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Presenter: Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen

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USS Cole Briefing - Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen

(Also participating in this briefing; Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig and Chief of Naval Operations Vern Clark)

SEC. COHEN: Good afternoon. I promise you, this is my final press conference. I thought I had taken my leave a week or so ago, but this is something that I felt needed to be addressed before I departed from office.

One of my highest priorities as secretary of Defense has been to protect and improve the safety and welfare of men and women in uniform. And, therefore, I think it's appropriate that on my last day in office, that I deal with a problem that will challenge our forces as long as they defend our national interests around the world. That continuing challenge is the threat of terrorist attacks.

On October 12th, a suicide boat loaded with explosives rammed into the side of the USS Cole as she was refueling in Aden, Yemen, and killed 17 sailors. Both the Navy and the Department of Defense reviewed the circumstances that led to that attack.

Now, the [Navy investigation](#), conducted under the Judge Advocate's General Manual Proceeding, studied the security procedures, preparedness and performance of the ship's crew. We are releasing that review today, and Secretary Danzig and Admiral Clark will discuss that with you in a moment. I believe that copies have been distributed to you.

Last week, General Crouch and Admiral Gehman reported on [their study](#) of the department-wide force protection measures and ways to improve them. Both the Navy and the Crouch-Gehman Commission found that the department has made major improvements in force protection since 1996 and the attack against Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, and that force protection was a priority issue on the ship and throughout the chain of command.

The Navy's JAGMAN investigation looked at whether the captain and crew of the USS Cole were negligent or deficient in the execution of their force protection duties. And while the commander of the ship didn't take every specific step that its force protection plan called for, the reviewers of the investigation, including the chief of Naval Operations and the secretary of the Navy, concluded that under the circumstances, the full implementation of the force protection plan probably could not have prevented the attack.

Navy leaders have concluded that the overall performance of the captain and his crew does not warrant punitive action. And I agree with that conclusion. However, the question of [accountability](#) is deeper and more complex than the performance of the crew alone.

Now, all of us in the leadership positions, including myself, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the secretary of the Navy, the chief of Naval Operations, the commander in chief of the Central Command and others, needed to engage more vigorously in examination of the range of potential threats. Clever, committed terrorists are predators

who will always search and look for weaknesses, and we simply have to do a better job of finding and correcting those weaknesses before the terrorists find them and exploit them.

We must constantly search for and find the so-called "seams" in our force protection plans before our enemies do. In the case of Cole, we did not do so. We were not complacent, but the terrorists found new opportunities before we found new protections. And we need better, more specific intelligence to prepare commanders for new and uncertain locations. We need force protection procedures that are more imaginative, more flexible and less predictable. And most of all, we need force protection programs that are less reactive and more proactive. And we need to be much tougher in our negotiations with host nations who are responsible for local security measures.

The Crouch-Gehman commission outlined new procedures and new approaches to force protection, and the chairman is working on a plan to implement those recommendations. As long as our troops are engaged around the world to promote peace and stability, they're going to face forces of violence and chaos. And no amount of planning and preparation is going to be able to eliminate all the threats, but we have to continue to try to do so. The sailors lost on the USS Cole died in the cause of peace and freedom, and we are never going to forget their sacrifice and will never forget the grief of their families and shipmates. And the best tribute we can pay to them now is to continue our work for peace and freedom while stopping the terrorists, who will never succeed in stopping us.

I'll take just a few questions. And I'd like to have Admiral Clark and Secretary Danzig come and give you the full briefing.

Charlie.

Q: Mr. Secretary, what would you say, just very briefly, to the families of the 17 who died on the Cole, who would ask why is no one being punished?

SEC. COHEN: Well, it's not correct to say no one is being punished. The highest naval officer in our country has indicated his dissatisfaction with some of the steps that the commander -- the captain of the ship failed to take.

Secondly, I have taken this occasion to spell out to you that accountability -- namely, the accountability of the factual situation -- and as well as measures that are identified that need to be taken have been done so with the Gehman and Crouch commission report to you, as well as the chairman preparing to carry out many, if not all, of them.

And thirdly, we have, in fact, identified accountability through the chain of command, all the way from the central commander, from NAVCENT right up through to the CNO, the secretary of the Navy, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs and myself.

I think that we have pointed out that we didn't do all that needed to be done. We have learned from this experience that we have to be more vigorous, we have to try to anticipate as many of the potential avenues of attack that any terrorist can conceive of and work toward. We have made great gains since Khobar.

We have, according to the Crouch-Gehman Commission, made significant improvements in our force protection plan. It is not -- has not been perfect, it is unlikely to be perfect in the future, but we have to do a better job. And all we can do at this point is try to always improve the force protection plans for the future, realizing that there inevitably will be no static level of perfection, that there are bound to be some seams develop in the future again, and we have to try to anticipate what they are and to correct them before they can be exploited. That is a lesson we have learned from this experience.

Q: Mr. Secretary --

Q: Speaking of Khobar, the commander there was relieved after a terrorist attack. What's different here from Khobar?

SEC. COHEN: Well, actually, the commander wasn't relieved, from my perspective. He was not promoted when he came up for -- time for promotion. But there are a number of differences. Number one, we had more specific intelligence in terms of the nature of the threat that could have been directed against Khobar. Secondly, the Downing Commission identified a number of steps that were not taken -- training not taken in terms of evacuation procedures, testing of alarm systems, other types of activities that might very well have saved lives.

Third point is that the commander of the base had been on the ground, as such, for about 11 months. In this particular case, you had the commander of the ship, the captain of the ship, who had been in the refueling for about four hours. And so it was a much different situational awareness of what was taking place than in Khobar. So I think there are some differences that have been identified.

Q: Mr. Secretary, if I understand what you're saying right, that you identified in your review and, I take it, in that of General Shelton, failures or lapses or areas where you could have been more diligent.

But you don't believe that any of those rose to the levels of requiring some sort of formal punishment or accountability, is that correct?

SEC. COHEN: Well, the accountability is there. The Navy has made an assessment that the failure to take certain measures did not warrant punitive action in the form of courts martial, and I agree with that assessment. I also pointed out in my memorandum -- I believe you have copies of that -- that we also were taking into account the heroic action that was conducted by the captain and the crew following the incident.

But I agree with the Navy's assessment that even though there were certain deficiencies or dissatisfactions, they did not rise to a level that would warrant courts martial.

Q: Sir, just to follow up, though, I meant above the level of the ship as well.

SEC. COHEN: That is correct. What we have identified is, we focus very intensely on protection of our forces in place. There was insufficient attention directed toward ships in transit as they are about to either make a port call or a refueling stop, and that was a failure of -- some of it is institutional, it's because of conflicting jurisdictions, of assumptions that were made that -- a lack of specific intelligence, a number of factors involved. But it's clear from the Gehman-Crouch report and recommendations that there has to be much greater coordination and cooperation between the different departments that have jurisdiction and responsibility, and that we have to focus on a deficiency or weakness that was identified by the terrorists before they were identified by us.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you said in the memo that was released to us that an attack like this should not have been a surprise, and you expressed today the thought that folks up the chain of command should have been better prepared. I suspect in light of that that some of the families may feel they're due an apology. I wonder if you would react to that.

SEC. COHEN: Well, we have expressed exactly our sentiments when the families were -- came to Norfolk. I think the president expressed the deepest of regret of what had happened. Whenever our forces are deployed, we have to take whatever precautions we can, understanding that their lives are placed on the line virtually every day in training missions, in peacekeeping missions, humanitarian rescue missions.

But what I am saying is that we need to do a better job, and we haven't done as well as we needed to, and I think that that responsibility is ours.

It would have been easy for me to walk out of this office today and say it's somebody else's responsibility. But it happened on my watch and our watch, and I wanted to make that clear before I left.

Q: Mr. Secretary, what advice, warning or message do you have for the new secretary and also for the Bush government to protect service men and women in the future?

SEC. COHEN: Well, the Crouch-Gehman report made a number of recommendations, which I've asked the chairman to review and to scrutinize them to make sure that we -- the department can in fact support them, that they are positive recommendations which can be effectively implemented. I believe that virtually all of them will be.

As far as the new administration coming in, I think that Secretary-designate Rumsfeld will focus very quickly on the force protection issue and try to make sure that those recommendations are carried forward.

But the point I want to make again, no matter what we do to always be reinforcing our force protection measures, there are going to be predators, terrorists, who are trying to find ways in which they can find weaknesses. And so to the extent -- as we found, as we beef-up our security around our fixed sites and bases, then they move to softer targets, and we found that with the bombing of the embassies in East Africa. And we will take measures to improve the way in which we conduct port calls and refueling stops. And it's all -- in all likelihood, they will move to other areas where civilians are involved, or perhaps gatherings in more informal contexts.

So they're always going to be trying to find ways in which they can inflict damage and harm upon U.S. military personnel, and perhaps even their families. And so we have to try to anticipate and look into the mind of the terrorists to say -- How are they thinking, how are they looking at this, what are they doing to try and bring about this kind of result? -- and anticipate it and take preventative measures; be much more proactive.

Yes?

Q: Just to follow. I just want to finish. Mr. Secretary, you have been one of the best secretaries. But how do you want to be written up for your legacy?

SEC. COHEN: Oh, well, I think tonight -- this afternoon at 4:30 is not the time for me to go through what I believe has been the legacy of the past four years. I've tried to take and lay that out in my final -- what I thought was going to be my final press conference last week.

But I think there's been a very positive record in terms of turning the funding levels around; of improving housing, health care, retirement benefits, pay; winning the war in Kosovo; keeping Saddam contained; and building bilateral -- strong bilateral relations with many, many countries the world over.

There's been a very strong legacy that the next administration can build upon and to keep us the finest force in the world.

Q: As you sort of come to the end on this Cole issue here, can you give us your latest thoughts about what you can tell us about the perpetrators of the incident, anything new on the investigation, and whether or not, as you leave, you still think any kind of retaliation that President Clinton talked about in Norfolk is possible? Anything new on that side of the --

SEC. COHEN: I can't give you any information about the investigation; that really is in the purview of the FBI. All I can tell you is Director Freeh up to this point has expressed to me satisfaction with the progress he's been able to make.

With respect to what action will be taken, we have to be very careful and deliberative and sure of identifying those who are in fact -- were responsible for this act of terrorism, because any action that we take at that time must be responsible. And I think that you would be the first to be critical of the administration if we should simply lash out and say we have a number of suspects and then take measures that would inflict punishment upon them in addition to bringing them before the bars of justice if we, in fact, were not very prudent and responsible in making those determinations. So we'll have to wait for more factual analysis, more investigative work by the FBI. And then that will be the responsibility of the new administration to decide what action should be taken. But the whole range is still

open.

Q: I guess I'm only asking because, you know, you're leaving, and they never were able to find out who did Khobar to anyone's satisfaction. Do you still think that's solvable? And do you think this is solvable?

SEC. COHEN: I believe there are at least six people who are in Saudi Arabia who are being held being responsible for the bombing in Khobar. But that investigation is still underway. We do know that there is a trial underway in New York City as we speak for the bombing of the trade tower. So the reach of the United States is long, and it is committed and determined and will persevere. So those who have committed acts of terrorism cannot hope to find sanctuary or any statute of limitations that they can hide behind.

Q: What measures short of a court martial, courts martial, might the commander face? Is there any administrative penalty here at all?

SEC. COHEN: I really believe Admiral Clark should address those issues in terms of what's -- (inaudible).

Q: Could you give us your reaction to the letter from the V-22 mechanic who said over the past two years that they've been forced to lie about the maintenance records to make it look good?

SEC. COHEN: Well, there have been -- there are allegations about misconduct with respect to the V-22. I really can't comment on the nature of the allegations in terms of the proof or the lack of proof. That's going to be under examination. But if they prove to be true, that would be a very serious charge, certainly, and it would have consequences, certainly, for the individuals involved. It would have been established whether there was a proximate cause between what is alleged and what took place with the V-22.

But as you know, I've constituted a panel which will examine the V-22 program from the manufacturing all the way through the maintenance of the aircraft itself. And until such time as that panel finishes its investigation and makes a report, there will be no flying of the Osprey.

Q: Thank you, sir.

SEC. COHEN: Okay. Thank you very much. And this is my last appearance before you, and thank you. (Applause.)

(Secretary Cohen departs.)

SEC. DANZIG: Well, as is well known to most of you, I'm Richard Danzig, secretary of the Navy. I had my farewell event earlier this afternoon. This also is my farewell press conference.

The secretary of Defense said that 4:30 on a Friday afternoon was not a good time for him to be summarizing his legacy. I'm very aware of the fact that 4:30 on a Friday afternoon is not the optimal time for discussing the Cole either, and I apologize that it comes to you at this time. It's just a product of the desire and strong feeling of the secretary and me both that we needed to finish this and present our own judgments to you before we left office. In the normal course, we might otherwise have held it till this next week and done it at a more regular time. I apologize for the rapid nature of these presentations.

With respect to the fundamental issues here, this is a major incident where -- of tragic proportions. We feel strongly that this is a circumstance that demands accountability. It's -- 17 sailors die. Twice as many -- more than twice as many people were injured. A billion-dollar warship was damaged. It will cost us some \$240 million to repair it.

The well-being of the United States itself was damaged when this ship was attacked.

From my standpoint, as secretary of the Navy, the first question is why did this happen? The desire for accountability,

for me, most fundamentally, requires an accounting. We are trustees for sailors and for the well-being of the Navy and the Marine Corps. What is it that occurred here and why is it that we were not able sufficiently to protect them?

From my standpoint, arriving at some clarity about that before we left office was particularly imperative, and I'm pleased in that respect, that within a hundred days of the incident, we have managed to work through a JAGMAN investigation, have received the judgments of three endorsers, culminating in the CNO. Admiral Clark's judgments was then the final judgment within the context of the JAGMAN process in the Navy. It was important for me, I felt, to write a forwarding memorandum to the secretary of Defense that described my own analysis of this, and provide an accounting to him, and for the secretary, advised by the chairman, and by me, and by Admiral Clark, to make his own judgments with regard to this. And you see those reflected in the memorandum that was provided to you this afternoon.

I think in the interest of time, what may be most useful is if I yield the podium to Admiral Clark, who can tell you a little bit about the JAGMAN and how he arrived at his judgments associated with accountability. Then I'll come back on and just briefly describe to you what seemed to me to be the most salient concerns here and what I thought about them, and then we'll open this up for your questions. We recognize that you all have deadlines to meet, and we'll try and make this as concise as possible.

Admiral Clark.

ADM. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. And my thanks also to all of you who certainly have waited patiently as we went through this time-consuming but very essential investigative process. And that message is for those of you inside the Pentagon and people that are outside the Pentagon.

Words can't adequately capture the deep sense of sorrow and loss that all of us in the United States Navy and in the nation feel for the 17 sailors who gave their lives in service to our country. Our hearts today again go out to the families, the friends, the shipmates and the other loved ones of the Cole family. And certainly, this investigation points out the true heroism of the men and women of the Cole.

We are here today to report on the results of the investigation and specifically into the actions that were taken on board the USS Cole before, during and after the terrorist attack on October the 12th. We have looked closely at the ship's performance from the commanding officer and down through the ranks.

Secretary Cohen has already spoken to the actions and the responsibilities of the operational chain of command above the USS Cole and, as you all know, especially if you're familiar with the JAG Manual process, our investigation focuses on the actions of the officers and the crew of the ship, but does not specifically look at the actions and the performance of those from many other commands, departments and agencies that provide vital support to Navy ships like the Cole as they operate in foreign waters in defending the interests of the United States of America.

Clearly, the band of terrorists who plotted and planned this attack for more than a year -- a year and a half, as close as I know it -- and then carried it out with determined brutality, they are the ones that are overwhelmingly responsible for the death and the destruction inflicted on the Cole that day. But I also wholeheartedly agree with Secretary Cohen's assessment that we all -- there is a collective responsibility here -- and that we all in the chain of command share responsibility for what happened on board USS Cole.

The investigation clearly shows the commanding officer of the Cole did not have the specific intelligence, the focused training, the appropriate equipment and on-scene security support to effectively prevent or deter such a determined, such a pre-planned, assault on his ship.

So in short, the system -- and that's all of us -- did not equip this skipper for success, and if you look at my statement, you will see those kinds of words. If you look at my endorsement and my assessment of the -- and conclusions about the investigation.

We did not support him in this kind of an environment, the kind he encountered, when they pulled into Aden on October the 12th.

Now, turning to the JAG Manual itself, most of you have had the opportunity here to review at least part of the investigation -- not all of it, certainly; we're talking 1,600-plus pages -- the endorsements, though, to the investigation and Secretary Danzig's memorandum to the secretary of Defense. I'm not going to repeat all of those findings, but I want to go through a few points.

It's, I believe, a very thorough investigation. The findings, the opinions, in my opinion, the recommendations of the final document, are well-reasoned and clearly stated. You will note that there are some differences of opinion between the endorsers, starting with the investigating officer, and among the endorsing officials themselves. This should come as no surprise to those of you who are familiar with the JAG Manual investigative process, for in fact, the review process is deliberately built on this hierarchy that we have in the military, and as each more senior and experienced officer conducts his review of the findings, that officer is expected to either approve or modify or reverse specific findings, as is appropriate.

The JAG Manual serves several very important purposes in the Navy. First, what happened; finding out what happened. Next, to determine specific and applicable lessons learned to help us prevent such future incidents. And finally, when appropriate, as in this case, it provides a means of assessing accountability, accountability for those involved.

Before the secretary comes back and makes additional comments, let me give you my take on the findings as they relate to those three broad subjects. First, what happened.

The JAG Manual presents a very complete picture of Cole's status and force protection posture as the ship pulled into Aden on October the 12th for her brief stop for fuel. Additional investigation was in fact conducted regarding the post-attack damage, the damage control, and emergency medical response. This was conducted in Norfolk, Virginia after the crew returned to Norfolk, under the review of the second endorser, the commander-in-chief of the Atlantic Fleet. And this review helped add to the body of knowledge and appreciation for the efforts, the heroic efforts, of the crew to save their ship and their shipmates, to battle the damage.

It is in the area of force protection -- specifically, what was done, what wasn't done -- where the most significant disagreement exists among the reviewing officials. The investigating officer and the commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, Admiral Moore, fault the commanding officer and others for not having implemented every measure specified in their force protection plan for Threat Condition Bravo. And his endorsement, the second endorser, the commander of the Atlantic Fleet, Admiral Natter, disagrees with some of those findings concerning whether certain measures were implemented, and further found that the commanding officer's decisions to adjust his force protection posture based upon his assessment of the situation that presented itself that day in Aden, he found those actions to be both reasonable and appropriate.

Now, I found Admiral Natter's analysis to be well-reasoned and convincing. I therefore concurred in his findings, while noting with some concern the commanding officer's willingness to accept gaps in his knowledge about what to expect when he got to Aden. My concerns are detailed in my comments and in my endorsement. And you have that.

While there are some disagreements, there are also significant areas where there is total unity. Specifically, that the cause of this event, this tragic event was an attack by a well-trained and a determined adversary. Second, that we inside the United States Navy have placed insufficient emphasis on waterside security. I know that we will talk more about that later. That standoff zones, the hardened perimeters, point defenses and aggressive inspection practices have become the norm in a post-Khobar world, but on shore installations. And had the Cole implemented the Threatcon Bravo measures perfectly, there is total unity among the flag officers who have reviewed this investigation that the ship would not have prevented or deterred this attack.

Threatcon Bravo measures were, in my view, inadequate to prevent the attack.

Let's turn to lessons learned. They are numerous, and many are not yet fully explored and appreciated. Part of that will come even more in Crouch-Gehman, but let me share with you some of the lessons learned that we have in hand.

First, we must do a better job of both training and equipping our ships to operate within reasonable risk, and that means risk will never go away completely. We understand that. We must do this especially when our ships are called upon to operate in high-threat areas.

Second, while Cole may not have done an exemplary job on force protection on that day, it is quite clear that there is collective responsibility for oversights in predeployment training, for threat awareness, and in-theater support for entering new ports.

Third, the Navy must take force protection to a new level and challenge every assumption we have about how we conduct our operations around the world.

Next, the secretary, shortly after the Cole explosion, formed a Navy-Marine Corps Task Force on Antiterrorism and Force Protection, and that task force is spearheading our efforts to effect this sea change, taking force protection to a new level in our approach to force protection throughout the Navy -- and, I would add, in the United States Marine Corps.

Next, well-built ships with trained crews remain the key to survival, whether the battle is with other military forces or with criminal terrorists.

And finally, the subject of accountability. Now, most of you can probably tell from my endorsement that this was a difficult call. Accountability is a critical concept in our Navy, and we have a long and we have a proud tradition of taking our Navy leaders to task when their actions and their decisions don't measure up to our standards. It is imperative that everyone understands what we mean by accountability. I believe Secretary Danzig addressed it very well in his letter to the Secretary of Defense.

Accountability does not equal figuring out who to punish when something bad happens. It does mean holding our people - and particularly our commanders and those with the most responsibility -- it means holding those people to account for their actions; and that is assessing their specific performance against a range of acceptable performance expected of people that we put in positions of responsibility and authority.

And it is this range of expected performance, not a single point that we're talking about. Our standards, while they're high and we want them to be high, have never been about perfection because human beings aren't perfect. In assessing accountability, we must determine whether the actions of this or that individual, however imperfect, fall on our spectrum of acceptable performance. In this instance, I concur with the assessment of Admiral Natter. I conclude that none of the deficiencies noted in the JAGMAN investigation warrant punitive action against the commanding officers and others of the crew. I further agree, along with all of the previous endorsers, that even if the Cole had implemented all measures specified under Threat Condition Bravo, that it remained highly unlikely that these measures would have been sufficient to thwart this terrorist attack.

To the families of the Cole, I want to say today, and especially those that have lost their loved ones, I know that affixing blame is often a very important part of closure for those who have suffered a traumatic loss, and that it helps in dealing with the pain. And I want them to know that the Navy also wants closure. And I, therefore, I appreciate the words of Secretary Cohen today, and the president before, that our nation will not rest until we are able to find those responsible for this attack. But given the circumstances on the USS Cole on the 12th of October in Aden, my conviction is that no one on that ship should be blamed for that tragedy because no one on the ship could have stopped this attack with the circumstances that they faced.

Before I return the podium to Secretary Danzig, I'd like to remind you of what I said the day that this event occurred, on October the 12th, when I appeared before you in this briefing theater; that on that day I had 101 ships in the United States Navy deployed forward in the far reaches of the earth, and it's much the same today. We have a few less today in the post-holiday period.

Certainly one of the greatest strengths of Navy ships is that they are tangible symbols of our interest in the region, a concrete extension of American sovereignty to the far corners of the Earth.

We have many friends and allies around the world who agree with America's values, democratic values, and efforts -- our efforts to maintain regional peace and stability through our policy of engagement.

But there are others also who oppose those values, who seek to limit or to deny American influence in critical regions of the world, who will continue to attack American interests and citizens in an effort to deny us access to critical areas.

In my view, we must not forget that the tragedy that befell Cole was not the product of carelessness or folly, but a deliberate attack by a determined adversary who was willing to give their lives for their cause. And I firmly believe that this -- that the Cole attack will not be their last attempt.

While there will never be risk-free operations, I assure you that our Navy will do a better job in the future of equipping our commanders to deal with the terrorist threat, and we will sharpen our focus in being ready to deal with the unknown. And I can assure this nation and the men and women of the United States Navy that when the call comes for action, our Navy, this nation's Navy, on station, forward, representing the sovereignty of the United States of America in the far corners of the Earth, we will be ready to answer that call.

Thank you, and I turn it back over to Secretary Danzig.

SEC. DANZIG: I just want to add one comment, if I can, and then -- sorry -- I agree with what Admiral Clark has said. I have additional responsibilities as secretary of the Navy. He concluded that the JAGMAN investigation and made the judgments that he's described to you there. I have Title X responsibilities for training, equipping, and organizing the Department of the Navy, and for advising the secretary of Defense in regard to his responsibilities.

So I asked myself, when I looked at this extensive JAGMAN report and other materials, like the good work of General Crouch and Admiral Gehman, what are the general lessons that I draw? What are the key salient issues here? And I -- that we need to address with respect to the future? And I identified six. I just want to underscore them to you for a moment.

First, from my standpoint, there is an intelligence question here. We have an event, an attack, which involved a dozen people over an 18-month period and a failed -- an aborted attempt against a previous ship. It is not one that we detected.

I don't have any reason to believe that there was in any way inadequate performance by our intelligence authorities on the scene in Aden. But my sense is that the level of intelligence effort associated with potential threats in that port was less than it should be, that in fact it may be less than a man-year, and that we ought to do better by way of calibrating our intelligence investments against potential risks in areas where we're going to have a billion-dollar warship and hundreds of sailors exposed.

Second, my feeling is that we need to focus more on operational risk assessment. You've heard testimony from General Zinni and others -- Admiral Moore's endorsement addresses it directly -- about the decision to be in Aden to begin with. And I don't raise issues about that, I find their observations credible. But it seems to me we ought to be frequently reassessing decisions, as, for example, whether to send a particular ship to the harbor in this particular context, against the backdrop of any inadequacies or limitations in our intelligence information, and as against the

risks associated with other alternatives: proceeding with less fuel, refueling at sea, using another port -- those kinds of things. And it seems to me we need to sharpen our operational risk assessment kinds of capabilities.

Another example of that is that it's, maybe, sensible to be in Threat Condition Bravo and not in Threat Condition Charlie, in general, for people who are long-term residents there. But it may be that Threat Condition Charlie is appropriate for a warship which is in the harbor for only four hours. We shouldn't have a one-size-fits-all attitude with respect to this operational risk assessment, we need to make it repeatedly.

Third, we need to sharpen the degree to which we secure host nation support security arrangements and make sure that our captains are well informed with regard to them. It doesn't seem to me, in this instance, to have been a good match in that regard.

Fourth, Admiral Clark's commented on our training circumstance. We vigorously train against a number of terrorist scenarios. The training, however, needs to underscore the risks associated with uncertainty and needs to better focus clearly on sea-borne attack and a range of other scenarios associated with that most vulnerable period for a ship, which is when it's in harbor or transiting restricted waters. In retrospect, our training program didn't have that level of vigor associated with that particular kind of problem.

Fifth, if we recognize that we are subject repeatedly to terrorist attack, it seems to me, as secretary of the Navy, that our acquisition and development program, or procurement program, and our research program ought to be able to do more to help us to identify terrorist threats, to maintain surveillance with respect to them, to better insulate us against the effects of attack when it does occur.

And the panel that I established in October, that Admiral Clark referred to, focuses in substantial measure on those sets of issues. I would anticipate that over the coming months there will be a number of investment opportunities in those regards.

And finally, I would add to Admiral Clark's observations by saying that, in general, I am in many respects impressed by the conscientiousness of the commanding officer with respect to thwarting certain kinds of terrorist attacks. The challenge lies in the words "certain kinds." I believe that our training program sensitized him in many ways, but may have produced the disadvantage of a somewhat blinkered vision. When this commanding officer underwent his training program, and the Cole as a whole did, it was commended for its work in countering land-based attacks on the ship. When it went to Slovenia, the CO instituted particular force protection measures that were highly successful, again, against land attack, and were substantially beyond what may be the norm. Going through the Suez Canal, he was diligent with respect to a number of issues. And when he was in Aden, in my view, he vigorously protected against attack that might come from the dolphin at which he was refueling. The problem, I think, is that by focusing so intently on that particular set of scenarios that he had been specially trained for, he may have lost some situational awareness with respect to other kinds of scenarios, like attack from the sea.

We need to make sure that uncertainty is broadly appreciated by our commanders, and that in fact, we recognize that we're not training -- inevitably, there will always be a risk out there that we will not train for some scenario that some people will think of. And we need to become more muscular with respect to expecting that kind of level of surprise and being prepared to deal with it.

All these things have implications for how we train, how we organize, how we equip. I've underscored those in the memorandum I've sent to the secretary of Defense, but I thought the analysis might be helpful for you all in seeing how I regard this event.

Having said that, Charlie?

Q: Admiral, I'd like to ask, despite the absence of punitive punishment here, is this report essentially a career-stopper for Commander Lippold? Is he likely to make captain? I mean, I know you're not a one-man promotion board, but is

likely to make captain after this?

ADM. CLARK: Well, not only that, Charlie, it would be inappropriate for me to stand here, as the chief of Naval Operations, and render opinion on that, that would then be regarded in any way to influence a statutorially designed board that will address this issue.

The secretary and I have made the judgment that in order for this to be treated in the most fair way, that this investigation will be appended to the commander's record.

We believe that it would be, and I believe that it would be inappropriate for this officer to go before a board and for there to be questions that are unanswered. And so he will compete, along with his peers, when it comes time for him to face further steps in his career.

I want to emphasize one thing that the secretary has talked about, and that is the magnificence of this officer's performance and then how I get to my conclusion. In areas -- and let's talk force protection specifically and how well the ship did in so many areas. You'll recall, and some of you have heard me talk, I have my top five here. I'm a top-five person. I was in command of the Atlantic Fleet when the Cole and the George Washington Battle Group were getting ready to deploy. Force protection was one of my top five items when I was the commander in the Atlantic.

I told my subordinates that I believed we needed to raise the bar, and this ship and the entire battle group went through the most arduous, the most difficult scenario that we have ever put them to. We shut down part of the base. All of the ships were given a scenario that tested them in a very determined way. Now I go back to what was that test? This was post-Khobar. We knew that we had vulnerabilities that exposed them, we exposed our units, from the shore -- a truck driving down the pier; access, somebody introducing things. And so I have made the judgment that -- and this has to do with the collective -- the collective responsibility.

Part of the way that this commanding officer responded in the way he did, because we as a system created the impressions that he had. I agree with the assessment that the secretary has made that this officer was overly focused on the specifics that were in the threat assessment and on the shore side of this. I take some ownership for us, and the refocusing of our training must ensure that we do not let people over-focus in one area, that they must prepare for uncertainty.

Q: Admiral? Since Threatcon Bravo specifically warns against the possibility or potential for a terrorist boat attack, what is the Navy's explanation for not giving adequate training to prevent that kind of attack?

ADM. CLARK: Well, I would respond in this manner. And I think this is especially well handled in the second endorsement, when I said the logic of all this convinces me. As I have examined this, it's become more and more clear to me that measures are one thing, the measures under a threatcon are one thing -- and note what I concluded, the measures were "inadequate to the scenario," quote-unquote from my written endorsement -- measures are one thing, tactics are another. And the tactics utilized to execute the measures are often times at least as important as the measures themselves.

So, what do the tactics and the stipulations of Threatcon Bravo put us to? Admiral Natter goes through this logic and says, "Thinking our way through this, when the measures specified that boats were not required to be in the water, it changes the tactics for the way each of the measures will be executed." For example, inspecting boats. It leaves the commander with what we have done for years and years. A boat comes alongside, we go inspect it. As the secretary has indicated, they did that perfectly.

And so my response to your question is, it's not just the measures, it is about the tactics. And my conclusion is, given the requirements that we laid on this commanding officer, he executed -- he executed the measures with reasonable tactics based upon the requirements that we placed upon him.

Q: But my questions goes to the Navy, not this commander. Both you gentlemen cited deficiencies in the training to prevent such an attack. But if Threatcon Bravo specifically warns that that's a possibility, why, then, hasn't the Navy been adequately training these commanders in preventing a suicide ship attack?

SEC. DANZIG: Let me address this. First of all, there are matters of emphasis. You have to make choices in the course of the training. In the wake of Khobar Towers, the great emphasis in terms of what was actually practiced with respect to in-port vulnerability was on the land attack, attack from the pier, or in this case attack from the dolphin. There were also issues of swimmers, light attack aircraft and that kind of thing. There was not in this commander's experience a working-through of the in-port seaborne attack. There was reference to attack from ships at the open sea, and that was a different matter.

I think the deficiency here is principally one of we need to sensitize our commanders that we're not covering everything and that they cannot be blinkered, as I put it, in the way in which they're approaching this kind of issue.

Another example of the ability, when properly trained and focused, of the CO on the ship is suggested by the damage control -- a lot of intensive preparation, terrific performance. And really the only point I'm trying to emphasize is that he was not so prepared in this domain for the ship -- seaward attack, and I think it was an error of both our training and of the individual that he doesn't come to see the alternative possibilities and prepare for them as much as he should.

Please.

Q: Admiral, you told us a minute ago that this record, this full record, is going to be part of Commander Lippold's file. Given what you've said about the collective accountability of people up the chain of command, why isn't this record also part of their files? Can you -- or is it?

ADM. CLARK: Well, I've -- (to the secretary) -- you want to --

SEC. DANZIG: Would you like me to --

ADM. CLARK: Yeah. (Chuckles.)

SEC. DANZIG: Yeah, I can respond to this as a political appointee. I can tell you that when the --

Q: (Off mike.)

SEC. DANZIG: I can respond to this as a Senate-confirmed official. The reality is that records of this kind are matters of public record, and when you come to appointment of senior officials -- this is well known -- there isn't typically a what's-in-the-jacket kind of differentiation in the same way as what occurred for an 06 or an 07. So I have no doubt that this record, this JAGMAN, as it exists, will be relevant to their appointment of all officers who were involved in this matter.

Yeah?

Q: Mr. Secretary, can I come to the politics of it? You've talked of -- in your presentation of taking a more muscular attitude, was the phrase you used, on the question of host nation security support. It seems to me that the political reality is that it's impossible for the U.S. Navy to preemptively use lethal force against a suspected boat coming up. I mean, if the guy's wrong, you're going to have embassies burnt all over the Middle East. I don't see how you overcome this problem.

SEC. DANZIG: You raise a wonderful point. There are a few parts to it. First, we naturally need to negotiate with host nations their degree of support and what the rules of engagement will be. So in the best world, and indeed the one

that we will seek and are seeking everywhere, they will undertake that kind of policing and establish a perimeter.

Second, when a perimeter is established, whether it is by the host or by us, then you have an opportunity to immediately differentiate between hostile intent or boats that don't have hostile intent, because when hailed and warned, and then even intercepted, if they proceed, you have a clear manifestation of hostile intent.

This commander didn't have the advantage of that, and that's one of the problems.

And third and finally, I'd note that one of the reasons I place emphasis on technological possibilities is that we may have possibilities for using non-lethal weapons, or for increasing our defensive or our surveillance capabilities, that will give us some substantial technological assistance here.

So, you put those things together and I think you have quite a workable regime here.

Yeah?

QGentlemen, I'm still wrestling a bit with this concept that there were deficiencies throughout the chain of command, from the secretary of Defense down to the ship, and yet there is no individual blame assigned. And specifically, Admiral, if I understood you right, you mentioned that you didn't believe that ThreatCon Bravo was sufficient for the threat that was there -- if I didn't misunderstand you. That is a decision, as I understand it, that one, or at least a group of people, makes, and it sounds like you think that was in error. In your view, are there in fact individuals who made mistakes here?

ADM. CLARK: You heard me correctly. I said that I do not believe that the measures were sufficient to the scenario on that day. These -- you know, the measures are drawn up across our institution, and they fundamentally -- the entire navy is using the same set of measures with just a couple of exceptions that exist in the Central Command theater.

I believe central to this question is, in 20/20 hindsight, can people know everything? We haven't discussed it here yet today, but in my endorsement, I make reference to the point that I have reviewed every piece of intelligence that would exist on this subject. At no time, since we've been conducting operations in Yemen, were there ever any intelligence assessments about this kind of threat. I say specifically, that I see nothing that would have caused the commanding officer to take steps above what the measures that were prescribed for him. In other words, there was no trip wire, there was no bit of information that he missed, in my opinion, that would have caused him to take additional steps and measures.

And so my conviction is that part of this cumulative and total responsibility is about the perceptions that we create in the minds of our commanding officers. And let me tell you what I'm looking for in our commanding officers.

I want COs who will take independent action. They're on the point. They have to be ready to do that.

And so part of my judgment is driven by this test. The first test is, Did he act within the range of acceptable performance that meets our standards? And I conclude that he does. And second, Was there something that he didn't do that, if he had done it, it would have precluded this attack? And I conclude that if he had done everything perfectly it would not have stopped this attack. And so that leads me to the conclusion of no punitive action.

Then beyond that, to all the people who should have known something that they did not know, we can address that in 20-20 hindsight. My assessment of the intelligence is that there was nothing to move them above Threatcon Bravo, and I assess that we need to -- and what we have learned from this -- we have to be continually challenging every assumption about everything that is in those threat conditions.

In fact, 48 hours after this event occurred, I sent a message to every commander -- and it was sent in the classified vein and so it was not made public. But I told every commanding officer in the Navy that day, after the attack, We

will not wait for this investigation to start our work. We have learned a lot in the last 48 hours that we need to focus on. What does it take for a terrorist to be successful? What can we do to thwart his ability to attack us? And our entire Navy has been working on that. Our measures are significantly different today. I am not going to detail them.

Q: Mr. Secretary --

SEC. DANZIG: Excuse me. After this, let's take one more question and then -- I think we're wearing out the press corps here.

Q: As far as Osama bin Laden is concerned, where do we stand today, and is he still part of the investigation, or how can we deal with him? Osama bin Laden?

SEC. DANZIG: Oh. Well, I think your question is well taken, because -- coming back to the earlier question -- at the outset, we clearly need to hold accountable the people who, as terrorists, planned this activity. And the additional questions we've been wrestling with are whether additional people in our own side should be punished or held accountable beyond what we have described.

With respect to what's going to happen after this, we really need to look to the FBI to comment. Their investigation is in process. It's sensitive. It is making progress. And from my standpoint, I have faced it, as the Secretary of Defense said, the United States has a long arm and a long memory, and that we will in the end catch these people. But when that will be, I couldn't say.

Last question. I'm sorry, Dale. I'll take you afterwards. Two last questions. Go ahead.

Q On a historical point, it was said -- various sources were saying in the aftermath of the Cole that when the discussions were entertained as to the advisability of going back into Aden for refueling, that the consideration had been given to setting up a dedicated dolphin somewhere over the west harbor, which would just be used by the military and could be guarded by them and so on, away from the main harbor, and that this was turned down. I think we even discussed it with the allies, who were also -- (Gulf patrol to this end ?) and that this was turned down largely or cost reasons. There have been Yemeni sensitivities as well, but largely for cost reasons. Is that true?

SEC. DANZIG: As always, John, it's informative listening to you. I'm not educated on this particular point. Are you, CNO?

ADM. CLARK: I'm familiar to the extent that I discuss these kinds of items with my Navy component commander in the theater. I have not heard of such a proposal.

SEC. DANZIG: Dale, it's always been my ambition to end my secretaryship with a question from you. (Laughter.) So you're on.

Q: Well, let me try -- I'm not sure I can live up to that with this question. (Laughter.)

Mr. Secretary, part of what's drawn people to the Navy historically is the chance to visit different parts of the world and see and meet interesting people. Do you have any fear that the kind of force protection measures that the Cole incident will spark will end up discouraging people from joining the Navy and wanting to become part of this because they know when they pull into interesting places they're probably going to have to remain aboardship?

SEC. DANZIG: Yes, I think it's a very good question. There's a balance for us. The safest place for us to be is at home in port in, say, Norfolk. Every time we go out, we assume a risk. As your question suggests, when we build a wall of force protection around us, every brick we put in that wall has costs, not only in dollar terms but in terms of restrictions on our sailors and what we can do and what we can accomplish. Engagement, for us, involves not simply giving sailors liberty and the like, but also giving them the opportunity to interact with other cultures and make a

statement about America en route. So those are real costs and we do have to balance them, and we are doing that readily.

I should conclude by saying -- and this really is an appropriate thing for me to say at the end of my secretaryship -- that I really have immense respect for Admiral Clark as he does this.

We talked about a number of these issues before I had occasion to recommend him to the secretary of Defense and the president to become chief of Naval Operations. He's had 10 commands -- a very unusually large number -- before coming to this. He has a remarkable record for being good at balancing the operational risks, at which he has vast experience, with the other kinds of issues associated with the running of our Navy, including the one that you described, the well-being of sailors.

So when he and Admiral Natter and Admiral Moore -- who between them have a century of Naval experience -- come forward with judgments in this matter, I tender them great respect.

And I must say in conclusion, that as a Secretary of the Navy about to leave, it's a great comfort to me that this service has the services of someone as skilled and as sound as Admiral Clark.

Thank you very much.

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