just it's a tremendous honor, it's great to talk about these issues with having no responsibility for them right now.

But the experience with -- I was in Iraq of course in the summer of 2014

when Mosul, and with regular engagement with the president, the national security team to actually devise the campaign plan of strategy of how we were going to do this. That was an incredibly tense. I mean ISIS controlled 8 million people under its domain, when you have 40,000 foreign fighters pouring into Syria. We talked very seriously about evacuating our embassy in Baghdad. That's how serious the situation was.

And so I can talk about that summer, but once we got the plan together, and then the experience of going to all these capitals around the world, particularly with General Allen, from capital to capital. I mean literally took trips around the world at some points, from Malaysia to Australia, to Jordan.

And walking into a capital with the trust and cachet of the United States of America, with General Allen and his relationships that we had in every capital, and we were speaking for the United States government and the president, there was no question about that, and to say we need you to sign up for this with us, and here's what we are going to need.

And it was a unique moment I think of American leadership, and we built an extraordinary coalition, with 21 military partners on the ground in Syria, and in very dark days in which this looked hopeless; the Danes, the Brits, the U.K., the French, the Australians, New Zealanders, Spain took on a critical mission, signed up almost immediately, because of American leadership.

So it's very important now. Of course I stayed on with the Trump administration for a little bit. Ambassador Jim Jeffrey has taken on what was originally our role, and it is the one coalition that the Trump administration has carried forward. So that's a -- you know, that's some sign of -- a good sign. But we could not have done this without trust and confidence in the United States of America. I think it would be much harder to do today if there was a crisis --

MS. GLASSER: To starting over, exactly.

MR. MCGURK: If there's a real crisis I think it would be much more difficult

to pull partners together.

MS. GLASSER: Well, again I don't want to get to the end of the story before the beginning, but I do think people will want to have this context for the remarks later. Brett, it's fascinating that this coalition still exists, as you said, but I think a lot of us are confused as to in what way and what manner it still exists right now?

When you left the administration at the same time that Jim Mattis decided to resign this was -- the proximate cause in fact was the question of the president ordering a withdrawal from Syria at the same time, literally within days, that General Mattis and yourself had reassured the other members of this coalition that we would be remaining there.

So does the coalition still exist? And, you know, what is its mission? Do you think that that will turn out to have been a key moment? Or did they successfully paper it over?

MR. MCGURK: Look, there's a -- it's awkward because I don't want to -- the guys who are still there are doing very difficult work, and I think it's good that President Trump did not fulfill his initial decision to take everybody out on a fairly accelerated timeframe.

But like a fundamental defect in strategy making and policy that every administration struggles with, is aligning your objectives and what you're trying to do with your resources and what you can put in. And there's a tendency to set your objectives way up here, but not have an honest conversation about the resources you're willing to put in.

And what started to happen in Syria, and I know Ambassador Bolton is now on his way out of the White House, but this really started to happen when he came in the summer. We've really expanded our objectives dramatically in Syria, and we were pretty careful in the counter-ISIS campaign. Like, hey, let's be clear-eyed about what we're going to achieve. Okay.

Our objectives expanded tremendously in Syria. So we want to see Iran leave Syria, we want to still see Assad fundamentally change his governance structure

somehow through the Geneva process. We want to do all these other things, and we want to maintain an enduring defeat of ISIS, which is critical, which was not finished.

So our objectives have increased, as then the president says pull out all your resources, or 50 percent of your resources. That in my experience you're taking on risk week by week. And so if you don't have your ends and your means aligned your policy isn't stable. And I think in Syria right now that's where we are. And I think that's one reason why the coalition is still together, but I think it is difficult -- it's more difficult to sign up for the commitments than when General Allen and I were doing it.

GENERAL ALLEN: It was complicated as well, in that the decision wasn't coordinated with our allies, and that was the other issue.

MS. GLASSER: Right. So we --

MR. MCGURK: I'll just give an anecdote, because I mean we did have a process to set this campaign plan, and with General Mattis we got all of our coalition members together in December, and we said here's the plan for the next two years and we did get commitments and then, you know, the president reversed it. So anyway, this is all water under the bridge at this point, but it's emblematic of how it's difficult to lead a coalition or to have members sign up with us when you don't have a steady leadership, you have this kind of incoherence.

MS. GLASSER: So let's go back in time, and I want to find out how this team came together. Lise, how did they enlist you in this ragtag band here? How did you -- how did you join up with General Allen and Brett?

MS. GRANDE: Susan, thank you. And it's an honor, it's a privilege to be on the same panel with General Allen, and with Brett McGurk.

I have to apologize right from the start, because I'm cutting in and out constantly, so I hope I understand, Susan, the correct question, and I hope that I'm able to share ideas that actually make it into the room.

Susan, I think what you asked is, how did the U.N. become implicated in

this. The U.N. had a Security Council-mandated mission in Iraq for a number of years, and that mission served a variety of functions, it supported a political peace process in the country, and the part of the mission that I was responsible for was responsible for providing humanitarian assistance to civilians who were impacted by the conflict.

We also expanded the work of the mission to help stabilize the areas that were liberated by ISIS, by the Iraqi security forces and the coalition.

I joined the U.N. in Iraq in December in 2014, and in fact when I arrived literally Ramadi was falling, and of course Ramadi is not that far from the capital of Baghdad. I think there was a sense at the time that all those steps were already being taken to mobilize the coalition, to support the Iraqi security forces and pushing back on ISIS, they were within traveling distance of the capital.

It was also not very clear at that stage what needed to be done, not only on the military and security side to push ISIS back, but on the humanitarian side. When the battle for Ramadi reached full-pitched, literally, the entire population of that city fled, they left town. And in fleeing they needed to be looked after, they needed shelter, they needed medical help, they needed protection and support.

I think we realized at that stage that what was going to happen in the next year-and-a-half was that every time the coalition, in supporting the Iraqi security forces, liberated a city the entire population was going to flee.

I remember sitting with General Allen and Brett McGurk very early on and we had, literally, almost like an envelope, and we were trying to calculate how many civilians we thought would end up fleeing as the liberation campaign gained strength and expanded.

At that point I remember saying, with confidence, not more than two million civilians are going to flee. And of course by the end of the effort in Iraq, six million Iraqi civilians fled from their homes, six million Iraqi civilians were supported by the Iraqi government, the Iraqi security forces, the coalition and the U.N.

It was one of the most exceptional population movements anywhere that

we've seen, of course next to Syria as well.

MS. GLASSER: So, Ramadi is a good starting point in a way. You both were enlisted how much before this event occurred? Was it right around the same time?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, Brett had been in the mission in Iraq from the spring and summer, and I came in, informally, in the latter part of the summer, and then was commissioned in September.

Let me just add a couple things to what Lise said because in retrospect it's difficult to overstate how complex this was. We had been watching this began to unfold in terms of instability in northwest Iraq in the latter part of the spring, and it was a whole -- there were a whole series of events: suicide bombings, vehicle bombings, assassinations, sheikhs were being assassinated, police and military were being -- the senior leader were being assassinated, Imams, religious leaders were being assassinated, and these appeared to be individual acts.

When the Islamic State invaded en masse into northwest Iraq it became very clear, if you connected the dots, that they had been -- in military terms -- they had been undertaking phase zero activities to hollow out the leadership of that part of Iraq, so that as their main force units in the advanced down route one, down the Tigris River, ran into these Iraqi units they all just folded.

So it was a brilliant scheme, but we had missed it because our intelligence was oriented in another direction. So Brett and John Kerry, and of course under the leadership and support of the administration, began a whole series of rolling meetings, places like Riyadh, and Paris, and Wales and NATO which began to build the momentum for the coalition which came together for the first time on the 3rd of December, so it's not far from the fall of Ramadi.

But from a standing start we had to build a strategy that we could pursue, and this is where Lise came in, very importantly. The strategy had five lines of effort, the first was the military line, and that was Marty Dempsey and Lloyd Austin leading the

coalition, that Brett mentioned a moment ago, and he can come in behind me.

The second was we had to isolate the entire region from the flow of foreign fighters. We had never seen the flow of foreign fighters to any conflict like this one. I had been in Iraq before, I'd been in Afghanistan, we've never seen that many foreign fighters come from so many places quickly, and this became a result of the declaration of the caliphate which created a religious spiritual motivation for people to come serve the caliph and to serve the caliphate.

We had, as I said, military, the isolation of the area from foreign fighters both coming in and going home. A third area was to get after the finances. We'd also never seen a terrorist organization like this, this expansive, able to provide its own resources in many ways, we can talk about that if you like.

The fourth area was encountering the narrative, the message, and the narrative, and the information operations of the Islamic State which proved to be extraordinarily challenging. And the fifth area was where Lise came in very early, because we had learned lessons previously in the Iraq war, very early we established a very robust line of effort for the stabilization of liberated populations.

And this is where she, in conjunction with the UNDP, created something called the stabilization fund, and member states of the coalition, to include the United States, donated millions of dollars into this fund which she managed very deftly. And here's another example of when the U.N. and the United States work together really good things can happen.

The intent was that Iraq would fulfill the long-term reconstruction of the damaged areas, meanwhile the U.N. in conjunction with the coalition would immediately come in behind military operations to provide stabilization and sustainment to the horrific effects that the Islamic State had inflicted on the population.

So we weren't just getting organized, we had to stop the Islamic State which was headed for Baghdad, where Brett was, and potentially had to be evacuated, and we had

to get up and organized to support the liberated population, stop the flow of foreign fighters, counter the message and get after their finances all of them simultaneously, all in contact with the enemy.

So it's really -- as I think back upon it, I thought last night about it, this was a really dire moment, it was a real emergency because thousands of Iraqis were being killed, thousands of Syrians were being killed by this horrific organization, and we just had to stop it.

For one thing we had to keep it from getting into the KRG, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and they had turned towards Irbil which I think was a major strategic mistake for them, because that mobilized a lot of international support for the Kurds that we might not have otherwise seen if they had just gone south for Baghdad, the Kurds were spectacular in their efforts to fight.

And I don't know that they had the combat power to stop them, but the emergency of the potential for Kurdistan to go down to the Islamic State I think helped to mobilize international support. So this was a real dire moment, and this was where the international community came together very quickly under American leadership, and as allies, to begin the process of dealing with this.

MS. GLASSER: So Brett, yes, you're sitting there in Baghdad and you're thinking, some guys in pickup trucks are going to be here in three days? I mean this really was -- we forget about it but really, it was it was seen as possible.

MR. MCGURK: Yes. So, it depends on where I start the tape. I mean I was on record in 2013 about this rising threat and I testified, and you can kind of see it coming, and the foreign fighters flowing into Syria, the fact that the moderate opposition was very quickly co-opted by these jihadist extremist groups, who kind of rode the back of what was a legitimate revolution against the Assad regime, and just taking it (inaudible).

So you could see this coming. Fallujah fell to ISIS on January 1st, 2014. So I was in Iraq when Mosul fell, and just to give you a sense of the situation. I mean, so I'm

the guy on the ground. I was in northern Iraq, I went down to Baghdad, we picked up people aren't along the way because some of our facilities, we were pretty vulnerable.

And walking into a meeting with President Obama and the national security team, I got a phone call from a very senior Iraqi official who said hundreds of ISIS gun trucks were entering Baghdad, and Baghdad is falling. And there was no way to know whether that was true or not, because we didn't have the intelligence coverage and things.

At that meeting very quickly, you know, and this is why if you have an engaged president and a good process you can adapt and react quickly. President Obama ordered special forces into Baghdad mainly to observe what was going on. Who can we work with? Who can't we work with? What's the situation? That was a huge help.

MS. GLASSER: And this was when, approximately?

MR. MCGURK: This was in June of 2014, so this is about a week after Mosul. So those special forces got on the ground, they did an assessment of the situation which was a huge help in our planning, and then in putting the plan together, and this is with all the discussion about Afghanistan, the discussion is about this, you know, deal with the Taliban or not, or Camp David, the big question is: What are we trying to achieve? What are the resources going to be? How are we going to do it? So that's what we did on this.

And look, we're not going to put you U.S. combat forces on the ground to go clear all these cities, we're not going to do that, we have to work by, with and through local partners which we knew would take a long time, because the local partners were disintegrating.

So this is an enormous endeavor, but we put the plan together, and then again with the credibility of people like General Allen able to go to capitals, because there was a great skepticism in these capitals: how are we possibly ever going to do this?

I mean, look, you used to hear from some people who come through my office, you know: hey, look Brett, we just have to kind of -- nobody in the U.S. government, but some academic types would come in and say, you know what the truth is, ISIS is here to

stay, it's a state they -- you know, the people under their domain they have billions of dollars in resources, and there isn't really a force on the ground that's going to be able to take them on.

I mean I used to hear that at the time, but we said well that's, you know, completely unacceptable. We also had the plan to -- you know, you take advantage of opportunities. So in Syria we tried a number of things but when the battle of Kobani happened in the fall of 2014 we took advantage of an opportunity that we didn't envision when we drew the plan out. But because we had a coherent team we were able to adapt quickly to circumstance, and catch ISIS off-guard. That was kind of a key turning point.

MS. GLASSER: How much, you know, it's obviously the accounts are just still being written in effect of the Obama administration. But, you know, both of you had interesting vantage points. To what extent did having a president who clearly was not politically interested in getting us further embroiled in a Middle East conflicts necessitate the creation of this international coalition, right.

How much was this a sort of Obama response to United States not really politically being able to go it alone in Iraq once again, so soon after having invaded Iraq?

MR. MCGURK: Well, I say two things. Once we crossed the Rubicon and this began, I mean we had one of the most hands-on engaged commanders in chief I think we could have asked for, and regular engagement with the president, which was really critical in something -- I'm a big believer, serving in three administrations, if we're going to put young men and women in harm's way the commander in chief has to be directly engaged. It's not something you can just delegate, so that was pretty key.

But then how we drew up the campaign really revolutionized how we do these types of wars. I mean there's a lot of lessons learned. I mean our casualties over four years I think 18 Americans have died in combat, I knew some of them, but the casualties on the Syrian Democratic Forces side, and the Iraqi side, you're talking in the tens of thousands. This is a war, and the battle of Mosul, one of the largest urban battles which

Lise led the humanitarian effort on; we haven't seen anything like that since World War II.

So, we shouldn't forget this was a real brutal, horrible war, and it's not over, and we need to see it through. But yeah I think -- Obama was very clear that he wanted coalition burden-sharing, but also how we managed the campaign, it's not going to be American combat forces in these cities, but look -- to my final point, 30 seconds.

There were two models of how to take down their capital in Raqqa. One, one with U.S. forces kind of leading the way working with some partners, that was an option we drew up for President Obama and for President Trump, both of whom said, no we're going to go with the "By, With, And Through" model.

So you can think we should have gone in heavier and done it faster, there was just very little support for that, either in Congress, or I think anywhere in the country.

MS. GLASSER: So, General Allen, obviously you had extraordinary amount of service previous to this, both in Afghanistan and Iraq. So how much was what was now unfolding as you're being brought into this and in a different kind of role as a diplomat, how different and mindful were you of the lessons of those other conflicts? And, you know, how did you try to shape this differently on the front end?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, I think the two things. We had learned a lot, as Brett just said about: by, with and through, this doctrine of, if we work with indigenous forces in a constructive way both in terms of providing certain kinds of support but training and equipment, and then supported them operationally a lot can be accomplished, as opposed to simply our doing it ourselves.

You know, remember there was significant conversation in Washington about deploying several brigades to deal with this. The problem that you have is when you introduce these antibodies into the region sooner or later if they are the defeat mechanism and you pull those forces out you have left an unstable environment in which -- because of which then those who must deal with our departure will find that the situation may be, in fact, very unstable.

MS. GLASSER: Which is basically what had already just happened?

GENERAL ALLEN: That's right. So that what we learned was, the by, with, and through, that I think that was very important. We learned that -- we still had deep connections into the Iraqi security system, the security environment.

A quick story: I got in there relatively early very quickly after I got the job, and went into Baghdad, and met with the minister of interior who owns the police. Now the police had largely been, in many respects, run off. The presence of the blue shirts in conjunction with the civilian population really kept criminality to a minimum, and residual ISIS presence to a minimum as well.

But the police, and particularly in Anbar which is where I had really extensive and deep experience, the police had largely been run off. And the Iraqis were crying for police. We knew that we needed police to come in right behind the conventional military operations that clears a town, so the police can protect the civilian population, prevent the back-flash, if you will, of ISIS fighters, but there weren't any trainers on the ground.

And what we learned from the minister of interior who was a Badr corps guy, by the way, who in normal circumstances would probably have never talked to an American, but because of the emergency he did, and we had a great conversation. He mentioned that the Italians had been very important to the training of Iraqi police.

And so within 24 hours of that conversation I flew to Rome, met with the minister of defense, met with the head of the Carabinieri, and within 24 hours of that there was an Italian Carabinieri colonel on his way to Iraq to organize the training.

So getting the police into the fight was something we had learned from the previous fight. But I think of all of the various tactical lessons that we learned the one that -- and this goes back to Lise's role in this -- we knew that if we didn't move immediately after we liberated a population, first of all the suffering that that population had experienced was incomparable to anything we'd ever seen before,

We had to come in and do whatever we could in a humanitarian sense to relieve that suffering. But if we didn't do that, all of the reasons why many of them have been willing to accept ISIL to begin with, ISIL would reflash. And maybe Lise could talk about how we put emphasis from the very beginning on the stabilization phase within the campaign that would follow the military action, the establishment of the police on the civilian population.

And right behind it would come the resources to help to stabilize the population after that, and to give the opportunity for internally-displaced people, IDPs, to come home, because you know you have won -- the population will flee -- you know you have won when the IDPs come home.

So if you've established the right environment for a liberated population and the IDPs are flowing back to their original locations, then you've been successful. And she was largely responsible for getting that process organized.

MS. GLASSER: Well that's right, Lise. I hope you can tell us a little bit about, you know, what you did on the front end, organizationally, to try to make sure that Iraq and its cities were restored as quickly as possible. It is a very different story than what we've seen next door in Syria, for example. So tell us what, at the very beginning -- you know, it took a long time in the end to liberate Mosul, you know, that was the big discussion.

I think almost from the very beginning the moment that it fell, when would the operation be to retake it, but in the end you had to deal with many, many other cities before you dealt with this enormous fight in Mosul. So tell us how that unfolded.

MS. GRANDE: The insight that we had into how to stabilize the cities that were newly liberated, we recognized that populations were going to come home for three reasons: one, because they trusted the security forces that were on the ground.

GENERAL ALLEN: Very important.

MS. GRANDE: Two, because basic services, including electricity and water were functioning. And three, because they knew that there was a way that they could restart

their lives. There was funding available to get back to work, there was funding available so that the health centers were operational, there was funding available so that the schools could start.

So we knew we had to do three things, and we had to do them very quickly. Typically stabilization efforts before Iraq would focus on very large-scale projects; they would focus on repairing an entire grid starting at the top of the grid and working down. They would focus on, quite frankly, programs that had a very long lead time before populations ever started to benefit from them.

In the case of Iraq, we took all of that and stood it on its head. So, as soon as the city was liberated, and again, in almost all cases the entire population of the city, everybody had left. So, as soon as the city was liberated the U.N. went in right away, and we would immediately, under coalition leadership and Iraqi government leadership, support the security forces that the populations had the most trust in. They needed to get in there very quickly because nothing else would happen if that wasn't first in place.

Then what we did was start to rebuild the grids, not from the top down, but from the bottom up. I'll give you an example of this. In the case of Ramadi when it was liberated the U.N., within just a few days, mobilized 71 separate mobile electricity grids. We took the biggest generators we could find, and we stuck them on the back of Lorries, and in they went.

We threw a stone concrete slab down put the generator on it, got a distributor board up, and you had U.N. engineers who would run to every house when a family returned, check the electrical box. If it was broken we fixed it. Took a blue cable from the electricity box, ran it to the distributor board and plugged it in.

On average, two hours after family got home, when they pressed the button, their lights came on. We then kept working our way up the grid to the distributor mechanisms, into the generating mechanisms, we kept looking over our shoulders to see if the big money was coming in for reconstruction, until it came we kept working our way up

the grid.

This was very unusual work for the U.N. typically. We started at a top of the grid on average. What that meant is that it's about two years before any family ever benefits from it. In the case of Iraq, that time was shrunk to approximately two hours.

We did the same thing with the sanitation grid, the same thing with the water grid. What we also did, we would put literally thousands of people to work in public works schemes. And again these schemes could be up and running within a week. So within a week you had public works schemes all across the city that were employing literally hundreds, thousands, and in the case of Mosul, tens of thousands of people who were destitute.

They didn't have any money and they couldn't bring their families home until they got that money, and these public works schemes were the way that happened.

All of this work was done with the Iraqi private sector, all of it. So we would put out a contract for a discrete project, the Iraqi contractors in the area, almost all of them came from the cities themselves, would bid for these. At the height of the stabilization program we were literally stabilizing 25 liberated cities, there were more than 2,400 individual projects underway at the same time, every single one of them being implemented by local companies.

This of course brought income into the local companies, those local companies had huge ownership over the stabilization process, and through the contracts, in addition to our public work schemes, there were tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands of people who were employed. That was the right combination.

It usually took us about three months to stabilize a city, you could always tell, as General Allen was referring to the magic moment, where population said: right, time to go home.

I still have incredible memories of being right outside of Fallujah, and turning around and seeing thousands of taxis and vehicles bringing thousands of families home.

They would come all at once, they would leave all at the same time and they would all come at once.

Now, all of this effort was possible because of the leadership of the U.S. government, not only over the coalition itself but in saying to all the members of the coalition, this is the concept which the U.N. has proven can work, we need to get behind it, we need to demonstrate that we believe in the U.N. and give them the resources.

GENERAL ALLEN: That is key.

MS. GRANDE: So that they can make this happen, and we can stabilize these cities. It was for the U.N., the largest stabilization effort we have ever undertaken in our 75-year history, and it was possible because of the trust and confidence that was given to us by the coalition, and most particularly by the exceptional leadership of that coalition, the U.S. government.

MS. GLASSER: Lise, that is really just an incredible story. You know, number one, are those lessons that you are able to deploy elsewhere around the world? You're working on Yemen right now. Or are they very Iraq-specific?

MS. GRANDE: So, until I had arrived in Iraq I had overseen some of the U.N.'s largest stabilization efforts. I note with great humility that every one of those efforts, until Iraq, that I presided over were failures,

So Iraq it meant we managed to get it right, and again I think what was so critical about Iraq is that, you know, you just had tremendous commitment to stabilization from the Iraqi government. You had an exceptional Iraqi private sector with exceptional engineering capabilities in that sector, and then we had the unique leadership of the U.S. government over the largest coalition that had been assembled since World War II.

In many of the countries where the U.N. is doing stabilization we don't have one, or in most of those countries any of those qualities. And so when those conditions are in place, the U.N. can make a big difference, when they're not we do our best, but we certainly don't succeed in the way that we did in Iraq.

MS. GLASSER: So, I want to go to the decisions that were made early on that would include this stabilization fund, but are not limited to that. There were -- it wasn't inevitable that it would turn out the way that it did and, you know, I'm curious for each, for both Brett and General Allen. What were two or three decisions where it could have gone the other way? You know, these might have been tactical but ultimately they could have affected the outcome here, not only in terms of bringing in other coalition partners, but the situation on the ground was fluid as you pointed out.

You didn't even have intelligence, really, that then led you to the right analysis, at least initially, of what was actually happening. So what were some of the fights that you had about, you know, right or left, up or down, which way to go?

GENERAL ALLEN: Brett made an important point, that the national security team at the time was a team that could have a conversation about difficult issues in a civil, organized way, and produce coherent decisions that came out of it. Now, we may not have all agreed on the particulars of the conversation, but typically the outcome, especially when the president was sitting at the end of the table, and was orchestrating the conversation in a often a very masterful way, that brought everybody into the conversation, and we may not have walked out of the room with everything that we might have wanted, but everybody was heard so that was the first thing.

We had an early debate in a conversation about -- with regard to Iraq. Do we go north for Mosul? Or do we go south, in other words north along the Euphrates -- or excuse me -- the Tigris, or west and south along the Euphrates? And that decision ultimately was made after a significant debate to go south to liberate the Al Anbar province. As Lise said, Fallujah had fallen early, it had fallen, as I recall on the 31st of December '13, 1st of January '14, it was awful for those of us who served in Al Anbar and Fallujah in particular.

But wrapping up the Al Anbar province secured the western flank, if you will, of Baghdad, which then permitted us to develop the situation which was, I think, more

difficult ultimately in the north. One of the things that was extraordinarily important was that the KRG held together.

It held together very well, it became not just a platform where they, the peshmerga and others conducted offensive operations to keep the enemy at arm's length, but it was a platform ultimately for us with a command center to begin the planning necessary for Mosul. And Brett, I'll let him talk about that, because he was in the saddle at that point.

The other issue, when we took over this mission we had no options in Syria. President Obama sent me to Turkey to negotiate with the Turks to relocate our strike aircraft from where they were flying off of naval platforms in the Gulf, to Incirlik, and Diyarbakir, and Batman which is the third location, but every time I'd show up the Turks would hand me another map, and the maps were all colored based on the locations of various forces, or whatever it might be, the local situation on the ground.

And the map below the Turkish border in Syria was always colored black for the Islamic flag, the Islamic States flag. We had no options. So, I think one of the very earliest tough decisions, that the administration made, because the Turks were extraordinarily attentive to the Syrian Kurds, and very suspicious of them, in some cases they didn't make the distinction between the PYD and the PKK, the PYD being the Syrians, was the battle of Kobani, and Kobani, and I think Brett ultimately would be on the ground there.

But the battle of Kobani was two things. First, it was the first real battle that we saw unfolding where we had an opportunity to make a difference, and it was clear that the Islamic State wanted to wipe out the Kurdish population in Kobani, there's no question about that. And it was the president's intention that that's not going to happen, and the coalition agreed to that.

And for some long period of time while the Kurds were defending, the coalition airpower was hammering the Islamic State, and they were pouring troops into this

fight because they believed that they had to take out Kobani because that would crack the will of the coalition and then open up Syria again. So the Coalition's intent to support Kobani gave us an indication that for the first time we had real partners in Syria that could make a difference.

And our special operators who were located in the KRG began to work closely with the Syrian Kurds and Kobani pointed us to options in Syria that we had not had before. And I'll turn it over to Brett.

MR. MCGURK: I think strategic three really -- or just two. The summer of 2014 Mosul falls, I think the first time, because I spent that summer in Iraq dealing with everything. I came back I think General Allen has named, I'm his deputy. We went into the Oval Office to see President Obama, this would have been September after we were engaged, I think the first thing, if I recall, Obama said to me was, I know you wanted immediate bombing, airstrikes because I've been the guy with my hair on fire out there.

And frankly, that was my recommendation. So this would have been June/July of 2014. Okay. President Obama's kind of guidance during that period was, before we do that let's get our strategic foundation together.

And what did that mean? The Iraqi government was going through a process after elections of forming a new government. We had to have an Iraqi government in place. I see Bayan, the representative of the KRG here, we had to work with our Kurdish partners to get them fully engaged in this -- in this process. We had to get the semblance of a coalition together before we actually launched something big.

And we did, we formed about -- we started in Jeddah with about 12 countries, so that the night, the night we really started airstrikes we had a number of Arab partners in with us in the operation. But that was a big decision point, I could have seen a more -- frankly it was my recommendation, when I look back I don't know how that would have gone, had the U.S. just acted unilaterally at that key moment.

So that was a big -- we took that time to get our act together so that when

we started we had the semblance of a campaign plan in place that we could really rally people behind. Kobani was just -- and the hard work of diplomacy also, just keeping the coalition together the maintenance is really difficult, that's something I think was done pretty well.

But Kobani was key because it was right people, right place, right time. We saw this opportunity, we had special forces in Iraq who had relations with the Iraqi Kurds, who happened to know some of the fighters who were left in Kobani were about to be overrun.

General Allen and I, we happened to be in Turkey around this time and we saw the prime minister of Turkey, and the Turks expected Kobani was going to fall because, frankly, everybody expected Kobani was going to fall, and obviously they had issues with the Syrian Kurds, and we had this very important meeting that night and we spoke with Secretary Kerry before going into the meeting, we knew we had the full top cover of the president and everybody, so this wasn't something we had to combat.

And we said to the Turkish prime minister, it was Davutoğlu at the time, and we got it, but what if we get the Iraqi -- the Kurdish peshmerga to come into Kobani and help in the battle? And he said, yeah, they would agree to that, we can support coming through southeast Turkey is a pretty extraordinary thing.

And immediately after that meeting I called the Kurdish leadership in Irbil, and they approved it, and we got the peshmerga to come into Kobani, we did an airdrop to support them. So it was a critical kind of bringing together the military, the diplomacy, the high strategic guidance, because the president had to approve this. Then he called President Erdoğan.

It was a key moment. And I think had Kobani fallen the caliphate would still be in Syria, I just have no doubt, because just given the tools we had to work with.

So there are a lot of key moments like that when I think historians will look back at this at some point, and with just the process matters, that people matter, the focus

matters, but those are two that just came to mind.

MS. GLASSER: Do we need as big of a coalition as the one that you assembled? I mean, you know, numbers look good and everything but, you know, the key players clearly were that, you know, the Kurds, your diplomacy with Turkey was obviously indispensable, but why did it have to be so big?

GENERAL ALLEN: I think the moral accumulation -- the accumulation of moral suasion is really important in a coalition. There were many small countries that, other than to show up and offer their national support, such of it as they could give. And some didn't give any other than to show up, but they were ready to go if we asked them.

That accumulation of moral support for this cause, and this request by the president of the United States was extraordinarily important.

And we had people, when we had our first meeting of the coalition, I think about 58 states were able to make it to Brussels on the 3rd of December of '14, we had people sitting around the oval at NATO headquarters, it was not used as NATO headquarters that day, it was just a coalition assembly, that countries we would never have imagined that we could see, For example, Taiwan was there.

And very quietly the Chinese were okay with Taiwan being there, which I thought was very important, we had Cyprus there with Turkey and Greece also there. So this was such an emergency, and the diplomacy I think was so profound by our ambassadors out at post, in convincing these countries through an active conversation with the State Department back in Washington, and with our allies in places like the EU, and in NATO and in East Asia, it really came together very well, you know.

And on a quick story on Kobani. The night we did an airdrop to Kobani because the fighters were running out of ammunition, they badly needed an ammunition resupply, and the border was closed, nothing was coming to them across the Turkish border, and I don't recall the exact numbers of C-130s, but they flew through Syrian airspace, and as they were approaching the drop site, I was on the phone to the ambassadors of the

various countries, the key members of the coalition to include the Turkish ambassador, telling them that in the next X-number of minutes there would be an American airdrop ammunition resupply to the Kobani defenders.

And there was this huge sense of appreciation from all the ambassadors, except the Turkish ambassador who was very quick to register his displeasure. And I took note of that and passed it back to the State Department. But those are the kinds of things that we did because it was an emergency, those fighters desperately needed support, and the United States did a night airdrop to give them ammunition so they could continue fighting.

MR. MCGURK: Just real quick. Why so many countries? It wasn't just about what's on the ground, as General Allen said, we also, it's a global network, and we develop -- this is the kind of stuff that doesn't get as much attention -- but we developed a -- General Terry Wolff who was the deputy presidential envoy for three years, together with our military colleagues, and our intelligence colleagues, set up these information-sharing networks so that we could share information radically and immediately across borders with our partners.

And that had stopped attacks, and there was a facility in Jordan in which most of the -- most of these jihadists put stuff on Facebook, and I mean they kind of don't really hide it, but it's being able to connect dots. So if someone from -- you know, a French officer is seeing something, someone talking to someone in Sweden they can immediately say: Hey, have you looked into this?

And so we built this information-sharing architecture that is still in place, and I think is one of the reasons we have not seen -- knock on wood -- we have not seen the types of attacks we are seeing in Paris in the 2015 time frame.

MS. GLASSER: So, I want to bring in the audience soon. But, Lise, I want to come back to you quickly, and ask you. We've referred several times to Mosul and the largest urban warfare since World War II. You know, tell us about the humanitarian scale of

what you had to deal with Mosul. And also was that -- I mean was that the biggest, in the end, challenge? It was the thing you worried about the longest and prepared for the most, but what was the worst moment when it came to the humanitarian response to this incredible, I mean very far-flung Islamic State challenge?

MS. GRANDE: The humanitarian operations started planning for the retaking of Mosul a year before military operations started. And I still recall the very first scenario, set of scenarios we had in front of us, and we were working on the assumption that there would be literally hundreds of thousands of people who would be forced to flee the city they would probably be without protection and without assistance for, arguably, days and more likely weeks.

I remember that we were talking with members of the coalition, and most importantly the Iraqi government and saying you need to be prepared to deal with the consequences in the media, and politically, with literally hundreds of thousands of people who will have lost everything, and won't be receiving the aid they need in as quick a fashion as they would expect. Based on that, we made a firm commitment to do everything we could to manage the evacuation of civilians.

One of the very first times in an active conflict the United Nations was embedded in the planning department or the planning section of the Iraqi Security Forces; we were supported very strongly by the coalition in this. The Iraqi military put in place a battle plan and at the center of that battle plan was the requirement to protect civilians at all cost.

The protection of civilians was not a secondary or third or even the fourth thing, it was literally the heart of the battle plan itself. The entire military effort to liberate Mosul started from the primary foundational premise that everything had to be done to make sure that civilians survived.

The first day in when Iraqi forces would move into a Mosul neighborhood was to protect civilians in their homes, only if they couldn't do that would they begin the

process of what we called a managed evacuation.

So it went like this: In the first part of Mosul, this would be on the eastern part of the city, almost all of the population, 90 percent of it was protected in their homes, they didn't leave the city, they were able to stay there and the Iraqi security forces as they liberated these areas were able to protect families in situ.

When they crossed over to western Mosul that changed, and in fact almost everyone in western Mosul was evacuated. This is how the evacuation worked: it was, if I may say, an incredibly coordinated, almost orchestrated effort.

In the morning of the battle, of the day, our teams would call Iraqi commanders on the ground and we would say: we have room, in the 19 camps that surrounded Mosul, today we have beds for X-number of people. The Iraqi security forces as they moved into a neighborhood would evacuate that day the number of beds we have.

They would escort the populations across the front line. Humanitarian organizations were right on the line, as the families came across they were vetted for weapons by the Iraqi security forces, then they went to a screening site, and on the day that they were evacuated, by that night they were in a camp receiving the life-saving assistance that they required.

Just to put this into perspective. Typically in an active war zone on average families will wait between three, four weeks, up to a month, and in many operations it's two months before they receive any assistance. In the case of Mosul they came out that day, that night their families were in a bed, and safe and they were receiving the help that they needed in order to survive.

That was only possible, that degree of coordination, because of the battle plan which puts civilian protection at the center of everything that was done, and the work that the humanitarian agencies were able to do in support of this effort. There has been no managed evacuation of this scale or scope since World War II. It is the largest managed evacuation of civilians in the 20th century, and it was an accomplishment that was done

because of the coalition leadership, and the exceptional battle plan that the Iraqi Forces put into place.

MS. GLASSER: Okay. Thank you, Lise. Well, I know there's going to be a lot of questions. I'm going to exercise my moderator's prerogative and return to the events of the day briefly. Brett, my question to you is actually pretty simple which is: How can you characterize for us in a straightforward -- for dummies like me -- way, what our current policy she is in regards to Syria? And also, what does it -- does it matter and do you see a consequence in the departure of the national security advisor today? Will that change our policies such as it is?

MR. MCGURK: I mean, the policies are articulable, I can articulate it. It is, we want to see all Iranian commander forces leave Syria. We want to see, through the Geneva process, we want to see the Assad regime fundamentally change the way he governs his country, and you only want to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS. Those are the objectives as articulated by the administration.

My point is those are big, those are some big objectives, and I've worked on Syria for a long time, and you've got to really resource a campaign like that, and it's not resourced. And we've got our hands full just in northeast Syria. Northeast Syria the enduring defeat of ISIS alone, that mission alone is going to be extremely challenging you have a camp at al-Hawl with 70,000, people part of which is like Jihad land.

We are putting very little resources into that. We're trying to do a safe zone with Turkey, which again I think is a laudable diplomatic endeavor, but that's going to take resources and President Trump has made clear he will not put any more resources into Syria.

So you just have this ends and means gap. For everything Lise is talking about that's in Iraq. In Syria we do not work with the U.N. because the U.N. works through the Assad regime which we don't do. So it's much more difficult and it requires more of a U.S. commitment.

So how does the departure of the national security advisor change this? I don't think it fundamentally changes that much, I mean it's -- you just have kind of a shambolic process in which the president will be forced to react when something happens in Syria, and something eventually, you know, will happen. But they're just -- there was never really a national security process that connected to the president, and if you don't have the connection to the President there's not much of a meaningful process.

And when HR was there was a very good national security process but --

GENERAL ALLEN: That's H.R. McMaster?

MR. MCGURK: H.R. McMaster, but the level of connection to the Oval Office was always questionable. So that's when you get this kind of lurching back and forth with various ideas.

MS. GLASSER: General Allen, my moderator's prerogative question to you is related to this but slightly different. We were both present the other night when General Mattis spoke about his new book, and sort of spoke about his decision, but not really, to leave the Trump administration. He has said that he believes there is a duty of silence that he owes President Trump as a career military man, even though he was serving in this administration in a civilian capacity.

And he has been critical of your decision and that of some others to speak out in our political process as you did in 2016. You know, is there a duty, not of silence, but a duty to come forward in your view, especially to help us understand issues like what has unfolded in Syria and Iraq?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, I think we, in our own way, we do our duty as we were given the light to see it, frankly. Jim Mattis can do whatever he wants, he can speak about the realities that he faced, or he can not speak about the realities that he faced, or he can partly speak about the realities that he faced, well, he could do whatever he wants.

I spoke out in 2016 because I was deeply concerned about what would become the reality of candidate Trump, three years later I'm deeply alarmed about the reality

that has become President Trump. And Jim can do whatever he wants. I'm going to continue to speak up.

MS. GLASSER: Well, I guess we'll see whether the former national security advisor also believes he has a duty of silence or not, soon.

GENERAL ALLEN: We will see.

MS. GLASSER: We will see. And perhaps you guys can enlighten us, whether he's already spoken out in the hour-an-a-half that we've been talking. (Laughter)

But who wants to jump in here with questions which will be better than mine? Okay I know that you actually did have your hand up even before. So, please, identify yourselves when you talk, and do make it a question so that we can get as many as possible. Thank you.

QUESTIONER: (inaudible) from the Turkish Embassy. (inaudible) PKK, provided by YPG is PKK, and they recently served in northeast Syria on the anniversary of the first time there is the PKK, they openly celebrated. And they celebrated that, maybe where it's a PKK territory. And your tune -- choice to work with them, ended up with millions of people living on the (inaudible) of the Marxist territory. But ISILs which are in Russian, the Soviets, are controlling the territory, and they take orders from Qandil. And everybody knows it, too many Turkish speakers around. So, what do you think, how these things will be solved then? Thank you.

MS. GLASSER: Interesting.

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, I'll make one comment at the beginning, and that was that the Turkish government did not make the distinction between the PKK and the PYD. Very clearly it did not, because I was in the negotiations at Ankara where the distinction was made. And the distinction was made in the context of our working with the PYD at the time, and you use YPG which is the armed wing of the PYD, the distinction was made that we could support them so long as we stayed east of the Euphrates, in the aftermath of the clearing of northeast Syria.

Now, sadly we ended up going west of the Euphrates into the Manbij pocket but that was -- that was a function of follow-on operations. So you can say there, or you can say here that the PKK and the PYD are synonymous in Ankara today, but in 2014 there was a distinction that was made that permitted us to have options in northern Syria that we would not have otherwise had.

And frankly I think that Turkey in the end is happy that much of that border was ultimately cleared as a direct result of the capacity to form the Syrian Democratic Forces which was not just Syrian Kurds, but Syrian Kurds, and Arabs, and Syriacs, and Turkmen, et cetera, et cetera. So, it's not quite as simple.

Although I understand your point, and I respect your ability to say that, it's not quite as simple as the PYD and the PKK are the same, and we somehow created a diplomatic outrage by considering them to be the same -- of considering them to be different.

MR. MCGURK: If I pull a string on my back on this one, I'll just go on forever, but I'll just, I'll leave it, I'll leave it with what General Allen said, that's exactly right.

MS. GLASSER: Okay. All right, ma'am, right here.

QUESTIONER: Thank you so much. I'm Sinam Mohamad, U.S. representative of Syrian Democratic Council. Thank you so much for this presentation, really. I would like to mention that we paid about 11,000 heroes in defeating ISIS in north of Syria. And it is with the help and support of the U.S. Thank you so much for the U.S., and for the global coalition.

But now after ISIS we have now thousands, 2,000 fighters, foreigners, fighters detainees in our prisons. Till now we asked for their countries to get them back, nobody respond. We ask now for having international tribunals for these fighters, foreigners, in our place even we don't have any support and response. So what do you think is the solution for this problem? This is just one.

Another thing is for the al-Hawl Camp which is now a time (inaudible) for the ISIS. It's so dangerous it becomes; 73,000 in these camps, fighters, I mean the family

fighters, and these people, they are so dangerous, they have the ideology of this radicalism and the Islamist, so now we can see many of the journalists when they say they are asking a child of 7 years old, what are you going to become in the future? And he'd say, jihadist.

So that time it is very important to look at this camp. What can we do? Till now we don't have any support, and this is I think, is the responsibility of the global coalitions also. So what do you think about that? Thank you so much. Thank you.

MR. MCGURK: This is a huge problem. Zarqawi was in Jordanian prison, he was in a U.S. military prison facility. Baghdadi, he was in a U.S. military prison facility, so I hear he was in an Egyptian prison. I mean we know what happens in these prisons, and we have this camp in al-Hawl, in which truly the next generation -- the current generation and the future generation of terrorists, so their end, it is getting very little attention.

And we used to talk about, in the terrible days of the Iraq war, I'm sure you had this in Afghanistan, General Allen, but, you know, counterinsurgency in the camp because you cannot --

GENERAL ALLEN: True. That's right.

MR. MCGURK: -- you can't allow these populations to be able to sit there every day, and that's what's happening in al-Hawl, and this is what concerns me about Syria. I think we're trying to do way too much with way too little, and I think we got to have some focused -- some focused priorities and al-Hawl is really critical.

And frankly, to the Syrian Democratic Forces, you don't have the resources to deal with this problem. And again this is a -- I don't think this is going to change. I mean when the difference with Mosul and Raqqa, you know, we took Raqqa -- President Trump made the decision, it's President Trump who made the decision to arm the Syrian Kurds and take Raqqa, that was a decision not made by President Obama, it was made by President Trump.

We did the Raqqa campaign, the military campaign, it was successful, and then the White House cut -- we were going to put \$200 million into stabilization of Raqqa,

which is like, nothing. And of course that's a multiplier to getting more coalition contributions and the White House made -- President Trump made very clear, we are putting no U.S. money into stabilization of Raqqa.

So this is where we are. You're in a resource-poor environment with a very serious situation on the ground and so -- and thank you for your question I just -- I hope and I think there's attention to this in Congress, I hope the U.S. steps up to this because it's very serious, and is central to our own national security interest. But, you know, my confidence is under wraps.

GENERAL ALLEN: And it's not just resources, as you said, it's also: this is the moment for American leadership to encourage those states that have foreign fighters that are still in Syria to take them back, and put them through a rehabilitation program of some form or another, or ultimately detain them as is necessary.

But here is this unique opportunity once again for the United States to lead by trying to get members of the coalition who own these foreign fighters that are in the hands of the Syrian Democratic Forces to take them back, get them off your hands, so it can reduce the burden that you have right now as you're trying to stabilize your population. Thank you for that question.

MS. GLASSER: But am I right that -- I mean I've seen the president tweet about foreign fighters at various of our allies but --

MR. MCGURK: The president has said, either you take them back, or I'm going to send them all back into your -- that's not -- that's not the best way to talk to your allies. Look, we have a difficult time taking American citizens back, this is extremely hard, and the numbers of European foreign fighters in that camp are fairly small, so that's part of the problem, it's not the whole problem.

We need a very comprehensive solution to this camp which is -- require a security solution because you have to separate this population, and right now even the Syrian Democratic Forces, guards of the camp cannot go into these areas because they're

so dangerous. That is a huge problem that we have to deal with as the U.S. military in situations like this.

So it requires our priority, am I'll just -- I hate to be a broken record -- but in Syria trying to do way too much with way too little, and losing focus of some really key priorities like this, and I would hate to be here in 10 years, when there's some massive attack, whether in Paris, or here, God forbid. And the people came out of al-Hawl. And that would literally be history repeating itself because we've seen that movie.

GENERAL ALLEN: And a complication to the lady's question is the next generation of jihadists, as you pointed to, many of these children who were born a direct result of the Islamic State they are themselves stateless, so they have no place to go, and we have yet to come to grips with the thousands of those children who are stateless, and no country will take them back. And this is the -- this is a global humanitarian challenge that we have got to deal with.

MS. GLASSER: Lise, I see you nodding your head. Do you have any knowledge of what if anything the U.N. is trying to do with regards to these children?

MS. GRANDE: It is a no. Because I am not serving in that theater I wouldn't be able to speak to that with the precision.

MS. GLASSER: Mm-hmm. Okay. All right, let's get some questions. I'm going to go all the way in the back there.

QUESTIONER: Silvan Castro from the Voice of America. So last, over the weekend the U.S. -- the U.S. and Turkey began their first joint mission patrol on the border, which is part of the safe zone that was agreed upon early on in August. Now my question is -- I guess I have a two-part question. The first part is: What does this mean in terms of the long-term U.S. presence in the region, and the northern -- northeastern part of Syria? And the second part is how does this contribute to the continuation of the fight against ISIS? Thank you.

MR. MCGURK: Let me first say to, he's a former colleague over many

years, from Iraq, from the Bush White House, Ambassador Jim Jeffrey is leading this issue, and I think he's done just a tremendous job in trying to hold things together, and putting the pieces together, for what we call it, as I understand, the security mechanism. The problem that I see, and it's just not in his hands, it comes down to this fundamental issue of our own commitment, is that if you're going to take on something like that, that you have to resource it.

So we have a new mission now of a security mechanism or a safe zone as the president has ordered our forces and our resources down tremendously. So then you just have this gap, and the gap is widening, and I think that's a problem.

Another issue that's going to be -- have to be confronted is, you know, President Erdoğan talks about the safe zone in very different terms than we talk about it. So that's obviously something I think that bridge will have to be crossed. But it comes down to resources and you can do these things if you resource them, if you don't resource them they're not going to succeed.

And so we're drawing resources away from other vital missions for the security mechanism, and that just takes even less for al-Hawl or for keeping the pressure on ISIS, and so these problems are going to continue to metastasize.

GENERAL ALLEN: Let me just add, if I could, to the gentleman who asked the question over there a moment ago. You know, there's a lot of tension between the U.S. and the Turkish government today, but I can remember Brett and I, in our conversations about that moment when there was no real -- there were no real options in Syria, that Turkey in many respects was going to be the key to unlocking any capacity for us to be successful in Syria.

And I can tell you the many occasions where I said publicly that we, the international community, need to understand the pressure that Turkey is under at any given time, the numbers, the millions of individuals that Turkey has taken in, the fact that basically the entire southern border of Turkey was in the hands of the Islamic State at a particular

moment.

And so while we may have differences, I think history needs to accurately portray that Turkey has really done a lot in this process to try to position the defeat of the Islamic State, and ultimately to take care of the refugees.

Now, sadly, where we are right now is that there is some expectation that the refugees will be taken to the border. I was reading about what was happening in Gaziantep where I spent some time not long ago, and they'll be pushed across the border at some point underground that theoretically was controlled by Turkish forces, or at least was controlled by forces that would accept them. And I don't know whether they're your forces or not.

Or the alternative is, if the international community doesn't step up that there is the implied threat that many of those refugees will be released back in towards Europe, and I think that -- I don't know whether that is in fact a threat or that's a reality, but this is a difficult moment in terms of, once again the Syrian refugees being whipsawed by the political situation in the region.

MS. GLASSER: All right. You, sir.

MR. FELDMAYER: Chick Feldmayer, the Munitions Industrial Task Force. I have a question for Lise. When you were planning your operations, particularly as you moved in to reestablish utilities, was security a component of your planning to protect those companies, or the Iraqis that were actually going to deliver the services?

And the second question I have, if I may, is did you go through the normal U.N. bid system, or did you develop an inventory of -- yeah I know -- of companies that you could call on to do that type of work?

MS. GRANDE: Thank you for your questions. The safety and security of the companies which were working on the stabilization projects was of course provided by the Iraqi security forces. That was not a responsibility of the U.N., it was the responsibility of the government.

If I can be candid, I think there was probably no one more surprised by how quickly we were able to push forward with the stabilization projects than the U.N. itself. We averaged two weeks from the time a project was approved until the time a spade was in the ground. That's really exceptional for the U.N. But we knew that we had to move at an absolute clip if the areas, once they had been liberated from ISIL, we're actually going to be stabilized. We just couldn't do business as usual.

We did follow all U.N. procurement rules and regulations, I have to be frank that we didn't often have cleared companies, pre-cleared companies except in the case of Mosul, and because, literally, from the time the city was liberated we were immediately contracting out to local companies. And because that was happening so quickly, I mean at one point there were 10 cities that were liberated in the span of two months, and the second the city was liberated we were in there.

So this meant that the kind of forward clearance our projects wasn't possible in most of the cities, it was, however, possible in the case of Mosul.

MS. GLASSER: Well, fascinating. So unfortunately I think we only have time for one more question. And we do have a very eager person in the back we haven't had that many questions in the back. Go ahead, sir.

QUESTIONER: Thank you very much. My name is Rahim Rashidi -- I am a Kurd from Kurdistan. How would you describe the Kirkuk situation after October 16, 2017, when those militia by Qassem Suleimani attacked Kirkuk by U.S. weapons, and you were in charge. You don't have any reaction and decision. Can you tell us why? Thank you.

MR. MCGURK: If you're talking about the referendum from the fall, I think, again I spoke to that as an official, and I'm going to stick to that. I mean it was a terrible situation and outcome. I think what is very encouraging now, and I spend most of last summer in Iraq, is that the -- at least as I understand it, and I live in California now so I'm not speaking, right, in any official capacity, or any inside knowledge.

But I think Irbil and Baghdad right now the relations are very strong, and I

think your new president to the KRG, Nechirvan Barzani, he's an old friend of mine, I think is a real problem solver. And your new Prime Minister Masrour is doing a great job, and Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi has his work cut out for him but it's obviously working very closely with the KRG.

So I think I'd really like to focus -- I think it's important to focus on where you are now going forward and there's a lot to get right. And I do hope that the U.S. government, they've got a lot of good people in the U.S. government working this issue. From the deputy assistant secretary, Andrew Peek, and others are working this every day.

And Matt Tueller, our new ambassador out there, is a real pro. So, you know, I think there's reason on Iraq with all the difficulties. And I want to just point, I mean Mosul was a success but west Mosul is going to take decades to recover. Let's be clear.

I was in east Mosul after the battle and I came back, but west Mosul was a tremendously vicious house-to-house battle that's going to take decades, it's going to try -- continued focus and commitment. And that's why keeping a coalition together is important.

But on Iraq right now I think there are some tremendous, tremendous challenges as regional tensions heat up and all sorts of things, and the Shi'a militias, everything we get into. But I think with the new government and the KRG, and the new government in Baghdad from what I understand, they're working together quite cooperatively, and that's a good sign.

GENERAL ALLEN: I'll add that we would not have had a lot of the options in Northern Iraq that we ultimately were able to take advantage of if it hadn't been for the KRG, frankly, and the leadership within the KRG, and the courage of the peshmerga. That gave us options not just in the context of Northern Iraq, but it gave us options with respect to Syria. And so we not only treasure our relationship with Baghdad, but we treasure our relationship with Irbil as well.

MS. GLASSER: Well, I think we're going to have to leave it on that note. But I have to say I have both learned a lot, and I have temporarily taken my mind off Twitter,

and I thank you for that. (Laughter)

And, Lise, I know we all want to thank you especially, for joining us from -- I guess you're in Amman today, but your stories are I think so powerful, and often missing from the Washington conversation. So thank you, Lise.

GENERAL ALLEN: Thank you, Lise.

MS. GLASSER: Thank you, Brett. Thank you, General Allen. And thank you to all of you.

GENERAL ALLEN: Thank you very much. Well done. (Applause)

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