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The Marine Corps: America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness**

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**Lt Gen George J. Flynn, USMC, Commanding General,  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Panelist, Session 2, "Meeting the Demand: Promoting Partnerships for Engagement"**

**Questions and Answers**

**TIM GORMLEY:** I had the privilege of serving over in HOA. And in HOA, we had, I think, a fairly good working model. In fact, the State Department was in charge of the operations going on over there. But I also had a problem with AID, USAID, coming out from the embassy and actually operating with us. We had a model, the military would go in, they had established a degree of security. And then we'd end up doing our own engagement. AID would have been extremely beneficial for us to come out and actually begin to engage the populace and provide those things that would, in fact, bring about a degree of stability and eliminate some of the causes of unrest, especially in the ungoverned spaces.

I agree, we have to make sure that we understand that Afghanistan and Iraq are unique, they are into the phase IV of phase V, engagement is into the phase zero. Are we actually right now trying to address this as we're coming to a close of these two engagements to where State, AID, and DOD are looking for a way to actually begin to engage as a combined effort?

**DR. NADIA SCHADLOW:** Each panelist to start, do you want to start the comment, Kurt, or Ambassador?

**AMBASSADOR JOHN HERBST:** There's a clear understanding among the professionals working these issues that a distinction between phase zero and one and two and three where one - where some of those are military and civilian, that's obsolete. The first month I was in my old job, this would have been early July of 2006, I went down to JFCOM and I went down for JFCOM for one of the leadership that was involving three and four stars. And they had that thing

on the board where they talked about phase zero, phase one, phase two, and everyone in the room agreed that no, you had to be talking about joint and joint civilian military from phase zero forward. Having said we understand, there are people who understand doesn't mean we've gotten it right. We haven't gotten it right, and we continue not to get it right.

And we continue not to get it right, one, because there's no comparable understanding on the civilian side. The military gets this very well. There are individual civilians who get it, I got it. But the leadership on the civilian side does not necessarily get it, so we have that problem. So, I would say until the President gets it, we're not going to get it as a government, in my opinion.

**LT. GENERAL GEORGE J. FLYNN:** I'd add a couple of thoughts here. As our panel lead has indicated, I think what you're striving for in all this is unity of effort. That's the end state, and how do you get there? Well, you have to get command relations right first, up front, and that seems to have been maybe where our challenge is. And I think it's a challenge right now, first of all because we have an environment-- and maybe we haven't got this right in 100 years, but we have an environment now that we haven't seen in 100 years. The complexity and the uncertainty of it really does present challenges out there.

The first step in getting unity of effort, I think, is forums like this and other things where people have to get the roles correct of what you're going to do before you do it. And that goes to my key point, is you have to then understand capabilities and capacity. And not overreach on your capability or underestimate what it's going to take. And there's a change going on in the military now that we moved away, as I mentioned, from our traditional military planning process, where now we've added design. And we're opening that aperture to actually try to understand the problem that we're trying to solve and the reason we're doing that is because of, I think, what you were alluding to is where we've had the problem.

Design should have told us that there were more aspects to this and to that working with everybody here, you have to do it. And had my colleague to my left said one of the key parts is when we do exercises, we're trying to invite other agencies to come. They don't have the capacity right now to come. So if you're not even training to it, when you have the crisis, you're really

way behind. And we've reserved seats at our schools, and I'm sure the other services have, for the interagency to come. The hardest thing now is for the interagency to find the people that they can spare to be able to go there. And likewise, we also have to embed people in different organizations, not to take over the organization, but to do it.

And I'll give you one experience I had as a colonel with an NGO. I had to have a third party do the initial introduction because the NGO did not trust the military and they didn't want to be associated with talking to the military in preplanning exercises. But who is the key enabler for an NGO in a crisis? It's probably the military has the capacity to open the air field, to provide transport, to do all that. And if you're not willing to talk before the crisis, you're probably going to screw up the crisis when it happens.

**KURT AMEND:** A couple of comments. Let me just add to a bit of what I experienced early days in Afghanistan, Kabul, in 2002 and 2003. I think it's fair to say that it was very-- it wasn't a very clean fit as among various executive departments and agencies and services. And I compare that now to how we're positioned and how I think we work much more effectively together. And so I agree with some of the comments that have been made here on unity of effort.

My fear looking forward in several years over the horizon is that we will lose the kind of-- we'll forget the kind of skills and the kind of linkages that are now, I think, proving to be very helpful. It took far too long, in my view, for them to evolve and then they will disappear, as happens in bureaucracies and governments, regrettably.

**DR. NADIA SCHADLOW:** Additional questions? Sir?

**AUDIENCE:** An answer to Tim Gormley. I was the foreign policy advisor of C. J. T. at HOA right after he left. One of the first things I did was spend a lot of time briefing the civ/mil. people on what this thing called USAID was. I'm very happy to report that by the time I left, there was actually an AID foreign policy advisor on the HOA staff. Don't know if they're still there. But that leads, the difficulties that you saw, lead us going forward. And arguably, one of the things that's very clear to the panelists today, the actual Marine Corps lane of this exercise, the

expeditionary thing, is probably the easiest part of the puzzle. Of all the things that would ever keep me up at night, the thing I would worry least about is the Marines' ability to execute their mission. But I used to have long hair, and most of it has to do with what happens before one calls the Marines, and whether we call it nation building, capacity reinforcement, state development or whatever.

And then the other thing that was brought home to me by a former Marine who's just come out of Afghanistan is okay, we mess up the front end, we send in the Marines and they go do what Marines do extraordinarily well. And as this guy said, we finished an operation and we turned around to the civil agencies and all we heard was crickets. Well, I'm a rather literal soul, I was wondering, "Why were you hearing crickets in Afghanistan?" And the point was there was no there, there.

DOD is about to experience what State has known in the budget department for decades and before any of you tear your hair, don't worry about it, you need only read about the Marine Corps in the '30s to realize you guys have been here as well. We can survive this. However, there is a real partnership that I think is critically important as we look out to the rest of government or, if you will, to the legislative side. I would commend to you a small article by Joseph Nye that's running around the foreign policy website and that is basically why are we declaring war on soft power or smart power or whatever you have.

If we do not get the partnership of the whole of government of the whole of international conflict right to the people who make funds available for these missions, then one of us is going to fail. My really bitter joke is if you continue to cut the foreign policy agencies, foreign affairs agencies, then you better start spending a lot of money in DOD because you're surely going to need it.

**DR. NADIA SCHADLOW:** We'll take a few questions. Wait for the mic, yes.

**DICK VOCOTTERN:** Dick Vocottern [?], Marine. We could have been in the same room probably in the 1970s and 1980s discussing these issues that I hear from DOD and DOS. Those

of us with long hair and maybe gray hair were there when these issues were being discussed, where there was myself with the U.N. and the Middle East or later in Africa with MSG working with State, or doing an evacuation in a variety of places that we've done those, we have always gone in to get people out but as somebody mentioned here on NGOs, getting them together to go show up to save their butt is very hard.

That conversation could have been had, in my view, 30 years ago. We're still having these conversations. I just did an AT seminar at Booz Allen for the J34 group and we're discussing issues on command and control and relationships between DOS and DOD. We understand that our ambassadors are in charge in their countries, we understand how to do that and we understand how we'll help them with their EAPs. But we have got to get what I hear the whole of government together, finally, or the whole international community together. Many of us have worked with countries that we've been working with for 60 years or 50 years, and we still don't have the command and control together when we go to war.

And we're having a conversation in 2011 about these issues when, in fact, these conversations have to have been had before the bombing in Nairobi, where my office was in 1998, when we had warned the State Department of the many issues there in Nairobi, both CIA and myself had. Same thing in Darussalam. How many embassies are we going to have to blow up, or how many embassies are we going to have to go evacuate before we get this right? Thank you.

**DR. NADIA SCHADLOW:** Thank you. Any other questions before I ask the panel to comment? Comments, Jacque?

**DR. JACQUELYN DAVIS:** This is a tactical question for the Red Sox fan on the panel in uniform. General Flynn, what would you like to see in a Marine module for the LCS?

**LT. GENERAL GEORGE J. FLYNN:** Well, first of all for the record, I'm not a Red Sox fan. [laughter] I'm a Yankee fan, and I note that the Yankees are in first place and the Red Sox have the worst record in baseball. I just want to get that out. As the Ambassador said, a very long season for the Red Sox. Normally this happens at the All Star break.

An LCS module is basically going to need a couple of things as we look at the design. Because there's two different types of ships that are in the design process, or are being constructed. I think first of all, the helicopter landing pads are going to have to be reinforced to be able to land the type of aircraft that we have in our inventory. And more importantly, we're going to need the habitability module, if you will, to be able to embark a task organized Marine air/ground taskforce. And what I'm talking there is the berthing, the messing, all those type of things that allow you to operate from a sea base. So this doesn't have to be monumental in cost, because I know we're in a fiscally challenged environment. But if you're going to spread out and you're going to take the peanut butter and put it out as much as you can, you're going to need to use every asset. And this is going to be a predominant ship in the naval inventory in the future. So an investment now, and then we have to understand what the right area to operate these type of ships in, what are the right targeted countries to be able to do it.

But basically the habitability at module, the ability to operate the range of aircraft that we need to be able to operate, and also right now the only way you can offload off of it is you have to pull into a port. There may be some things we can look at that you could be able to not necessarily be port reliant to be able to do your engagements. And we've been talking to the Navy about that, but that's the next level, I think, in this, is we have to get serious about the discussion if it really is going to be an option in the future.

**DR. NADIA SCHADLOW:** I think the previous two comments, essentially as I interpreted them before I asked the panelists to comment were essentially that we've proliferated institutions, offices, expertise but we still do not yet have a concept of operations for how to use all of these different entities and organizations that we're creating. That was the way I interpreted the two gentlemen's comments. But I was wondering if the panelists had any comments based on those previous comments?

**JIM THOMPSON:** Just quickly to add two things. One, the Orioles, actually, are in first place. They are tied with some team from New York. [laughter] And second, there was an article a couple of years ago written by Mark Ward, who is now the Deputy Assistant Administrator for

Democracy Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance at USAID saying that our eight officers are hamstrung and that we're unable to get out into the field where we need to be. And that's a problem. We have our contractors, we have our grantees out there, but we're not able to get out because of security reasons to go out and kick the tires. And that's something that we need to change. And Mark wrote a really good article on that and I recommend you take a look for it. It's important for us to get out. These environments are dangerous, we work in dangerous times and we work in dangerous places. But we need to be able to take those risks. I'll leave it at that.

**DR. NADIA SCHADLOW:** There are no more questions, should I end early or anyone else? Oh, there's one in the back. Yes?

**GLEN SEARS:** Glen Sears, Navy staff, sir. For the panel, in recent years, a growing number of military have embraced the partnership capacity building. We understand certainly with the challenges that we've recently faced, the importance of this and can see it into the future. I think many of us have learned the challenges that State Department and USAID face in terms of meeting challenges, shortage of people, those types of things. As we look into our future with constrained budget and especially from a military perspective of daunting challenges of capitalizing and knowing the challenges that State and USAID face with their budgets, too, how do we put forth a better story on the importance of this capacity building and this partnership building in the future to get the funds we need with all the other things that are going on?

**LT. GENERAL GEORGE J. FLYNN:** I think the first part is it doesn't have to be expensive, and I think going back to the earlier thing, we do have to have this understanding of what everybody's role is and capability and capacity. I'm not sure that engagement has to be expensive. I don't see it that way. But responding to things does get to be pretty expensive, as we can see by all the things that are going on right now and the bills that we're paying for that.

As we get more fiscally constrained, you have a couple of options. You can think your way out of the problem because we know we're not going to be able to buy ourself out of the problem. So the question, and I think one of the reasons having this forum is how can we think our way out of this problem, and what are going to be the new ways of doing this to do it? We've talked a lot,

interview heard the whole of government now probably for about ten years and I'm not sure I know what it is yet, when we say the whole of government. I think I know what I'm supposed to do with the State Department. I think I know what I'm supposed to do with USAID. I'm not sure what I do with the rest of the government.

And I'm not trying to be smart in my comment here. But how do you come together, and if we're going to shape the world that we want to shape, when we're fiscally challenged, we do have to have this frank conversation with all the agencies that are going to be involved in shaping the world. What do you bring to the table, get the unity of effort right and then fix the command relations on how you execute this. Not in a crisis environment, but in day to day activities. And I think that's the only way we're going to get to this part of it.

And then we also have to understand, too, is when do you overreach on what you're trying to do and when do you break the bank? I've been around doing this long enough that I know what's ahead in this fiscally changing environment. And it's going to be tough for us to do things. We can't do everything, so how are we going to be selective in that? And normally what we find out is we commit ourselves and then we have to figure out how to back out or not to do something else that may be more important.

**AMBASSADOR JOHN HERBST:** There's no question that in the current budget climate the small gains that have been made at the State Department and at USAID and to a lesser extent in the other civilian agencies are going to be challenged. The way to maximize the chances for success means that they will not be stripped of the resources, would be the Pentagon's going to have to defend these things. The Pentagon was my best friend and my most powerful ally when I was trying to explain what SCRS was up to on the Hill. So the Pentagon will have to do that with its own budgets declining. Otherwise, there's not a chance this thing is going to survive. That's point one.

Point two, and this falls into the metaphysical, how much of this can be done category. Our political leadership has to exercise restraint and prudence when it's confronted with the next crisis which is hitting CNN and the internet at the same time. In an age where we have to worry

about our budget, we really have to wonder, do we want to go into that next adventure? Even if there are very sound humanitarian or other reasons? But what happens is our political process is driven by factors which do not include budget. And then we're left holding the budget bag once we've committed. And that's a very serious mistake. And that requires high level political leadership, intelligence, which we often don't see.

**JIM THOMPSON:** Just quickly, two things. One, you take a country like Brazil, the U.S. foreign assistance budget is about \$30 million in Brazil. We had an ambassador down there, Cliff Sobel, who said I'm really interested in what the American companies are doing in Brazil, particularly around corporate social responsibility. They totaled it up, it was over \$100 million a year being spent by American companies in Brazil on corporate social responsibility programs. Not targeted, overlapping. So, one, what we need to do is think differently about what our ambassadors and what our embassies do in coordinating across what others are doing and bring people together. They formed a group down there called Mios Amigos [?], which is my Spanish version and what should be said in Portuguese. But they actually now are coordinating out of the embassy with the U.S. private companies and they've added Brazilian companies in corporate social responsibility programs. And it's totaling up, it's actually making a developmental impact where we have no economic growth development programs. All our money down there is environment.

Second point. Andrew Natsios said this often. He used to say it's one thing for me to go to the Hill and say that the U.S. Agency for International Development is the best development agency in the world. It's another thing if Chevron goes and says it. So we need to talk with our partners to support our programs. They understand the benefit and the value of them, they're participating with us in them and we need them on the Hill explaining what we do.

**DR. NADIA SCHADLOW:** Close actually by asking my panelists a question and then we'll close and wrap. I think an assumption of General Flynn's remarks was we can shape the environment and that we should be shaping the environment. And a theme of your remarks was that the word shape is used many times. But I was wondering if the rest of the panel, and General Flynn, too, do other institutions in the U.S. government share the belief that we can and should

be shaping the political environment strategically? Do we have the confidence to do that? I think over the past ten years, we may have lost confidence in this, and I think there's always been a bit of a disconnect culturally about that. And I was wondering if the panelists could comment on that, and then we can wrap. Because I think that really goes to the heart of some of the discussion here. Thanks.

**KURT AMEND:** My answer would be yes, but it will be a challenge, in part, because I think you take the Department of State and Foreign Service Office, for example. In part, you have to reorient or sort of rethink about what their core mission is. For decades, if not longer, it has been to, in large part, to protect Americans overseas, but also to report on and to be the main medium for diplomatic intercourse between nations, to comment on what's happening in a nation and then also to convey those messages back to Washington effectively and to make recommendations on that basis.

Our environment is very, very different now and so I think you're asking for an organization to sort of rethink its core skill sets. So yes, it's possible, but it will take time.

**LT. GENERAL GEORGE J. FLYNN:** Obviously, I think it's possible, quite a bit, and I think it's an imperative because what happens if we don't? If we don't figure out how to do this more effectively, then what's the world we're going to shape? I think Mr. Thompson, when he talks about business being engaged, they're trying to shape the environment. And I'll go back to what I said, we have to think our way out of it because we're not going to be able to fund our way out of it. So come up with ways of getting business involved in this partnership and having everybody's role and capability understood and getting towards unity of effort is going to require a paradigm shift, but it has to take place.

I like the idea of \$100 million being spent in a country by businesses is a great thing. The fact that it is not targeted and not focused, we ought to be ashamed of that. And somebody earlier today said Brazil is the seventh largest economy in the world. We're giving it \$30 million, somebody else is putting \$100 million in there. There ought to be some way of shaping it. And the other piece about shaping it, and I think this goes to it, we're always going to shape the world

by the engagement of all our men and women overseas, whether they're from military service or departments, just by the example of how they act and how they behave. So I'd close by saying if we didn't shape the world, what's the alternative?

**AMBASSADOR JOHN HERBST:** Of course we can shape the world, but we find ourselves creating problems for ourselves when we overestimate our influence and we set our goals which are overly ambitious. And we are willing to act to crises just because they appear on CNN and our politicians feel they have to act. So we have to be prudent as we lay out what we're going to do, and then our influence will both be maximized and be to our own benefit.

**JIM THOMPSON:** Just briefly, the Secretary of State did something unprecedented this past year. She called back every single U.S. ambassador for a chief of missions conference, had 180-some ambassadors in Washington. And one of the things they went to talk about was the role of the ambassador as a CEO. It's a new way of thinking. We actually need to think longer and harder about what is it that our embassies are going to do? What types of services are we going to provide? How are we going to coordinate better? What does this whole of government thing mean, and how do we direct it where we are the chief of mission in a country? Thanks.

**DR. NADIA SCHADLOW:** One last question. Wait for the--

**AUDIENCE:** Can I say something here? This is something I feel strongly about. I live in the Pacific, okay? That's where my command is. And if you take all the human disasters, all the natural disasters that affect the human populations, if you take all of them in Africa, North and South America, and Europe, you have less than a seventh of what's going to happen on the Pacific Rim. So it's not a matter of if it's going to happen, it's going to happen and we know kind of what the character of that event is going to be in terms of the ones in Africa are going to be a little bit different than the ones on the Pacific Rim.

Right now, I mean, there's a great example of the one in Japan. This is a compound, complex disaster that happened in a highly technical society and that country needed predictable, understandable help that we have very full knowledge of today and we had before it happened.

All right. Irony of irony. Tomorrow, I give a presentation in this very building that's hosted by State Department, disaster risk reduction in Asia. And it's just in the junior ball room, somebody tell me where that is. [laughter]

So, I will tell you unequivocally that with the forces I have in Marine forces Pacific, I can push more things in the correct lines of operation that we know are going to be necessary today than we are able to coordinate on a large scale. I can do it. Why? Because I can get there by sea, I can get there by air. Anybody can get there eventually, but we can get there, we can affect it, we can provide them food, medicine and water. And I can do it any time, anywhere that you need it. The question is how do we do it and how do we coordinate it and how do we do it in the timely manner that it has to be done? So if you'll facilitate me in that process, I can get it there and I can bring you along. Just tell me what you want.

**DR. NADIA SCHADLOW:** Thank you. Thanks, everyone. I think coffee break now, and then what time do we reconvene, Jacques? Four o'clock, thanks. [applause]

END OF SESSION 2