

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

**SECURING THE HOMELAND BY RENEWING AMERICA'S  
STRENGTHS, RESILIENCE, AND VALUES**

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JOHN HAMRE: Good morning, everybody. Welcome. We're glad to have you here. Can't imagine that you all have this much free time, so there must be something going on today here. So we're delighted to welcome John Brennan. This is actually a very, very important week.

The administration's going to be releasing its national security strategy and we get a chance to think about it a little bit in advance and start thinking through the issues that we know that the administration's been wrestling with. And we're fortunate to have John to help lead us through that. So first, John, thank you. Thank you for taking the time to join us.

You all know John Brennan. John's a long-time civil servant. He's been helping this country with its security for 30 years, long time with the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to become the head of the National Counterterrorism Center, really its founding director. And now, of course, serves as the assistant to the president for homeland security and for counterterrorism.

And in that capacity, he is completely in the center of all things important right now. So we are – we're delighted that he would be willing to take the time to join us and we know it's going to be very interesting. John, I want to thank you for your service. The country needs you and we're very grateful that you're willing to do this and join us today. We'll turn to you. Thank you. John Brennan, ladies and gentlemen. (Applause.)

JOHN BRENNAN: Thank you very much, John. And I would like to take a moment to express my appreciation to CSIS for inviting me back. You invited me here a little after six months, I think, when I came into this administration and I greatly appreciate the invitation to return.

I also want to extend a note of appreciation to John Hamre, who I think last month, celebrated your 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary here at CSIS. You truly are, John, one of the modern icons of public service after so many years working for the government and continuing that tradition here at CSIS. I think we all owe you a note of thanks for what you have done for the security of this country. So thank you very much, John. (Applause.)

As I said, last summer, I stood here a little over six months into President Obama's administration. At that time, I outlined the emerging contours of the president's approach to meeting two related, but distinct, challenges. First, the immediate near-term challenge of destroying al-Qaida and its extremist affiliates. And second, the longer-term challenge of confronting violent extremism generally, including the political, economic and social forces that can sometimes put individuals on the path toward militancy.

This approach is now being formalized as the president releases his national security strategy tomorrow. This strategy aims to renew American leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by

rebuilding the fundamental sources of American strength, security, prosperity and influence in the world.

It reflects the positive vision of American leadership and partnership with other nations that President Obama has consistently articulated since taking office. It provides the intellectual framework for the national security policies and programs already being implemented and it reflects the president's vision for confronting the most daunting challenges of our time while seizing the opportunities of an increasingly globalized world.

The president's strategy is guided by national interests that are clear and enduring. First and foremost, security. The security of the United States, its citizens and U.S. allies and partners is and always will be paramount. Prosperity, a strong, innovative and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity is essential to our future and the future of generations yet to come.

Values – respect for universal values at home and around the world defines who we are and what we hold dear and an international order that promotes peace, security and opportunity through stronger cooperation as this is the only path that will allow us to meet global challenges. The strategy lays out a clear path for advancing these interests and shaping the world we seek.

As the president stated this weekend at West Point, we must build the sources of America's strength and influence and shape a world that's more peaceful and more prosperous. As the president explained, this includes rebuilding the foundation of American strength and prosperity at home.

It includes comprehensive engagement with the world. It includes building and integrating the capabilities we need to succeed, capabilities that span the military, diplomatic, development, intelligence, law enforcement and homeland security fronts. And it includes strengthening multilateral institutions and norms so that shared challenges can be met through collective action.

Tomorrow, Secretary of State Clinton and the president's national security advisor, Gen. Jones, will discuss how this strategy will advance our interests around the world. Today, as the president's principal advisor on homeland security and counterterrorism, I want to address how this national security strategy is guiding our efforts to secure our homeland by renewing America's strength, resilience and values.

The president's strategy is absolutely clear about the threat we face. Our enemy is not terrorism because terrorism is but a tactic. Our enemy is not terror because terror is a state of mind and, as Americans, we refuse to live in fear. Nor do we describe our enemy as jihadists or Islamists because jihad is holy struggle, a legitimate tenet of Islam meaning to purify oneself of one's community.

And there is nothing holy or legitimate or Islamic about murdering innocent men, women and children. Indeed, characterizing our adversaries this way would actually be counterproductive. It would play into the false perception that they are religious leaders

defending a holy cause when in fact, they are nothing more than murderers, including the murder of thousands upon thousands of Muslims.

This is why Muslim leaders around the world have spoken out forcefully and often at great risk to their own lives to reject al-Qaida and violent extremism. And frankly, their condemnations often do not get the recognition they deserve, including from the media.

Moreover, describing our enemy in religious terms would lend credence to the lie propagated by al-Qaida and its affiliates to justify terrorism, that the United States is somehow at war against Islam. The reality, of course, is that we have never been and will never be at war with Islam. After all, Islam, like so many faiths, is part of America.

Instead, the president's strategy is clear and precise. Our enemy is al-Qaida and its terrorist affiliates. For it was al-Qaida who attacked us so viciously on 9/11 and whose desire to attack the United States, our allies and our partners remains undiminished. And it is its affiliates who have take up al-Qaida's call to arms against the United States and other parts of the world.

The president's strategy is unequivocal with regard to our posture. The United States of America is at war. We are at war against al-Qaida and its terrorist affiliates. That is why the president is responsibly ending the war in Iraq, which had nothing to do with 9/11 and why he has refocused our efforts on Afghanistan, where al-Qaida continues to plot from the tribal regions along the border with Pakistan and inside of Pakistan.

We have a clear mission. We will not simply degrade al-Qaida's capabilities or simply prevent terrorist attacks against our country or citizens. We will not merely respond after the fact, after an attack that has been attempted. Instead, the United States will disrupt, dismantle and ensure a lasting defeat of al-Qaida and violent extremist affiliates.

And the president's strategy outlines how we will achieve this mission and keep Americans safe. We will deny al-Qaida and its affiliates safe haven. We will secure the world's most dangerous weapons, especially the nuclear materials that al-Qaida seeks and would surely use against us. We will build positive partnerships with Muslim communities around the world. And most importantly, we will protect our homeland.

The president's strategy describes how this effort will require a broad, sustained and integrated campaign that harnesses every tool of American power, military and civilian, kinetic and diplomatic. And indeed, the value, the power of our values and partnerships with other nations and institutions.

In other words, this is a multi-departmental, multinational and indeed, a multi-generational effort. To deny al-Qaida and its affiliates safe haven, we will take the fight to al-Qaida and its extremist affiliates wherever they plot and train in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and beyond.

We are not only delivering severe blows against the leadership of al-Qaida and its affiliates, we are helping those governments build their capacity to provide for their own

security, to help them root out the al-Qaida cancer that has manifested itself within their borders and to help them prevent it from returning.

In all our efforts, we will exercise force prudently, recognizing that we often need to use a scalpel and not a hammer. When we know of terrorists who are plotting against us, we have a responsibility to take action to defend ourselves and we will do so. At the same time, an action that eliminates a single terrorist but causes civilian casualties can, in fact, inflame local populations and create far more problems – a tactical success but a strategic failure.

So we need to ensure that our actions are more precise and more accurate than ever before. This is something that President Obama not only expects, but demands. Moreover, we know that al-Qaida seeks to overextend the United States and drain us militarily, financially and psychologically.

I have seen this through my own experience covering al-Qaida and terrorism over the past two decades. But we will not let that happen. We will always carefully weigh the costs and risks of action against the costs and risks of inaction. And whenever possible, we will join with allies and partners to share the burdens of our collective security.

As a result of our actions, we have subjected the core of al-Qaida, led by Osama bin Laden, to unprecedented pressure. In the last 16 months alone, hundreds of al-Qaida fighters and affiliates, including many senior leaders, have been captured or killed. We have inflicted significant damage on their capabilities.

Today, it is harder than ever for this network to move, raise funds, recruit, train and plot attacks, all of which makes the American people safer. These successes, though, have not come easily. They are a result of the service and sacrifices of men and women who risk their lives to protect ours in our intelligence, military, law enforcement, first responder and homeland security communities.

On many occasions, they have made the ultimate sacrifice, such as those seven CIA officers who gave their lives at a remote outpost in Afghanistan last December and all those brave servicemen and women who give their lives on a daily basis in Afghanistan. So as a nation, let us always debate our counterterrorism efforts, but let us never forget or fail to support the extraordinary men and women who serve to keep us safe.

The president's national security strategy also outlines how we will strengthen other tools of American power which will help us meet many challenges. This includes addressing the political, economic and social forces that can make some people fall victim to the cancer of violent extremism.

Through a renewed commitment to diplomacy and in contrast to terrorists who offer the false hope of change through violence, we seek to show that legitimate grievances can be resolved peacefully through democratic institutions and dialogue, whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan or between Israelis and Palestinians, where the continuing conflict undermines moderates and strengthens extremists across the region.

Through new partnerships to promote development in places like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, we are working to foster good governance, reduce corruption and improve education, health and basic services, all of which helps undermine the forces that can put the disillusioned and disposed on the path to militancy.

And in all our efforts, the president's national security strategy makes clear that we must demonstrate and communicate America's vision of opportunity and progress in contrast with the bankrupt and evil ideology of violent extremists who exploit the people they purport to serve. Communicating America's vision is what the president did in his speech nearly one year ago in Cairo, which has inspired new partnerships between the United States and Muslim communities around the world in development, education, health and science, and technology.

And to secure our homeland, we will continue the never-ending work of strengthening our defenses here at home. In light of the failed attacks over Detroit and in Times Square, it is easy to forget, but it bears repeating. Since 9/11, we have made enormous progress as a nation in securing our homeland.

And under President Obama, we have built upon the work of the previous administration and have accelerated efforts in many areas. We have improved security at our borders, airports and other ports of entry. We have strengthened intelligence, information sharing and cooperation at all levels, federal, state and local and timely analysis of threat information, even as events over the past year highlight the need to do better.

Today, our defenses are stronger and the United States presents a much less hospitable environment for terrorists to carry out their cowardly attacks than ever before. Indeed, since January of last year, more than 20 individuals in the United States have been arrested and charged with terrorism crimes, their plans and plots disrupted.

This includes Najibullah Zazi, who planned to attack the New York subway system in what could have been the worst terrorist attack on our soil since 9/11. Each of these arrests represents the coordinated work of countless intelligence, homeland security and law enforcement personnel who have saved countless American lives.

But these successes notwithstanding, indeed, perhaps because of them, it is clear that we are now facing a new phase of the terrorist threat. We have long recognized that al-Qaida, its affiliates and those who subscribe to its murderous ideology are a resilient, resourceful and determined enemy.

We have made it harder for them to recruit and train so they are increasingly relying on recruits with little training. We have strengthened our defenses against massive, sophisticated attacks on our homeland, so they are attempting attacks with little sophistication, but with very lethal intent.

They are seeking foot soldiers who might slip past our defenses by defying the traditional profile of a terrorist like Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian behind the failed attack over

Detroit. Knowing that the United States and our allies have strengthened aviation screening in recent years, they equipped Abdulmutallab with explosives sewn into his clothes that were less likely to be detected by a traditional metal detector.

Knowing that it is harder to penetrate America's defenses, the likes of al-Qaida's Adam Gadahan and Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen, American citizens who understand our society, our strengths as well as our vulnerabilities, not only plan attacks, they use the Internet and extremist websites to exhort people already living in the United States to take up arms and launch terrorist attacks from within.

Indeed, we have seen an increasing number of individuals here in the United States become captivated by extremist ideologies or causes. Somali Americans from Minnesota traveling to fight in Somalia, the five Virginia men who went to Pakistan seeking terrorist training, David Headley, the Chicago man charged with helping to plan the Mumbai attacks, the Pennsylvania woman, JihadJane, charged with conspiring to murder a Danish cartoonist.

The president's national security strategy explicitly recognizes the threat to the United States posed by individuals radicalized here at home. We have seen individuals, including U.S. citizens, armed with their U.S. passports, travel easily to extremist safe havens and return to America, their deadly plans disrupted by coordinated intelligence and law enforcement.

Daniel Patrick Boyd of North Carolina, who with others, conspired to murder U.S. military personnel and Najibullah Zazi, who received his instruction in bomb making in Pakistan. Unfortunately, we were unable to thwart Faisal Shahzad, accused of attempting to set off the car bomb in Times Square.

We have also seen individuals, including American citizens, apparently inspired by al-Qaida's ideology, take matters into their own hands. Again, we have disrupted a number of these plots, including individuals in Texas and Illinois charged with planning to blow up buildings.

Tragically, we were unable to prevent others. The murder of the military recruiter in Arkansas last year and the senseless slaughter of 13 innocent Americans at Fort Hood. I would note that it is telling that many of these individuals felt the need to hide their activities from their families and communities, likely because they knew they would be condemned by those very same communities.

Indeed, in a number of these cases, it has been families and communities concerned for their loved ones who have brought these individuals to the attention of law enforcement. This is a new phase to the terrorist threat, no longer limited to coordinated, sophisticated, 9/11-style attacks, but expanding to single individuals attempting to carry out relatively unsophisticated attacks.

As our enemy adapts and evolves their tactics, so must we constantly adapt and evolve ours, not in a mad rush driven by fear, but in a thoughtful and reasoned way that enhances our security and further delegitimizes the actions of our enemy. To this end, a key theme of the

president's national security strategy is how we will remain a strong and resilient nation here at home.

As a strong and resilient nation, we will adapt. This is the first national security strategy of any president that integrates homeland security as part of a broader national security strategy. At the White House, we have already merged the staffs of the National Security Council, Homeland Security Council and parts of the National Economic Council into a single, integrated national security staff that includes new offices, including cybersecurity.

This has fostered a more rapid, coordinated and effective federal response to the range of challenges we face, from the failed attacks in Detroit and Times Square to H1N1, to the earthquake in Haiti and to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. To ensure we are constantly adapting and improving and to address any deficiencies or weaknesses in the system, the president has ordered immediate reviews and corrective actions in the immediate aftermath of attempted attacks.

Since the attack at Fort Hood, we have taken numerous steps, including improving communication between the Department of Defense and Justice regarding disaffected individuals in our armed forces. Following the failed attack of Detroit, we have strengthened the analysis and integration of intelligence and have enhanced aviation security, including a new, real-time, threat-based screening policy for all international flights to the United States.

And as the investigation into the Times Square plot continues, so will our constant effort to assess and bolster our defenses. As a strong and resilient nation, we will prepare. Building on the unprecedented investments we have already made in homeland security, we will continue to reduce our vulnerabilities.

We will work with allies and partners to constantly enhance security at our borders, airports and ports. We will move forward with our new initiative to respond faster to bioterrorism. We will work with the private sector to enhance the security of our critical infrastructure, including cyberspace, which underpins our economy, our society and our security.

Even as we do everything in our government to prevent attacks, we recognize the indispensable role played by ordinary citizens. We have seen this before in the heroic passengers aboard Flight 93 on 9/11, who saved countless lives on the ground in Washington, the response personnel who prevented even more lives from being lost at Fort Hood, the passengers who restrained Abdulmutallab on Flight 253 over Detroit and the street vendors in Times Square who alerted the police when they saw something suspicious.

This is the kind of vigilance that can keep us safe. As a strong and resilient nation, we will strengthen our ability to withstand any disruption, whatever the cause. For even as we put unrelenting pressure on the enemy, even as we strive to thwart 100 percent of the plots against us, we know that terrorists are striving to succeed only once.

And we must be honest with ourselves. No nation, no matter how powerful, can prevent every threat from coming to fruition. And in America, a free and open society of 300 million

people, the task becomes even more difficult as our adversaries increasingly rely on individual terrorists and lone individuals inspired by al-Qaida's hateful ideology.

But rather than a reason to fear, this must be a catalyst for action. Instead of simply resigning ourselves to what appears to some to be the inevitable, we must improve our preparedness and plan for all contingencies. Instead of simply building defensive walls, we must bolster our ability at all levels, federal, state, local and the private sector to withstand disruptions, maintain operations and recover quickly.

Instead of giving into fear and paralysis, which is the goal of terrorists, we must resolve, as a nation, as a people, that we will go forward with confidence, that we will resist succumbing to overreaction, especially to failed attacks and not magnify these perpetrators beyond the despicable miscreants that they are, that as a proud and strong nation, we will not cower in the face of a small band of cowards who hide in the shadows and send others to their slaughter and to slaughter the innocents.

As the president said at West Point, we must remember who we are. We are Americans who have overcome great challenges before and will do so again and again and again. This leads to the final way we can remain a strong and resilient nation, by staying true to who we are a people, including the values that remain one of the greatest sources of our strength at home and abroad.

The president's national security strategy speaks to this directly. More than any other action we have taken, the power of America's example has spread freedom and democracy worldwide. That is why we must always seek to uphold these values, not just when it is easy but also when it is hard.

Indeed, fidelity to our values and to end practices that were counterproductive to our counterterrorism efforts is why the president banned brutal methods of interrogation. Fidelity to our values and to deny violent extremists one of their most potent recruitment tools is why the president ordered that the prison at Guantanamo Bay be closed and that we bring detainees to justice.

As we work to close that prison, including any transfers or release of detainees, we will be guided by one priority above all others, the security of the American people. And we must not forget what military leaders and national security experts from across the political spectrum have said for years, that the detention facility at Guantanamo has served as a powerful recruiting tool for our enemies and must be closed.

Going forward, our challenge is to find policies that are consistent with both the rule of law and our values as a nation that allow us to optimize both our security and our liberties, that give us the maximum flexibility to collect intelligence and protect the American people and keep us one step ahead of the involving threats to our nation.

Fortunately, we can do all this because we have the strongest, most effective legal system in the world. Nonetheless, we are constantly working to strengthen existing tools and

capabilities to develop new ones consistent with our constitutional and legal obligations that will further empower our counterterrorism professionals to protect the American people.

For example, we have created an interagency team called the High Value Detainee Interrogation Group that we deploy overseas as well as domestically to gather valuable intelligence from terrorist suspects like Zazi, Abdulmutallab and Shahzad. We do this as rapidly as possible and in accordance with the law.

We're also working to develop an effective and durable legal framework for the war against al-Qaida. Effective by providing our counterterrorism professionals with the tools they need to prevent terrorist suspects from threatening us again and durable, able to withstand legal challenge in our courts as well as to have the support of both political parties so that it can be sustained in future administrations.

We continue to work with the Congress on such a framework, but its broad elements are clear, as is the need for flexibility so we can apply the right tools in the right circumstances. Such a framework must include, perhaps, our single most effective tool for prosecuting, convicting and sentencing suspected terrorists, our Article III courts.

Since 9/11, prosecutions in our federal courts have resulted in hundreds of convictions of terrorists, including life sentences for the likes of Zacarias Moussaoui, the so-called 20<sup>th</sup> 9/11 hijacker, as well as the shoe bomber, Richard Reid. In addition, the federal criminal justice system has enabled us to disrupt ongoing plots.

And as recent cases have demonstrated, prosecuting suspects in federal courts does not impede intelligence collection. To the contrary, our federal criminal justice system has proven to be an effective intelligence collection tool, helping the government to obtain information about the plans, intentions, tactics, recruitment, training and organizational structures of terrorist organization, including al-Qaida and its affiliates.

Just as we cannot cast aside our federal courts because we are at war, we must also recognize that there are other options for bringing terrorists to justice, including military commissions.

Last year, we worked with Congress to reform and strengthen these commissions, restoring their legitimacy as an appropriate venue for trying terrorist suspects and turning those commissions into an effective tool. We have announced plans to try several individuals by these reformed commissions, even as we remain mindful that commissions are not without limitations that circumscribe the instances in which they cannot be used.

As such, commissions should remain one of the tools of any framework, but is to be used as needed and as appropriate. A durable and effective legal framework must also recognize that some detainees currently in our custody at Guantanamo cannot be released because they pose a grave threat to the United States. But, for a variety of reasons, they also cannot be prosecuted. This is, as the president has said, the toughest issue we face.

So we continue to work to ensure that any prolonged detention includes fair procedures, periodic review, and is subject to constitutional checks and balances. Finally, remaining faithful to our values requires something else – that we never surrender the diversity and tolerance and openness to different cultures and faiths that define us as Americans. Several months ago, I had the opportunity to speak at NYU, where I was hosted by the university’s Islamic center and the Islamic Law Students Association.

The audience included people of many faiths – Muslim, Christian, Jew, Hindu and Sikh. I was there to have a dialogue on how, as Americans, we can all work together to keep our country safe from the terrorists who seek to drive us apart. After I was finished speaking, person after person stood up to share their perspective and to ask their questions. Mothers and fathers, religious leaders and students, recent immigrants and American citizens by birth. One after another, they spoke of how they love this country and of all the opportunities it has afforded them and their families.

But they also spoke of their concerns, that their fellow Americans, and at times, their own government, may see them as a threat to American security, rather than a part of the American family. One man, a father, explained that his 21-year-old son, an American born and raised, who was subjected to extra security every time he boards a plane, now feels disenfranchised in his own country. This is the challenge we face.

Even more than the attacks al-Qaida and its violent affiliates unleash and the blood they spill, they seek to strike at the very essence of who we are as Americans by replacing our hard-won confidence with fear and replacing our tolerance with suspicion; by turning our great diversity from a source of strength into a source of division; by causing us to undermine the laws and values that have been a source of our strength and our influence throughout the world; by turning a nation whose global leadership has meant greater security and prosperity for people in every corner of the globe into a nation that retreats from the world stage and abandons allies and partners.

That is what al-Qaida and its allies want – to achieve their goals by turning us into something we are not. But that is something they can never achieve, because only the people of America can change who we are, as a nation. Al-Qaida can sew explosives into their clothes or park an SUV with explosives on a busy street. But it is our choice to react with panic or resolve. They can seek to recruit people already living among us, but it is our choice to subject entire communities to suspicion, or to support those communities in reaching the disaffected before they turn to violence.

Terrorists may try to bring death to our cities, but it is our choice to either uphold the rule of law or chip away at it. They may strike our communities, but it is our choice to either respond wisely and effectively or lash out in ways that inflame entire regions and stoke the fires of the violent extremism. That is our choice. And with the strategy we are releasing tomorrow, President Obama and the administration offers our answer.

We will defeat al-Qaida and its affiliates; we will build a strong and resilient nation; and we will remain faithful to our values that make us Americans. That is how we will prevail in this

fight. That is how we will keep our country safe. And I want to thank you for the opportunity to talk to you this morning. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. NELSON: Well, Mr. Brennan, thank you very much for those remarks, and of course, as John Hamre said, it's an honor to have you here and it's a privilege for the president and you to unveil these parts of the security strategy here at CSIS. We're now going to go into the question-and-answer period. I get to have a little bit of an iron fist here.

This will be a question-and-answer period, not a statement-and-answer period, so please keep – there will be microphones around the room. When you get a microphone – first, raise your hand. When a microphone comes to you, please state your name and your affiliation if you have one. And then please provide a succinct question and then Mr. Brennan will answer it from there. So go ahead and kick it off. We'll start right here in the front.

Q: Thank you very much. Katherine Harris, Fox News Channel. Mr. Brennan, who do you consider the greater threat today: Osama bin Laden or the American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki?

MR. BRENNAN: I think they both present a threat to American security in different ways. Osama bin Laden, who has built up al-Qaida over the past two decades is the titular head of that organization, and he is representative of the violence and the murderous agenda that al-Qaida holds. Clearly, the al-Qaida organization writ large is something that we are continuing to pound and to use all of our tools against.

But individuals like Anwar Awlaki, who recently released a video, demonstrated that his rhetoric is anything but peaceful. It's anything but Islamic. It is dedicated to murder and lashing out. So they both have the ability to inspire and to try to prey on those victims who believe that they are true Muslims. But they're anything but.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. BRENNAN: I'm saying that they both represent a threat in different ways. Mr. Awlaki is in Yemen. We know that al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula poses a serious threat in the peninsula, as well as abroad. We know of his involvement in exhortations to individuals to carry out attacks. So to me, they're both dangers; they're both threats and we will address them appropriately.

MR. NELSON: All right, thank you. Let's go to the gentleman here in the gray suit and the beard.

Q: Thank you. Spencer Ackerman with the Washington Independent. What would you say to those who would say that you've already compromised American values by pursuing indefinite detention without charge?

MR. BRENNAN: When this administration came in, in January of last year, we dealt with a number of legacy situations that we wanted to make sure that we were able to deal with

appropriately, without compromising the security of the American people. I think as everybody recognizes, on both sides of the political spectrum, that the situation in Guantanamo is a very, very difficult and challenging one.

And I think as – even though the president said he was determined to close Guantanamo within one year, it still remains open because the president is determined not to do anything that would compromise America's security. It is something that we are working very closely with the Congress on. We are trying to do things in a very thoughtful manner. We have transferred about 50 of those detainees over the past year-and-a-half and we're continuing to look at their situations there. But this is a challenge that we need to look at from a policy perspective, from a legal perspective, as well as from a security perspective.

MR. NELSON: Okay, I'm going to try to go back and forth. Over here in the front row. Some of you might have to navigate around the podium to – (chuckles).

Q: Hello, my name is Carie LeMack with Global Survivors Network. In light of last week's intel committee report and the 9/11 Commission chairs' – Kean and Hamilton's – testimony about the adequacy of the support from the president and the administration for the DNI, how do you plan to go about selecting a new DNI? And do you believe that you're going to be able to have an administration give the support for that person to be able to adequately perform the duties and be able to coordinate across intel communities?

MR. BRENNAN: The DNI structure, now, has been in place for five years. There have been three individuals who have, I think, performed very well in those positions. What we're doing right now is ensuring that we're able to optimize the contribution of the Office of the DNI. We believe that it is critically important to make sure that the 16 organizations, or so, that make up the intelligence community are going to be integrated well and orchestrated well.

And that's what the DNI's role is. We're confident that we're going to be able to do this in the future, going forward. Denny Blair is a true public servant to this country and he did a great job. And what we need to do now is to go forward and to build upon the progress he has made. But this is something that President Obama and the administration is taking very seriously. There's no diminishment of the importance of intelligence for this administration, and we want to make sure the DNI's role is clear and it's able to optimize the contributions that the intelligence community makes on a daily basis.

MR. NELSON: Okay, I'll just stay – you can stay down here if you want. You want to go in the front row over here? Okay.

Q: Thank you very much. I'm Josh Rogan, Foreign Policy magazine. You talked a little bit about the changes in the national security bureaucracy that the administration is already making. I'm wondering if there are any new changes that will be required as part of the document you're releasing tomorrow, or is this just a summary of the changes that you already have planned and ongoing?

And secondly, you didn't mention democracy or human rights promotion as part of the national security strategy. Of course, this was a major pillar of the previous national security strategy, and I'm wondering if you could talk about why this administration seems to be deprioritizing those goals.

MR. BRENNAN: My portfolio, at the White House, is counterterrorism and homeland security, and what I was trying to do today is to herald some of those key themes that are going to be coming out in that national security strategy that will be released tomorrow. Secretary Clinton will be addressing a number of those international dimensions that you point out, and I don't want to take away any of the thunder that is coming out of that.

This document embodies that which has been part and parcel of this administration's policies, heretofore, and it also lays out the vision of where we're going in the future. So it's a combination of taking stock of what we have done and where we're going and the challenges that we yet face. But there will be other parts of the strategy that will address those issues that you raise.

MR. NELSON: Let's go back in the middle, with the pink shirt – sorry, peach shirt. (Chuckles.) Mr. Preble.

Q: It's Chris Preble at the Cato Institute. Sir, you mentioned, in terms of law enforcement, you mentioned, in terms of homeland security, what role does communication play in building a resilient society? Do you have a communication strategy with respect to terrorism, or even if not a published strategy, do you have best practices or terms or a way of talking about terrorism in the speeches that you give and the other speeches the administration gives on terrorism?

MR. BRENNAN: I think what we've tried to do, over the past 16 months or so, is to be very precise and careful in the terminology that we use. That's part of the content of the communications that we're trying to put forth. But there also is a comprehensive communications strategy to deal with issues like violent extremism. And we're trying to do that not just internationally, as evidenced by the president's speech in Cairo, but also engaging with the different departments and agencies here and engaging with the local communities so that we have that outreach.

So there is a communications strategy. It deals with content; it also deals with how we are communicating and interacting with these different elements. What I don't like to do is to try to just address the terrorism dimension of it, because terrorism is just the – is part of this continuum of radicalization, extremism and terrorism. What we need to make sure is that we're able to address a number of those upstream factors and conditions and influences that can lead to terrorism. So it is comprehensive and more of it is going to be laid out in this national security strategy that comes out tomorrow.

MR. NELSON: Let's go to the lady in the back with the green shirt, please.

Q: Kimberly Dozier with the Associated Press. Sir, the administration has acknowledged, over the past year, that there's been a doubling in drone strikes. It's also acknowledged the difficulties in closing Gitmo. Some of your critics say it seems it's become easier to kill terrorist suspects than to capture them and to deal with the consequences afterward. How do you answer that?

MR. BRENNAN: I think as I tried to explain in my remarks, what we need to do is use all the tools that are available to us to keep the American people safe. Sometimes, that requires us to be very proactive and to utilize the power that we have as a country, military and otherwise, so that we can strike those terrorists where they are hiding – where they're plotting and training – to prevent them from getting into a system that will bring them into the homeland.

At other times, though, it deals with capacity-building of other countries that we have partnered with. It also is enhancing our defenses here at home. I think we have captured a lot of terrorists over the last year – not just those that we've arrested here in the United States, but those that we have captured with the assistance, and in partnership with, other nations.

So I know that the media likes to highlight some of the reports that are coming out regarding kinetic strikes, but that is just one dimension. It is multidimensional. And I feel as though it's a robust and comprehensive program.

Q: If you'd care to share the numbers, I'm sure we'd all be willing to write it down.

MR. BRENNAN: There have been many, many terrorists who have been captured. (Laughter.)

MR. NELSON: Let's – this is where the moderator steps in. Arnaud, do you have a question?

Q: Arnaud de Borchgrave, CSIS. Mr. Brennan, I think we would agree that Pakistan is a major non-NATO ally, but as The New York Times reminded us this morning, it is also a country to the conspiracy theory born; and most people, even at a very high level, believe that 9/11 was a CIA/Mossad conspiracy. It's not a joke. We know that it goes to a very high level in that country. And I was wondering what can be done to counter that?

MR. BRENNAN: Well, I think conspiracy theories and hyperbole and misrepresentation of the facts is something that is not the domain of any single country. We see that, including in our country, mischaracterizations of the facts. It's unfortunate that a lot of individuals are prone to believing those conspiracy theorists. You know, there's the freedom of the press and speech, and unfortunately, a lot of those types of speech are highlighted in the media. And it is quite unfortunate that they're given more, I think, attention than they deserve.

We are working with the highest levels, as well as other levels, of the governments abroad. But it's not just government-to-government interaction. That's what it's so important to emphasize the building up of those educational systems abroad – so they're not prone to hearing these types of views that are far removed from reality. And we know that there are textbooks in

different parts of the world that, at a very early age, individuals' views of the world is conditioned by those textbooks.

And this is something that we're trying to address. So it really is multigenerational, as well as multidimensional. And we have to interact with our partners, but at the same time, we have to think about the generations who are growing up in an environment where those conspiracy theories abound. And that's why it's so important that we have this public communications strategy in a very proactive and aggressive way to let people know that America is not trying to take over the world.

We're not an imperialist power. We're not trying to militarize our relationships with these countries. The United States has long been seen as the beacon of democracy and help, and what we need to do is to make sure that we emphasize that so that those individuals who are prone to those theorists are going to have a better opportunity to learn about the real world.

MR. NELSON: Okay, I'm going to go to the gentleman behind Arnaud, and then I'm going to go to a question over here, and then back to the middle and then back over.

Q: John McLaughlin, CSIS. Mr. Brennan, does the word "counterintelligence" appear in your new national intelligence strategy? If so, how do you see it in that? And how does it fit in more broadly with your whole portfolio at the White House?

MR. BRENNAN: Yeah, counterintelligence permeates my portfolio, from a homeland security and a counterterrorism perspective, and it does that both in a strategic and in a tactical sense. But we need to make sure that we are very mindful of what it is that's going to allow us to stop these attacks from taking place and to make our country strong and safe.

And we know that there are active efforts, not just by the nation states that we have traditionally tried to guard against, but also by those who are trying to gain information as a way to identify vulnerabilities. And we have to be mindful of that. This is something that is clearly embedded in this administration. I know you have worked long and hard at making sure that we're ever-mindful of that, because sometimes, those counterintelligence challenges we face are sub rosa, and are not, you know, at the top of our inbox.

And this is where, I think, the people who are working at the National Counterintelligence Executive, as well as the DNI has been a very strong proponent of that – FBI as well. Counterintelligence is something that I think has – the challenges have changed over time. And I think our counterintelligence establishment needs to adapt, as well. Because we're not facing the traditional, Cold War counterintelligence challenge; we're facing a much more, sort of, multi-headed beast that is out there.

MR. NELSON: Okay, on this side of the room. Eric, could you go?

Q: Eric Schmitt with The New York Times. Mr. Brennan, the Zazi case and the Shahzad case have exposed vulnerabilities in how potential terrorists operate within the United States. To

what extent do you believe you need broader authorities to conduct domestic surveillance to identify and target these kinds of threats?

MR. BRENNAN: What we've tried to do is to make sure that we balance appropriately the need for security, but also recognition of the civil liberties and privacy rights that make this country great. What we've tried to do is increase our intelligence collection capabilities, particularly overseas, because both Shahzad and Najibullah Zazi obtained training at those training camps in Pakistan.

And so what we need to do is to try to modulate those intelligence-collection capabilities so that we might be able to pick that up. There is quite a bit of flow back and forth from, you know, other parts of the world to our country. Especially challenging is when people have U.S. passports – they're U.S. residency – that allows them to travel back and forth.

What we've tried to do, also, is to calibrate our system for watch-listing – the president ordered immediate reviews afterward – to highlight different traits, not based on profiling, but based on, sometimes, travel patterns, other types of things – indicators that might raise up to the surface those individuals that have been operating under the radar.

It is challenging here in the United States. We are a country of 300 million people. We have certain liberties and freedoms that we hold dear. So how can we raise up our ability to detect those individuals who are operating, sometimes alone or with a small group of cohorts, and are using the protections and the liberties of this country? And I think this is something that is worthwhile of debate. What else do we need to do, as a country, that will enhance our security, but, at the same time, hold true to those values that we cherish? It is a challenge.

MR. NELSON: We'll go to the gentleman in the gray suit in the middle here and then we'll go over to this side of the room.

Q: Thank you. I'm Reggie Dale with CSIS. You twice spoke of the political, economic and social forces that drive people to terrorism, and I'm wondering if that isn't a somewhat incomplete description. Are there not also religious, theological, ideological – you spoke of al-Qaida's ideology – and even psychological forces that drive people to terrorism?

MR. BRENNAN: There are many, many. And that was just a sampling of some of those factors. But you're absolutely right. There are educational; there are cultural; there are some that purport to be religious. There are very disturbing views that are espoused and perpetuated in certain environments that I think we need to take stock of. I think we need to do more work on the behavioral science side.

What is it that will actually drive somebody who has a family, who has a job, to carry out an attack designed to kill many, as well as themselves? And I think there are some – there's more work we need to do to understand the psychology behind terrorism. But a lot of times, the psychology is affected by the environment that has those political, social, economic factors that contribute to that.

So the counterterrorism community has developed significantly since 9/11. There are a number of elements within the intelligence, law enforcement, homeland security communities that are looking at this phenomenon. And there's no single cause for terrorism. There's no single profile for a terrorist.

There are individuals who don't have any education to those who have doctorates and engineering degrees. So what we need to do is to try and dissect it and not have a single prism that we look at terrorists through. We need to understand its multidimensional nature. But you're absolutely right; I agree with you.

MR. NELSON: Okay, let's go to a question over here. You already had one – the back in the white shirt, please. Sorry, the lady in the back, sorry – with the pink shirt.

Q: Mina al-Arabia with the Sharq al-Awsat newspaper. I'd like to ask you about Iraq. You mentioned that you're withdrawing responsibility from Iraq, that the events in Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11. However, there are al-Qaida members, or at least networks that say they are affiliated to al-Qaida. Do you see them as posing no threat – that the effort is to withdraw responsibly from Iraq and that this is an internal, domestic matter? Or how do you assess the threat from al-Qaida in Iraq? Thank you.

MR. BRENNAN: Al-Qaida in Iraq poses a serious threat. We have been able to have a number of successes against them, their leadership, over the past couple of months. We're continuing to work with our Iraqi partners to degrade them. Al-Qaida in Iraq bloomed in the aftermath of the fall of Saddam Hussein. It was able to take advantage of some of the political vacuums that took place there.

We know that they are named "al-Qaida in Iraq," they have a relationship with the broader al-Qaida family. This is something that we need to continue to work against. It does pose a threat, but we've been very pleased with the Iraqi security forces and how well they've been able to take the lead in prosecuting this effort against the terrorists in Iraq. So it is something that we need to stay on top of, and that's one of the things that we need to make sure we don't do, is to fall into a state of complacency, whether it be in Iraq or in the United States or other places.

This is something that continues to crop up, and even though we have made tremendous progress, they are continuing to be determined to carry out attacks, both against the United States, as well as against those governments, such as Iraq, that are trying to keep their people safe.

MR. NELSON: Okay, this will be the final question. The lady in the back in the white dress – yep, right back there.

Q: Sima Imaud with the Open Society Institute. Mr. Brennan, I'm really heartened by the government's change, in terms of the language usage of "jihadist" and "Islamist" and was similarly heartened by your talk at NYU in February. I wonder if there's been any thought about rethinking, frankly, the usage of the words "terrorism" and "terrorist," which, at present, seem to

be defined by the government and the media as acts of violence exclusively perpetrated by Muslims.

MR. NELSON: WE have tried to expand the framework when we talk about terrorism and counterterrorism efforts, to include the concern we have about violent extremism, which is a more encompassing term, in many respects. Unfortunately, a number of these terms have become just part of our lexicon in the United States. What we can't do, though, is just to leave it at that one, single term.

We have to make sure we understand what we are talking about. Because the terrorists that are operating in Pakistan are different than the terrorists that are operating in the Sahel, in Africa and from places in Southeast Asia. There are common traits; there are common tactics that they use. But sometimes, the forces that fuel them are radically different. And we know that there are political forces – local political factors – that can contribute to the use of violence to achieve political objectives.

What we need to do is to understand those forces. Some of them can be addressed through political dialogue. There was the extensive use of terrorism in the North of Ireland. It was something that could be addressed, and we've been able to succeed, as far as bringing that conflict to a halt and to have them engage in a dialogue and political participation. However, al-Qaida – what is being perpetuated and propagated by bin Laden is not to build up something; it really is just to pull it down.

To me, that embodies and epitomizes the terrorist challenge that we face that can be, in some respects, existential in some areas, because they really are trying to just destroy our way of life, our people, our economy. And that's where we have to be particularly resilient. But I think in some of these other areas, we have to understand some of the dynamics that are at play. You know, the PLO, for many years, used terrorism to try to advance their agenda. It was only when they set it aside that we were able to deal with some of these issues that underlie those problems in a very rational manner.

For al-Qaida, though, there is no negotiating with them. We're not going to negotiate with al-Qaida; we're going to destroy that organization. It's going to take time, but we're going to do it. But there are other elements throughout the world that are using terrorism and violence to achieve local political objectives.

And I think we, as a country, need to look very carefully at those and to work with the governments and to understand the phenomenon better so that we can find a way to end it and so that those local problems and grievances are not prone, then, to being exploited by al-Qaida. Because that's what they try to do, is to go after those opportunities.

MR. NELSON: Well, that's great. Before we thank Mr. Brennan, please, everyone needs to remain seated for Mr. Brennan and his party to depart. But Mr. Brennan, thank you very much for your time and for the remarks and for sharing that with you. We really appreciate it. (Applause.)

(END)