



Al-Qaeda Today (11/19/19)

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Alice M. Greenwald: We are deeply grateful for our panelists this evening: Peter Bergen, Mary Galligan, Bruce Hoffman, and Mark Stout, who are not only valued advisers in the exhibition I just mentioned, but all are friends of the Memorial & Museum.

Over the past several years, they've worked closely with our curatorial and exhibition staff, generously sharing their time, insights, and expertise to ensure-- I just got louder-- to ensure that this landmark exhibition would present its compelling historical narrative with absolute fidelity to truth and fact.

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Based on unprecedented access to the agencies and individuals who conducted the hunt, "Revealed" presents materials never before seen by the public, and provides an insider perspective on the coordinated intelligence, law enforcement, and military activities that ultimately led to that compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, where Osama bin Laden was killed nearly ten years after 9/11.

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Following the years-long search for the leader of al-Qaeda, the story in the exhibition opens with the pre-9/11 attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and on the U.S.S. Cole in Yemen. It continues through bin Laden's disappearance in Afghanistan in the Tora Bora mountains after 9/11 and culminates in the Navy SEAL raid on his hideout in Abbottabad. "Revealed" opened to the public just last week, and I strongly encourage you to go see it.

- 00:01:56 We all think we know this story. We certainly know how it ended, but I can assure you, learning what it took to get there will astonish you. For the duration of the exhibition, the museum will be presenting public programs to complement and further explore the themes and ideas presented in "Revealed." This evening, our advisers are gracing us with another favor by participating in this program, which will examine the current status of al-Qaeda within the context of the wider jihadist movement.
- 00:02:29 Unlike ISIS, whose strategy has been to dominate the headlines and attract as many followers as possible, al-Qaeda is understood to be playing a long game. Earlier this year, the U.S. State Department declared al-Qaeda to be as great a threat to the U.S. as it has ever been, and some experts have speculated that what hurts ISIS, such as the recent death of its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, may in turn help al-Qaeda. We'll certainly learn more about that tonight.
- 00:03:00 I would like to begin by introducing our panelists, and you'll forgive me, we have four very accomplished people, and they deserve all of the biographical information I can provide. So, among other accolades, Peter Bergen is considered one of the nation's leading authorities on al-Qaeda.
- 00:03:18 In 1997, he produced the first television interview with Osama bin Laden. That interview, which aired on CNN, marked the first time that bin Laden openly declared war against the United States to a Western audience. Peter wears many hats. He's a journalist, a documentary film producer, vice president for Global Studies and Fellows at the think tank New America, a national security analyst for CNN, and professor of practice in the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University, where he also co-directs the Center on the Future of War.
- 00:03:57 When he's not doing all of that, somehow, he finds time to write highly acclaimed books. He is the author or editor of seven books, three of which were "New York Times" bestsellers, and four of which were named among the best nonfiction books of the year by "The Washington Post." In addition, documentaries based on his books have been nominated for

two Emmys and also won the Emmy for best documentary. And that's just our first person.

(laughter)

00:04:28 Alice M. Greenwald: Our next guest is Mary Galligan, whose service at the FBI spanned 25 years. Initially, she was assigned to the New York division, where she handled terrorism investigations and intelligence gathering. In 1998, Mary traveled to Tanzania to work on the U.S. Embassy bombing case, and subsequently was one of the on-scene commanders in Yemen to investigate the October 2000 attack on the U.S.S. Cole.

00:04:55 After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, she supervised PENTTBOM, the FBI's investigation of the attacks. She reported to FBI headquarters and oversaw the entire investigation and a team of 75 people. In this role, she briefed the FBI director, the Senate and House intelligence committees, the 9/11 Commission and its staff, members of the National Security Council, the media, the U.S. military, and families of 9/11 victims. She knows very little about the subject matter.

(laughter)

00:05:30 Alice M. Greenwald: In July 2010, then-director Robert S. Mueller III-- we've never heard of him, either-- named Mary the first female special agent in charge of Cyber/Special Operations for the FBI's New York division. She retired from the bureau in 2013 and joined Deloitte and Touche, now known as Deloitte, as managing director of cyber risk services. We're thrilled that she's here.

Dr. Bruce Hoffman, our third guest this evening, has been studying terrorism and insurgency for four decades. He is currently a professor at Georgetown University and the Shelby Cullom and Kathryn W. Davis Senior Fellow for counterterrorism and homeland security at the Council on Foreign Relations.

- 00:06:12 In addition, Bruce serves as visiting professor of terrorism studies at St. Andrews University in Scotland, where he was also the founding director of the Center for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence. He previously held the corporate chair in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency at the RAND Corporation, and was also director of RAND's Washington, DC, office and its vice president for external affairs. Appointed by the U.S. Congress to serve as a commissioner on the independent commission to review the FBI's post-9/11 response to terrorism and radicalization, otherwise known as the 9/11 Review Commission, Bruce was a lead author of the commission's final report.
- 00:06:54 He was scholar-in-residence for counterterrorism at the C.I.A. between 2004 and 2006; an adviser on counterterrorism to the Office of National Security Affairs, Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad in 2004; and from 2004 to 2005, was an adviser on counterinsurgency to the Strategy, Plans, and Analysis Office at Multinational Forces-Iraq headquarters, also in Baghdad. Do you believe we have these people as advisers? I mean, it's, it's stunning.
- 00:07:28 And finally, I get to welcome Mark Stout, Dr. Mark Stout, who, prior to entering academia, worked for 13 years as an intelligence analyst, first with the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research and later with the C.I.A. He also worked at the Institute for Defense Analyses doing research for the U.S. Defense Department. Currently, Mark is a senior lecturer at Johns Hopkins University, where he also serves as program director of the M.A. in Global Security Studies. His research interests include American intelligence history, the history of military thought, terrorism, and irregular warfare.
- 00:08:08 Mark is the co-author or co-editor of several books and was lead author of "The Terrorist Perspectives Project: Strategic and Operational Views of Al Qaida and Associated Movements," published in 2008 by the Naval Institute Press. He is a senior editor at War on the Rocks and president of the North American Society for Intelligence History. And notably, before becoming an adviser to the 9/11 Memorial & Museum, he was the historian at the International Spy Museum in Washington, DC.

00:08:42 As must be evident, we are incredibly fortunate to have these three esteemed panelists with us this evening, and I'd like to thank them once again publicly for being so generous with their time and expertise and helping us deliver an exhibition of the quality and substance as we have right now in "Revealed: The Hunt for bin Laden."

00:09:02 With that, please join me in welcoming Peter Bergen, Mary Galligan, Bruce Hoffman, and Mark Stout in conversation with our executive vice president and deputy director for museum programs, and the project lead for "Revealed: The Hunt for bin Laden," Cliff Chanin.

(applause)

Clifford Chanin: Thank you very much, Alice. I think after all that, the only thing I could do is announce my retirement.

(laughter)

00:09:34 Clifford Chanin: You know, we're going to go a little bit inside the story of the exhibition, because Alice is right. It's really extraordinary to have had the expertise of these four folks here for three years as we developed the exhibition. And what's interesting, and I think the conversation tonight will reflect it, is, you know, we were talking about a particular point in time: the events that led to the raid in Abbottabad.

00:09:58 But what was so helpful and so interesting about the conversations we had with our advisers is, we went back and forth in time in the conversations. So it wasn't that we were just guided by the moments we were describing in the exhibition. We had the expertise to go into the very early period of al-Qaeda and then into the post-raid al-Qaeda to get a sense of the perspective that really informed the process of developing the exhibition.

- 00:10:25 So, I think we will do a little bit of that tonight. And then the other thing is, we are giving you a little inside look at how we actually thought about this and talked about this, and we... Just another reminder of how this all works, Bruce Hoffman is not just a member of the advisory group, but he's actually a donor to the museum, and one of his donations is actually in the exhibition downstairs, in one of the first cases that actually references the 9/11 attack itself.
- 00:10:52 So, that said, let me start by asking each of you to think about the impact of this raid that kills the leader of al-Qaeda, but al-Qaeda is not dead with him. Al-Qaeda goes forward. How would you describe the impact of the raid on al-Qaeda? How it changed, whether it was badly hit or was able to recover over the course of time. And I'll start at the end with Peter, working back down.
- 00:11:20 Peter Bergen: So, thank you for-- Alice, and thank you, Cliff, and it was really an honor to be involved in this amazing exhibition. Wolf Blitzer asked me the same question right after President Obama finished his speech at 11:30 that night. And of course, you're not prepared, and I said, "The war on terrorism is over." And, what I, what I didn't mean is that terrorism is over. What I meant was... that the organizing our national security policy entirely around terrorism was over. At the end of the day, bringing justice to bin Laden for the victims of 9/11 and their families was what this was really about.
- 00:11:59 And I, you know, probably naively-- in fact, very naively-- I sort of thought the death of bin Laden and the Arab Spring, in which al-Qaeda played a role, and in fact was kind of a liberal impulse-- and bin Laden, by the way, we know from the documents recovered in Abbottabad, was very concerned about the Arab Spring, because here is exactly what he wanted, which was potentially regime change in the Middle East. But it was exactly the wrong kind of people who were on the barricades and with nothing to do with him. And so he didn't know how to respond.

00:12:25 But in fact, of course, I was wrong, and that's, we can obviously get into that later in the evening. I mean, it didn't-- it wasn't the end of everything in this, in this sphere at all. You know, history moved on. But at the end... I do think that it was highly significant for many very obvious reasons, and it marked, I think...

00:12:46 The thing about the people that you interviewed in this, it's not in the exhibit, necessarily, but, you know, one of the things is, nobody in the White House knew what was happening outside, and they came out at 11:30 that night. And there were all these crowds cheering, and they were kind of surprised, because they've been kind of in the Situation Room.

And that kind of just spontaneous outpouring of emotion, I think, was very real and represented what Americans felt, which is, "justice has been served."

Clifford Chanin: Mary?

00:13:13 Mary E. Galligan: Well, I think it impact from two different ways. So, as a New Yorker who was in the FBI at the time, I was surprised at the reaction in New York City, in Times Square, with the fire-- firemen on the fire trucks with the banners going around, that it did, as Peter said, mean so much to so many people, especially in New York and Washington and elsewhere.

00:13:37 As far as an impact from the "war on terrorism" or the "fight on terrorism," and I know there are some people here today who are still involved in that fight, I don't think it changed the impact to the FBI, right? The terrorists-- counterterrorism is still the FBI's number-one priority. You had, due to the internet and due to media, more and more shift towards lone-wolf.

So the ideology was still there. So I would echo what Peter said, that it was an impact that justice had been served, but there was so much more work still to be done.

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Clifford Chanin: Bruce, the impact within al-Qaeda itself, how did it respond to the killing of its leader?

Bruce Hoffman: A crushing blow, but unfortunately, not a fatal one. That, I think, is the problem end. Ayman al-Zawahiri, I think, has proven himself to, you know, more than capable leader, and move very quickly to prevent a repeat of the Abbottabad raid. I remember one of his first edicts as the new emir of al-Qaeda was, disperse the al-Qaeda leadership far and wide so that it would be impervious to any kind of decapitation.

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And then I think his second big move was to recognize that the Arab Spring presented new opportunities for al-Qaeda to demonstrate its relevance and sort of resurrect its brand. And in that respect, the civil-- the civil war in Syria proved enormously useful for al-Qaeda. He's getting a toehold that unfortunately today, they've been able to increase to more of a foothold in Idlib province.

Clifford Chanin: Mark?

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Mark Stout: I don't have a whole lot to add here. I think I agree with everything that everyone's just said. I just emphasize, I think, two things. I think Peter's absolutely right, that the sort of the political valence, if you will, of the war on terrorism was fundamentally changed when this happened.

And Americans like to personalize their wars, right? I mean, World War I was about the Kaiser, right? And World War II was about Hitler and Tojo. Honorable mention for Mussolini, you know? And then we had Saddam Hussein, and then bin Laden, right? And we like to, we like to get rid of

them, whatever that precisely means, and tie a bow on it, and, like, "Okay, we're done."

00:15:34 And so obviously, while terrorism, and al-Qaeda generally and al-Qaeda specifically, continues to exist, I feel it was a turning point sort of psychologically for the United States. And I guess the other thing I would say is, I, I completely agree with Bruce, and I defer to his vastly greater expertise on this question of the, of the impact of the death of bin Laden on al-Qaeda itself.

00:15:55 That said, pretty much everybody in al-Qaeda believed that there would come a time when bin Laden wasn't around, because they weren't expecting to achieve their ultimate goals-- goals which I believe, by the way, are fundamentally unachievable anyway; that's a different discussion. But they weren't expecting, short of some catastrophic bizarre success, to get to their version of the promised land with bin Laden still around. So in some sense, you know, he was gonna go away at some point, and in their view, the jihad was gonna continue.

00:16:24 Clifford Chanin: How could we describe the role of bin Laden in hiding for the five or six years that he was based there, and obviously, we know something about his communications and his efforts to maintain leadership, if not on a daily basis, but at least in terms of the strategic guidance of the organization. But how would you characterize his role in hiding during those years? Let's start with Bruce.

00:16:49 Bruce Hoffman: I think he was far more engaged than we had imagined he was. It was the trope that he was hiding in a cave somewhere, completely isolated from his followers. But we found out that he was fully engaged, he was-- I mean, that was his undoing.

He was using couriers to communicate his, his edicts and commands to his foot soldiers, and that's how he was tracked down. So, much more involved. But at the same time, though, and this is, I think, why we still wrestle with the challenge of al-Qaeda today, it had already decentralized, and his command and control over it was much more

fragile or frayed than it had been before. But nonetheless, he at least saw himself, I think, as still the great man pulling all the strings.

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Clifford Chanin: Mary, do you have a thought on what he was doing while he was hiding?

Mary E. Galligan: I think one of the interesting things about what he was doing when he was in hiding is that he was with his family, right? His wife and his childrens—his wives and his children. As opposed to being with what a lot of people thought, you know, a bunch of warriors, a bunch of fighters, as Bruce said, in a cave in Afghanistan. That what he decided to do in hiding was to be with his family.

Clifford Chanin: Peter?

Peter Bergen: Yeah, most fugitives don't take their 12, you know, wives and kids with them.

(Stout chuckling)

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Peter Bergen: I mean, there was three wives and nine kids and grandkids total. At least 12 family members with him. I mean, so that was unusual, but in fact, as the exhibition correctly points out, once you really look into bin Laden as a character, he was very close to these wives. Two of them have PhDs, by the way; they were very kind of committed to the cause. One of them was a younger Yemeni who was not highly educated, but they were all... you know, they regarded bin Laden as a heroic figure. They wanted to be with him.

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At considerable risk, one of... The oldest wife, age 62, came from Iran to join him about a year before the raid happened, and she'd been under some form of house arrest in Iran. So he was living this family life, but that is what the... The analysts who were following bin Laden weren't

surprised by that, as Mary said, Mary said. They, they knew, they knew that it was likely he would be with his family, which is why, when they, when they found a compound with a certain signature, they... they said, "Wow, this could be him," because there was this family there.

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But one thing on the way that he communicated, Bruce is right. He was trying to impose control. But imagine you're running a business, let's say, in 18th-century New York, and your businesses are around the world in Jamaica, or... and you're sending messages on ships, and you know, they may or may not arrive, and if they arrive, there may not be a message that comes back.

And it was a very-- he was trying to maintain control, but it was very hard to do, because the way that he was communicating was through these couriers, and it would never-- you know, he was sending messages to North Africa. Did they ever get there? Did he get a message back?

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Clifford Chanin: Mark, let me ask you to think back in your own intelligence analysis experience and help us understand a bit more about, as you understand it, the process of following the leads to bin Laden.

Mark Stout: Yeah.

Clifford Chanin: You know, there, there are obviously methods that we didn't learn about and that won't be disclosed. But I'm, I'm more interested in asking about the logic. How do you break down this kind of a problem? What are you looking for as the key to moving your assessment forward?

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Mark Stout: Yeah, well, with the caveat that while I've studied this, and I was an intelligence analyst, that it was not a counterterrorism intelligence analyst, but I think I'd... I'd start by backing up a little bit and saying that, for people who haven't ever done it, you have no idea how much data is out there.

Uh, you know, you sit down at your desk and there is a deluge-- and I use that word advisedly-- every single day, of stuff. And the keys to the kingdom may be in there. A tiny, you know... a flake of rust off a key to the kingdom. Or, you know, that... it may be all garbage that day, and, you, you don't a priori know.

00:20:34 So, you know, this question of, how do you make sense of this, is, you know, is a really, really, really difficult one for any intelligence problem, frankly, and this, this in particular, where you're looking for a very small target that is determinedly trying not to be found, right? And then I think the exhibit, you know, talks about this... you know, very well, right?

00:20:59 In this particular case, there's not a lot of direct evidence available to the intelligence community about where, you know, bin Laden is. And so, you start looking at the people and the processes that he has to touch, right? And then you look for them, right? So families and couriers and communications networks and all those sorts of things. And those are the kinds of approaches that eventually, you know, ultimately, it's the courier that is the biggest payoff, that leads you, that, that leads you to the, to the... to the person.

00:21:28 But in that process also, then, you have to have a very, very close relationship between your intelligence analysts-- and a function that I used to perform, again, not for counterterrorism-- right, the people who sort of figure out what, if anything, all this data means, and your collectors, and, the people out there who are intercepting signals, the people who are taking, you know, overhead imagery, the people who are looking at open source, which can often be very important, the clandestine collectors at C.I.A. and elsewhere.

00:21:56 And that has to be a really, really tight relationship, particularly on something very, very tactical like this, right, where it's literally a small target. It's a guy and maybe his 12 followers, hangers-on. And it's physically small, right? This is not like looking for the, I don't know, the Soviet Third Shock Army in East Germany back in the day. You kind of

know where that's gonna be, right? So, so very small changes in, you know, behavior or location can go from, like, "Well, we think he's over here," to no clue whatsoever, so you need to have a really, really, really tight relationship between analysts and collectors.

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Like, "Okay, you gave me this, and I think that's useful. That leads me to this question. Can you get me some of that? Oh, okay, so, good, we'll orient our collection efforts so that we're aimed more at getting that and, and sort of carve off, because everything's limited resources, efforts trying to get this other stuff over here, which you're telling me isn't so useful to you." And that just iterates and iterates and iterates.

Clifford Chanin: Mary, you were on the active side of this, in this major investigation, which is not just, you know, in the past-- it's forward-looking, as well. What can you tell us about that process of the integration of not just the collection and the analysis within one agency, but within multiple agencies and the improvements over time as they existed of sharing across agencies?

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Mary E. Galligan: Well, to your first point about looking at the amount of information, I think we forget very easily what computers were like in 2001 and '02, and what computers were like now or in 2011. All right, the iPhone gets invented somewhere in between there—I think 2006, 2007. So first, you have as, um, Mark is explaining, this incredible amount of information, even as soon as right after 9/11, when the raids start happening.

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Very little bandwidth to analyze it from a, from a computer perspective, from a technical perspective. And then, as you just mentioned, how do you share this across different agencies? So that's where you see the government creating the NCTC, creating O.D.N.I., creating the Terrorist Screening Center, where the computers could talk to each other, because on September 11, very few of them could, 2001.

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But what you did have was, you had agents and analysts from different agencies who were already working together with each other, whether it

was on the JTTFs in each of the offices; whether it was at the C.I.A. at Alec Station, which was looking for bin Laden, al-Qaeda; whether it was at the FBI. So the people would be working together. It was, how do you get the technology to catch up to that?

00:24:33 Clifford Chanin: Bruce, can you talk a little bit about sort of the institutional barriers and how they were overcome that kept the agencies from cooperating fully. This is the pre-9/11 period, but also post-9/11, the aspiration very quickly was to cooperate, but the aspiration was not always matched by the reality, because institutional barriers exist for a reason and have to be overcome over time.

00:24:56 Bruce Hoffman: Well, certainly the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Anti-Terrorism Act had a huge role in further knitting together the intelligence community. And I, I think, too, that the hunt for bin Laden had an enormously important role in providing that focus and enabling the type of cooperation and sharing of information and breaking down of the stove pipes that didn't obviously have the same priority, tragically, before 9/11.

00:25:20 Clifford Chanin: Peter, you know, we, in meeting many of the people who worked on this, both directly and then in a larger circle, so many of them would say at one point or another how guilty, personally, they felt that this had happened on their watch, if you will. Um, you know, what was this impact of this terrible failure on the intelligence community and the way they went about their business? How do you track that from, you know, your sources in that world?

00:25:51 Peter Bergen: Well, let's start with the fact this wasn't an intelligence failure. It was a policy failure. I mean, the C.I.A. actually was doing its job in the summer of 2001, which is to provide strategic warning. That-- to policymakers-- that's what it's supposed to do. And if you look at the memos that were coming out in the spring and summer of 2001, all of which are publicly available, there was great concern at the agency-- you know, the famous blinking red thing that George Tenet talked about.

00:26:17 What the C.I.A. did make, a big mistake, was not telling the FBI until August the 25th that Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar, who were the two hijackers who went into the Pentagon, were living in San Diego under their true names, and their names were in the phone book, and if the FBI had known that when the C.I.A. first discovered that, this whole thing could have been stopped.

00:26:40 So, the C.I.A. was doing its job, providing strategic warning to policymakers; the policymakers didn't really absorb what was being said. The famous August the 2nd PDB, you know, saying, you know, "Bin Laden Determined to Strike the United States." The Bush team was new. They were kind of Cold War warriors. They didn't really think bin Laden was a big deal. Their first NSC meeting was about Iraq, but it took them nine months to have an NSC meeting about al-Qaeda.

00:27:06 So I mean, there were failures on every level. But in some... but the main thing, I think, is that the biggest failure was by bin Laden. I mean, yes, he had this great tactical victory and he killed 3,000 people here where we're sitting. But he totally underestimated what the...

Mark Stout: (chuckles)

00:27:27 Peter Bergen: ...what our response would be, which was basically to kill al-Qaeda. I mean, yes, I mean, al-Qaeda continues to exist in some shape or form in Syria, but the best witness for the damage we did to... to al-Qaeda is the documents that were recovered in this raid. Bin Laden was so concerned about all the al-Qaeda leaders killed in C.I.A. drone attacks.

He was concerned, you know, he was very concerned about his son being killed in a drone attack. He was thinking about changing the name of al-Qaeda. But the point is, is that we inflicted a tremendous amount of damage on al-Qaeda, and he completely under-- misunderstood what we would do.

00:28:02 He thought we would just do a couple of cruise missile attacks, as we'd done after the embassy attacks. Not what we did, which is overthrow the Taliban regime in seven weeks, and basically more or less kill the organization. At the end of the day, the organization that attacked us on 9/11 is a local jihadi group in Pakistan with very scant abilities to attack outside South Asia.

Clifford Chanin: Let's skip ahead. Bruce Hoffman has recently written, at the end of October, an article titled "After Baghdadi: What Hurts the Islamic State May Help al-Qaeda" for the Council on Foreign Relations. I'll just read a sentence or two, ask Bruce to begin the conversation about it.

00:28:38 "The death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, founder and leader of the self-proclaimed Islamic State, is a crushing blow to the already enfeebled organization. The big question now is whether his demise will prove a boon to al-Qaeda, reinvigorating what was once the world's most feared terrorist group." Bruce, explain.

00:28:56 Bruce Hoffman: Well, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi hasn't been the most effective terrorist leader. I mean, he's dead, right? The caliphate doesn't exist any longer. So I think that, among his rank and file, when they think towards the long term, that they want someone that may have far less pizzazz. Like al-Zawahiri compared to al-Baghdadi, but has adopted more of a long... a longer-term strategy.

00:29:21 So I think that just, you know, on merits, al-Qaeda has survived the greatest onslaught in the history of the war, of any war on terrorism. And that, I think, speaks volumes for why someone might want to hitch their fortunes to a star that may not be rising, but at least has remained steadily over the horizon.

But what I was really thinking of when I wrote that is, the estrangement between al-Qaeda and ISIS, in my view, is almost entirely personal. It's that al-Baghdadi and al-Zawahiri hated one another. I mean, there was this tremendous personal rivalry, and with one of them eliminated, one

of them's still standing, and probably, I would say, the more mature one, let's say.

00:30:02 That one could, I think, easily imagine the survivors of ISIS, in order to ensure their survival, and particularly, you know... ISIS has spread and has many different branches, so whether the branches would fall into line is another question. But at least in the kill box of Syria, and perhaps in Iraq, you could see the remnants of ISIS, in order to ensure their survival, re-amalgamating with al-Qaeda.

00:30:26 After all, they split from al-Qaeda. Their ideology is the same. They both revere bin Laden, and bin Laden still remains, I think, a seminal figure for, for both of them. So these reasons, I think, suggest that, you know, al-Qaeda, by playing the longer game, arguing that their strategy will pay permanent dividends, may attract some of the support from existing ISIS fighters in the future.

Clifford Chanin: Mark, did you look forward that way?

00:30:51 Mark Stout: No, I think that, I think that makes perfect sense. I completely agree with that, and that in some sense, the al-Qaeda brand is, you know, is up, and the ISIS brand is down, right? And a lot of this, ultimately, is about attracting individual people to come join this group or that group or sit on, sit on the bench. So, yeah, and I think that makes complete sense.

I guess the only thing I'd say, and is not at all by way of disagreement, just going in a slightly different direction, is, you know, um, al-Qaeda is still in the game. ISIS looks very seriously, if not mortally wounded. Al-Qaeda is still in the game, and as Bruce says, is playing the long game. But gosh, you know, I wouldn't want to trade strategic positions with them, right?

00:31:36 You know, it's, to my mind, it's a question of, do you lose quickly and spectacularly, as ISIS seems to... to have done, or do you lose really

slowly and painfully as al-Qaeda's been-- I mean, like, if you look at what al-Qaeda wants to have, right, you know, this transcontinental caliphate and all the 1.7 billion Muslims in the world finally doing Islam, you know, "correctly," quote-unquote, the way al-Qaeda sees it,

I mean, you can't get there from here. Um, so in some sense, it's... I don't mean a moot point exactly, but... Well, maybe it-- take a long view, it is a moot point, right? They're both losers. It's just, one's losing quickly and one's losing slowly.

00:32:12

Peter Bergen: And it relates to the question of, what does it mean for American national security? I mean, the last time that al-Qaeda core tried to attack the United States was in September of 2009, which was Najibullah Zazi, who tried to blow up multiple bombs in the New York City subway. And it didn't work. You have the three American citizens, Najibullah Zazi and two confederates, who were all American citizens. And they'd be trained by al-Qaeda in Pakistan. And then, of course, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula also tried to blow up Northwest flight 253 over Detroit on Christmas Day 2009.

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So both of these events—which is, of course, an al-Qaeda affiliate—happened a decade ago. So, you know, that, I think it's worth remembering that our offensive-defensive capabilities have put... You know, our defensive capabilities are in a completely different place than they were on 9/11, where only 16 people were on the no-fly list, and now there are 81,000, and there's one-and-a-half million people on a larger tied list.

00:33:05

And we didn't have TSA or DHS or the National Counterterrorism Center or multiple joint terrorism task forces around the country. We have put up a huge defensive wall against these groups we didn't have, and then we also inflicted a huge amount of damage on them with our offensive capabilities. So, to me, it's not surprising.

Of course, the internet changes that, because it inspiring people here, whether they're jihadis, or in some cases, extreme right-wing domestic

terrorists. And there's really, you know, that travel ban obviously had no impact on that. And the people who are getting radicalized are not going anywhere, they're just radicalizing in their basement.

00:33:36

And there's very... you know, trying to... Trying to, you know, what you do about that is not, it's very complicated, because they're regrettably not small numbers of people. They're not communicating with others. So they're not part of a conspiracy, usually, which not so... which makes it harder for the bureau to deal with them.

And they're coming seemingly out of nowhere. And unfortunately, we live in a country where you can access semi-automatic weapons legally, including if you're on the no-fly list, by the way, because right after Orlando, there was an effort by Peter King of... Since 2005, Peter King of, of Long Island has had legislation saying, if you're too dangerous to fly, you can't buy legally a semi-automatic weapon.

00:34:18

Well, that almost passed after the Orlando attack. But because of the NRA, and basically a huge smokescreen around this question, it didn't pass. But if I-- if there was one thing I would do if I was in charge... (chuckles) It would be that you cannot buy a semi-automatic weapon legally if you're on the no-fly list. Which, by the way, many of the people involved in these attacks recently have legally purchased semi-automatic weapons, and surely were on the no-fly list.

Mark Stout: If I could just...

Peter Bergen: Yeah.

00:34:45

Mark Stout: ...sort of follow up on something Peter just alluded to. Folks like ISIS and al-Qaeda and terrorists generally face a fundamental dilemma, right? The things that you need to do to keep yourself secure from the U.S. intelligence community, the U.S. military, you know, high-tech militaries and intelligence services around the world, plus the

sometimes low-tech but extraordinarily effective and knowledgeable local security services-- the thing you need, things you need to do to keep yourself going and not dead or in jail are fundamentally inconsistent... Maybe not 100 degrees, 80 degrees out, 160 degrees out from the things that you need to do to be strategically effective and to bring about whatever strategic, political, religious, et cetera, end, you know, end state you want to see, right?

00:35:30

And you see this with ISIS, right? So, ISIS temporarily was pretty effective at building something that kind of started to look like a nation-state. But you know what? There are a lot of countries in this world who have capabilities that are just exquisitely designed to destroy nation-states. And, so... just was wanting to...

Clifford Chanin: Mary, the law enforcement challenge that's being described here...

Mary E. Galligan: Yes.

Clifford Chanin: Which is, you know, not networks now, domestically, at least in relation to the Islamist threat. We may be speaking differently in relation to the right-wing threat. But, you know, talk to us about the law enforcement challenge of dealing with this transition from networks to the lone wolf.

00:36:09

Mary E. Galligan: Well, building off what Peter said, if you think about the internet, it gives the terrorists unprecedented access to American citizens. It is... you can be quickly brought into the, their mission, their beliefs, and you can mobilize. You hear what ISIS just said recently, within the last two years, is, "Wherever you are, whatever you have access to, attack."

00:36:38

So, from a law enforcement inspect... perspective, excuse me-- in a country where we have the rights that we have, it is extremely difficult to

find that one person-- you said he is in his basement-- who is doing that communications. Communicating with people and becoming radicalized. That's part of the challenge.

00:36:58

The second part of that challenge is, more and more technology is "going dark," as law enforcement would say, where you don't have the access even with legal paperwork, even with subpoenas, search warrants, et cetera, to actually access the technology, allowing the terrorists to communicate with each other and it can't be intercepted.

So you take that challenge, the, how easy it is to get a weapon in the United States, a gun, but then you have the truck attack that just-- that happened in, on Halloween, here in New York City... two years ago? And just this week, the attacker speaking in open court about, you know, why is he sitting here in court when so many Muslim women and babies are being killed by the American government?

00:37:44

So the challenge is threefold: the technology is there for the, for the terrorists to communicate. At times, it's difficult to intercept that. And then there is access to weapons that you can then use for your attack.

Clifford Chanin: Yeah, one of the things-- and it's in the exhibition briefly, but we heard in the background, as well, at greater length-- this idea that over time, the U.S. developed an effective strategy for going after these networks. And I, I ask it in particular in relation to the recent raid that brought the death of al-Baghdadi.

00:38:18

I mean, again, we don't know as much about that as we know about the Abbottabad raid for bin Laden. But the methods seemed very, very similar. I mean, the use of helicopters and these elite forces, the intelligence gathering, so on and so forth. I mean, these are all methods that developed well before the raid in Abbottabad. This is in Iraq, it's in Afghanistan, and now going forward, ten, 12, 15 years later, this still seems to be the method that works when you're reaching out for a very particular target in a very particular place. Do you see those continuities

in terms of the way the military and the intelligence operates under these kinds of threats? Let me start with Peter.

00:38:57 Peter Bergen: Not only that, it's a great commonality between President Obama and President Trump. If you strip away kind of the rhetoric around President Trump, and you look actually at what he's done, it's actually very similar to President Obama in this particular area, which is, we're fighting a variety of different wars in a number of Muslim countries, we're doing it with a very small footprint-- Special Forces.

00:39:16 We are doing it with drones-- which, by the way, Obama, of course, really was the drone president. And we're doing with cyber, offensive cyber operations. We're not doing it with a large footprint. There's no demand signal from the American people for that, and it's not necessary. And, you know, in fact, you know, this whole thing of what we're doing in Syria, you know, what our Syria policy is, it's sort of a puzzle, but we seem to have kind of landed back in a place that sort of makes sense.

00:39:40 We have 900 troops there as opposed to, put that down to 500, then it was 2,000. But the point is, there's been a conflation, which... The president is making a conflation between endless wars and persistent presence. We're not-- no one's—of course, no one wants endless wars. But a persistent presence where we actually prevent the return of al-Qaeda and ISIS in Afghanistan at a relatively low cost, both in blood and treasure, is... is an insurance policy for not having another 9/11.

00:40:10 And I think that actually the president himself obviously changed his mind on Afghanistan. But whoever the future president is, whether in 2020 or 2024, he or she will face a lot of the same decisions, and I think he or she will make... will really, there's a tremendous amount of continuity between the Republican and Democrats, there's kind of consistent national security policy on this issue, which you can see even in the people that were held over by the Trump administration, like Nick Rasmussen, who is the head of national counterterrorism, so that there's a great agreement amongst the professionals about what actually works.

- 00:40:43 Clifford Chanin: Bruce, I think somewhere in the articles I've read about all this, you know, there's this analogy with the Cold War. I mean, you know, we were committed for the long term to the Cold War. The idea of winning the Cold War wasn't really the point. Enduring and coming out eventually on the right side of that was the point.
- 00:40:59 Obviously, with active wars, when they were as active as they were in Afghanistan and Iraq, that's not a good analogy. But in terms of, you know, the forever wars, I mean, is that the wrong way to look at it? Is this simply-- simply—is this a just a threat that needs to be dealt with on a constant basis until, for whatever reason, it disappears? Or is this war analogy something that misleads that there can be a neat and tidy conclusion at a particular moment in time?
- 00:41:25 Bruce Hoffman: Well, I mean, that's exactly the problem, is that when you talk about something as a war, you expect vanquishing an enemy and marching into their capital and then resurrecting something that prevents that particular enmity from rising again. And this isn't what this is about at all, unfortunately. And listening to, to Peter just now, I mean, I think he's absolutely right across the board.
- 00:41:48 But what worries me in the future is, think about it, in 2011, we had one big enemy, and that was al-Qaeda. In 2019, we're talking about al-Qaeda and ISIS. Peter mentioned violent far-right extremism, threats from hostile foreign governments, so-- great power challenges and rivalries. So the problem is, is that, if we look at it as wars, we're gonna be inevitably disappointed.
- 00:42:11 We have to look at this as a new national security environment that, unlike the Cold War, sees salient threats from non-state entities as well state entities, but the problem in 2019-- and I don't think this will change in the future-- is that there's this multiplicity of threats that threatens to, um, not, say, overwhelm us, but certainly to challenge lots of the capabilities we were so good at and that we were able to preserve that are now in, I think, the flush of success against al-Qaeda and ISIS, who are shadows of their former selves.

00:42:42 Of that there's no doubt. But just as Peter was saying, is throttling back on exactly the initiatives and the policies and the practices that accounted for that diminishment of these groups, while we're distracted by many other challenges and threats.

Clifford Chanin: Mary, you dealt both with the terrorism issue and the cyber issue in the FBI, now moved in the private sector, where cyber is the main focus of your work. I mean, how do these things combine? We're talking about multi-threats at the same time.

00:43:13 There's a question, I suppose, is whether our society or any society can actually maintain enough focus in enough directions to protect itself. But do you see... Obviously, there's cyberterrorism. But how do you see these threats combining in the current environment?

Mary E. Galligan: Combining, I think, building off of what Peter said to a point where, where do you put your resources? So when you look at the cyber footprint, it is so easy to do so much more damage with very few... very few effort.

00:43:45 So the resources it takes to defend against that are astronomical, right? They're just, especially in a country like ours, where it is a free and open internet. So you're looking at-- there's a threat to the economic system, there's a threat to the financial systems from, as Bruce was saying, both nation-state... And then cyberterrorism is not at the point where people thought it would be three or four years ago. It's about... it's more about, will the nation-state, will the tools that they use for cyber offense get into the hands of some of these terrorist groups, and then what will they do with them?

00:44:22 So in summary, in the cyber threat, there is a detente between nation-states of, "You turn my lights off, I'm gonna turn your lights off." But when you walk, move into the cyber terrorism realm, or you move into

some extremist group, they get their hands on those tools, then I think our resources in the United States are beyond stretched for that threat.

00:44:45 Clifford Chanin: Let me ask the others to comment exactly on that, in terms of the threat posed by al-Qaeda or ISIS or any permutation of that form, are they still focused on the individual physical violence of the attack? Or are they looking now in the direction that Mary had set, just this vulnerability that is systemic, rather than necessarily killing a certain number of people in a certain number-- in a certain number of places?

00:45:12 Peter Bergen: You know, they're, they're not-- I don't think they have great capabilities in this, in this sphere. I mean, there is a sort of Moore's Law here that over time, maybe they will. But I wanted to return just briefly to what Bruce was saying.

Part of the problem we always had with what happened on 9/11 was how to describe what actions we were going to take. And there was a debate, whether it was a war or whether it was something else. And we ended up with a war metaphor.

00:45:34 The problem about wars is that you win them. And there's a surrender ceremony. But this is not like that. And so what we have to be, we have to get away from this word "win," and talk about "managing." Now, as a political matter, it's not very heroic to say we're managing something, and we're... rather than winning. But that's really what is what we're doing, if we're being honest about ourselves, and I think we've managed this problem pretty well.

00:45:58 If we had this conversation collectively in 2002, then I said, "In the next 17 years, there will not be another terrorist attack of any... from a foreign terrorist organization in New York City, or indeed the rest of the United States," that would have seemed like a crazy thing to say, but that's what has actually happened. And so we have managed. The point is, we have to need-- we need to continue managing this.

00:46:20 Mark Stout: Just a couple of quick thoughts. And I'm, I'm far from a cyber expert. I guess I also am not, like Peter, not super-worried about the prospect of cyber terrorism by individuals or small groups. I mean, if you look even just among nation-states, there's definitely some that are in the top tier of being able to, to do all sorts of really horrible things, and then there are others who are sort of, you know, elsewhere. And then there's countries that are really not seriously in the game at all, and then there's, you know, all the non-state actors that exist below that, um, uh... So I'm not super-worried about it.

00:46:54 I'm sure we'll see terrorists do bad things with cyber capabilities, but I'm... In the scale of things, you know, the threats, it doesn't really bother me, looking forward. I guess, just to comment on this question of war, though. Um, I would argue that it's a... maybe not uniquely, but it's particularly an American idea that wars have beginnings and they have ends. Right? That's, that's our, uh, national conceit, right?

00:47:20 For, you know, a variety of reasons, Americans like to believe we are either at war or we are not, and there's no sort of in-between part. That is not the way all countries in the world see things. Um, uh... there's all sorts of examples. But... And I do think that we... and I don't know, you can take this as a good thing, or you can take it as a bad thing. (chuckling): We're evolving from that, I think. Right? And we're, we're... That evolution is still not complete.

00:47:49 But I think this, you know, discussion of this phrase that you yourself used, "the forever war," which you hear a lot, is, you know, maybe a step or two in the direction of Americans coming to grip with, grips with the fact that, that was a reasonably good construct-- you're either at war or you're not-- for the American sort of polity in the industrial age, against large nation-states, but doesn't... sort of doesn't really correspond to the way the world really works anymore. To the extent that it ever did.

00:48:17 Bruce Hoffman: Well, let me say one thing about this war, and then I want to talk about the cyber threat. I mean, that's what 9/11 changed. I mean, terrorism is a fixture of our national security posture now, and it's never going to change. And for exactly the reasons that terrorism doesn't

occur in a vacuum. It feeds off of what's occurring in society. In the information revolution, the digital revolution, the social media has facilitated and enabled terrorism in unimaginable ways.

00:48:41

I mean, that's ISIS's rise. But that's exactly the point that... What Mary was saying made me think, and yet there's another threat that illustrates the diversity of the challenges out there. When it's, when you have a terrorist group that's married to a state sponsor, like Hezbollah or the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps-- which is part of the state-- but Hezbollah is exactly the kind of terrorist group that does, that does very much embrace cyber warfare, cyber terrorism, is extremely skilled at it-- and the reason is, of course, it's fronted and supported by the resources and assets of a state.

00:49:16

Whereas I would say ISIS and al-Qaeda, the digital realm is more useful for them as a soapbox or a vehicle to continue to publicize themselves and their causes, and attempt to radicalize individuals and attract support.

Clifford Chanin: You know, it occurs to me, it may be a little late to be asking this question. But, you know, we put together this exhibition, and... You know, to some degree or other, we take people behind the scenes and, um, have people who don't speak about this normally speaking about it.

00:49:46

And, you know, I think from our point of view, this serves a valuable education function. We're in the middle of this war. This was a major event, the bin Laden raid I'm talking about, in response to 9/11, but also it exposes the way the agencies, the military, think about this problem and act in it. But am I delusional in thinking that, you know, in putting this exhibition together, and you're all part of it...

(others laugh)

Clifford Chanin: We're all delusional.

Mark Stout: Are we all deluded? Yeah.

00:50:10

Clifford Chanin: You know, is there, is there a broader purpose served here in helping people understand what the stakes are, the risks, and how these things are done? Because it's really quite remarkable when you actually get, you know, any insight into that.

Peter Bergen: Of course, and, you know, secrecy is in service of policy. It is another policy in itself. And so when President Obama announced the raid, made some comments about it, I mean, hey, he can declassify whatever he wants, and President Trump did the same thing with the Baghdadi raid.

00:50:38

But I mean, at the end of the day, American taxpayers pay a lot of money for this enterprise, and if one of the kind of chief goals is achieved, understanding a little bit about it that doesn't reveal, you know, anything that shouldn't be revealed is, I think, a very reasonable and important exercise.

Clifford Chanin: Mary, do we have the approval of the FBI?

(all laugh)

Mary E. Galligan: I cannot speak on behalf of the FBI, but...

(others laughing)

00:51:02

Mary E. Galligan: Um, no. Um, I absolutely think that it does good, and because, especially in the environment that we're in right now, where it

is so easy to criticize the intelligence community, the FBI, law enforcement, pick whatever noun you want, for people to be able to see what it really took, why did it take ten years, what the intelligence community is about working together...

00:51:25

I think there's one part of the exhibit that shows it very well, where there is the circle of the military doing the raids and then coming back with this material-- hard drives, pocket litter, papers-- and the analyst taking it and breaking it down into data, and then the agents using it to interview people to start that circle again.

And I think Admiral McRaven says at some point in the exhibit about how that cycle just kept reiterating itself. People need to appreciate that, and the amount of effort and sacrifice that goes into "managing" or winning the war, whichever phrase we want to use, that, the threat that we have.

00:52:08

Clifford Chanin: Let me ask Bruce and Mark, because, you know, your work studying this over years, and each of you, at one point or another, coming in and out of this a little bit in terms of the agencies that do this, but, you know, they are not going to give away their secrets. But are they served or not by the public knowing better-- not the details of what they do, but what they actually do in a large-picture sense?

00:52:32

Bruce Hoffman: Well, I think, absolutely. I think it's, it's-- it's also, particularly at this moment in time, it's such an important testament to the sacrifice and the determination and dedication and loyalty of people in federal law enforcement, from the intelligence agencies, and the military, and that we should never take that for granted and never devalue it. And that's, I think, what the exhibit very clearly and very persuasively and importantly demonstrates.

00:52:56

Mark Stout: I completely agree. I mean, as a former intelligence officer who is now an intelligence historian, and as the guy who used to be the historian at the International Spy Museum, I do think that some degree of openness and public discussion about these things are good. There are, the U.S. intelligence community and our friends and partners have many

secrets that should remain secret, secrets that are secret for a good reason. And we are all benefiting from the fact that those secrets are staying secret.

00:53:24 That said, um, however, if the answer is silence, right? If the answer is always, "No comment," then you leave an information vacuum, and that vacuum will be filled. And that vacuum will be largely filled by people who don't know what they're talking about.

And some of those people are going to imagine, or just simply knowingly falsely assert things that are flat-out dangerous and wrong. In part, you know, some of that vacuum will be filled by the Russians. The Russians talk about the U.S. intelligence community. Would you rather have them be the loudest voice, the biggest megaphone on the block?

00:54:03 Or have, you know, the U.S. intelligence community speaking out for itself? Now, so I think it's, I think it's an easy question. None of this should be taken as saying that I think the U.S. intelligence community is or should be immune from criticism. Lord knows they make mistakes. They make mistakes every day. If this were a classified discussion, I could tell you about a couple that I personally made. And, you know, from time to time, they do things I don't approve of.

00:54:28 But also, you know, so, I'm taking it all into account, and also just finally, I guess I'd say that in, in some sense, you know, openness, at least in terms of-- certainly in terms of malfeasance-- is a good disinfectant. So I'm, within, within, you know, reasonable bounds, I'm a big fan of, you know, having informed public discussion about how the intelligence community does what it does and why it does what it does.

00:54:52 Clifford Chanin: You know, it's a curious thing, and having been on the receiving end of back-and-forth with some of the agencies in terms of what we could get or couldn't get, or, did we know what we could get or couldn't get? I mean, it's... it is a house of mirrors in some way.

But, you know, Peter, you live in this world, too, in terms of trying to get things and, you know, bringing them into the public view. I mean, I think the agencies seem to be thinking differently about this than they might have done in a pre-9/11 time or ten years ago, whenever it was.

00:55:19

Peter Bergen: We didn't publicly acknowledge we had a drone program for a long time. President Obama first acknowledged it in 2012. We didn't publicly acknowledge that Joint Special Operations Command existed until relatively recently, again. Somebody was live-tweeting the raid. We live in a very different kind of information environment, and it's... it's different, and the idea that you can just say nothing is, it's not persuasive.

Clifford Chanin: Mary, your thoughts on just how inside these, FBI or other agencies, you know, they, the shift in, you know, going forward publicly in ways that might not have been the case before?

00:55:53

Mary E. Galligan: I know I'm very biased, Cliff, after 25 years in the FBI, but I believe that anything that helps the American people understand what the FBI does, the C.I.A. does, is beneficial to all of us. And if it helps the morale inside any of those agencies, then I'm all for it. But I agree that in today's day and age, somebody will fill that vacuum, to Mark's point. And I think it's better that it's a, it's a place with the reputation of the 9/11 Museum, or it's the intelligence community itself.

00:56:25

But there's that integrity of the display that you put together over a three-year period. When people go through it downstairs, the thought that went into it, I think that does the intelligence community and the FBI very well. So thank you for that.

Clifford Chanin: Yep. I think, on that note, let's see if we can take a question or two from the audience, our vast audience this evening. Right there. You're gonna have to wait for a mic to get to you. Just hold on a second.

00:57:00 Audience Member: Hi, thank you so much for sharing all of your insights this evening. I guess where I'm going from and going back to some of the comments that you made earlier. You talk about how the death of bin Laden could bring al-Qaeda and ISIS back together, and that... Do you have the thought that some of that could be them responding to the death of bin Laden, much like we responded to the 9/11 events, where it was basically unifying fractured elements, and as another factor from that, with the multiplicity of effects and the threats being bolstered, could that also be another result from the attack?

00:57:39 And then thinking about what is maybe bolstering the terrorist side of the house, what can anybody do to sort of help counteract that effect? Like, are there things that we can do as citizens when, as other individuals, that can help to mitigate this? Because this isn't a fight that should just be reliant on the intelligence community, the military, and that, this is a worldwide fight, so to speak. So what are some of those tactics that we could maybe start to employ or consider doing?

Clifford Chanin: Bruce?

00:58:12 Bruce Hoffman: You've asked us some very good questions. I think, to answer the first part, whether it was bin Laden or al-Baghdadi, the problem is that this, this terrorist enterprise is larger than one individual, and there'll always be someone willing to step up to it, which I think means that we always have to be eternally vigilant, especially in the 21st century, because, as I said, that's, I think, one unfortunate repercussion from the 9/11 attacks we still deal with, is that terrorism intruded upon America's serenity, as it were, in a way that hadn't happened since, since December 7, 1941.

00:58:48 Uh, I think that as citizens, what I go back to is, is, you know, certainly not overreacting to terrorism. Put it into proportion. I think Peter has given a very good example of that, is that we don't want to look at our enemies as somehow these, you know, monsters that are unassailable. And that's what's very important about the exhibit, is, it showed that no one should ever underestimate the determination, the resiliency, and the strength of

the United States, and by the same token, I think that means that we have to put terrorism in perspective, in context.

00:59:19 I agree completely with Peter, and I'm generally a pessimist on most of these things, having studied terrorism for so long. But I think the likelihood of a terrorist group ever perpetrating something along the lines of 9/11 because of the successes and because of the progress we've made in countering terrorism, is very low. So we have to keep that in proportion when we see terrorist incidents today.

00:59:39 And a lot of that, I think, involves us not having this expectation that we have to take precipitous action immediately that may have counterproductive effects. What we often forget is that terrorism is a strategy of provocation. It's trying to provoke the terrorists' opponents to do things that the terrorists hope will play into their narrative, will feed their efforts at recruitment and finance. And we have to be smarter than the terrorists.

01:00:02 And I think that comes from an informed population and citizenry that isn't driven to embrace, let's say, a feel-good kinetic response when actually a longer-term strategic response would be much more effective.

Clifford Chanin: Want to go?

Peter Bergen: The FBI did a very interesting study of the number of terrorism cases, and they found that the people who know most about a case are peers, the people who know the second-most are family, and the who people know the third-most are authority figures, and the people who know the least are strangers.

01:00:33 But the strangers are the most likely to drop a dime, the authority figures are slightly more likely to, the family members are somewhat unlikely to, and the peers, who actually know the most, are the least likely to come

forward. So if you're thinking about-- that has very important policy implications, and this is true of school shootings, as well.

01:00:53

Basically, you're trying to get peers to come forward. And I'm not a policymaker, but since we know this as a fact, any kind of policy needs to be constructed around the idea that you have to get peers to come forward, which is not an easy thing, particularly if they themselves may have been involved in the crime in some shape or form. But that is the policy that would stop terrorism the most effectively, at least domestically.

Clifford Chanin: Take another question. The gentleman there. Just wait-- yep, just wait. Ruth is right there with the mic.

01:01:23

Audience Member: Thank you all for being here. A question for Peter Bergen and the whole panel. Mr. Bergen, you interviewed bin Laden in the early 2000s or late '90s. And obviously, we can't fight the war on terror in an ad hominem manner. But do you remember his, portions of his personality, that stuck with you, and...

01:01:52

Peter Bergen: Well, he reminded me a tiny bit of Cliff. (laughter)

Clifford Chanin: I am definitely retiring now. Thank you and good night.

Peter Bergen: No, he was a very serious guy. I mean, you know, just, the people around him were very serious...

Mary E. Galligan: And smart.

(laughter)

Clifford Chanin: Let's go in that direction.

Peter Bergen: But it's very hard to explain why the French army were at the gates of Moscow in 1812 without Napoleon. Explaining the Holocaust without Hitler is quite hard, also. Explaining 9/11 without bin Laden is not... He ran this al-Qaeda as a dictatorship. There were people inside the organization who said this might be a bad idea, think about the blowback, and think about, or it might be against Islam.

01:02:34 So in fact, I think, you know, Mark correctly said, we tend to put a person and characterize a conflict. But in many of the conflicts, that's true. I mean, people make... people in leadership positions and terrorist organizations, they're not running a democracy. They are in charge, and in bin Laden's case, he was in charge.

01:02:53 He had a set of ideas about us that were extremely naive. He thought we were like the Russians in the '80s in Afghanistan, or he just didn't understand what our likely response was, and, and there was no one around to contradict him. Or if they contradicted him, he didn't take them seriously.

Clifford Chanin: Who else? Gentleman over there. Hang on again for the mic. Griff? Down here.

01:03:23 Audience Member: So you didn't discuss at all the role of religion, and how that motivates people, how it motivated bin Laden. And even today, you have religious leadership in Saudi Arabia, in Iran, and that seems to be a very difficult situation, because that seems to help these groups recruit and eventually radicalize. So, how do you see... how do you see going forward with this whole discussion without talking about religious conflict?

Peter Bergen: That is another hour.

(laughter)

Mary E. Galligan: We have to come back for another session.

Clifford Chanin: We've got one panel here. Take a break, come back in an hour.

01:04:09 Bruce Hoffman: Well, there is... there is a brief answer, and it's a very good, a very good question. I mean, this is why I would argue that terrorism is a fixture of 21st-century security, because you're up against... If you are up against adversaries that see this struggle as in any way divinely ordained, it goes beyond one individual, a mere mortal, who may be their leader. It goes beyond something that is prosecuted to their death, but there's an expectation that their progeny, or that their kith and kin will carry on the struggle.

01:04:39 And it-- and this is also why I think it's so dangerous to look at it as a, as a war, because we're talking about people that feel driven to violence and are perfectly adept at justifying and legitimizing it using theological texts and treatises, and where there are clerics involved that are encouraging them to do so. Which means that there's no easy answer there, because how do you convince someone who has this visceral, this visceral attitude that they are serving whatever deity is commanding them to commit this violence?

01:05:08 How do you deter them from this path? It's why I've always been very suspicious of what... Deradicalization. I think you could perhaps disengage people from terrorism, but how do you, how do you deradicalize? How do you convince someone to change their entire mindset or worldview? That's a, a much more formidable challenge.

01:05:25 Mark Stout: Two other quick thoughts. There is a debate out there, and I'm blissfully, blissfully unencumbered by an opinion on the answer, but there is a debate out there in the terrorism studies literature on ideology,

to include religion, and the role that it plays in terrorism, and whether, you know, violent ideologies lead to terrorism or whether people who were inclined to engage in violence go sort of shopping for the ideology that will, you know, allow them to psychologically justify it.

01:05:54

That's one point, the other thing I'd say is, with, very specifically to al-Qaeda-- I know much less about ISIS-- but with regard to al-Qaeda, what you see when you look at what they... what they say to each other, or have said to each other, there is, year in and year out, just consistent disappointment with the extent to which their message is catching on, or, rather, not catching on with other Muslims.

01:06:21

They're just tremendously disappointed all of the time, like, "We've got the true version of Islam. Why is no one listening to us? Why aren't people following it?" Right? And I say that, then, to suggest that I do believe that religion is an important part of this particular terrorism problem that we've largely been talking about, and has been of many others and will be in the future. But it's really important to approach those discussions with some finesse of exactly what are we talking about and exactly what are we not talking about. Um, uh, so, yeah, I'll just leave that there.

Clifford Chanin: We won't talk about it.

01:06:59

Peter Bergen: You know, on the right, there is a kind of view that... I mean, sort of, that this is all about Islam. And then liberals say, "Well, it's got nothing to do with religion." And of course, both are wrong in the sense that yes, this has something to do with religion. I mean, just as the Crusades had something to do with Christianity, but-- there's a huge but-- if you actually start looking into these individual cases, the kind of work that Mary did, I mean, the more you know about this cases, particularly domestic terrorism cases in the United States, where there's usually a very good court record, a lot of these guys are... you know, they're, as Mark said, they're grievance-shopping, and they're finding an ideology that kind of lets them be a hero in their own story.

01:07:34 And usually they're a zero-- Omar Mateen, for instance, who killed 49 people in Orlando. You know, he dreamed of being an NYPD cop, he had that T-shirt with the NYPD slogan. He failed to get into the New York Police Academy twice. He took further with Hezbollah and then al-Qaeda and then ISIS, and, you know, basically, this was a way of turning his totally, total failure in life into some kind of heroic story in his own mind. Is that about religion? No, it's about his personal failures.

01:08:01 So the more you know about these cases, often you find that somebody's grievance-shopping, finding an ideology that kind of justifies the violence they plan to do, whether they're right-wing or jihadis.

Clifford Chanin: Mary, is that—I mean, going to your experience in how the FBI looks at it, I mean, the people who do these things are, are examples of failure, not success, it seems.

Mary E. Galligan: Correct. I'm still hung up, Cliff, on him comparing you to bin Laden.

(laughter)

Clifford Chanin: We, we'll let that slide for a while.

Mary E. Galligan: I will say this, the FBI does not compare you to Osama bin Laden.

Clifford Chanin: That's very good news, Mary.

01:08:34 Mary E. Galligan: Yes, I think all the points that have been made is that you have to look at it as, "Are-- am I shopping around for a belief or an ideology that will justify my feelings, my failure, what I want to do?" And all of that is taken into account when you look at the behavioral aspects

of the lone wolf, the domestic terrorist, versus the international terrorists.

Clifford Chanin: Well, as you can see, we had an extraordinary time with these four people, talking about the problems, putting the exhibition together, and tapping into these deep wells of knowledge. We are really, really deeply grateful. We're going to have to do a reunion tour of all of this, because it really has been extraordinary.

01:09:13

But we're going to stop there, but I ask you two things: I ask you first, if you're not a member of the museum, to think about becoming a member of the museum, outside at the table, because you can help us support these programs. And then I ask you to thank Peter Bergen, Mary Galligan, Bruce Hoffman, Mark Stout.

(applause)