MFR 0 3004406

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Background Interview with Adm (ret) John Sigler, former CENTCOM/J5 until March 2000

Type of event: Briefing

Date: July 10, 2003, 10:00am

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Team Number: 3

Location: National Defense University

Participants – Admiral John Sigler

Participants - Commission: Daniel Byman, and Bonnie D. Jenkins

Major Point Made by Adm. Sigler In the Interview:

An attack on September 11, 2002 was inevitable and CENTCOM could not reorganize itself to prevent it. More was needed. The problem was three-fold:

1. the way CENTCOM was organized
2. too much on CENTCOM's plate
3. there were no priorities

Summary:

CENTCOM and CT

Overall question – was the military engaged regarding the issue of CT prior to 9-11? The general assessment is that it was not.

Sigler: That is an interesting question. If the belief that the military was not engaged is correct, then why was it not?

A terrorist attack against the US was a matter of when, not if. Many were saying this. So when the problem comes, one would be ready if one made the right investments in preparation. It was hard to get this resourced because so many other priorities existed. The question is, how much was enough at the time if a major attack had not yet occurred? What could we have afforded not to do in preparation for an attack?

There were competing priorities for CENTCOM. The first major competing priority was Iraq and Saddam. There were many on-going military operations, for example, Desert Fox. These were very time-consuming. The second competing priority was the Theater Engagement Plan (TEP)

now called the Theater Security Cooperation. This was also very time-consuming. Also there is the normal day-to-day tasks in addition to other contingencies that arise in the AOR.

Many were talking about and looking at the issue. We were doing things at CENTCOM. CT was one of many priorities and it did not jump to the head of the list until after 9-11. If we blame anyone here, it has to be the people who did know. Some knew but were not given a voice or were not talking loud enough. Were the CINCs pounding on the tables?

Clarke knew the system and was working the system and yet he could not get the US to do what it is doing now. This is indicative of an organizational problem and maybe not a problem because people were not doing their jobs.

There was a SOCCENT liaison located at CENTCOM but working for the J3. SOCCENT was working the CT problem hard. But the problem is that the CIA, FBI and local law enforcement was not showing SOCCENT enough information. Yet, SOF was always in a stovepipe and was very secretive. The SOF work in CT issues were so highly classified that many did not know about what was occurring.

Many were working hard on the CT but the issue had not reached a critical mass and they could not force the issue if there was no attack. Now after 9-11 they have been joined with the combined armed forces, and we have a better idea of what SOF is doing.

The SOF was focused on al Qaeda and the UBL. UBL got briefed twice a week and there was concern in CENTCOM about the threat. I believe there were several messages that went from CENTCOM to OSD about CENTCOM's concerns about al Qaeda.

<u>CT and Military Planning</u>

There are two types of planing processes. The first is the deliberative (J5) and the second is the crisis action plans (J3). There are different plans within J5.

1. Operations plans. There are two types:
    a. those fully fleshed out
    b. those not fully fleshed out

    Both are on the shelf and we can pull them, update them and execute them when there is a crisis;
2. Concept plans. These are based on the following idea: "I have identified a problem and I need to know how to deal with it." CT was a con plan.

Plans can be either <u>top-down</u> or <u>bottom-up</u>.
Top-down: Comes from OSD or JCS (via OSD)
Bottom-up: More interesting. "We have a problem and we must deal with it."
Iraq provides a great example:
Top-down: The Iraq plan for taking out Saddam was developed in 1999 based on a statement by Albright that we can no longer live with Saddam.
Bottom-up: The J5 asked what if Saddam goes away either because we take him out or due to any other reason? What does that portend for Iraq? We told JCS we would develop this plan. Once developed, it must be blessed by JCS and OSD.

So, J-5 developed both plans. The top-down plan (take him out) went through more iterations than did the bottom-up "life after Saddam" plan.

We did have a CT plan. We had 27 plans and CT was one of them. Again, the problem was where was the priority? Where did CT fit into the overall scheme? On my watch we also had the embassy bombings. Should that have been a wake-up call? It occurred overseas and not many Americans died. We realized we were on an up-ramp regarding al Qaeda but we were not at the level yet to devote national assets required and to reorganize the bureaucracy the way we needed to in order to address the issue.

It is possible that plans were discouraged because some feared that by having them they would become self-fulfilling? It should be noted that there is a general distrust among military officers regarding plans. Some of it is cultural and some of it is codified. The military is action oriented and generally does not prefer to rely on plans. Not all agencies of the US government are organized or culturally able to do the types of planning DoD does. But the war on terrorism is an interagency problem (financial, legal, diplomacy, nonproliferation, etc). The military is supposed to be the minor part if it is done correctly.

Adm Sigler is not aware of any change in plans or update of plans following the embassy bombings. We should speak to J3 folks for that information.

The Military and Clinton

There may have been rumors the military did not trust Clinton. However, this was not the case on my level. He did not detect that on Zinni's level or in the JCS. "It was not that way at CENTCOM."

Actionable Intelligence for Military Operations

Actionable intelligence is based on intent and not capabilities: what will the actor do with the capability? The ability to act based on actionable intelligence changes over time. It is dynamic. The line has switched since 9-11 where military action can take place based on less actionable intelligence than before 9-11. But if the military acts without adequate intelligence, it will get in trouble if the operation fails. If the IC does not provide the best intelligence, the IC will be blamed for not being able to provide the warfighter with what he/she needs to conduct operations. Actionable intelligence will never be perfect.

Future Interviews

Sigler recommended the Commission speak with those who worked at the J3 at CENTCOM.

1. LTGEN (ret) Tom Case, AF. He was J3 and DCINC. His deputy who was doing the actual day to day stuff (still on active duty) was Al Harms.
2. VADM Al Harms, now Commanding Admiral, Chief of Naval Education and Training

J2 CINCENT

1. Bob Noonan, now the Director of Army Intelligence

At SOCENT at the time

1. General Toney

Another suggestion: CENTCOM is an unusual command. It has been in existence for 20 years yet it has had 22 major contingencies. It also has no forces assigned to it. It would be interesting to speak with other combatant commands (e.g., EUCOM and PACOM) to see how they worked the CT issue in their theater.