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

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Panelist, Session 1, "The 21st-Century Security Setting: Identifying the Demand"**

DR. RICHARD H. SHULTZ, JR.: Following him is not easy. That was outstanding. What I'm going to talk about today grows out of a project I took part in last year and the year before, organized by the National Strategy Information Center here in town. And that project tried to identify, what are the most likely patterns of conflict and instability that we've seen in the last 20 years; so post-Cold War and post-9/11 environment. This presentation is going to comment on some of those findings.

That project also spent quite a bit of time looking at what sorts of capabilities do you need as well. And it's all available on a website that they have, if you're interested. It's pretty easy. It's just www.strategycenter.org.

Anyway, I'm going to draw on that. Now, you can see from the title slide what I'm concerned with. And what I'm concerned with is kind of what Bob Kaplan talked about just now, and that is weak states and the growth of armed groups and irregular conflict.

Now, this isn't a new subject for the Marine Corps. And you can see there that I start with General Krulak, in 1997, gave this very interesting speech in which – you can read it there – he said that conflict and war in the future is not going to be like yesterday. General Krulak was commenting on the events in Somalia, Bosnia and other places. And that those challenges were going to come from non-state actors or armed groups. I call them armed groups.

Krulak proved quite prescient in what he had to say. We had him come and give that talk to the Fletcher School as well. We took what he had to say quite seriously. Most did not. So the Joint

Chiefs, the services, DoD bureaucracy all did not think about or prepare for the conflicts that Krulak was speaking about. The Marine Corps did.

Those conflicts were seen by most in defense and in security, intelligence as minor problems, tertiary security matters and not very important. Of course, since 9/11, they have burgeoned considerably.

Now, in the shadow of 9/11, the war in Afghanistan, Iraq, Al Qaeda's transnational operations, the rise of other armed groups in other regions has led some other general officers to change their opinion on this. And I want to just comment on two others as a preface or a prelude to what I want to speak about.

One is Rupert Smith. Rupert Smith's an interesting guy. He grew up during the Cold War and the kind of war he learned to fight was interstate industrialized war; that's what he calls it. But in the Cold War's aftermath, Smith found himself involved in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in Northern Ireland. And then after he retired, he witnessed 9/11 and its aftermath. And finally he had had enough, and he published a very interesting book, I recommend it. You can see it titled there, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*.

That book, in many ways, captures this changing landscape and the kind of actors who are going to be involved in that landscape, the way they fight, the way they organize, and what it means for us. So Rupert Smith, his book, is really to be studied. I use it as a teaching tool at Fletcher School.

And then finally I put on there General McChrystal. That comes from his 2009 fall report to President Obama, and you can see what he has to say about the nature of the fight there.

So the type of conflict that General Krulak saw in the '90s, that General Smith experienced in Bosnia and elsewhere, and General McChrystal has written about, these are the conflicts that I think will be the conflict patterns that I believe will be pervasive as we look into the 21st century.

So the question for us, and what I want to highlight here is, what are some of the changed conditions that will characterize this 21st century conflict environment. And to answer it, I'm going to just give you a little bit from this report and this study I was involved with. And it's going to parallel a lot of what Bob Kaplan had to say. It'll, in many ways, touch on several of the issues that he discussed.

So my focus is on the irregular conflicts. Now, that doesn't mean that there aren't going to be traditional threats and challenges we have to be concerned with. But it's not my concern. Where I'm concerned with will be these irregular challenges. And so, let me highlight some of that.

Everyone says the 21st century is going to be different, and many say that it's going to be unpredictable and we don't know what's coming. And I think there's some truth to that. In fact, there's probably a lot of truth to that. Nevertheless, there are certain patterns of conflict over this last 20 years that are quite discernable. I would argue that there is a persistent, there will be persistent irregular conflict challenges that are going to come about because of the large growth in different types of armed groups. Bob mentioned this book, *Insurgents, Terrorists and Militias*, also criminal organizations. Those are the kind of armed groups that I've been interested in.

And these armed groups have grown considerably over the last 20 years. And they are different. Often I hear, There's nothing new; armed groups existed before, they exist now, nothing new. There's a lot new.

And so, there will be armed groups. And other kinds of non-state actors. I'm going to comment on those. And authoritarian states. And these non-state and state actors are developing some very interesting cooperative relationships, ranging from de facto coalitions to loose affiliations. We saw this, you all saw this in Iraq. The pattern of armed groups and cooperation among armed groups was very prevalent there. You're seeing it in Afghanistan. And cooperation among different types of armed groups is occurring in other parts of the world; for example, between those groups that employ and specialize in and focus on the use of different types of terrorism and organized crime.

So what this is doing is it's fostering a complex irregular environment. And this irregular environment can be local, regional and global. And I'm going to talk more about that in a moment. Most importantly, the environment generating these irregular challenges will be this large number of weak and failing states that Bob Kaplan was commenting on. I'm going to give you some numbers to show you how serious this issue is in a moment. And this is not going to go away soon.

So the environment that I'm going to lay out for you, and the patterns that I want to examine, I think, are ones that over the last 20 years we've seen develop. And there's nothing in the research or work that I've done that tells me this is going to end soon.

So today's world, I think, is understandable, but it's not understandable— or at least part of it is understandable, but not through the 20th century conflict and security frameworks that we've been so comfortable with. Conflict and war has visibly changed. And a decade into the 21st century, I think there are patterns of irregular conflict that we need to study and understand.

And by the way, there are a number of organizations, research organizations that are doing quite good work on compiling databases and information on armed groups and irregular challenges. So there's a lot there that I used that one can use to see this. And as I say, I don't believe these trends are going to change much in the foreseeable future.

So here are a few trends I'd like to highlight:

First of all, over half of the world's states, according to those who study states, measure state strength, state weakness, have very sophisticated methods for doing this kind of analysis. What those databases all tell you is, that about half the states of the world are weak, failing or failed. They are unable to control their territory, and they provide conditions for armed groups to burgeon or to become more powerful.

Within these weak states, we now use this concept or this term, ungoverned. There's ungoverned space. And there's a lot of it. And normally in the past when we've thought about ungoverned space, we thought about rural areas, out in the desert, out in the mountains, and so on. But what Bob Kaplan was talking about, this enormous urbanization of populations in these megacities that are near coastal areas, these places have large areas that are ungoverned; they have no government authority. And they provide a very good environment for armed groups to grow and to become empowered. A good example is Karachi. But it's not the only one. There are many others, and he mentioned Rio, and that's certainly true, and Mexico City, and elsewhere.

So one factor that is contributing to these irregular challenges that I think will characterize the world environment in the next 10, 20 years will be this problem of weak and failing states. And I'll give you the numbers on that in a moment.

These situations do provide opportunities for armed groups to pursue their objectives. And they can pursue their objectives out of these areas in their region and even globally because there have been a number of developments over the last 20 years that they can draw on that enhances their power. Now, I sometimes call these power enhancers or enablers. And certainly, the revolution in communications has been important to them, in transportation, the development of network thinking, and so on. They have exploited this and it has empowered them.

So these are among the factors that I think make today's armed groups a much different challenge. And as I said, they can operate from the local level to the regional to the global.

If you just look, for instance, at Mexico's major cartels, those cartels are operating on a regional and global scale. Tomorrow, I'm leaving for West Africa and doing some work there, and you can find Mexican cartels operating through West Africa and up into Europe. This is a reality. They think about the world in a global sense. These global commons that's so much part of our discourse is something that they're exploiting.

Many of you, Marines, in this audience have been involved in Afghanistan. Right across from Afghanistan is this place in Pakistan called the FATA. And out of the FATA, armed groups there are able to operate across the region and are causing major geopolitical damage to that region.

I think Bob Kaplan is absolutely right, that Yemen, in the future, the coming empowerment in Yemen of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and other armed groups, is going to mean that out of collapse in Yemen there will be another place where armed groups have the capacity to develop capacity and to fight well beyond those regions.

Authoritarian regional powers do employ irregular means to extend their influence, and part of that is partnership with armed groups. Again, we learned this in Iraq, where armed groups were aided, at minimum, by Iran and Syria, but also by others.

Now, today, then, there are many more actors on this irregular battlefield. I've talked a lot about armed groups, but there are other non-state players as well that can empower individuals and groups that, like states, can use their capability to facilitate irregular conflict. There are individuals with a great deal of wealth that we have seen now, in this 20-year period or more, use that wealth to facilitate instability. Gulf sheikhs and business executives are an example of this.

There are other non-state players that are not conducting conflict themselves, but are facilitating conflict that we're going to have to worry about. These are individuals who can traffic in technology, who may have special technological skills that they can provide to other state and non-state actors.

In Senator Reed's comments, he spoke about the challenge of weapons of mass destruction, but I think one of the things we're going to have to worry about are how non-state armed groups gain the capacity to carry out mass disruption. And the skills and the technologies that they need for that are already available, and they will gain access to it.

Recently, there was a very interesting story on how one of the Colombian cartels was building a submarine in the jungle on the Colombian/Ecuador border. And they had photos of this

submarine. This thing could go 6,000 miles. It could stay submerged for 18 hours. It had a capacity to haul nine tons of cocaine, which is worth \$250 million. And they were building this thing in the jungle. Now, that meant that they had engineers and they had resources that they got there, and they were able to do that. Now, if they're able to do something like that, they're going to be able to figure out how to get specialists in cyber technology, and other technologies that they can use for attacks that we have not seen yet.

So these are some of the irregular conflict trends. Here's just the assessment of states. Look at the number of weak states. We broke these down into authoritarian and democratic. There are many weak democracies in the world. The 1990s brought out a number of new democracies; these have now emerged as weak democracies. And they, along with other types of weak states, give you an idea of what this environment looks like.

So weak states: Unable to control their territory. They don't maintain a monopoly over the use of legitimate force. Can't perform core functions. Have pervasive corruption. This is going to be the generator of armed groups, who will become increasingly empowered by those things that we have seen over the last 20 years that have empowered us. And the conditions fostering these weak states are not going to change easily, or quickly.

So to summarize, there it is: Armed groups are burgeoning in number and capacity. They can take a variety of different forms. We don't know a lot about them before we get engaged with them. We have to figure them out; we need methodologies for all of that. And these diverse groups are going to create an important part of the conflict environment we're going to have to deal with.

Now, what does this mean for the Marine Corps? Well, I think it means a great deal for the Marine Corps. You are the nation's expeditionary force. But from those expeditionary platforms, you're going to find this environment. And so, it's an environment that needs a great deal of study. And you have learned a great deal over the last number of years in the conflicts you've been involved in.

Now, Bob mentioned that I've spent the last two-and-a-half years studying the Marine Corps campaign in Anbar. There's a great deal to learn from that campaign. It is a classic example of a Marine campaign. When the Marines went there, they went there with an operational plan that one person in this audience, who I read the oral history by, said it didn't survive first contact. And that was true. It was a complex enemy they didn't know much about. But you figured it out. And you developed capabilities and skill sets that served you well; by the summer of 2007, it was over in Anbar, a year ahead of the success of the surge.

So from those campaigns in Anbar, in Afghanistan, and elsewhere, there is a great deal to learn about the capabilities and skill sets that the Marine Corps will need, and we'll be able to, and should develop and deploy through your expeditionary legacies and the expeditionary force that you will build.

So don't lose those lessons. But study them and embrace them. Embed them in your organization, because I think that they will serve you well in the future.

Thank you. [Applause]