



**Remarks and Q&A by the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center
Mr. Michael E. Leiter**

**The American Bar Association – Standing Committee on Law and National Security
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SUZANNE SPAULDING: Good morning. I'm Suzanne Spaulding. I am the chair of the advisory committee of the American Bar Association's standing committee on law and national Security. Our chair of the committee, General Al Harvey, wishes he could be here this morning and sends his regrets. But we are very pleased that all of you could be with us this morning and as usual, Holly has asked me to start with a few administrative announcements.

I want to make sure everyone is aware that the standing committee has initiated – and this is our second year – a national security law student writing competition. The deadline is August 15. The theme this year, in honor of all of the Lincoln celebrations, is redefining liberty in the 21st century, and Holly's got information at the registration table. The award for the student paper that wins in this competition is a cash prize and a free registration to our annual review of the field of national security law conference.

Our conference this year is on Thursday and Friday, November 12th and 13th. So mark your calendars. We have a line-up of new issues and lots of new folks and a new administration, many of whom we're proud to say have some background with the ABA Standing Committee on Law and National Security, and so it should be interesting. The ABA standing committee is also going electronic. Holly has sign-up sheets at the registration table, and if you are not already receiving your announcements from the Committee via e-mail, we'd encourage you to make sure Holly has your e-mail address. And we are also transitioning the newsletter to electronic forms, so sign up.

And we are delighted to have Mike Leiter here to speak with us. I first met Mike in 2004, when I was on the House Intelligence Committee, and it was right after the executive order establishing the Robb-Silberman Commission, which was formerly known as the President's Commission on Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction. Which may seem like a mouthful but, the WMD Commission that I – for which I was executive director was the Commission to Examine – to Assess the Organization of the Federal Government to Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, so they all seem to have long titles. I have told this group before, the secretary took to answering the phone, "Weapons of mass destruction?" (Laughter.)

Mike was the deputy general counsel and assistant director of that commission. He was working for our own Stewart Baker, former chair of the standing committee, and recently retired from the

Department of Homeland Security and back with Steptoe and Johnson. Mike had come in with his colleague Bret Gerry to talk with me about weapons of mass destruction, the earlier commission. They were clearly very smart, they asked very good questions, and most importantly, they were very attentive to my answers. And I knew that he was, at that moment, that he was clearly a very bright guy. (Laughter.)

And this was before I knew that he had been president of the Harvard Law Review, had clerked for Supreme Court Justice Breyer, as well as Judge Michael Boudin of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st circuit. Mike was also a former prosecutor, having served as Assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia from 2003 to 2005. After the commission filed its very successful and well-received report, Mike served as the Deputy Chief of Staff for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which was of course just getting started in these days.

Among Mike's many duties, he also was involved in the development of the National Counterterrorism Center, which he then became, in February of 2007, principal deputy director for. And on June 12th of 2008, Mike was sworn in as the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, a position which he holds today. There are a couple of things from Mike's bio that some of you may not know. From 1991 until 1997 he was a naval flight officer, flying EA-6B Prowlers and participated in the U.S., NATO and U.N. operations in the former Yugoslavia and in Iraq.

And the one that may surprise those of you who don't know Mike as well as I do is that he served as Harvard Law School Human Rights Fellow with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague. That Mike has human-rights experience in his background does not surprise those of us who know him and have always found him to be thoughtful, firmly committed to the rule of law, and reflecting a fundamental sense of fairness. President Obama often notes that it is an unwavering commitment to our ideals that will ultimately lead to our victory over the violent extremists who seek to destroy our way of life. It is not surprising, therefore, that he asked Michael Leiter to stay on as head of the National Counterterrorism Center. Please join me in welcoming Mike to the podium.

(Applause.)

MR. MICHAEL LEITER: Thank you, Suzanne. That was really lovely. Thank you for having me here this morning. It is great to be with so many old friends, current friends. And I want to especially thank Stewart Baker, and Suzanne, of course and also recognize Judge Pat Wald. Judge Wald was a member of the WMD commission. And she was not just a member, she was really one of the most authoritative voices.

And there is a paragraph in that book which many people probably haven't thought a lot about over the past several years. But it is actually a paragraph – I don't think I'm disclosing too many internal commission secrets. It is a paragraph that was authored and driven largely by one Judge Pat Wald and one Senator John McCain concerning interrogations. And I think Judge Wald, almost five years ago now, was on the cutting edge of trying to ensure that U.S. policy was consistent with our values and our laws, and I think we all deserve her – she deserves our tremendous thanks for doing that then, with Senator McCain and the rest of the commission.

I know this well because I spent roughly 90 percent of my time on the commission trying to broker the language for that one paragraph as Stewart Baker wrote the rest of the report. (Laughter.) First of all, I would say I was asked to speak today and I was told that I had 10 minutes. And Suzanne mentioned that I was an assistant U.S. attorney. And I was an assistant U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Virginia. And when she told me that I had 10 minutes, I thought she was serious, I only had 10 minutes. Now I'm told that I might have more, but I'll do my best to keep this to 10 minutes in legal talk, which I guess is about 12 or 13 or 14 minutes.

Rather than running through the line and block charts of counterterrorism and what I do at the National Counterterrorism Center, what I wanted to do instead was hit really four major themes for this morning. And I want to go back and try to give some context for all of this because I'll go out on a limb here and suggest that our memory in the society, political society and thinking about national security, is not always a lengthy memory. And I think it is important to have some memory of the past to understand the challenges that we face today, how we have improved upon those issues, but also how those challenges continue.

So my four themes are simply to talk about the foreign-domestic divide, which was so much the center of the tragedy of 9/11 and is so much the center of how we do our work at this National Counterterrorism Center, information-sharing, perhaps the single biggest theme hit during the 9/11 Commission report and following on, the issue of counterterrorism as a war versus a struggle, and then the last piece, that I'll just leave you all waiting to tell you about when I get there.

The first, though, is foreign and domestic, and I want to read a quote. For each of those, I have a quote which I think, again, highlights how these problems tend to repeat themselves, and this is a quote from the 9/11 Commission. Quote, "There was a clear disparity in the levels of response to foreign versus domestic threats. The domestic agencies did not have a game plan. Neither the National Security Council nor anyone else instructed them to create one." This was written about the U.S. government and the U.S. counterterrorism community during the summer – referring to the summer of 2001.

And what I want to highlight today is, frankly, how much that situation has changed. That distinction between the foreign and domestic, in almost every way, does not exist at this National Counterterrorism Center. Now, it does exist in one very important way, and that is in the protection of civil liberties and the way in which different information is treated, because clearly, domestically collected information about U.S. persons and the like, or information collected overseas about U.S. persons, has to be protected and done very differently. And clearly, the operations that collect that information are done very differently domestically or overseas.

But the key point I want to get across is, today, when we look at threat information at the National Counterterrorism Center, working with our partners at CIA, FBI and DHS, there is no distinction. When we see a threat today emanating from Peshawar, I simply assume that that threat, in one way or another, may affect Phoenix, or may affect anywhere else in the United States. And what we try to do is take that information and uncover any possible links, anywhere in the world, to understand where that threat may ultimately manifest itself.

But there is a different point here which is about threat warning, because there was a period before 9/11 where threat warning was fundamentally focused on the foreign threats and delivered to foreign policymakers. Today threat warning that we provide to the president and to the Cabinet, there, again, is fundamentally no distinction between providing that threat warning to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense. Equally important, that same information is going to the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of FBI and the like.

And a point which is a slight tangent, but I think equally important – what the NCTC provides which we didn't have prior to 9/11 is not a single voice for warning but an integrated voice for warning, an ability today to provide threat warning and simultaneously to provide alternative views, whether or not those alternative views come from the CIA, DHS or FBI or NCTC to ensure when the President, Vice President and the Cabinet are reading about what the threat is today, they understand where there is disagreement or where there is agreement.

Now, the final piece from that quote was that the domestic agencies did not have a game plan and no one instructed them to create one. Well, first, I can report, and I think Stewart Baker, formerly of DHS would echo quite strongly, the idea that domestic agencies, whether or not it is DHS or FBI or even Health and Human Services, don't have a game plan today simply is not the case. They do have game plans. Now, I think that is important, but I think there is a more important piece here, and that is, there is a coordinated government game plan for current threats, for escalating threats, and for after a threat manifests itself, should that occur.

And I'm quite proud to say that NCTC has been able, with the strong support of the National Security Council and other departments and agencies, been able to craft what is a system of defensive and offensive actions to try to address the threats that we see today emanating from a variety of places, most notably Southeast Asia – I'm sorry – India, Pakistan and that region, but also from other places like Somalia and elsewhere.

Now, that is obviously a step in the right direction to have that standing plan and standing execution to ensure that you are addressing these threats. But in addition, it is to already have the plan that if that threat level goes up, we know what the options are to counter that threat. And we also have what I affectionately call the time-to-get-my-résumé-ready plan, which is the plan for the day after the attack. Should, God forbid, another attack occur, either here in the United States, against U.S. interests overseas, we have already gamed out what potential responses are, what the choices are for policymakers, domestically, overseas, communications, and the like. So I think, again, a relatively stark distinction between the observations of 2004, looking back at 9/11, and where we are today.

Second, information-sharing. And let me quote here, and I'll let you figure out where it comes from. Quote, "No single person or agency ever had at any given moment all of the signals existing in the vast information network. The signals lay scattered in a number of different agencies. Some traveled through rapid channels of communication, some were blocked by technical or procedural delays, some never reached a center of decision." Well, let me offer that this could easily come from 9/11. But – and this may depress some even more than my comments probably already have – this came from Roberta Wohlstetter's study of Pearl Harbor,

“Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision,” written in 1962, a seminal study of the U.S. response to Pearl Harbor. And I would offer that much of what she wrote unfortunately could, again, apply to the events of 9/11.

I don’t want to suggest perfection on this front either, but I do want to say that I think we have made enormous strides on this front. And I say that in part based on my experience of watching a new set of principles and deputies and others come to – come into the administration with the transition, and how surprised they have been at the vast amount of progress that has been made. Let me just highlight four quick things on information-sharing.

First of all, the basic division that we had between intelligence, law enforcement, the military and the diplomatic world fundamentally, in terms of information-sharing relating to terrorism, does not exist today. There are still limitations, again, associated with legitimate protections of information civil liberties, but fundamentally, those walls or boundaries have been eliminated.

How can I say that? Why do I feel that’s the case? My organization itself is a wonderful illustration of that. The vast majority of my staff are detailed to me from other organizations, so I have sitting side by side CIA, FBI, Department of Defense and every other acronym- laden agency you can imagine. And the CIA people are not simply looking at CIA information, the FBI people are not simply looking at FBI information. They are looking at each other’s information, and I am looking at all of that information. And we are trying to ensure that that information is crossing those traditional boundaries.

It is not just, though, about those different realms; it is about how often and deeply the information is exchanged. Now, this may sound routine and bureaucratic, but a critical piece of this is that three times a day, every day of the year – Saturday, Sundays, holidays – the National Counterterrorism Center chairs video teleconferences with more than, now, 19 different organizations in the U.S. government to make sure everyone is on the same page.

So you have the traditional security agencies, but you also have diplomatic security representing the State Department, the Transportation Security Administration, the Department of Transportation, again, Health and Human Service, the Secret Service, all making sure that if there is a threat out there somewhere, what are people doing about it, do they understand the threat and can they respond to that?

Of course, 9/11 and the threats we have seen are not just about the federal government. It is also clearly about integrating state and local governments into this vast system the federal government has developed. Now, I will say that I think this is still one area where we have a lot of work to do, but tremendous progress has been made. I think Secretary Napolitano and Director Mueller are going to continue that progress with vehemence, and we’re trying to do our part at NCTC. Not only do I have individuals from every different department and agency in the national-security community, I am the proud, quote, unquote, “owner” of more than 10 state and state and local, tribal, officials from across the United States government.

I have police officers from Clark County, Las Vegas; I have a firefighter from Seattle, New Jersey State Police, Boston Police Department. The list goes on and on. I have a representative

from one of the Iroquois Nations. And the reason for this is because, believe it or not, they look at information differently than I do. And they certainly look at information differently from the way the CIA does, and others. And their job is to live in this sea of federal classified information and get that information back down, with the assistance of FBI and DHS, to state and local partners so they can do their part.

Now, a final point from 9/11, and I think this is maybe the most concrete example of where there has been improvement. If you read the 9/11 Commission Report, there is a powerful element of this that two of the hijackers, Khalid al Mihdhar and Nawaf al Hamzi were two individuals who were identified by the CIA and NSA as operatives, associated with al Qaeda, and they were seen in Kuala Lumpur. They were believed to have had traveled to the United States or at least obtained visas. They then lived in Los Angeles and San Diego for a period before they were two of the hijackers on 9/11. That was a concrete failure of watch-listing that we have, to a great extent, fixed.

Now, I'm happy to field questions about watch listing. I often get them, but I would like to make clear that today, regardless of whether you are applying for a visa overseas or regardless of whether or not you are coming to an airport in the United States or you get pulled over when you drive away from here because you are going too fast, when that official legitimately enters your name into whatever database they have, that information will be screened against the U.S. Government's repository of known and suspected terrorists. We have an integrated names-based watch system in a way that prior to 9/11, we simply did not. I clearly already hit my 10 minutes, but as I said, this is going to be a legal 10 minutes, which might be a bit longer.

The third point is about a war versus a struggle. And let me quote here from the 9/11 Commission again: "Long-term success demands the use of all elements of national power: diplomacy, intelligence, covert action, law enforcement, economic policy, foreign aid, public diplomacy and homeland defense. If we favor one tool while neglecting others, we will leave ourselves vulnerable and weak in our national effort." First, of all the passages in the book, this is one that I feel potentially most strongly about. We must have a very balanced effort. This must not simply be a war with the connotations of using bombs and bullets. It must be a struggle, which from my perspective includes bombs and bullets when appropriate, but includes those all elements of national power – other elements of national power as well.

How are we trying do that? Well, you have – in the U.S. Government, you can't do anything without a plan, so of course we have a plan, the National Implementation Plan which, tries to encompass all of these elements of national power and assigns responsibility. But let me get a little bit more specific about that. From my perspective, we have to think globally about this challenge and act locally, and I appreciate the people who came up with that slogan many years ago.

This is a global struggle for al Qaeda, but if we think about it too much as a global struggle and fail to identify the local events that are truly motivating people to join what they view as a global struggle, we will really miss the boat. We have to try to disaggregate al Qaeda into the localized units that largely make up the organization and attack those local issues that have motivated these individuals to see their future destiny through a global jihad banner.

Much of what this must focus on and what we have been less than successful, I believe, in focusing on over the past several years, I think for many legitimate reasons, I might add, is combating the ideology and combating the root causes. NCTC has poured more resources into this area than anything else over the past two years, ensuring that we understand the motivating factors behind violent extremists and then trying to craft whole-of-government solutions for attacking those in targeted ways.

My point here is, it's not just about the kinetic bombs going off, it is what proceeds those bombs, it is what accompanies those bombs, it's what follows those bombs, or it is what acts completely and utterly independent of those bombs which has to be our focus in the long term. How do we make the government do this? Well, my closest partner in this challenge is none other than the mighty Office of Management and Budget. My links between our organization and OMB, in Washington speak, are incredibly important for ensuring that we are not only talking about this in forums like this, but that, equally important, I am talking about it with OMB examiners so when they sit down with departments and agencies, we ensure that budgets and programs, now and into the future, are aligned with these priorities and not simply with priorities which, I think it is fair to say, can almost guarantee support.

Those were my three major themes from these previous reports. But I have a last one, and perhaps it is the most important. We have made enormous amount of progress. I think that we are safer than we have been in the past, but we undoubtedly are not safe. And I would end with the note that we cannot ensure perfect safety.

And I'm going to use two quotes here, one from the 9/11 report, and I'll also let you guess where this came from: Quote, "First of all, it is much easier after the event to sort the relevant from the irrelevant signals. After the event, of course, the signal was always clear. We can now see what disaster it was signaling, since the disaster has occurred. But before the event, it is pregnant and obscure with conflicting meanings." That's our good friend Roberta Wohlstetter again, writing about Pearl Harbor. And second, I think a very important statement, again from the 9/11 Commission Report. "No president can promise that catastrophic attack like that of 9/11 will not happen again. History has shown that even the most vigilant and expert agencies cannot always prevent determined suicidal attackers from reaching a target."

Now, why do I say this, other than to likely ruin your day? Guaranteeing safety is impossible. Please don't ask me to do that, don't ask any of your government to do that. But what you should do and must do as Americans is expect that we will optimize our efforts to provide you with the greatest security possible. I go to work every single day, and some others from NCTC go to work every single day here assuming that today could be the day that happens. And that is what motivates us, and we focus on every day as if it's September 12th. I hope you don't because if you are not thinking that way, it means we are doing okay in our job.

And I want to stress that – I want to remind you about this before the event so, God forbid it occurs again, you remember it after the event. And I don't want you to remember it after the event for some sort of personal liability protection on my part. This is not a waiver that I am asking you to sign. I am asking you to remember this because you, as members of the ABA

national security section and as members of the legal community, have a critical role after the event to help make our public and our government make wise policy choices.

And again if, God forbid, an attack were to occur, it does not necessarily mean that we have had systemic failure. It will be a failure in the absolute sense; we want to prevent attacks and we will have failed if an attack occurs. But it does not mean that we necessarily have to start over again. It does not necessarily mean that everything has fallen apart and we have to build something new. It means we have to look, we have to examine, we have to think about whatever changes and reforms we make will improve the situation, and how they will affect human behavior going forward.

So, again, I already have my personal-liability protection, like most government employees. I am not looking for that. I am looking for the day after, that you can help guide a reasonable, balanced discussion of what worked and what didn't work and what is humanly possible with the systems that we have. With that, not even a lawyerly 10 minutes, sort of a New York 10 minutes, which is 22, I think, I am more than happy to take as many questions as we can get in. (Applause.) Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: I'm Emily Grad (ph); I work a fair amount with the risk side of the homeland-security world – (inaudible). Threat is one element of this risk equation which is talked about as a fundamental threat-vulnerability consequence. And we have a fairly good sense of even, if it is not completely done, how might we do vulnerability assessments with regard to specific scenarios or assets. And there is a similar body of work, current and growing, on consequence from various scenarios across different regions of the population centers.

But what I observe in this environment is that they have a terrible time eliciting the kinds of threat information that would really help them formulate a comprehensive sense of risk in a way that the decision-makers can grasp it. There's a longstanding tradition of refusing to place numerical values in the threat community, so these elicitations can at times become almost combative. And I wonder if you can talk a little bit about what do you see as the most productive way to get threat in a meaningful way into these scenario-driven discussions so that a comprehensive picture of threat, vulnerability and consequence can be formulated?

MR. LEITER: That's a very interesting question. I think what I have seen over the past several years; there has been an improvement, but, still, quite a long ways to go. The worlds that you talk about: the threat folks, the vulnerability folks and the consequence folks, again to people outside this room in Washington, this is just gobbledygook. Aren't all the folks who are protecting us? But within Washington, within our institutions – because they're rather large, complex and often unwieldy institutions – there are three very separate worlds.

So you end up with an exercise which is driven by the consequence folks and they come up with the scenario which is wholly unrelated to what we sit and look at the threat and think is the most likely threat. And then you have people who focus on consequences really running exercises which may not be particularly helpful. So, one thing that we try to do, and we did this, post Mumbai is meld those worlds together a bit more and have people working together from the beginning.

So you have the consequence folks literally sitting with the threat folks, and talking through what the threat is, what they have seen and what their vulnerabilities are. So in the case of Mumbai, obviously, last November so many people were glued to their television sets around the world – watching relatively small number of attackers, with AK-47s and improvised explosive devices and grenades completely shut down one of the world’s largest cities. Immediately we thought, there will be copy cats from this, and I think we probably have seen some of that already on the subcontinent.

We then did the best threat analysis we could in understanding those attackers’ training and procedures that they followed, the tools they had, and folded that directly in working with the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA and others; directly working with the consequence people, on how they would manage it. We took that program, and we rolled it out to the federal government, and we have now slowly but surely rolled that out to state and local officials – running exercises, beginning to run exercises throughout the United States. Because again, if this happens in Chicago or Los Angeles, it’s not going to be the Department of Homeland Security which is this first people to show up; it is not even going to be the FBI – it’s going to be the Chicago Police Department, et cetera, et cetera.

So, again, we are trying to break down, this is information-sharing – I just talked about information-sharing 101 – what you’re talking about information-sharing 201 – which is even within the federal bureaucracies ensuring that the same people who work on similar – different people who work on similar related issues, are working off of a common set of assumptions. Yes, sir?

QUESTION: Gary Proctor (sp), retired from State, the same question I asked Janet Reno a long time ago. It’s about the training for people in these new fields, the education and what can we do encourage it or is it being done, actually, and at State I think we’ve done some – do you have people coming out of college that understand international crime and corruption and terrorism, you know, all of these new issues none of us in the old days – when we just concentrated on the Soviet Union and military threat an then we all became terrorism analysts after that. (Laughter.) So what are we doing to have qualified –

MR. LEITER: (inaudible)

QUESTION: Yeah, don’t we all.

MR. LEITER: It’s an excellent point. We still have a significant challenge within our ranks of finding individuals with the right language, cultural background for some – for many of these issues. I’ll do it with this crowd. How many people here took a class on religion in college? For the camera, it’s about 50 percent. How many people in this room took a class on Islam in college? Not bad in here, we’ve got maybe 10 percent. It is much better and most of the people who raised their hand were probably under 40 – and that is good. But, the fight against terrorism does, obviously involve a region that – region and many issues that many Americans do not understand particularly well.

I see no shortage of people who want to come to the U.S. Government and continue to work on these issues, whether or not it is the State Department or National Counterterrorism Center or elsewhere, it is easy to find motivated people. It remains difficult for us to find sufficient numbers of people with the right language, cultural, regional expertise – especially people who spent time in that region, in these regions, and get them into the program. So what do we have to do about that?

We have to – and I think the Director of National Intelligence is continuing to do this – we have to adjust our security clearance process so we can get these people in. We have to have exactly the people with the hardest time getting through the security clearance process; we have to continue to have law firms that maybe don't want to hire people because of the economic downturn, because that is driving people towards government service and it's a great thing from my perspective. (Laughter.) And not everyone here is smiling and happy about that, but it is good for me.

And we have to continue to think of this as a long-term challenge, because it is. And America's engagement in Middle East, in Pakistan and India is not going to go away; it is going to continue. And it will frankly continue, I hope, long after and needs to continue long after the threat to terrorism or catastrophic terrorism has been greatly diminished. These are enormously important regions of the world and I think we have to encourage more people and tell people that there is real value in understanding these cultures, understanding these regions. Suzanne, do you want to pick, otherwise I'll get in trouble. (Chuckles.)

MS. SPAULDING: We can take one more.

QUESTION: Jeff Bliss, Bloomberg News; I just wanted to ask, how concerned are you that the civilian deaths in Afghanistan and Pakistan might be fueling anger that will be helping the groups you are trying to get rid of there? And the second question is how effective do you think the U.S. has been at exploiting the divisions of the Taliban?

MR. LEITER: As for the first, as a general matter, it is undoubtedly true that deaths of civilians first of all are tragic. Second of all are counterproductive to a larger effort to win over a population or even if you are not going to win over the population at least ensure that the population is not sympathetic towards those who are actively plotting attacks against U.S – and Coalition troops in Afghanistan, or, the United States. I think that the deaths of civilians in Afghanistan, versus the deaths of civilians in Pakistan, are very different. One clearly in Afghanistan, is involving coalition forces, and, I think General McKiernan and General Petraeus understand the challenges there and part of that is using more of an Afghan hand in these operations, and trying to avoid you these casualties.

I think in Pakistan, the challenges are a bit different, because let me just suggest that what is often reported through Pakistani media, and elsewhere, may not be fully accurate about the deaths of civilians. Our enemy has an enormous investment in wanting to portray the deaths of individuals in Pakistan as though it has been innocent civilians. I'm not here to say that, that has not occurred but I will suggest that in many cases those claims are vastly exaggerated, and there is a clear agenda in pushing that message in the same way we want to get out the truth and say,

people have or have not been killed. But undoubtedly this is a challenge for us and, in a regular warfare in areas like Pakistan and Afghanistan the challenge is identifying those people who are actual threats, and not at the same time not hurting those who are not.

How effective has this U.S. Government been in taking advantage of divisions in the Taliban? I think General Petraeus and Ambassador Holbrooke's efforts to bring a combined focused effort of all elements of national power in Pakistan and Afghanistan, are exactly in line with what we continue to advocate, in a broader struggle against terrorism. As part of that, part of that will clearly be, I think, identifying whether or not there are factions within the Taliban that could be exploited in a way to advance not just U.S. interests, but this interests of safety and security in both of those countries.

We can't look at the Taliban as an absolutely monolithic beast; is it not. And Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban are different. And we have to look also among other militant groups in the region to try to understand if there are ways that we can carve them out from those who we know we cannot negotiate with – the likes of al Qaeda and others – who have sworn death and - sworn their lives to try to perpetrate death and destruction against the U.S., and I think the idea of negotiating or talking or carving off elements of that faction is not a realistic one.

MS. SPAULDING: Thank you very much. (Applause.) I want to thank you particularly. Your remarks were terrific, but your closing remarks, I'm particularly grateful for – the concept that – and reminding the American public that what we're engaged in here is risk management and risk reduction and not risk elimination. I think it's really very important for reinforcing the resiliency of the American public that's going to be so important and really our best hope for a good response should there be another attack.

And so I thank you for conveying that message. I am so mindful of the Londoners, who went back in the subway after the bombings, not because they thought it was safe, but because they were determined to carry on. And I think you are spreading that message and reinforcing that in a way that is very helpful. So thank you very much for being with us this morning, we know how busy your schedule is and thanks to all of you for joining us as well. Thanks.

(Applause.)

(END)