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

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Panelist, Session 4, "Supporting and Enabling the Force to Meet Emerging and Future Challenges"**

DAVID A. OCHMANEK: Good morning. as Dr. Perry said, I work in OSD. I'm a force planner there. And I'd like, in light of that, to just take a step back a little bit from General Wissler's perspective and offer you some views on the strategic environment as we see it and the sorts of military capabilities that are going to be called upon from United States armed forces, and then come back and briefly assess what that might mean for the United States Marine Corps.

Force planning is about anticipating capabilities that will be needed in the future. And anyone who believes they can predict the future ought to have a sense of humility about that. As Yogi Berra said, making predictions is always risky, especially when it's about the future. And we have a sense of humility in the defense community. None of us that I now of actually predicted the end of the Soviet Union. None of us predicted that 9/11 would happen. And so we have an appreciation for the inherent uncertainty of the task of force planning and strategic planning.

That said, I would say that our QDR that finished about two years ago had three big ideas in it, and at least so far those ideas seem to be holding up pretty well. I may have to eat my words in a matter of weeks or months, but so far we'll take credit for that. Let me just outline those for you. One was the Secretary's often repeated imperative to win today's fight. And more broadly, to have adequate capabilities to conduct effective counterinsurgency and stability operations.

The second was the prescription that over time, in the coming few years, as we draw down in Iraq and Afghanistan, the level of effort, the distribution of effort, against terrorist and insurgent threats is going to shift from large scale U.S.-led operations to smaller scale indirect operations

where the United States plays a background role in building partner capacity and advising partners.

And the third is the need to begin now to start enhancing our capabilities to counter threats from adversaries wielding anti-access and area denial capabilities. And I'll say a little more about these as we go along and try to assess the extent to which the Marine Corps, as I understand its evolution, is meeting these things. But if you put these three together, what it says is we envisage a shift in emphasis in force planning in the United States from this middle of the conflict spectrum, the old MCO, major combat operation, to operations at the edges of the spectrum; on the low end, countering insurgents and terrorists, on the higher end countering adversaries with much more capable capabilities than our adversaries in the Cold War period have had.

And so if you imagine that spectrum of conflict, for the post Cold War era, our focus was in the middle. In the post post-Cold War era, which I think we have now entered, our emphasis is going to be on the two ends, the high and the low end. That gives me a little bit of a pause when I hear the term middleweight force, and I hope that's not misconstrued by people as saying the Marine Corps is optimizing itself for the middle of the conflict spectrum, because I don't think that's the case. But I think there's a risk of a misunderstanding there.

So if I could say a little about the low end. As I mentioned, Secretary Gates has been adamant about the imperative to prevail in today's fights. The importance of doing that is self evident. We don't want to go back to a situation where Afghanistan is again a haven for terrorists who can come and threaten our way of life. But it's also important looking forward because we appreciate that irregular approaches to challenging U.S. interests is not an anomaly of today's world, it's not a transitory element of the world, it's an enduring threat that adversaries are going to continue to pursue. And those adversaries are going to become more capable over time.

One of the most enduring, powerful trends in human history is the devolution of destructive technologies and capability to lower and lower levels of social organization. It used to take a state to raise an army. Now, sub national actors can raise groups of armed people who have capabilities that can challenge those of armies. We're on the cusp of seeing non-state actors

master the technologies of mass disruption, if not mass destruction through cyber, through chemical, through bio and perhaps other means as well.

And so we have to prepare ourselves to confront adversaries that are non-state actors that can do more to hurt our interests, our people and our way of life. So we not only need to provide today's war fighters with the capabilities they need to succeed, but we need to institutionalize these lessons that we've learned, in some cases in the hard way, over the last ten years. The capabilities, the doctrine, the training, the TTPs.

Now, in many ways the United States Marine Corps can take pride in having been the keepers of the flame, if you will, for how you conduct operations against irregular adversaries. And their continued focus on small wars in an era when it wasn't really cool to do that is impressive. And we know the three block war development, the focus on urban combat, and so forth. Before that was in our face, the Marine Corps was there developing those capabilities and concepts. And I have every confidence that the culture of the Marine Corps is well suited to continuing an emphasis on those things. And we certainly have seen the Marine Corps be responsive to the needs of the war fighter in the field with increased support to special operations forces, embarking tactical UAVs, innovating with fire support with your C130 capability, and a host of others that you know better than I.

Even as we focus on institutionalizing these capabilities and concepts, however, we have to begin preparing for the shift in emphasis to what other people call the indirect approach. The future of our efforts against terrorists and insurgent networks is going to be characterized more by our efforts to train, equip, advise and assist partners to do a better job of securing their own people and territories than it is going to be about a continued focus on large scale, U.S.-led operations on other people's territory. I won't go as far as Secretary Gates a couple of weeks ago who said that those who advocate another Afghanistan-like operation somewhere in Eurasia should have their head examined. He's more capable of saying those kinds of things than I am. But I will say our preferred mode of bringing security to troubled areas is going to be working by, with and through others.

For one thing, it's imperative that we change the al-Qaeda narrative that there are Americans around the world conducting a war on Islam. A better narrative is certainly there are Americans around the world helping legitimate governments do a better job of protecting their people from the threats posed by violent groups and extremists on their own territory. And practically speaking, if one looks at the world and places where we see insurgent groups gestating, where we see terrorist groups, where we see the potential for ungoverned and under-governed territories, we don't have enough manpower and resources to be everywhere we need to be.

Success in counterinsurgency and success in counterterrorism happens when competent, legitimate governments are meeting the needs of their people and providing security on their territory. And we can help do that. Security force assistance, building partner capacity is a high leverage strategy for doing what we need to do vis-à-vis al-Qaeda and related groups. And what we need to do is dry up these ungoverned areas and keep the network under pressure. Organizations under pressure have difficulty training and preparing their own operations, they make mistakes when they're under pressure and when they make mistakes is when they get policed up.

General Wissler mentioned the importance of projecting soft power as well as hard power. And a lot of the security force assistance could be characterized as soft power, but ultimately we're training soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, security forces to do their jobs better and we need to have warriors, we need to have competent war fighters do that. It's just that we're not pulling the trigger; we're doing the training, we're behind the scenes, we're maybe providing high leverage things like ISR, communications, better medical care for those who are wounded. But above all, training, advising, projecting a culture of how a competent armed force operates in a democracy, these are the things that we bring to our partners when we do the security force assistance.

And we have examples of success. The marines were tremendously successful in Georgia over a period of years raising the game of the elite units there and bringing security to places like the Pankisi Valley, which were classically ungoverned areas. We've done the same thing in the

Philippines, in Mindanao in the Islamic dominated sections of the Philippines. We've done it in Colombia, we're doing it Yemen. It can be done and it's high leverage.

The marines are world class trainers, they always have been, and they have this marvelous flexibility to operate on land or on sea. Many places where we do this, as General Wissler said, are austere environments. And we don't necessarily do our partners a favor when we come in and put a big footprint on their territory and demand water and electricity and food and air conditioning. I come from the Air Force, and so we bring our air conditioning with us when we go on expeditionary operations. But, the global fleet stations and the ships that make those possible are a great way to ameliorate the stress we place on the infrastructure of partners that have austere environments.

I want to say one thing about the human dimension. General Wissler, you were very good on this. The relationships exist at a person to person level, and they're not made instantly and they're not sustained without effort and time and attention. I think all of our services in the next planning phase as we ramp up the security force assistance operation globally, are going to be challenged to adjust their career management of selected elements of their officer and NCO forces so that they reward people who do this well and who want to continue to do it over the course of their careers. I have in mind the regionalization of regiments or elements of regiments and the logistics battalions that support those. So that individuals who as captains go to do security force assistance in the Philippines come back as lieutenant colonels and again are interacting with their peers. And they understand the language, the customs and so forth, for the people they're interacting with.

That's going to take some investment. It's not big bucks investment, It's not big programs, it's not going to generate a lot of political support through industry and Capitol Hill, but I think it's vitally important.

Let me just say a few words about anti-access. This has become a buzzword and I know none of you needs to be rehearsed on the litany of systems that adversary state and non-state actors are feeling that are making our job harder. So I won't do that. But I will say that we run the risk of

being complacent about our ability to project hard power against adversaries who are gaining new capabilities that we have not confronted in recent operations. It's one thing to say that Saddam Hussein had SCUDS during Desert Storm, and those SCUDS were not harmless by any means, as we know. But they were limited in number, very limited in accuracy and reliability. They were more of a harassment weapon than the accurate ballistic and cruise missiles that China is fielding now in very large numbers. These are things that can take out specific facilities on specific installations. We don't know how to fight a base that's under attack by weapons of that sort.

The QDR acknowledged this threat in the budgets. We've weighed in in '10, '11 and '12. We've taken some important steps toward meeting these challenges. We've ramped up and accelerated our efforts to field a new generation of electronic attack systems. We've modestly ramped up investment in standoff weapons such as tactical Tomahawk and Jazz and ER. We've begun steps to explore concepts for making our forward bases more resilient to attack. We've been thinking about dispersal as a way of complementing those base hardening [?] assets, and importantly in FY '12 the secretary announced an effort to develop a new bomber that would be capable of long-range operations and defeating advanced air defenses.

But fundamentally, there are many things we don't know about how to fight this fight. And it's not just state actors. Frank Hoffman, who's here, has written very cogently about the adoption of specific technologies by non-state actors that we used to associate exclusively with state actors. I'm talking about anti-tank guided weapons, unmanned aerial vehicles, advanced surface to air missiles, signals intelligence capabilities and so forth. And all of our armed forces need to accelerate their efforts to examine and evaluate new concepts of operation for meeting these threats. Air/sea battle is a first step, but only a first step. We need to sort of get air/sea battle now down to the operational level. How are we actually going to operate forces in this kind of environment? And we need new planning scenarios that depict non-state adversaries and proxy adversaries and state adversaries like Iran that are adopting these hybrid approaches of a mix of irregular tactics with high tech anti-access weapons.

I think we'll have time, perhaps, in the Q&A to examine in more detail what this might mean for the marine program, but I thank you for the opportunity to address these challenges here. Thank you. [applause]