

**CENTER FOR
STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CSIS)**

“A NEW APPROACH FOR SAFEGUARDING AMERICANS”

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STEPHEN FLANAGAN: (In progress) – Stephen Flanagan, senior vice president and Henry Kissinger chair here at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and it's a pleasure to welcome you here on this rather somber August morning, but to discuss an equally somber and critically important topic – the president's approach to dealing with terrorism and extremist threats.

We're delighted to welcome here this morning Mr. John Brennan, assistant to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism, to provide an overview of the president's comprehensive approach to protecting the American people from terrorism, to disrupting and defeating the near-term threats from al-Qaida and other international terrorist groups and addressing some of the political, economic and social factors that often fuel violent extremism.

Mr. Brennan, as many of you know, has held his current post since the outset of the administration. He also serves as homeland security advisor and deputy national security advisor for counterterrorism. In that capacity, he is the president's principal advisor on formulation, coordination and implementation of policies related to homeland security and counterterrorism.

Prior to joining the White House, Mr. Brennan served as a CEO of The Analysis Corporation in MacLean, Virginia for about four years. But before that, of course, he had long and distinguished career – 25 years with the Central Intelligence Agency serving in a variety of senior positions throughout the intelligence community.

His assignments towards the end of his career – his last assignment in the intelligence community was as director of the National Counterterrorism Center. He was also the founding director of NCTC's predecessor organization, the Terrorist Threat Integration Center, or TTIC. Mr. Brennan began his career as an intelligence officer in 1980 with CIA. He served with the Department of State in Embassy Jeddah in Saudi Arabia in the mid-'80s.

He also served in a variety of analytic assignments and he also served as the CIA's daily intelligence briefer to the White House in 1994 and '95 and as chief of station in a Middle East capital in the period 1996-1999. He later served as DCI of George Tenet's chief of staff from '99 to 2001 and as deputy executive director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Mr. Brennan is a recipient of numerous awards and commendations, including the National Security Medal and the Distinguished Intelligence Medal, the Distinguished Career Intelligence Medal and the Defense Intelligence Agency's Director's Award.

He earned his bachelor's degree from Fordham University and also studied at the American University in Cairo and University of Texas at Austin. Mr. Brennan will speak for about 30 minutes or so. We'll then take questions from the floor that I will moderate. This is obviously an on-the-record session and we will end promptly at 12:30. So Mr. Brennan, welcome to CSIS. (Applause.)

JOHN BRENNAN: Thank you very much, Steve. It truly is a pleasure to be here today. It's also good to see so many familiar faces here. And thinking about a setting for this address, I can think of no better one than the Center for Strategic and International Studies, since it has long served as a venue for some of the most insightful and intellectual discourse on national security issues.

So I very much appreciate the opportunity to be here today and speak to all of you. What I want to do today is to talk about the new thinking and the new approach that President Obama brings to the task of safeguarding the American people from violent extremism and terrorism. President Obama has now been in office for but six months. In that time, he has rightly focused on urgent domestic challenges, including the nation's economic recovery, reforming health insurance and reducing the cost of health-care for the American people.

At the same time, however, he has never lost sight of what he has called his single most important responsibility as president – keeping the American people safe. To this end, he and Secretary of State Clinton have renewed America's commitment to diplomacy, rebuilding old alliances, strengthening critical partnerships with nations such as Russia and China and naming special envoys and representatives to focus on some of the most pressing international challenges, from Middle East peace to Afghanistan and Pakistan to climate change to the crisis in Darfur.

He has launched a new era of engagement with the world, including committing the United States to a new partnership with Muslims around the world, a partnership based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To confront the transnational threats of the 21st century, he has launched new initiatives: strengthening the global nonproliferation regime, promoting food security that fights world hunger and lifts people around the world out of poverty and bolstering the nation's digital defense against cyber-attacks.

And to refocus the fight against those who attacked our embassies in Africa 11 years ago tomorrow and our homeland eight years ago next month, the president is proceeding with his plan to end the war in Iraq and to defeat al-Qaida and its allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And to ensure that our counterterrorism efforts strengthen our national security and not undermine it, he banned the use of enhanced interrogation techniques, is proceeding with a new plan to swiftly and certainly deal with detainees and will close the prison at Guantanamo Bay.

Most recently, key members of the president's national security team have laid out how their departments and organizations are implementing these new strategies. Secretary of State Clinton outlined how American diplomacy will advance American interests by building new partnerships, promoting universal values and heeding the power of our example. Secretary of Defense Gates is reforming how we acquire weapons and reorienting our armed forces for the unconventional, irregular conflicts of today and the future.

Last week, Secretary of Homeland Security Napolitano highlighted the local, state, federal and international partnerships that will be required to keep the homeland secure from terrorist attacks. FBI Director Mueller has been tireless in his efforts over the past eight years, forging similarly strong partnerships with a wide array of law enforcement organizations at home

and abroad. And General Jones, the president's national security advisor, earlier this year, addressed how the administration will more effectively address transnational challenges through a newly integrated national security staff at the White House.

Today, as the president's principal advisor on counterterrorism, I want to outline the president's efforts to safeguard the American people from the transnational challenge that poses one of the greatest threats to our national security, the scourge of violent extremists who would use terrorism to slaughter Americans at home and abroad. I want to note at the outset that my professional and personal experience has greatly shaped my perspective on how best to confront the challenges we face.

During a 25-year career in government, I saw firsthand the mayhem and destruction that terrorists wreak. I have seen close friends and fellow intelligence officers – good, courageous, heroic Americans – injured, maimed and killed in terrorist attacks. Eight years ago this morning, I read warnings that Osama bin Laden was determined to strike inside the U.S. but our government was unable to prevent the worst terrorist attack in American history that would occur on 9/11.

In the years since, I have seen significant progress made in safeguarding the American people; unprecedented coordination and information-sharing between federal agencies and with state and local governments; improved security at our border and ports of entry; disruption of terrorist recruitment and financing; and a degradation of al-Qaida's ability to plan and execute attacks. And credit for much of this progress belongs to our armed forces, diplomats, intelligence officers and law enforcement personnel at every level. They risk their lives; many have given their lives. And this nation owes them an enormous debt of gratitude.

At the same time, I have seen – we all have seen – how our fight against terrorists sometimes led us to stray from our ideals as a nation. Tactics such as waterboarding were not in keeping with our values as Americans, and these practices have been rightly terminated and should not and will not happen again. I believe President Obama is absolutely correct. Such practices not only fail to advance our counterterrorism efforts; they actually set back our efforts. They are a recruitment bonanza for terrorists, increase the determination of our enemies and decrease the willingness of other nations to cooperate with us. In short, they undermine our national security.

A deep appreciation for our nation's unique example and relationships with the world has always informed my service. This includes our ties with Muslim communities. While in college in the mid-1970s, I spent a summer traveling through Indonesia, where, like President Obama, I came to see the beauty and diversity of Islam. In the decades since, I studied as an undergraduate at the American University in Cairo, I worked as a State Department political officer in Saudi Arabia and I served as a CIA station chief in the region.

And in that time, I saw how Arab and Muslim attitudes toward the U.S. hardened, often into hatred. It was these collective experiences and the worldview they shaped that led me to an extended discussion with then-president-elect Obama last November. He, too, was deeply concerned with how the United States was viewed in the world and how these attitudes were

fueling the flames of hatred and violence. He showed a clear understanding of the historical forces and conditions shaping the world and the unique role and responsibility of the United States at this moment in history.

And so I decided to return to public service as the president's senior advisor for homeland security and counterterrorism. But since my return to public service, I have been deeply troubled by the inflammatory rhetoric, hyperbole and intellectual narrowness that has often characterized the debate over the president's national security policies, particularly those relating to the fight against terrorists.

Some like to claim that the president's policies somehow represent a wholesale dismantling of counterterrorism policies and practices adopted by his predecessor; others claim that the president's policies constitute a wholesale retention of his predecessor's policies. Well, they can't both be right, and in fact, they're both wrong. As he has said, the president rejects an absolutist approach or the imposition of a rigid ideology on our problems. Like the world itself, his views are nuanced not simplistic, practical not ideological.

He understands the complexities and many dimensions of the challenges presented by violent extremism. He understands that preventing terrorists from slaughtering the innocent sometimes requires making very difficult decisions – deployment of military forces, authorization of sensitive intelligence activities, the handling and disposition of terrorists that capture and detain and the policies we make and the measures we take to protect our homeland. And so, as he has said on many occasions, he rejects the false choice between ensuring our national security and upholding civil liberties.

The United States of America has done both for centuries and must do so again. As we move ahead, the president feels strongly that we maintain a robust dialogue with the American people, indeed, with the world, about the full range of our efforts to prevent terrorist attacks. With that in mind, I want to sketch out how the president sees this challenge and how the president is confronting it.

And I want to distinguish between two related, but very distinct challenges: the immediate, near-term challenge of destroying al-Qaida and its allies, those who are willing and ready to kill innocent civilians and the longer-term challenge of confronting violent extremism generally. First, the immediate challenge: the persistent and evolving threat from al-Qaida and its allies.

President Obama is under no illusions about the imminence and severity of this threat. Indeed, he has repeatedly and forcefully challenged those who suggest that this threat has passed. To Americans who ask why our forces still fight and die in Afghanistan, he has made it clear that al-Qaida is actively plotting to attack us again and that he will not tolerate Afghanistan or any other country being a base for terrorists determined to kill Americans.

To those abroad who doubt al-Qaida's motives or murderous history, the president said in Cairo, "these are not opinions to be debated; these are facts to be dealt with." So here are the facts: Al-Qaida and its affiliates are under tremendous pressure. After years of U.S.

counterterrorism operations and in partnership with other nations, al-Qaida has been seriously damaged and forced to replace many of its top-tier leadership with less-experienced and less-capable individuals.

It is being forced to work harder and harder to raise money, to move its operatives around the world and to plan attacks. Nevertheless, al-Qaida has proven to be adaptive and highly resilient, and remains the most serious terrorist threat we face as a nation. The group's intent to carry out attacks against the United States and U.S. interests around the world with weapons of mass destruction, if possible, remains undiminished, and another attack on the U.S. homeland remains the top priority for the al-Qaida senior leadership.

From its safe haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas – the so-called FATA – al-Qaida continues to recruit and train fighters, including extremists from Western nations, and to plot attacks. Finally, al-Qaida's own capabilities are further leveraged by the web of relationships the group maintains with other, locally run terrorist organizations around the world, from Iraq to the Arabian Peninsula, from East Africa to the Sahel and Maghreb regions of North Africa. In short, we continue to face a dynamic and evolving threat.

And faced with this clear threat, President Obama has articulated a clear policy – to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida and its allies. That is our mission and the president described it in no uncertain terms in his inaugural, when he said “our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred.” And to win this war against al-Qaida, the administration continues to be unrelenting, using every tool in its toolbox and every arrow in its quiver.

As part of the president's new strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, U.S. forces are pushing the Taliban out of key population areas in Afghanistan so we can prevent the return the al-Qaida to that country. In partnership with Pakistan, which, in the face of unrelenting brutality from al-Qaida and its allies, has shown new resolve in this fight, we are confronting al-Qaida directly, inflicting significant losses to the Taliban and al-Qaida.

In East Africa and the Trans-Sahel region, we are sharing intelligence with partner nations and building the capacity of their security forces to deny al-Qaida safe havens. We are actively working with and through the international banking community to deny resources and funding to the al-Qaida network and the business that support them. And through strong law enforcement investigations and successful prosecutions of terrorists and their supporters, we and our allies are disrupting and deterring future terrorist attacks, here and abroad.

And I would add one personal observation. Over the past six months, we have presented President Obama with a number of actions and initiatives against al-Qaida and other terrorist groups. Not only has he approved these operations; he has encouraged us to be even more aggressive, even more proactive and even more innovative, to seek out new ways and new opportunities for taking down these terrorists before they can kill more innocent men, women and children.

To this end, the president is devoting new resources, investing in new capabilities, approving new actions and adapting our policies across the board. He is confronting what he has identified as the most immediate and extreme threat to global security – the possibility that terrorists will obtain and use a nuclear weapon. That is why he has taken a number of critical steps, leading the effort for a stronger global nonproliferation regime, launching an international effort to secure the world's vulnerable nuclear material in four years and hosting a global nuclear summit next year.

The risk of just one terrorist with just one nuclear weapon is a risk we simply cannot afford to take. To ensure our military has the new capabilities and technology it needs for this fight, he accelerated the increase in the size of the Army and the Marines, has approved another increase in the size of the Army, is expanding our Special Forces and is increasing the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets our troops need in Afghanistan.

To ensure we have timely and accurate intelligence that prevents terrorist attacks and saves lives, we are continuing to adapt and strengthen the intelligence community by expanding human intelligence, strengthening operations, enhancing the workforce with improved linguistic and cultural skills, filling intelligence gaps, improving collaboration across the intelligence community and promoting greater coordination with foreign intelligence partners.

And to better secure the homeland from attack, we're taking the steps Secretary Napolitano described last week – enhancing information-sharing arrangements with our allies and partners, strengthening partnerships with state and local officials, law enforcement and first responders, and improving the security of our critical infrastructure, borders, ports and airports. Our homeland security efforts include working aggressively to prevent and prepare for bioterrorism, which is why the president's budget makes major investments in our public health infrastructure, including new technologies to detect attacks and new vaccines to respond to a crisis.

And I would note that our coordinated response to the H1N1 virus across the federal government and with state and local governments and with the public and private sectors, and our extensive preparations for the coming flu season, will ensure that we are better prepared for any future bioterrorist attack. So there should be no doubt, as the president has told us privately and as he has said publicly, this administration will do everything in our power to keep the American people safe, with certainty that we can defeat al-Qaida.

At the same time, the president understands that military power, intelligence operations and law enforcement alone will never solve the second long-term challenge we face – the threat of violent extremism generally, including the political, economic and social factors that help put so many individuals on the path to violence. And here is where I believe President Obama is bringing a fundamentally new and more effective approach to the long-term obligation of safeguarding the American people.

This new approach has five key elements. First, and perhaps most significantly, the fight against terrorists and violent extremists has been returned to its right and proper place, no longer defining, indeed distorting, our entire national security and foreign policy, but rather serving as a

vital part of those larger policies. President Obama has made it clear that the United States will not be defined simply by what we are against, but by what we are for – the opportunity, the liberties, prosperity and common aspirations we share with the rest of the world.

Rather than looking at allies and other nations through the narrow prism of terrorism, whether they are with us or against us, the administration is now engaging other countries and people across a broader range of areas. Rather than treating so many of our foreign affairs programs – foreign assistance, development and democracy promotion – as simply extensions of the fight against terrorists, we will do these things, promote economic growth, advocate good governance, transparency and accountability, because they serve our common interests and common security, not just in regions gripped by violent extremism, but around the world.

We see this approach most vividly in the president's personal engagement with the world – his trips, his speeches, his town halls with foreign audiences – where he addresses terrorism directly and forcefully. At the same time, terrorism is recognized as one of the many transnational challenges the world will face in the 21st century. We saw this in his speech in Cairo, where he spoke of a broader engagement with the world's Muslims, including the issues important to them – education, public health, economic development, responsive governance and women's rights.

Indeed, it was telling that the president was actually criticized in certain quarters in this country for not using words like terror, terrorist and terrorism in that speech. This goes to the heart of this new approach. Why should a great and powerful nation like the United States allow its relationship with more than a billion Muslims around the world be defined by the narrow hatred and nihilistic actions of an exceptionally small minority of Muslims?

After all, this is precisely what Osama bin Laden intended with his September 11th attacks – to use al-Qaida to foment a clash of civilizations in which the United States and Islam are seen as distinct enemies that are in conflict. In his approach to the world and his approach to safeguarding the American people, President Obama is determined not to validate al-Qaida's twisted worldview.

This leads directly to the second element of the president's approach – a clear, more precise definition of the challenge. This is critically important. How you define a problem shapes how you address it. As many have noted, the president does not describe this as a “war on terrorism.” That is because terrorism is but a tactic – a means to an end – which, in al-Qaida's case, is global domination by an Islamic caliphate.

Confusing ends and means is dangerous, because by focusing on the tactic, we risk floundering among the terrorist trees while missing the growth of the extremist forest. And ultimately, confusing ends and means is self-defeating, because you can never fully defeat a tactic like terrorism any more than you can defeat a tactic of war itself. Likewise, the president does not describe this as a “global war.”

Yes, al-Qaida and other terrorist groups operate in many corners of the world and continue to launch attacks in different nations, as we saw most recently in Jakarta. And yes, the

United States will confront al-Qaida aggressively wherever it exists so that it enjoys no safe haven. But describing our efforts as a global war only plays into the warped narrative that al-Qaida propagates. It plays into the misleading and dangerous notion that the U.S. is somehow in conflict with the rest of the world.

It risks setting our nation apart from the world, rather than emphasizing the interests we share. And perhaps more dangerously, portraying this as a global war reinforces the very image that al-Qaida seeks to project of itself, that it is a highly organized, global entity capable of replacing sovereign nations with a global caliphate. And nothing could be further from the truth.

Nor does President Obama see this challenge as a fight against jihadists. Describing terrorists in this way, using the legitimate term “jihad,” which means to purify oneself or to wage a holy struggle for a moral goal, risks giving these murderers the religious legitimacy they desperately seek but in no way deserve. Worse, it risks reinforcing the idea that the United States is somehow at war with Islam itself. And this is why President Obama has confronted this perception directly and forcefully in its speeches to Muslim audiences, declaring that America is not and never will be at war with Islam.

Instead, as the president has made clear, we are at war with al-Qaida, which attacked us on 9/11 and killed 3,000 people. We are at war with its violent extremist allies who seek to carry on al-Qaida’s murderous agenda. These are the terrorists we will destroy; these are the extremists we will defeat. Even as the president takes a more focused view of the threat, his approach includes a third element – a broader, more accurate understanding of the causes and conditions that help fuel violent extremism, be they in Pakistan and Afghanistan or Somalia and Yemen.

The president has been very clear on this. Poverty does not cause violence and terrorism. Lack of education does not cause terrorism. But just as there is no excuse for the wanton slaughter of innocents, there is no denying that when children have no hope for an education, when young people have no hope for a job and feel disconnected from the modern world, when governments fail to provide for the basic needs of their people, then people become more susceptible to ideologies of violence and death.

Extremist violence and terrorist attacks are therefore, often the final, murderous manifestations of a long process rooted in helplessness, humiliation and hatred. Therefore, any comprehensive approach has to also address the upstream factors, the conditions that help fuel violent extremism. Indeed, the counterinsurgency lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan apply equally to the broader fight against extremism.

We cannot shoot ourselves out of this challenge. We can take out all the terrorists we want – their leadership and their foot soldiers – but if we fail to confront the broader political, economic and social conditions under which extremists thrive, then there will always be another recruit in the pipeline, another attack coming downstream. Indeed, our failure to address these conditions also plays into the extremists’ hands, allowing them to make the false claim that the United States actually wants to keep people impoverished and unempowered.

It is important to note that these factors not only help fuel violent extremism, but also contribute to a wide range of national security threats, from other types of organized violence and sociopolitical instability to resource competition. And addressing these factors will help the United States deal with a wide range of threats, including violent extremism.

This is why the president's approach includes a critical fourth element – the recognition that addressing these upstream factors is ultimately not a military operation, but a political, economic and social campaign to meet the basic needs and legitimate grievances of ordinary people – security for their communities, education for their children, a job and income for parents and a sense of dignity and worth.

The extremists know this. Wherever governments are unable to provide for the legitimate needs of their people, these groups step into the void. It is why they offer free education to impoverished Pakistani children, where they can recruit and indoctrinate the next generation. It is why Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaze provide so many social services to the poor even as they commit heinous acts of terror. It is why the terrorist warlord in Somalia can so easily recruit a destitute teenager who sees nothing but a future of poverty and despair.

President Obama understands that successfully defeating these extremists over the long term requires breaking this bond, exposing al-Qaida as nothing but the death cult it is and isolating extremists from the people they pretend to serve. Often, the extremists do this themselves. Time and again, their barbarism, brutality and beheadings have provoked backlashes among ordinary, good people, from Afghanistan under the Taliban to al-Qaida in Iraq, and increasingly in Pakistan today.

Going forward, people must come to see that it is the likes of al-Qaida and the Taliban, Hezbollah and Hamas, not the United States, that is holding their aspirations hostage. That of all those al-Qaida have killed, most have been Muslims; that the murder of innocent civilians, as the president said in Cairo, is not how moral authority is claimed, but how it is surrendered; that the future offered by extremists is not one of peace, but of violence, not of hope and opportunity but of poverty and despair.

Indeed, it is the people in these countries, not the United States, who ultimately will isolate these extremists. Governments that provide for basic security and needs of their people, strong and transparent institutions free from corruption, mainstream clerics and scholars who teach that Islam promotes peace, not extremism, and ordinary people who are ready to choose a future free from violence and fear. Still, the United States can and must play its part.

For even as we condemn and oppose the illegitimate tactics used by terrorists, we need to acknowledge and address the legitimate needs and grievances of ordinary people those terrorists claim to represent, which leads to the fifth and final part of the president's approach – integrating every element of American power to ensure that those upstream factor discourage rather than encourage violent extremism.

After all, the most effective long-term strategy for safeguarding the American people is one that promotes a future where young man or woman never even considers joining an

extremist group in the first place, where they reject out of hand the idea of picking up that gun or strapping on that suicide vest; where they have faith in the political process and confidence in the rule of law; where they realize that they can build, not simply destroy and that the United States is a real partner in opportunity, prosperity, dignity and peace.

That is why President Obama is committed to using every element of our national power to address the underlying causes and conditions that fuel so many national security threats, including violent extremism. We will take a multidimensional, multi-departmental, multinational approach. We will use our military power not only to take down al-Qaida and its allies, but to train and build up the capacity of foreign militaries and security forces, as we are doing from Iraq to Afghanistan to Africa, because if these militaries and security forces can uphold the rule of law, if these countries can take responsibility for their own security, then militias, warlords and terrorists will find it harder to win sympathizers and recruits with the false promise of security and stability.

So the president has increased funding to help build the capacity of foreign law enforcement, border security and judiciaries. We will use our power to demonstrate that seemingly intractable problems and legitimate grievances can be resolved through diplomacy, dialogue and the democratic process. That is why we are supporting national elections in Afghanistan and helping to protect all the rights of Afghans.

That is why the president has made clear that our relationship with Pakistan is grounded in support for Pakistan's democratic institutions and the Pakistani people. That is why we support an Iraqi government that promotes national unity and is non-sectarian. And that is why the administration is aggressively pursuing negotiations to achieve the goal of two states – Israel and Palestine – living side-by-side in peace and security.

We will also use our economic power to promote opportunity and prosperity. This will help restore people's hope in the political process and in legitimate institutions. In Afghanistan, this means a dramatic increase in our development efforts, working with the government to end corruption, improve the delivery of basic services and build an economy that isn't dominated by drugs.

In Pakistan, it means a billion-and-a-half dollars in direct support to the Pakistani people every year for education, health care and infrastructure, as well as opportunity zones to spark development in the border regions. And we are harnessing our economic power to make substantial increases in foreign assistance generally, including poverty reduction, global health and food security, not as a crutch for societies in need, but as a catalyst for development, good governance and long-term prosperity.

Finally, as I described, we will harness our greatest asset of all – the power of America's moral example. Even as we aggressively pursue terrorists and extremists, we will uphold the values of justice, liberty, dignity and rule of law that make people want to work with us and other governments want to partner with us. Taken together, the policies and priorities I've described constitute the contours of a new strategic approach – a new way of seeing this challenge and a new way of confronting it in a more comprehensive manner.

The president understands that, for the fanatical few, no amount of outreach or engagement will ever dissuade them from violence and murder. So faced with that persistent and evolving terrorist threat, President Obama and his administration will be unrelenting, unwavering and unyielding in its efforts to defeat, disrupt and dismantle al-Qaida and its allies.

At the same time, the United States will pursue a more comprehensive approach against the longer-term threat of violent extremism in the five areas I described. And at home, we know that we can rely on the extraordinary capabilities of the American people to be fully engaged in our shared effort to protect ourselves.

We will not live our lives in fear, but rather in confidence, as we strengthen our ability to prevent attacks and reduce our vulnerabilities, wherever they exist. So just as we work to disrupt, dismantle and defeat terrorism with a wide range of efforts abroad, we'll also strengthen our efforts here at home to create strong and resilient communities prepared to stand together and let the terrorists know that they will never succeed in shaking our will.

In less than four weeks, America and the world will again mark the anniversary of that terrible day in September when so many innocents were ruthlessly murdered as they went about their daily lives. The U.S. government was unable to prevent that attack, but the American people should know we are doing everything in our power to prevent another one.

And eight years on, that mission demands nothing less than the new thinking that President Obama brings to this challenge and the new approach that this administration will pursue in the years ahead as we fulfill our single most important responsibility – ensuring the safety and security of the American people. And with that, I would like to thank you very much for your patience in listening to me. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. FLANAGAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Brennan. We have about 40 minutes or so for comments and discussion. I'd ask you to please raise your hand, I'll recognize you and then we'll wait for a microphone to come to you. If you'd identify yourself, please, and then we'll – yes, there's a gentlemen right here in the second row.

Q: Hello – it's on? Okay, David Silverberg, Homeland Security Today magazine. I noticed that in your determination to pursue al-Qaida in theater, you never mentioned Osama bin Laden or Ayman al-Zawahiri. What priority do they play in your overall strategy, and are they still a priority in this new approach?

MR. BRENNAN: Well, I think I did mention Osama bin Laden once. And the reason why I didn't mention him more is because it's not about Osama. It's about what he represents – the organization that he has tried to build. Clearly, the leadership of al-Qaida is something that is very important. It's part of our strategy. I think it is important to dismantle that leadership. I think the government has been very successful as far as attacking successfully and removing some of the senior leadership within the organization.

But Osama bin Laden and al-Zawahiri are two individuals that will be brought to justice one day. Hopefully, that day will be sooner rather than later. But make no mistake about it – we are continuing the pursuit of them. And the fact that sometimes Zawahiri comes out with these videos – if he’s just putting out videos, you know, quite frankly, I think we’re doing a pretty good job – but what we’re doing is making sure that we continue to pursue all of the avenues that we have going after the al-Qaida organization from the top leadership to the foot soldiers and to everyone in between.

Q: Good morning, John. I’m Bob Dreyfuss from The Nation magazine. It’s good to see you. You mentioned the long term and the short term. My question is, maybe there’s a medium term in between I wanted you to address. In between al-Qaida and general violent extremists, there are other organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah, even the Taliban, that seem amenable to the kind of persuasion that you said that al-Qaida, the president believes, is not amenable to.

And we’ve discussed this in the past, and you’ve suggested that it might be possible to have a dialogue with Hamas and Hezbollah, and I think the president himself has said the Taliban. So I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about disaggregating these movements, which the Bush administration was so prone to rolling up into one, big Islamo-fascist ball of wax. Talk a little bit about how we could deal with some of the other formations that exist and whether or not it might be prudent to start talking to them, now.

MR. BRENNAN: Well, the two cases that you give, Hamas and Hezbollah, are interesting case studies. Hezbollah started out as purely a terrorist organization back in the early ’80s and has evolved significantly over time. And now it has members of parliament, in the cabinet; there are lawyers, doctors, others who are part of the Hezbollah organization.

However, within Hezbollah, there’s still a terrorist core. And hopefully those elements within the Shia community in Lebanon and within Hezbollah at large – they’re going to continue to look at that extremist terrorist core as being something that is anathema to what, in fact, they’re trying to accomplish in terms of their aspirations about being part of the political process in Lebanon. And so, quite frankly, I’m pleased to see that a lot of Hezbollah individuals are in fact renouncing that type of terrorism and violence and are trying to participate in the political process in a very legitimate fashion.

Hamas, on the other hand, started out as a very focused social organization that was providing welfare to Palestinians, primarily in Gaza. Over time, it developed an extremist and terrorist element to it that, I think, has unfortunately delegitimized it in the eyes of many, not just throughout the world, but also in the territories. And its continued embrace of violence and terrorism is something that the Palestinian people, I think, have to continue to tell Hamas leaders that this is not going to bring them what they truly deserve, which is a Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel.

So you’re absolutely correct. There are a number of different organizations that have both political and terrorist dimensions to it. Unfortunately, it’s the terrorist dimension that, as I pointed out in my remarks, really holds the aspirations of the people. There are disenfranchised Shia within Lebanon that Hezbollah is trying to represent. But they’re doing it in a corrupted

and twisted manner. They're not going to help to realize those aspirations of the Shia people if they continue to embrace that violence – same thing with Hamas. And I think these aspirations of the people need to be realized, and it's not going to be through the terrorist agenda.

Q: So what do we do? What is America's role?

MR. BRENNAN: I think what we've done is to demonstrate both in Lebanon and to the Palestinians that we, the United States, are willing to engage and have a dialogue with any organizations or groups that are, in fact, dedicated to realizing peaceful solutions to existing problems. And I think those elements within Lebanon, be they Hezbollah or others, know that the United States has tried to be a very honest broker there, providing support to Lebanese institutions.

And those who shun and eschew that terrorism will, in fact, gain favor with the United States. The same thing in the Palestinian community – those Palestinians that are really going to ensure that they pursue a path towards peace that does not bring terrorism to bear are going to be partners with the United States.

Q: Eli Lake, Washington Times. Mr. Brennan, do you favor, as Dennis Blair seems to have suggested, a classified annex to the intelligence field manual on interrogations?

MR. BRENNAN: The intelligence field manual? You're talking about the Army field manual?

Q: No, I'm talking about what is being reviewed right now; that is, the interrogation manual for the entire intelligence community is being apparently reviewed right now. Would you favor a classified annex for certain kinds of techniques the public couldn't see?

MR. BRENNAN: There is a taskforce that has been set up, a working group that the president commissioned through executive order to take a look at what the United States' proper policies and practices should be as far as detention and interrogations in the briefings. That process is ongoing. The group continues to sort of work. I have participated in some of those discussions and have received briefings from them. It's a deliberative process right now, and I think it needs to continue to be deliberative, in that regard.

These are tough issues. The Army field manual is serving, right now, as the basis for all U.S. government interrogations or briefings of individuals who are captured and detained. And what the president has directed us to do is to make sure we look at all these issues very thoroughly and come forward with recommendations. And that's what we'll be doing.

Q: Just to follow up to that, could you clarify the administration's position, at this point, on preventive detention?

MR. BRENNAN: As I just mentioned, the president has directed that there be this group that is going to be looking at the issue. When you talk about preventive detention, we have a couple of dimensions to this. One is that when the administration came in, we inherited a

situation where you had over 200 individuals at Guantanamo Bay. They are in a preventive detention regime right now. We are looking at the different options for those individuals: prosecution, transfer, release, whatever. That process is ongoing and will continue to be.

So that's sort of a retrospective issue that we have deal with – the legacy that we have inherited. Going forward now, as far as what we're going to do with individuals who might be picked up or detained, this is what the group is looking at right now as far as what practices and policies should be put in place. There are theaters of military operations right now in Iraq and Afghanistan where there are, in fact, very well-known protocols and procedures for individuals who are captured and detained on the battlefield.

The issue, then, gets to, if we capture and detain somebody in another part of the world, what will be done with them. I might point out that over the past eight years, there has been tremendous maturing and developing of intelligence relationships with different services overseas, as well as a tremendous capability and willingness of intelligence and security services abroad to, in fact, deal with the terrorist threat appropriately.

We're able to count now more on our partners to do what they need to do to bring these individuals to justice. So in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, there were a number of people that were picked up. A lot of people were picked up in those subsequent years. You see less of that now because, in fact, the local authorities, the local services, are doing what they need to do: identify, find and root out those individuals.

So the instances of that type of detention, I think, are dwindling in terms of what we need to do because foreign governments are standing up to their responsibilities now. But again, the main point is that we're looking at this right now, it's continuing to be developed and we will be telling the American people what it's going to be going forward.

MR. FLANAGAN: Yes, Pauline Baker, here in the middle.

Q: Yes, thank you. Pauline Baker from The Fund for Peace. Mr. Brennan, there have been reports that some of the al-Qaida operatives in Afghanistan are now moving into Somalia and East Africa, and you mentioned East Africa in your speech. How high a priority is it in your antiterrorism strategy and your new foreign policy to deal with failed states like Somalia? And what can we do in a situation like that?

MR. BRENNAN: Somalia's a good case in point in terms of not looking at an issue only through the counterterrorism prism because the situation in the Horn of Africa for many years has basically been a chaotic one. You have a number of different power centers that exist within Somalia. You have the al-Shabab; you have the TFG – the transitional government; you have the Puntland and Somaliland authorities; you have AMISOM that is there.

What we need to do is to make sure that we're staying on top of the terrorist challenge that we face as a result of having a place like Somalia serve as a safe haven and terrorist training camp. What we need to do, though, is to have a more comprehensive approach in terms of what is U.S. policy on the Horn of Africa. Over the past several months, there have been numerous

meetings within the administration at the deputies and other levels looking at, what are the issues that we confront. How are we going to deal with the situation in Somalia in a thoughtful manner; not just to put Band-Aids on problems that are there, but how are we going to address it on a longer term?

Secretary Clinton is meeting with the president of the Somali government in Nairobi. There are discussions ongoing; we're providing support to the TFG; we're continuing to provide support and encouragement to AMISOM. What we need to do is to have that comprehensive policy and the counterterrorism effort is a part of that because al-Shabab has, in fact carried out terrorist attacks and is not just a purely domestic insurgent movement. They have tentacles outside in other areas.

We know that there are instances where Somalis who have come here to the United States, including U.S. citizens, have been drawn back by that ideological rhetoric and are engaged in the fighting there. This is something we're very concerned about. There were instances just the other day in Australia where the Australians had arrested a number of individuals of Somali background. They were planning to carry out attacks.

So Somalia is an issue but it needs to be looked at in a broader geo-strategic context: what we need to be able to do in order to give the people of Somalia an alternative to joining with al-Shabab. And sometimes in these places young Somalis or others will join up with terrorist groups because it gives them an opportunity to have three square meals a day because they don't have any other alternative. What we need to do is to help develop those alternative paths for them so they shun that path toward violence.

Q: Thank you. I'm Tom Reckford with the World Affairs Council. There have been press reports that the administration is considering letting NSA and DIA appoint some station chiefs. How would this affect the effort against counterterrorism and the liaison relationships that help that effort?

MR. BRENNAN: The intelligence community has grown significantly, especially since 9/11, as a way to respond to the challenge we face. As you know, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 established the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and a director of national intelligence, separating out that senior intelligence officer position from CIA.

What the DNI and CIA and others are doing now is making sure that their resources and authorities are arrayed appropriately both here in Washington as well as abroad. I know there's been a lot of speculation out in the press about things that are going on as far as chief of station responsibilities. Having served as a chief of station for three years, I know the importance of that in terms of providing support to the ambassadors, to the chiefs of mission, as well as have the ability to interact with the host government's intelligence and security services.

And so I'm a strong advocate of maintaining one person to have that role. And these are issues that, you know, the DNI and director of CIA will work out. And Denny Blair and Leon Panetta have regular discussions about these issues. What we're trying to do is make sure that

the intelligence mission is served and the national security interest of the United States is served. So in sort of a longwinded way, we're going to take care of this issue. And there will continue to be speculation in the press, but the intelligence mission abroad will continue to be run efficiently and effectively.

MR. FLANAGAN: Another question here on the end, and a couple over there? There's someone on the end and then we can field people in the middle here.

Q: Thank you. Spencer Ackerman with the Washington Independent. How do you deal with possible tradeoffs between your near-term approach on al-Qaida and some longer-term approaches? Would you put certain techniques, like drone strikes in Pakistan, as an area where there might be some tradeoff in terms of dealing with an immediate terrorism problem versus possibly cleaving the population away from the Pakistani government in anger? And did you have any role while you were at NCTC in domestic surveillance? A recent IG report suggested NCTC had some while you were there.

MR. BRENNAN: First issue, as far as the tradeoffs involved between countering terrorism and the subordinate issues, when we look at different options on the counterterrorism front, we convene interagency meetings at the assistant secretary level, at the deputy's level, at the principals level, that we tee up various options.

And we look at them from the standpoint of – okay, how is this going to help to address the terrorist threat that we face and mitigate that threat? But we also have all of the right players involved to say, okay, what are the implications as far as, if we take this step, what is it going to do on the political front, on the economic front, and even on the social front? And so this – you know, the decisions that are reached on any particular operations or activities is the result of a very thoughtful and rigorous process where we bring to bear those different perspectives.

What we don't want to do is to have a bunch of CT people in the room saying, okay, what can we do here, and being unknowing of the implications in the broader context. So you bring in the people who have that because – one of the things that President Obama has made very clear – and especially to me – is that if I'm going to tee up an option or a recommendation to him, I'd better have done my homework because he asks some very probing and difficult questions.

So if I know I'm going to get those questions asked of me, I'm going to make sure I ask those questions of others. And it has been a very collaborative effort over the past six months, and I've been very pleased with the way things have progressed.

Q: And on the second question?

MR. BRENNAN: NCTC and what was my role there?

Q: Domestic surveillance – if you had any role in domestic surveillance while you were there.

MR. BRENNAN: I fulfilled all my responsibilities at NCTC that I was asked to fulfill. And there are a number of different programs, some of which have come out in the press; some of which have not. Some of the things that have come out in the press have been inaccurate in terms of the representations there. And when I look back in terms of my service at the NCTC and other places, I believe that I fulfilled those responsibilities to the best of my abilities.

And these issues related to so-called domestic surveillance programs and other things, one of the things – and I mentioned it – there is a lot of hyperbole and misrepresentations about what actually happened. And a lot of times, people go down certain roads, believing reports as facts, and that's not the case. So I'm not going to go into what my role was in that instance because a lot of those activities are still considered to be classified and not in the public domain, irrespective of what press reports might be out there.

MR. FLANAGAN: Okay, let me just capture a couple more questions over here. In fact, why don't both of you, in sequence, ask your question and then we'll come back around the other side of the room?

Q: Mr. Brennan, the administration inherited some of the old administration's interrogation and detention policies. There was a report in the Post today about this speech today that said you had opposed Obama's decision to release the OLC memos from the last administration. If you could talk about some of the thinking behind your opposition to the release of those?

MR. BRENNAN: One of the things that I really have appreciated since I joined the Obama administration, and serving President Obama, is that he welcomes – in fact, not only encourages, but presses people – to speak their mind on these issues. And I have never felt any reluctance on my part or – I've seen on other people's part – to share with the president their views.

In the days and weeks that ran up to the decision to release those memos, I was asked – I participated in a number of meetings. I gave my perspective based on my role as assistant to the president for counterterrorism and homeland security. And I gave him my perspective on what I believed were the pros and cons, the implications of release. And that is what we affectionately refer to as the “internal deliberative process” within the White House.

And my counsel to the president is directed to the president. And if the president wants to explain to people what my counsel is, he certainly has the authority and my proxy to do it. But I serve the president and I'm going to continue to keep my counsel to him my counsel to him.

MR. FLANAGAN: Yes, the gentleman there in the back row.

Q: I'm Alex Kingsbury from U.S. News & World Report. I wonder, when you're talking about these upstream factors, if regimes with poor, say, human rights records or, you know, these oppressive regimes, if that's acknowledged as a factor in the upstream cause of

some of these radicalizations, and if so, if the U.S. is going to work more aggressively to get these regimes with which we're allied to change?

MR. BRENNAN: The treatment of individuals abroad and the human rights record of other countries is something that is closely looked at by various organizations – American and others – as well as the United States government. The United States State Department has the responsibility to report on the human rights record of individual countries.

And it is something that is always a part of our dialogue with countries where we have concerns about their human rights record, and in terms of humane treatment and women's rights and other types of things. What we want to do is make sure it is a dialogue that we maintain, in fact, that discourse with them underscoring our concerns about certain areas.

So I've seen in instances – and I've served in different parts of the world – where there were issues and concerns expressed. These concerns are expressed at the highest levels of the U.S. government to the highest levels of these other governments. And there needs to be, I think, continued pressure and momentum on a number of these areas, but human rights is a very, sort of, wide issue with a lot of things that are included in there.

But it also then pervades into things like corruption. It's not just treatment of individuals, but how legitimate institutions are ignored, which I think takes away the rights of individuals overseas if they cannot count on their government. So whether you're talking about practices by governments, whether you're talking about abuses, whether you're talking about not allowing certain parts of their population to realize the full benefits of citizenship, this is something that is continued to be discussed.

MR. FLANAGAN: Okay, we've got a couple of questions here in the second row.

Q: Ted Kattouf. The terrorist financing, particularly in areas like the Gulf, is a pretty straightforward issue. I mean, it's difficult but one can have frank conversations with officials about that. But it seems to me there's a more pernicious and contextual issue that is harder to get at, and that is the financing of the very rigid Salafi doctrine, which is often taking root in Central Asia where there had not been much Islamic tradition or squeezing out Sufi and other more benign forms of Islamic thought and religion. How does one in your position get at that? Thank you.

MR. BRENNAN: First of all, it's good to see you again, Ambassador Kattouf. Ted was the deputy chief of mission when I served overseas and it was a great honor to serve with Ted. The issue you talk about as far as terrorist financing – in fact, we had discussion at the White House this week at the highest levels looking at, sort of, where we have come over the past number of years, where we need to go, what are the challenges we face. And we've made a lot of progress.

I think there are two aspects to this. One is that it's now increasingly difficult, because the financiers have adapted, to distinguish and disaggregate the monies that are going to legitimate social, educational programs from that which is being siphoned off for terrorist

purposes because it is very commingled and blended. I think we've done a great job as far as stopping a number of these financing flows that go to terrorist groups or terrorist purposes. The further downstream the money gets, it's hard then to determine exactly where it's going to.

But this sort of tension and the effort to almost push out some of the local religious sects or practices or individuals – there is tremendous competition that's going on in the Muslim world. It has gone on for the past 20, 30 years, as you all know. After the revolution in Iran and the effort to export the Iranian revolution, there was a concurrent effort on the part of Sunni governments and religious institutions to counter that by building mosques and schools and whatever else.

And also, then, there was competition within those Shia and those Sunni schools as a way to get the edge on the others. And the concern that I have is that even if there are these moderate institutions and moderate efforts that try to really bring legitimate teachings of Islam and a much more moderate Islamic view, they are being used by extremists. They are being used by terrorists as the “cover” organizations, or whatever.

So what's important for us in working with our fellow services is to really try to root out those individuals that are doing things – not just because they're proselytizing for proselytization's sake, but also are doing it in order to propagate and perpetuate some of these terrorist causes and extremist causes. And it is tough.

That's why I said in my remarks that it really is going to be up to these individuals, these people, their governments, to really root out extremists and to diminish that threat we face. We can help to a certain point, but then it gets down not just to those governments but further down, the state and local; just the way it is here in the United States – all politics is local – the same thing overseas.

That's why I think, for example, in Pakistan, the Pakistani government, I think, has done a better job of trying to reach out to some of this hinterlands to demonstrate to them that the Pakistani government is not trying to take over, but they're trying to really help protect these tribes and groups from this encroachment by al-Qaida and likeminded extremists.

MR. FLANAGAN: Could I just ask a related question on this, John? You mentioned in your remarks about the challenge of separating the broader people from some of the extremists and their ideologies. And one of the things that, certainly, the Bush administration wrestled with was this question of how to empower some of the voices in these communities that are speaking out against – in many cases – Islamic extremists without discrediting them.

And it's a real challenge. And I wondered if you've, in your review, been looking at new ways to do this; that is, to strengthen some of the voices that are out there in these communities that are speaking out against the extremists and the dead-end nature of some of their philosophies?

MR. BRENNAN: Yeah, we've been looking at this and there are a couple of challenges here. One is that it really takes a lot of courage, on the part of individuals, to speak out because

they are speaking out against the use of violence and terrorism, and they are not the ones who are using it but what they speak out against is being used against them. And we see that these killings and assassinations are taking place against those moderate clerics and others who are trying, in fact, to push back.

This is where I also think it's incumbent on governments to allow the freedom of expression because freedom of expression will allow not just the criticism of the government, but also the criticisms of those who espouse extremisms, who espouse violence. And if some of these governments are trying to repress that freedom of speech, they're repressing not just the extremists but they're repressing those forces that, I think, are integral to, in fact, the defeat of extremism over time.

So this is one of the things that as we – sometimes we have meetings with opposition leaders or we listen to them or we talk to them. This is important to encourage – that dialogue – so that they feel as though they are empowered not just to speak out about the government but to speak out about how their societies are being corroded by these extremist elements.

MR. FLANAGAN: The gentleman here in the second row; you've been very patient.

Q: Tony Capaccio with Bloomberg News. To what extent do military tactics sometimes come back and haunt you in your attempt to mitigate these upstream activities – factors that breed terrorism. I'm talking about high-collateral damage, high-profile attacks, like in Farah province back in May that killed a number of people. Predator strikes oftentimes are publicized as causing a number of collateral damages. And what steps are you taking or is General Hood taking with CENTCOM to minimize those types of occurrences?

MR. BRENNAN: Okay, if anybody didn't hear the question, it was how do the military tactics that might be employed sort of work against us, to include reports of collateral damage or other types of things. I think there are two aspects of this. One is that which has occurred that is, in fact, the case, or the facts – things like Abu Ghraib, things like waterboarding – you know, I'm not just talking about military tactics; these are illegitimate ones – or collateral damage that did occur because there wasn't sufficient rigor in terms of the steps that were taken before the trigger was pulled.

They can be devastating. And I know that President Obama has really wanted to make sure that we do, whether it's intelligence or military or whatever, do our homework to make sure that those instances, if they cannot be totally eliminated, they're going to be minimized to the greatest degree. But then there's also those reports of things that are specious – that did not occur. It's sometimes hard to counter that missive because people want to believe what they want to believe.

And I've read and seen reports about all different types of collateral damage as a result of different types of military and, maybe, intelligence activities and they are way, way off the mark. But when there is one instance when it is accurate, it tends to then lend credence to these others. That's why we need to put a premium on making sure that any action we take, it is not just because of that sort of immediate need, that we do it with care, with great precision and

conscious that there are implications far beyond that one instance that really will come back and haunt us.

MR. FLANAGAN: Okay, I've been advised we have to end a little bit sooner than I had advertised originally. If we could take one question here from the middle – if you could ask your question, just wait until this – on the other side there are also two questions there and then we'll wrap up.

Q: Catherine Herridge, FOX News channel. Thank you for taking my question. Earlier, you mentioned the administration plan to close Guantanamo Bay. What does closed mean? Does it mean there will be no military detainees at the prison in January of next year?

MR. FLANAGAN: And then two others on the end of the other aisle.

MR. BRENNAN: Well, as you know, one of the first acts that the president made after he came into office was to call for the closure of Guantanamo Bay within a year's time. There has been constant work and attention paid to this. This is one of the most challenging issues that is on our plate, and certainly one that is on my plate, because there are so many different dimensions to this, in terms of prosecutions, whether it's under Article III of military commissions or transfers or releases, preventative detention or whatever.

It is our full intention to close down Guantanamo Bay, per the president's direction and we are doing everything possible to ensure that we are able to meet that directive and meet that deadline. And so when the president now said – I know that it was his full intent that it would in fact close and be shuttered – there'd be no detainees there. We are working hard to realize that vision. We are going to get there, and whether or not you know, we come in a week or two early or right on time or whatever, there are a number of things that are – there are dependencies here as far as court cases.

Congress can help or hinder – (laughter) – our efforts on this. We are trying to do the right thing. We want to make sure justice is served. The families of the victims of those terrorist attacks deserve justice. And those that need to be brought to trial here in the United States need to be brought to trial. And I very much hope that the congress will work with the administration to ensure that justice is done.

Q: So I just want to be clear. You said there would be no detainees there in January.

MR. BRENNAN: No, what I said was that the president directed that Guantanamo Bay be closed in a year's time and that we are doing everything possible to be there. Unfortunately, I don't have a crystal ball that I can say with certainty, because at this point it is unknowable, exactly how many people will be transferred in the next week, month, several months, and what the conditions on the ground will be on 1 January and 21 January. But what I'm saying to you as a fact is that everybody is doing everything possible, within the administration, to realize the president's goal.

MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. Well, I'm sorry. I've been advised we will have to cut it off right now. Thank you, Mr. Brennan for your clarity and candor and we wish you the best of luck in your endeavors. (Applause.)

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you.

(END)