



Essential Intelligence: The CIA's Response to 9/11 (9/26/19)

- 00:00:29 Clifford Chanin: It's very nice to see so many familiar faces and so many not-yet-familiar faces, and I'm certain this program is going to bring you back for future programs here. Good evening, I am Clifford Chanin. I'm the executive vice president and deputy director for museum programs here at the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. And it's my pleasure to welcome you to tonight's very special program, which is delivered in partnership with the Central Intelligence Agency. As always, I'd like to extend a special welcome to our museum members and to those tuning in to our live web broadcast at 911memorial.org/live.
- 00:01:12 On September 26, 2001, the American response to the 9/11 attacks began when a small team of C.I.A. personnel, code-named Jawbreaker, was sent into Afghanistan. The C.I.A. has enshrined that mission in its institutional history by commissioning a painting by the artist James Dietz in 2008 entitled, "Cast of a Few, Courage of a Nation," and installing that painting in a place of honor at C.I.A. headquarters.
- 00:01:46 I'm proud to tell you that the C.I.A. has very generously agreed to lend us that painting, as well as other extraordinary materials for the special exhibition that we will be opening here at the museum November 15, entitled, "Revealed: The Hunt for Bin Laden."
- 00:02:06 The C.I.A.'s cooperation with the museum, along with the cooperation of other elements of the intelligence and military communities, has provided us, the museum, and through us to the public, with an inside account of this extraordinary story. Many of the intelligence and military people who took part in the long hunt, and then in the raid on bin

Laden's hideout, will be telling their stories publicly for the first time through this exhibition.

00:02:38 Now, three years ago, for the 15th anniversary of the Jawbreaker arrival in Afghanistan, then-C.I.A. Director John Brennan came to honor that date by speaking at the museum. Tonight, for the 18th anniversary of that mission-- just 15 days after the 9/11 attacks-- we return on this date to mark this extraordinary deployment and the work behind it with this program: "Essential Intelligence: The C.I.A.'s Response to 9/11."

00:03:10 We're honored to be joined by not one, but two former acting directors of the Central Intelligence Agency and one of those first Jawbreaker paramilitary officers. They'll discuss how the agency responded in those crucial 15 days immediately following the attacks. They'll also discuss how 9/11 ushered in a new era of intelligence work.

00:03:36 Our moderator this evening is Michael Morell, a former acting director and deputy director of the C.I.A., and he is one of the nation's leading national security professionals, with extensive experience in intelligence and foreign policy. During his 33-year career at the C.I.A., Mr. Morell served as deputy director for over three years, a job in which he managed the agency's day-to-day operations and analysis, represented the agency at the White House and Congress, and maintained the agency's relationships with intelligence services and foreign leaders around the world.

00:04:13 Mr. Morell also served twice as acting director. He is now a senior national security contributor for CBS News. He's the host of the national security podcast "Intelligence Matters." He's an expert voice on "Axios" and a contributing columnist for "The Washington Post." He's joined tonight by John McLaughlin and Phil Reilly.

00:04:36 In a career spanning 32 years, Mr. McLaughlin served as acting director of Central Intelligence from July to September 2004, and as deputy director from October 2000 to July 2004. He was a U.S. Army officer in the 1960s, with service in Vietnam. He comments on foreign affairs in various

printed media and on television, writes frequently on intelligence and foreign affairs in a variety of publications, including a biweekly column at www.ozy.com. During his C.I.A. service, Mr. McLaughlin worked on nearly every part of the world and supervised work on analysis, clandestine operations, and technology.

00:05:23 Our third guest, Phil Reilly, is a retired C.I.A. senior operations officer with a decorated 29-year career. He's also served in the U.S. Army Special Forces prior to joining C.I.A. Among the many positions he held there, Mr. Reilly served as C.I.A.'s senior paramilitary officer and as chief of the Special Activities Division. Mr. Reilly has had numerous foreign and domestic assignments, including chief of station positions in Afghanistan, Europe and the Far East.

00:05:58 Mr. Reilly was the deputy commander of the first U.S. government team to enter Afghanistan two weeks after the 9/11 attacks. He is now a senior adviser at Boston Consulting Group and a partner at F.O.N. Advisors. He's also on the board of directors of Third Option Foundation, which supports C.I.A.'s Special Operations cadre.

00:06:21 Finally, a wonderful capper for tonight's program, it will feature as an episode of CBS News's "Intelligence Matters" podcast, hosted by Michael Morell. Now, as we know, that's a form that honors brevity. So I ask you to keep that in mind when the opportunity for questions arises toward the end of the program. Without further ado, please join me in welcoming John McLaughlin and Phil Reilly, in conversation with Michael Morell.

(applause)

00:06:54 Michael Morell: Thank you very much, and good evening to everyone. Let me thank C.I.A. and the 9/11 Museum for putting this event on and for inviting me to moderate it, in moderated discussion with two of the best intelligence officers with whom I ever worked. So I'm honored to be on stage with both of them. Let me start by asking both of you for your

memories of 9/11 itself. Where were you when you first heard, and what was that day like for both of you? John, do you want to start?

00:07:33 John McLaughlin: Well, of course, Michael, memories of that day are vivid and many, and I could go on at length. I'll just pick out two or three quick impressions, because we'll be talking about many other aspects of that as we go along. I was on the seventh floor of the C.I.A. I was in a staff meeting, talking about terrorism and some other matters. I went into my office, and I realized what was going on when I saw a television.

00:08:01 Many of you will know the first plane hit shortly before 8:00-- just after 8:00. The second plane, a little later, and then a third plane hit the Pentagon around 9:45. I had two major thoughts that day. Let me say three. The first was, for a lot, a lot of us at C.I.A., the thought was, "So that's it. That's it." Because we had been predicting an attack, expecting an attack, warning of an attack, but we had not been able to pinpoint time, target, or method. "That's it."

00:08:48 I think the second major thing I remember is, about 10:00 at that night, writing down on a piece of paper, that first day, "Nothing will ever be the same." And that paper is archived somewhere. And the third thought I had was, it's really on us now to prevent this from happening again. And no one else can prevent this from happening again. Those are the main thoughts that I had.

Michael Morell: Phil?

00:09:22 Phil Reilly: Yeah, I was in language training, studying to go out to the field as chief of station. And I think my initial reactions were the same as everybody in this room, and certainly in this city-- was shock. And then anger. And then, perhaps, even rage. I knew it was different. It was different, this was different. You know, if my grandpa had to worry about Pearl Harbor as an event that changed history, this was all ours. And I knew that it was going to be a different, different response. And then maybe a little selfishness. I did everything I could to get in the fight. I

wanted to get out of language school. Serbo-Croatian did not seem quite as important, uh, to the task at hand.

00:10:03 Michael Morell: Great. We're going to, we're going to talk in detail about the, the effort to go into Afghanistan and go after the Taliban, and go after Al-Qaeda. But maybe we could start those first couple of days after 9/11. What was happening at the agency? What were you focused on, John? You and George Tenet, and the director? What were you focused on? What were you doing? What were all the things that were happening around you?

00:10:33 John McLaughlin: Well, Michael, I think it's worth starting a little before 9/11, because there was a blend here. George Tenet, the director, had begun quite early, in 1998, sending a letter to the agency saying, "We are at war." And sending a comparable letter to most members of the Clinton administration at that time. Because we sensed that this was a very different sort of challenge.

00:11:02 The embassy bombings in Africa had killed over 200 people. 17 soldiers--sailors-- had lost their lives on the U.S.S. Cole in Yemen. And operationally, we were leaning forward. Phil will know, probably, many of the details, but I know we were already in Afghanistan from 1998 forward, with small teams, building a relationship with the group in the north known as the Northern Alliance. I think we were the only part of the U.S. government that maintained a relationship of a working nature with the elements in Afghanistan. So we were, in a way, trying to get on war footing in the run-up to 9/11.

00:11:52 We did not have the resources and could not get the resources that we thought we needed. I always look back at the Counterterrorism Center, Michael, and I say we were, like, 300 people spread-eagled across a dyke at that point, just sort of plugging holes. When the attacks occurred, I remember, that day, we went to, we evacuated parts of our building.

00:12:18 The Counterterrorism Center, Center, stayed, because we knew the building was a potential target. We put our leadership in a, an adjacent

building and set up a phone network with the other parts of the intelligence community and the policy community-- Condi Rice, the president, and so forth. And within about three hours, a young analyst ran into our room and said, "Well, no debate, this was Al-Qaeda." And the reason he knew was, he had the manifest from the airplane that had hit the Pentagon. And on the manifest were two names of people we recognized to be Al-Qaeda.

00:12:55 The names were al-Hamzi... Al-Mihdhar and al-Hamzi. And we suspected them of being in the United States, and were on the hunt for them. So that was the clincher for us, that, "Okay, this is Al-Qaeda, as we suspected."

During that day, there was a video conference, a classified video conference, with the president. At least one that I remember, may have been more. But the one I remember, he went around through the national security team-- secretary of defense, secretary of defense, C.I.A. director, secretary of state, and so forth.

00:13:28 And at the end of the discussion-- I have this written down somewhere, because it was a very vivid expression of mission-- he said, "We must form a worldwide coalition and we will destroy them." So that was about the clearest sense of mission that...The clearest statement of mission that I'd ever heard in my C.I.A. career.

00:13:51 And then, for the rest of the day, we just gathered our thoughts and... began to plan for what we would do. Now, we can talk more about the nature of that plan, but that was a sense for that first day or two. If I go a day or two later, I'll tell you, September 12-- because the director was in the White House-- I was asked to go to Capitol Hill. And I sat in the well of the House of Representatives, and any member of Congress could come and ask any questions they wanted to ask. I was there with the secretary of defense, the attorney general, the FBI director, who'd only been in office a week-- Bob, then, Bob Mueller had only been in office a week at that point.

00:14:35 And the questions came, and frankly, everyone left and left me there. And I fielded questions for about an hour. And then went back the next day to do the same thing. And essentially, their questions were... Well, I can tell you, the three points in my briefing that I still remember were, I wanted to say who we thought did this, what they might do next, and what we were doing about it.

00:15:02 Of course, this was very early, so this was all very tentative and our best thinking at that moment-- the best we could do. On the second day, the 13th, a congressman asked me, "Do you think the Capitol's a target?" I said, "Yes." And at that precise moment, a siren went off. Have you ever seen 200 congressmen stampeding?

(laughter)

00:15:31 John McLaughlin: Several people were almost knocked down. But that's about the only funny thing I remember in that first week or so, first few days.

Michael Morell: So there was a massive... John, you remember, there was a massive movement of resources.

John McLaughlin: Oh, totally.

Michael Morell: We... We sent hundreds of people who worked on other things to go work on counterterrorism. We created something called the Red Cell.

John McLaughlin: Yes.

Michael Morell: If you could talk a little bit about what the Red Cell was and why we created it.

00:16:03 John McLaughlin: Yeah, yes, as I said, we, we were resourced, but not as heavily as possible. We just started pulling people off of everything and throwing them on the terrorism target. The Red Cell was an interesting experiment that turned out to be a wise move and very successful. We took the most adventurous thinkers we could find in the agency, the real eccentrics, the people who... Talk about out of the box, these people had never even seen a box.

(laughter)

00:16:35 John McLaughlin: We put them in a room, and we said, "We want you to think like terrorists. We want you to get into their social milieu, their intellectual milieu, their ideological milieu, and imagine what they might do next. What's their next target? What are their objectives? How do they make those decisions?" And we'd put food under the door, you know, twice a day.

(laughter)

00:17:00 John McLaughlin: And, and give them bathroom breaks. But they became a huge resource and very popular in Washington, because we would circulate to a small group of people what they came up with in the way of ideas. And I do believe that that... That really informed our thinking.

00:17:20 And another adventurous thing along those lines that we did, later, but Jane Harman, who was the, at that time the congressional representative for the area that included Hollywood, said, "You know, screenwriters are imaginative people. Why don't I bring some of them here?" And we actually collected a bunch of Hollywood screenwriters in one of our conference rooms and said, "Okay, for the next three hours, we want you to be terrorists. Make a terrorist movie for us. What might they do?"

00:17:52 And through all of this, I think we got a lot of ideas that helped us understand what we needed to do. Those were just some techniques we used, along with classic intelligence techniques-- collection of intelligence with signals intelligence and human intelligence and imagery from space, and all of the stuff that we do.

00:18:15 Michael Morell: Phil, when did you extricate yourself from language training and show up with the guys doing the planning?

Phil Reilly: Nearly immediately. I, I was picked to be the deputy of Jawbreaker on the 13th, and we began to plan immediately, even while the plan wasn't yet fully baked.

John McLaughlin: Right.

00:18:32 Phil Reilly: We knew, we knew we were going to war. There was an anticipation of going with our military colleagues, probably simultaneously. That ultimately didn't happen, as we can get into. But there was that, so, I mean, for me, it was contact with military counterparts. That's usually our Special Operations elements for the U.S. military. Tier 1 force is Delta Force, SEAL Team Six, those kind of people, and other military elements.

00:18:55 And a conversation started, anticipating what our response would look like. Because we had, we had worked together very closely. It wasn't the first time we worked extremely well with the U.S. military. We'd been in the Balkans together. We'd been in Gulf War I together. We'd been... going all the way back in time. So we knew each other and we had a lot of people seconded back and forth to the various units. So, so the relationship was very, very sound.

But at that point, it was, it was planning, which we didn't yet have, what instruction would look like. But we knew that we were going. And we began to assemble the makings of a team, what would be a small team.

00:19:26 Michael Morell: So, so, John, before we get to the war part of this, there was a, a... There was an effort by the Bush administration to conduct diplomacy with the Taliban. To try to get them to see reason and try to get them to turn over bin Laden, and, and walk away from Al-Qaeda. And C.I.A. actually played a role in that diplomacy. Can you talk about that?

00:19:48 John McLaughlin: Yeah, a couple of things were going on all through that summer. Deputies that-- people at my level-- were meeting in the White House Situation Room. And the Bush administration, to its credit, was trying to figure out, what is a way that we can attack Al-Qaeda in some fundamental, rooted-up way?

00:20:06 And one of the thoughts considered during that summer was, "Can we find moderates within the Taliban who are only Taliban members because the leadership gives them money and weapons, and they have no ideological affinity with this movement, and break them away?" This was considered in the White House area. "And, and then, try to get them to help us get bin Laden and get him out of there and take this whole thing down? Tear it apart?"

00:20:41 That didn't happen that summer. But after 9/11, or in that immediate period, we had a station chief in Pakistan who had been quite influential in shaping our thinking about what was coming and what to do subsequent to 9/11-- the station chief being our principal officer there. And he, Bob Grenier was his name, he was asked to meet with, to get in touch with Taliban, and essentially ask them, tell them, that we wanted bin Laden. That we wanted, basically, to... Their help in turning the—the Taliban leadership-- hand Al-Qaeda over to us.

00:21:23 We made that effort, but it didn't, it didn't pan out. So it was, we were trying everything in the book at that point to break up what was a terrible movement in Afghanistan.

Michael Morell: So, let's talk about the plan. So, Director Tenet, George Tenet, briefs the NSC on the 13th.

John McLaughlin: Yeah.

Michael Morell: So, two days after 9/11, he briefs them on a plan to go after Al-Qaeda. I don't think you were at that session at the White House. You were probably sitting at the Hill answering all those questions.

John McLaughlin: Yeah, yeah.

00:22:00 Michael Morell: But then, you, you go with the director on the 15th to Camp David, where there's even a more extensive briefing of the plan. John, I want to ask you two questions. What were the key elements of the plan? And then, how is it possible... Second question is, how is it possible that two days after 9/11, C.I.A. had a sophisticated, extensive, well-thought-out plan to go after Al-Qaeda?

John McLaughlin: That was ultimately adopted by the government.

Michael Morell: Yeah.

00:22:36 John McLaughlin: It's an interesting story, because it goes back to the Clinton administration. The Clinton administration was obsessed with terrorism, as you would expect. They had witnessed the attacks in Africa and the attacks on the U.S.S. Cole. At one point, Sandy Berger, the national security adviser, had us writing a memo to him on Al-Qaeda, and where, what we knew about it, literally every day.

00:22:59 And at one point, in roughly the last three or four months of the Clinton administration, they asked us to put together what they called a "Blue Sky" plan. What they meant was, "Imagine you have no constraints from

resources. You have whatever you need. What would you do to attack Al-Qaeda and defeat it?"

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Because up to that point, remember, we hadn't been in there fighting. There hadn't been any bombing. We were observing remotely with drones. We were collecting intelligence and so forth. So we put together such a plan. I remember sitting in my basement on a secure fax going back and forth with Cofer Black.

Phil Reilly: Yeah.

John McLaughlin: Who was the head of the Counterterrorism Center. Me and my dog-- who was not cleared for this, by the way.

(laughter)

00:23:53

John McLaughlin: And coming to a point where we said, "Okay, we got it-- this is a pretty good plan." By that time, frankly, the Clinton administration had just run out of time. We're talking December. It was, so, there's a month to go or so. They can't really operationalize this plan. We put it on the shelf. We go through the first nine months or so of the Bush administration. 9/11 happens, we take the plan off the shelf and we say, "Okay, we're ready to go."

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And that's... The president, by Wednesday of that week, by the 13th-- I spoke with George Tenet about this, because I wasn't at that meeting-- he said by Wednesday, the president had a pretty good idea of the outlines of the plan. And then we laid it out in about a, you know, a 40-page booklet at Camp David on the 15th. And it was a plan for attacking Al-Qaeda in 90 countries around the world, because they were global.

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What was the plan? Well, it had several elements. One was centered on Afghanistan, and that involved sending in teams, building on the

relationship that we had established with the Northern Alliance-- that rebel group in the North, that Tajik group, Tajik-based group that was in a civil war with Taliban. We'd built that relationship. Go in and meet with them. Ask what they need to fight this more aggressively and to partner with us, and to work with us on intelligence.

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Now, bear in mind, we had at this point, by virtue of having worked Afghanistan aggressively in the late '90s, we had over 100 recruited sources on the ground in Afghanistan, and we had eight tribal networks working with us. So our teams went in to work, to exploit that, and to build that relationship with the Northern Alliance.

The plan was to then prepare the way for the U.S. military to come in, in the form of Special Forces. The beauty of this arrangement was, our intelligence could locate targets, Special Forces could laser-designate them and bring heavy metal on. Phil can talk about that in much more detail.

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Second part of the plan was to turn Pakistan to our advantage. The Pakistani intelligence service had been visiting us just a couple of days before 9/11. In fact, the Pakistani intelligence director was in Washington on 9/11. And our sense of the, Pakistan at that point was, they were not prepared to help us. They were in denial about the danger that the Taliban presented.

But, after 9/11, part of the plan was to give them an ultimatum, and this was delivered through Rich Armitage and the secretary of state, who basically called him up. And if you've ever seen Rich, he's about 400 pounds.

Michael Morell: Big barrel chest.

00:26:46

John McLaughlin: Big barrel chest. You don't want to say no to him. He called up and said, "Make a choice. You're with us or you're against us."

And Musharraf, then the president of Pakistan, swiveled on a dime, changed his intelligence director, and basically helped us. There are qualifiers you'd put on that. Michael and I were talking about it, but essentially, the core element of the Pakistani intelligence service that we needed to help us helped us.

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And... And then to... work around the world, increasing our resources, and the effect of local intelligence services, in parts of the world where Al-Qaeda was present and capable of inflicting damage. And of course, there was a whole domestic part of this, too, which was to work with the FBI. There was not a Homeland Security Department then, but to work with the FBI in the United States to make sure that we had all of the bases covered here.

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One of the big problems in this time was getting people to understand that we had to harden the vulnerabilities in the United States. That this couldn't be present... prevented by just detecting what they were going to do. We had-- someone will always get through. We had to harden the soft parts of the United States against attack. So that was also part of our thinking at this point.

Michael Morell: John, how did the president react?

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John McLaughlin: He... He bought it, in a word. I mean, we laid all of this out at Camp David, and he said... The way Camp David worked on the 15th, in the morning, he just went around the table and he asked everyone in a kind of freewheeling, brainstorming way, "What do you think happened here? What's your interpretation of it?"

00:28:38

And people were, except for the C.I.A., I think, they were all over the map. There were people in the room who were convinced this couldn't have been done by a terrorist group. It had, they had to have help from a major partner-- Iran or Iraq or someone. We argued against that and said, "No, this group is capable of doing what you saw happen."

- 00:28:59 But there was that kind of discussion, very loose, free-flowing. He said, after lunch, "Take a walk, come back, then we'll decide, what do we make of all of this?" And it's then that we laid out this plan. Others laid out thoughts, but without-- I say this respectfully, and without wanting to be critical-- no one really had a plan comparable to what we were putting on the table.
- 00:29:24 The military since then has become, I would say, just brilliant at exploiting their Special Operations forces against terrorism. At that time, they were not. This wasn't where they were in terms of their thinking and their deployment and their, their... use of their forces.
- 00:29:45 So this was pretty much on C.I.A., and then, I don't know whether you want to go there, Michael, but at... The president said, "All right, I've thought about all this, and I'll think about it over the weekend, and let's get back together on Monday." He invited us to the Cabinet Room, and then Monday, he had thought about it over the weekend. And he went around the room and he said, "I've made about 12 decisions."
- 00:30:09 And he pointed to every cabinet secretary and said, "Defense, I want you to get heavy military ready to do something. We'll figure out what it is later. Treasury, there's a money angle here. You need to start following the money. Justice, you need to be thinking about the legal aspects of this." By the way, this day, the 17th, we had been given what's called a presidential finding, which is an order the president signs for covert action that directs the C.I.A. to do something. We don't do it if it doesn't have a presidential signature.
- 00:30:41 And he came to the C.I.A., and this is where the phrase "first in," I first heard it. He said, "I want you guys first in." He bought the plan. And he said, "I want you on the ground as soon as you can get there. Prepare the way for big military to come in. Work together to take these people down." And that was essentially what happened between the 13th and the 17th.

00:31:05 Michael Morell: So on the 17th, the president says, "Go." And on the 26th, you go into Afghanistan, Phil.

Phil Reilly: Right.

Michael Morell: How was it that the agency was able to move so quickly from the plan being approved to the action?

Phil Reilly: Right.

Michael Morell: Nine days.

00:31:24 Phil Reilly: Right, you know. That sounds like an excellent question, and I'm sure the audience wants to hear the response. Part of me, though, is, that's what we do. So there was nothing surprising, in some respect, to, to how quickly we respond. C.I.A. has a very strong organic paramilitary capability. Air, sea, land capability. 100% of its membership are prior military service members. Most from special, elite units. Are platforms.

00:31:51 We have the ability to... When I say organic, we have the people and the platform and the means to lift up and go someplace very, very quickly. I mean, the president tomorrow could say, "I need 20 people in Ouagadougou." We're going to be there, period. With our own organic capability. So we have the capabilities to do it.

00:32:07 We also had the right, as mentioned before, we had the relation, pre-existing relationships, which is critical. We knew some of the players in Afghanistan that we were going to rely upon to, to be our allies. And we haven't said it yet, but, but actually, all of our allies around the world-- because I invited some of my British friends here this evening-- they were absolutely fantastic. Every one of them stood up and said, "We are here to support you." I mean, there were some countries that may have come

a little bit slower, but our critical allies threw everything they could at this problem set, as well.

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So we didn't only have the capabilities of the entire U.S. government at our disposal, but we had all of our allies from around the world being there. So, again, we had the capability, we had the people, we had the means to get over there, and we had the allies on the ground. And so that all brought, brought it together. And at some point, we should talk about Ahmad Shah Massoud, his demise, and how that added to the fervor...

Michael Morell: Go ahead, go ahead, talk about that.

00:32:56

Phil Reilly: Well, again, the Northern Alliance was headed by a fellow named Ahmad Shah Massoud. He was a, their, a guerrilla leader. He was the only one in Afghanistan at that point who owned terrain. He was against the Taliban. Mullah Omar wanted him dead. But he was aligned with us. Not the best of friends, but he let us come in and out of there. He also provided us information. On the ninth of September, two days before 9/11-- again, he was assassinated by Al-Qaeda in the Panjshir Valley. And he was such a beloved figure that the... It did not disrupt the Northern Alliance. It absolutely galvanized them. They were absolutely rabid and furious that their leader had been killed.

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Two days later, the events occur on 9/11. And they saw the attack on us as, in their minds, analogous-- the loss of their leader and us. And it actually bound them to us in a way that it hadn't been before.

Michael Morell: Why do you think Al-Qaeda killed Massoud when they did?

Phil Reilly: I think, I think they thought it was going to fracture the unit, because he was such a unique figure, a beloved figure, that it would fall

apart. Someone couldn't fill his shoes. And, but in hindsight, I think it was a tremendous miscalculation.

00:34:00

Michael Morell: Yeah, yeah—so then...

John McLaughlin: I said-- Michael...

Michael Morell: Go ahead.

John McLaughlin: Phil mentioning our allies reminds me of something really important. On the 12th of September, even though airports were closed, one airplane landed. It was from the... I kind of choke up when I think about this. It was from the United Kingdom. And on that plane was the head of their foreign intelligence service, MI6, the head of their domestic service, MI5, the head of their SIGINT service, the GCHQ, and the national security adviser to their prime minister.

00:34:46

And they came just to say, on September 12, "We are with you. Anything you need from us, you have." And they came personally to our headquarters and we had dinner that night. And... So when you hear about the special relationship, it really is.

Michael Morell: So, Phil, how is it that you found yourself on the first helicopter?

00:35:14

Phil Reilly: Well, I got picked to be the deputy and we, we built a team. We knew we had a single helicopter to get in initially. They had one single Mi-17, an old Russian helicopter that we had had rehabilitated and rehabbed and was in theater-- it was in Uzbekistan. In mothball status, actually, because we hadn't been back to see the Northern Alliance since January, actually, the last trip, trip in. But it was quickly pulled out and, and made, made ready. I mean, do you want me to go through sort of how we, we got over there?

Michael Morell: Absolutely, absolutely.

00:35:42

Phil Reilly: Yeah, yeah, well, no, the team was... We, we kept it to seven players. I got to pick them. We picked the best medic in, in... field medic in C.I.A. We field... the best field communicator. I picked another paramilitary officer, another guy named Phil. And we had another case officer named Chris...

Michael Morell: They were all named Phil.

(laughter)

00:36:00

Phil Reilly: Yeah, no. It's confusing, we have aliases and books of different names. I can't keep it straight. But anyway, seven and a three-person crew. Again, as taxpayers here, you should be proud that we have the capability... The military trains people to fly Russian helicopters. And so, we had three expert crew members who were able to, to get us over there. But we flew...

Remember, most aircraft weren't flying at that point. We were able to get to Germany. We left the CONUS, the United States, on the 19th, in a hurried operation. We went to Germany to stage all of our gear. And there we did. We met up with other team members. Some of the team members, the medic was stuck in Gander. He had been flying back when 9/11 occurred and wasn't in, wasn't able to get to us.

00:36:41

So we had to get him out of Gander. We had a military aircraft pick him up. And we had another operative overseas, one of the team members who flew into Germany. Staged in Germany and then moved forward. We were going to have to go through two former Russian satellites, I mean Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Not in that order—Uzbekistan first, then Tajikistan. Tashkent and then Dushanbe. And they, again, were former Russian proxies, and there was some resistance. So it actually delayed our

entry by, by several days, as there was some negotiation as to how to, to get in.

00:37:13 But ultimately, on the 25th of, of September, the president gave the, the go signal. We were cleared to go. So we took off the following morning, very, very early. And we made our way from Tashkent to Tajikistan. We had trouble getting into Tajikistan. They were denying even to the last second, as the helicopter was inbound. This would be our last place to touch base before we headed into Afghanistan, and they were refusing us entry.

00:37:40 So, my other Phil, who has an excellent... Russian speaker. We got him on the radio, and he just went at it with the control tower. And, I don't know what he said. Because, so you couldn't hear anything going on anyway, in the helicopter, it was so loud. But we got a thumbs-up and we were able to land. So God bless Phil, and the team leader, Gary, gave me a thumbs-up. Phil was pretty good. I guess we got, we got the good Phil.

00:38:03 So we were able to land, take on last fuel. We took on a single Tajik pilot to help us-- a Northern Alliance pilot. He was going to help us navigate through the mountain passes. And talk about a small world, I met him this morning in C.I.A.-- he was there. We had a ceremony at C.I.A. this morning. We were unveiling the helicopter I'm describing to you. It was unveiled at the C.I.A. compound this morning, and that Northern Alliance Afghani is there. He's been in, he's been a Green Card holder for the last five months, so... Anybody questions immigrant status in this country, I got news for you. There's a good American right there.

(laughter)

00:38:39 Phil Reilly: So, we... We took off-- daytime. Part of it was because of the difficulty of the terrain. We had to go through a place called the Anjuman Pass, which is 14,500 feet. Very, very heavy helicopter, fully, fully loaded—extra fuel. I should say what we had. We had ten Americans—three crew, seven of us. We had weapons, as you'd expect. What with

the gear to survive, because we didn't know quite the environment we were going into. And we had \$3 million.

(laughter)

Phil Reilly: In, in three boxes. So, in other words, everything we needed.

(laughter)

00:39:12

Phil Reilly: I say the helicopter was rehabilitated and rehabbed, but they were, actually, it was still pretty austere, the conditions. Because I looked up and Ned, the pilot-- true name, Ned. He had a little Garmin GPS affixed.

(laughter)

Phil Reilly: We were flying by the Garmin GPS, you know? So we first, we first entered Afghan territory and we actually were flying over Taliban patrols. First time we saw them, they were beneath us. And of course, they had one or two functioning helicopters. So, they didn't shoot at us, because, I guess, they weren't quite sure, "Who was that?" You know what I mean?

00:39:43

So, but we made it into the Panjshir Valley midday of the 26th and were met there by the officialdom of, the heads of the Northern Alliance. The survivors-- Ahmad Shah Massoud had just died-- they were still in a state of shock. But they met us with absolute open arms. And immediately, we got to work with the mission that you described.

00:40:00

Again, the mission was to link up with the Northern Alliance, have them totally brought onto our side-- which they basically already were-- and facilitate the entry of the U.S. military into, into Afghanistan. That was

the primary mission, and, of course, unspoken in the background was, "Go after Al-Qaeda full bore." But of course, the first two had to be achieved.

Michael Morell: So, John, when did you hear that they had made it into Afghanistan? And how was the president informed?

00:40:29

John McLaughlin: We heard that when they landed, they were sending back cables. This, this was the only communication coming out of Afghanistan. And as I recall, one of Phil's colleagues went down with us to the Oval Office, and we had a cable that said, "They're on the ground. This is what they're seeing. These are the content of the first conversation that they've had. So far, everything's on target." This was Hank Crumpton, and, as I recall, usually in the...

00:41:02

Michael Morell: So, Hank was sort of the general in charge of the war back at C.I.A. headquarters.

John McLaughlin: Yeah, he was the... I guess, you know, in World War II terms, he was sort of the George Marshall. Phil was the Patton.

(laughter)

John McLaughlin: And, you know, normally in the Oval Office-- where you've been many times, Michael-- you sit on a sofa and you brief the president. And it's all very like that. Hank squatted down on the ground between the two of them, spread out a big map, and said, "This is where they are, right here." And sort of laid it all out and described most of what Phil just described.

00:41:38

For this period of time, the only information coming out of Afghanistan that had an American origin was coming from these guys. And so, we were kind of responsible for informing the U.S. government about where

all of this is. When you go to a situation room meeting, it was kind of all on us to say, "Here's where we are, here's where the situation is." Yeah.

Michael Morell: So, Phil, how and when was D.O.D. merged into the, into the operation?

00:42:05 Phil Reilly: We had constant communication with D.O.D. and... But it took several weeks. They ultimately, the first teams came in on the 19th of October. You've seen "The Horse Soldiers" movie, right? It wasn't led by an Australian guy at the head of that team, as it was in the movie theaters, but there were two O.D.As. that came in on the 19th, but we had been coordinating back and forth. They'd set up a base in Uzbekistan, Karshi-Khanabad, and the Fifth Special Forces Group.

00:42:30 And this was near and dear to my heart, because before C.I.A., I had been in Special Forces. They were the proper tool for this operation, okay? The only element of the U.S. military trained to work with foreign forces, trained linguistically to do so. And all of the teams are self-contained-- medics, and demolitions experts, and communicators, where each team member's cross-trained. They were ideal for this mission. And so the U.S. military picked the right tool. And that's how they ultimately came in.

00:42:56 Again, because we had worked together over the years in other campaigns in different places-- obviously not of this magnitude-- we had personal relationships. So the commander of the Fifth Group, then-Colonel John Mulholland-- he retired not too many years ago as a three-star general-- was my counterpart, and we were able to coordinate each one of these infiltrations.

Michael Morell: And this, at the end of the day, was a remarkable success. So, two-and-a-half months after the day that you flew in, the Taliban had been defeated, Kabul was liberated from the Taliban, the National Council had appointed a new Afghan president, and a quarter of the Al-Qaeda senior leadership was either dead or captured, in two-and-a-half months. Really a remarkable accomplishment.

00:43:40

I want to ask both of you if you were surprised at how quickly, how quickly the Taliban fell, and how quickly this played out.

John McLaughlin: You know, it's, it's a hard question. Yes and no. Yes in the sense that when you go into something like this, you never really know how it's going to come out. One of the things I take away from my time in government is, when you begin engaging in violence, you don't know where it's going. You just don't. So there was an element of, "We're not quite sure where this is going."

00:44:20

But as it took hold and developed, that's when I would say no, I wasn't surprised. There was a sense building in the United States... In fact, there was an article in, probably in the "New York Times," as I recall, in roughly this timeframe, November or so, saying, "We're stuck, we're in a quagmire, this will take months. We'll never be able to finish this."

00:44:46

There were actually papers written by other agencies in the U.S. government that alleged the same thing, worrying that we were in a quagmire. I remember when I saw one of those papers, our reaction was, "No, Kabul's going to fall in 24 hours." Because we had people on the ground who were giving us, well, ground truth. And that was our assessment.

There was a discussion in our government about whether it would be dangerous to allow the Northern Alliance, the allies that Phil was working with, mostly Tajik elements?

00:45:20

Phil Reilly: Mostly Tajik.

John McLaughlin: Because of the tribal tensions in Afghanistan, the... You get further south, you're into Pashtun areas. Um, there was a belief in some parts of our government that if we were to let the Northern Alliance go into Kabul and take it over, that it would lead to some kind of

a bloodbath or ethnic cleansing or such. We did not think so. And we, our feeling was, "These are our allies. We have told them we are supporting them. If we were to hesitate at this point to allow them to push all the way, we'll lose them-- we'll break our word."

00:45:58

And I think Phil would probably say, that's the most important thing in this part of the world, in the world, is keeping your word. And so we won that argument, and the teams pushed into Kabul and it fell by November. So... Yes, you never know how it's going to work out. But as it went along, no, I wasn't surprised. I could see we were going from strength to strength there.

Michael Morell: Phil?

00:46:26

Phil Reilly: Yeah, just... The Taliban are a guerrilla force, a capable guerrilla force that is still killing our people every now and then. You still read about it. Um, at that point, though, they were trying to play like a static army. They actually had trench lines dug around them. The Northern Alliance, to the north of Kabul was a series of trenches with Taliban positions. They were very easy to identify and give the coordinates, ultimately, to the U.S. Air Force, as it was in the west, up in the Takhar front.

00:46:53

You know, I went up there one day to plot enemy positions, and my Afghan allies knew every hilltop. "Oh, those are Uzbeks, those are Pashtuns over there. And they're from this region." And so we were able to report all that very, very accurately. I tell one quick anecdote on that, there was an artillery duel going on when I went up to the Takhar front. Again, my mission was not to engage personally in this. It was to go identify where the enemy is and have them destroyed by all our superior forces.

00:47:16

But I felt really strongly at one point to go over to that artillery and crank off a round, and fire the first round in response, technically. But that wasn't my job, so I didn't do it. And we just, I mean... So, we've given a lot of credit here, as we should, to the teams. And by the way, our team

went into the Panjshir, and then a series of teams went around the country-- Alpha... Teams Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, X-ray. And each one of those had a Special Forces A detachments attached to it. So incredibly strong capability. Three to four C.I.A. officers, one of which definitely linguistically qualified in Dari or the local language, and then a Special Forces team with direct superior connectivity to the U.S. military.

00:47:56

And, really, so these people were in static positions. And when the U.S. Air Force started, they were destroyed. They had to run for their lives. So it didn't surprise me, either, that, that they crumbled the way they did. Now, some crumbled back into the woodwork and they remain guerillas to this day. But as a standing army, they were destroyed and they fled.

Michael Morell: I want to ask you both about Mike Spann. Phil, what happened?

00:48:19

Phil Reilly: Mike Spann was a ground branch officer, a colleague. Yeah, Mike was the first American killed in Afghanistan, on the 25th of November 2001. He was at a prison camp interrogating or debriefing prisoners with another agency officer-- who I met this morning, by the way, the survivor-- when the prisoners rose en masse, and they were overcome.

00:48:44

Mike was killed almost instantaneously trying to extricate from the prison. And his colleague did get out after killing many of the enemy. Actually, some British SBS, Special Boat Service-- Royal Marine types-- were in the immediate vicinity and helped him exfiltrate. But that's how, that's how he perished. He was absolutely a phenomenal young... former Marine. Just married another C.I.A. officer, had a one-month-old son, and the first American killed.

Michael Morell: John, do you remember how you heard?

00:49:16 John McLaughlin: Uh, yes. I don't remember precisely where I was and so forth, but I think I heard on the way to the White House, and, of course, we—George Tenet and I-- went to Dover to meet Mike as he was brought back from Afghanistan. He was the first American killed.

One thing that happened as a result of his death, some then-retired C.I.A. officers organized something called the C.I.A. Officers Memorial Foundation, thinking that we were heading into a different time for the C.I.A.-- this would be a dangerous time. This is an organization that I chaired for seven years. Michael was on the board.

00:50:03 It raises funds, as does another group, the Third Option, that Phil has been involved in. Raises funds for the education of children whose... who have lost a parent in C.I.A. service. And we have now sponsored over a hundred kids. And, I would tell you this-- there are now 129 stars on the wall at C.I.A. Each one is carved, when a C.I.A. officer loses their life, in the marble wall in the lobby.

00:50:35 More than a third of those have been carved since 9/11. So the officers who formed this organization back in 2001-2002 were very prescient about this being a particularly dangerous time for the C.I.A.

00:50:50 Michael Morell: I'll tell you that I was with George Tenet when he told the president about Mike Spann, told the president how it happened, and... And I remember the president... And Shannon was Mike's, Mike's wife. And George told the president about Shannon and how she worked with us. And the president looked at Andy Card, his chief of staff, and said, "I want to call Shannon. I want to do that today."

00:51:20 One more question and then we'll, we'll go to questions in the audience. And question for both of you is, how did this... How did 9/11, how did this period of time, how did the fact that we were in the lead in this war, how did, what effect did this have on the agency as an institution?

- 00:51:42 John McLaughlin: Well, it... had a revolutionary effect, I think. At a material level, a mundane level, we received a lot of resources that we hadn't had. In the 1990s, we had been reduced in resources by about 23%, because the Cold War was over. And post-9/11, people realized, this is our instrument for fighting Al-Qaeda, and we got a lot of... We got new authorities, as we were given legal authority to do things that we had never been asked to do before that allowed us to be much more aggressive and direct in fighting Al-Qaeda.
- 00:52:24 It led to an unprecedented integration with the U.S. military. Phil is right, we had always been close to them in certain areas. But as the years went on after 9/11, I would say the integration became intimate. And so today, I think one of the incredible capabilities the U.S. has-- I hope we don't lose it-- is the ability to marry up civilian-produced intelligence with military power in a way that we... I don't think we could have done before 9/11.
- 00:53:00 It also meant our officers were socialized in a different environment. That is to say, they matured and came to, they... Particularly people... We had... Before 9/11, we had about 65,000 resumes a year for jobs. After 9/11, it shot up to 180,000. People wanted to serve. Officers, like some on Phil's team, had been ready to retire or in retirement, came back.
- 00:53:29 And so... And young officers who joined in that period of time have now known 18 years of war. That's the first generation of C.I.A. officers raised in war, if you will, since World War II, when the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of C.I.A., was created. And so everyone goes.
- 00:53:55 I would... Michael may know the percentages, but even among our analysts, a large percentage of them have served in the war zones, and that's different. And I think it... I said at the very beginning, when Michael asked me for my memories of that day, and one of them was, this is on us to prevent again. I think that notion of first line of defense was always there theoretically, but 9/11 made it real and urgent in a way that things before had not.

00:54:36 Michael Morell: And Phil, I'm sure you felt that when you were in the field after 9/11.

Phil Reilly: That's right. That's a tough question. You don't want to follow a former acting C.I.A. director on an answer like that. You know, everything, everything John said I think is right. It was a very special time, and borne out of the most, the worst of tragedies. But the feeling that was in the building, where... You talked about, people came out of retirement. People, senior people, just wanted to do anything to help. And that was a rare time.

00:55:03 I think there was, at the time, where you felt like everyone had to serve. People have had three, four, five, six, seven war zone tours now since then. Although, I'll be honest, it has a bit crested. And it's 18 years, maybe it should. And there's fewer people doing it now. And, you know, people having successful careers who, who haven't served.

So it's... for ten years there, it was pretty remarkable. But you have people in that... you know, it's different. It's changed.

Michael Morell: Okay, let's, um, let's turn to you guys. Please, yes.

(inaudible)

00:55:43 Clifford Chanin: Who would like to ask a question? Gentleman in the back, please.

Audience Member: Phil, how long were you actually in Afghanistan before you returned?

Clifford Chanin: So the question was how long you were in Afghanistan before you returned.

Phil Reilly: Yeah, the first stint was 45 days, but I would go back repeatedly. Ultimately, I became the chief of station in Afghanistan, so I've spent about two-and-a-half years there.

00:56:06 Clifford Chanin: Another question-- sir.

Audience Member: So, one thing revealed by 9/11 was a lack of coordination between the C.I.A. and the FBI. An example, the FBI guys (inaudible) those two guys on the manifest that you knew were in this country, the FBI wasn't told. And some in the FBI say, if they'd known, maybe 9/11 is prevented. What do you think about that?

00:56:31 Clifford Chanin: So the question is about the coordination pre-9/11 between the C.I.A. and FBI, particularly the presence of two of the eventual hijackers in the United States.

John McLaughlin: That's a complicated... Michael and I may have something to say about that. That's a complicated story, and it's not been told... So complicated it's never been quite told right. I think... I think I'm confident FBI did know they were in the country. We had a large number of FBI officers embedded in our Counterterrorism Center, and their mission was to report back to their leadership whatever we had in the way of information about terrorists.

00:57:08 And I think, at C.I.A. headquarters, we have emails, I believe, that show we were emailing that information to FBI. I don't think they have emails that show they received it. So that's another complication. And that, that contributes to the debate. It may be true that we did not make out a formal piece of paper that... It has a particular technical name, about transmitting information.

00:57:37 But there is no... there was no policy at C.I.A. to withhold those names from the FBI, and... You know, at C.I.A., we try not to get in the blame

game with people, because, frankly, we're so used to taking blame that we know how it feels. So, you know, we don't get in those food fights. But, you know... We did watch-list those two individuals on August 23, okay? And any agency in the U.S. government can watch-list terrorist suspects. C.I.A. was the only one that did.

00:58:19 So there was knowledge within the U.S. government that these two people were on a watch list. Now, before I go blaming anyone, let me say, the U.S. government at that time did not have the policy instruments to implement watch-listing the way we do it today. That's a whole other story. That's a revolutionized process.

00:58:37 Today, if you did that, those people would not get on an airplane. But back at the time of 9/11, there were only 35 air marshals in the U.S. system. You were still allowed to bring air... on an aircraft knives of seven inches. We were not, as a country, prepared to even deal with the knowledge that two of those people were in the United States.

00:58:58 Michael Morell: I'll just add one thing. There is a, there is a myth, there is a conspiracy theory that says that we didn't want to tell the FBI about those two because we wanted to go recruit them, and we didn't want the FBI to do that. That is totally inaccurate.

John McLaughlin: Yeah.

Michael Morell: Not true. A number of inspector generals have looked at that question, and yet the conspiracy theory and the myth persist.

Clifford Chanin: See who else we have. Other question? Gentleman here.

00:59:30 Audience Member: Yeah, can you speak to the ability of Osama bin Laden to exfiltrate himself from the Tora Bora region over into Pakistan, and how we were unable to prevent that? There's a lot of conflicting

information as to the conflict within the various services that inhibited our ability to effectively prevent that.

00:59:57

Clifford Chanin: So the question is about Osama bin Laden's escape from Tora Bora, which, just by way of advertisement, we take this up in the exhibition that I mentioned, which will open on November 15, thank you. Please.

(laughter)

Phil Reilly: Yeah, I know... He undoubtedly was there. Retrospectively, we know that through intelligence means. And he fled across the border to safe haven in Pakistan, where he resided in various places until he ultimately was killed. There was some disagreements about how it should be prosecuted, Tora Bora campaign. Very remote region-- that region of Afghanistan, I will tell you, in summertime, it's difficult to operate in. In wintertime, it's almost unbelievable.

01:00:35

And I'm just curious, you asked, asked that question, because about two weeks ago, I was with General Tommy Franks. General Tommy Franks was the commander, the overall commander. I was speaking at his leadership academy. And this, and this came up. And, you know, the simple notion is that he didn't want to commit the troops.

Audience Member: Right, that's where I'm going.

01:00:53

Phil Reilly: Exactly. And there was a C.I.A. officer on the ground, the second Jawbreaker. I call him the second. The guy followed us in. He, he sort of thought that perhaps they should have prosecuted more vigorously. Look, the military commander's got to make that decision. I'm coming down on the side of the U.S. military. I mean, hindsight's 20-20, but to just drop troops into those conditions without the full resources available...

01:01:15 So you've got to remember, this is early December. We still didn't have the footprint we have there now. This was very early on. Taliban had just been rooted out. It was not the right call to have sent those people in. So, again, I'm backing sort of the military on that call. And, again, we didn't even know he was there at the time.

Audience Member: Yes, but we had a strong suspicion...

Phil Reilly: Right...

Clifford Chanin: Sir, we'll just...

01:01:37 Michael Morell: So I'll just add one piece of color here. So I was still President Bush's briefer at the time. And I walked in to brief him in Crawford, over the holidays, and he said, "What's new?" And I said, "Mr. President, bin Laden has escaped from Tora Bora." And I had never seen the president mad before. But he was mad, and he shot the messenger. He shot me.

(laughter)

01:02:09 Michael Morell: He said, "How could you let this happen?" And I'm thinking, "I didn't do this." And he said, "What is your plan now?" And luckily, George Tenet came up on the screen just then...

(laughter)

Clifford Chanin: All the way in the back.

Audience Member: Thank you for your service. I'm just curious...
(inaudible)

01:02:38 Clifford Chanin: So the question is about the current negotiations with the Taliban.

John McLaughlin: Well, I think they're stalled at the moment. But if you went back to the time before they were stalled, the agreement that the negotiator-- a former ambassador, Khalilzad-- had announced was that we would remove our troops over a period of time, contingent upon assuring compliance with a Taliban promise that they would not invite Al-Qaeda back in and permit terrorism to run amok in Afghanistan.

01:03:11 And it sort of was frozen at that moment. Now, the problem here is, can you... I think it's questionable whether the Taliban can ever actually share power with an elected government. It runs against everything in Sharia law, the Sharia law that they endorse formally. And so I think that's a shaky proposition.

01:03:40 The Taliban currently, by, I think, official U.S. government estimates, controls or contests still about 40% of the territory in Afghanistan-- controls or contests. And so I think we have to be very careful in coming to an agreement there. The idea is to have the Taliban then go into a subsequent negotiation with the existing Afghan government, or whichever one is in power, and come to a power-sharing arrangement.

01:04:15 The two mistakes we have to not make if we get out of Afghanistan are the two big mistakes we made in Vietnam. One is to be blind to the consequences. You won't remember, perhaps, our frantic exit from the roof of the American Embassy in Saigon because the North Vietnamese had broken the agreement and invaded. So we can't let ourselves get in that position.

01:04:41 And, second, we can't abandon friends of ours in Afghanistan-- people who have worked with us-- who would probably be targets of Taliban that didn't follow the agreement. That's essentially what happened in Vietnam with many people. So we can't make those two mistakes. That

said, I think, you know, there is an American... The public is probably tired of this. And, and there's a lot of sentiment in Congress for finding a way to wind it down. We just have to do it, and if we're going to do it in an honorable way that isn't predicting disaster before our eyes.

01:05:21

Clifford Chanin: We will take one more. The gentleman right there.

(audience member speaking off mic)

Clifford Chanin: Yes, so how the evolution of approach evolved from the beginning throughout the conflict.

John McLaughlin: Uh, that's a tough one. Maybe Michael wants to chime in on this, as well. I, you know, I often say we won in Afghanistan twice. We won in this period when Phil and his teams were in there, and, and one of our officers was actually instrumental in rescuing the president—the first president, Karzai-- from a difficult, life-threatening situation. And he becomes the first free president, freely elected president, of Afghanistan.

01:06:11

There is tremendous corruption in Afghanistan, and I think we had that situation under reasonable control, up till about 2006. And at that point, things began to change in Pakistan. Musharraf began losing power. He made some agreements with tribal elements along the Pakistani-Afghan Border that didn't pan out, and that border became again a much more useful sanctuary for terrorists in Afghanistan.

01:06:45

So the pressures began to rise there. And then I think corruption just overcame the Karzai government. The new government under Ghani has been struggling, as well. What I would say, you know, when I think back over our time in Afghanistan is, it's easy to say all of the things that didn't go well or that aren't going well.

01:07:10 All that said, nine million children are going to school in Afghanistan; one-third of them are girls. There were very few kids in school in the Taliban period. That's out of a population of about 16 million, thereabouts. No girls went to school. Anyone who looks at development in countries that are in need of It knows that the main way to change the country that is struggling is to educate the women.

01:07:43 And so I think we have... And one-third of the members of Parliament are women. So I think if the Taliban come back in, they're going to confront a very different Afghanistan than the one that they once governed. And you have to think about whether they could just suppress all of that and crush it, or whether there would now be a different fiber and foundation in Afghanistan that would successfully prevent that. Prediction is really hard, isn't it?

Michael Morell: I think...

John McLaughlin: Especially about the future.

(laughter)

01:08:23 Michael Morell: I think the point I would add, and maybe, maybe we can finish on this, is, the really remarkable and important thing at the end of the day is all of the efforts, whether they're to defend the homeland or taking the fight to the enemy-- as we did in Afghanistan and as we did around the world-- is, there was never another successful attack on the homeland and there still hasn't. And that just didn't happen.

01:08:51 Al-Qaeda tried numerous times to attack the homeland and failed because of the efforts that I just mentioned, to include, to include the use of U.A.Vs. So I think, you know, we didn't get everything right. Some things still aren't going right in places like Afghanistan, but the homeland has been protected.

01:09:13

Clifford Chanin: I think that is a very appropriate note to end on, and to thank these gentlemen for coming here at the museum, making this extraordinary presentation. I'm going to ask everybody to keep their seats until our guests leave. But on their way out, please join me in thanking Phil Reilly, John McLaughlin, and Michael Morell.

(applause)