"How Do We Overhaul the Nation's Defense to Win the Next War?"

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Address by General Anthony Zinni, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)

I'm going to just speak for a few minutes and then go into the questions and answers, because that's always the most interesting part. I was really taken by the title of the forum this year, especially the part that says "Win the Next War." And it struck me-why are we asking that question? Well, when I ask myself that question, I say it's because we tend to defeat the enemy in battle, we tend not to win the wars lately. And so the question we ought to ask ourselves-if we're going to start thinking about what our military needs to do and what its role is-is why is that happening? It used to be that if you defeated the enemy's forces in the field, what was left was just mopping up or restructuring, and the war was won on the battlefield. That hasn't happened. It hasn't happened in the time I served, for 39 years. It probably hasn't happened since the end of the Second World War. There's a difference between winning battles, or defeating the enemy in battle, and winning the war. And I think the first question we have to ask ourselves is why is that happening and what is the military's role, then, in taking it beyond just defeating the enemy in battle?

What strikes me is that we are constantly redesigning the military to do something it already does pretty well. I mean, I think you heard from the last panel that breaking the organized resistance in Iraq, even though it may not have been the greatest army in the world, was done extremely well. We've very proud of our troops and very proud of the way that was executed and led. But it wasn't enough. "Whatever blood is poured onto the battlefield could be wasted if we don't follow it up with understanding what victory is." At the end of the third inning we declared victory and said the game's over.

It ain't over. It isn't going to be over in future wars. If we're talking about the future, we need to talk about not how you win the peace as a separate part of the war, but you've got to look at this thing from start to finish. It's not a phased conflict; there isn't a fighting part and then another part. It is nine innings. And at the end of the game, somebody's going to declare victory. And whatever blood is poured onto the battlefield could be wasted if we don't follow it up with understanding what victory is.

There's only one time in our history that we really, truly understood that. Harry Truman and George Marshall understood it. Woodrow Wilson tried to get us to understand it, but we refused and we were doomed to fight again in a second great war. We didn't understand it after the collapse of the Soviet Union. And we have failed in Vietnam, in places like Somalia; and we're in danger of failing again, to get it and to understand it.

Right after I retired in 2000, before 9/11, this was the big topic in this town: change for the military, transformation. No one could

explain what that was, but everybody wanted to know what our military should morph into.
I did a dangerous thing when I was asked to come here and speak today. I actually went back-I never write speeches, I never even take notes, I just get up and talk. I don't advise you to do that, because it's pretty painful; you never know what you're going to say and people actually hold you accountable for it. But in some of these speeches there's some poor guy or girl that has to write your crap down because you didn't transcribe it and then play it back. Usually it sounds a hell of a lot better when they do it than if I were to attempt to do it. So I went back and found a few of these things. And I was asked right after retirement, by NDU [National Defense University], what I thought the future missions would be for our military, and the capabilities they should possess. And I gave them seven things, back in 2000, that I thought were important.

The first was the ability to defeat a global power with sophisticated military capabilities. That always will be the priority for our military. If there is another emergent threat on a global scale, if there is somebody out there that's a so-called peer competitor that we have to deal with, that's always going to be the number-one way we design, organize, procure what we need to fight.

The second I said was to deal with regional hegemonies with asymmetric capabilities, such as weapons of mass destruction, missiles-with basically a design to deny us access to vital areas of the world and regional allies in places where we care.

The third was to deal with transnational threats that included terrorist groups, international crime and drug organizations, warlords, environmental security issues, health and disease problems, and illegal migrations.

The fourth was to deal with the problems of failed or incapable states that require peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, or national reconstruction. Remember, this was 2000. We needed to deal with overseas crises that popped up, and respond to them quickly, where our U.S. citizens and property were in danger. And we needed to be capable of dealing with domestic emergencies that exceeded the capacity of other federal and local government agencies. And finally, we had to protect against threats to our key repositories of information and our systems for moving information.

I saw these as the missions for our military in the 21st century. And, in fact, that was the title of the paper and the title of the speech. And I think they still hold. This wasn't any remarkable prescience on my part; you could have asked [retired Marine Corps General] Charlie Wilhelm, [former Pacific Commander-in-Chief Admiral] Denny Blair. You could have asked [former NATO Supreme Allied Commander General] Wes Clark, any of the CINCs [commanders-in-chief] at the time. You would have come up with the same list. You could have asked anybody that's looking at the world or global threats that we faced out there, and you would have gotten the same answer. You could have asked anybody in our intelligence community what they foresaw as the requirement, you would have gotten the same answer. So there was nothing remarkable about this.

"Usually we look at the other elements of national power-the political, the economic, information, whatever-that are going to be brought to bear. . . . That has not happened." What is remarkable about it is the military's role. The military traditionally is supposed to go out there and kill people and break things. And then from that, we determine how we're going to right the disorder or fix the conflict. Usually we look at the other elements of national power-the political, the economic, information, whatever-that are going to be brought to bear, much like George Marshall saw it at the end of the Second World War. That has not happened.

The military does a damn good job of killing people and breaking things. And we can sit here and design a better rifle squad, build a better fighter, a better ship, a better tank. And we're so far ahead of any potential enemy right now in those kinds of technological areas, in the areas of expertise of quality of leadership, and all the things that make military units great on the battlefield, that you wonder why we keep busting brain cells wondering how to continually do it better, or to transform into something else. I'm for transformation, if you define it as finding better remarkable ways to tap into technology, into our own brain power, into our training and education, creative ways of redesigning our organization to make our military even more efficient, more powerful on the battlefield. But that is not the problem and it hasn't been.

What is the role of the military beyond that point? Right now the military in Iraq has been stuck with this baby. In Somalia it was stuck with that baby. In Vietnam it was stuck with that baby. And it's going to continue to be that way. And what we have to ask ourselves now is, is there something that the military needs to change into that involves its movement into this area of the political, the economic, the information management? If the others, those wearing suits, can't come in and solve the problem-can't bring the resources, the expertise, and the organization-and we're going to continue to get stuck with it, you have one or two choices. Either they get the capability and it's demanded of them, and we learn how to partner to get it done, or the military finally decides to change into something else beyond the breaking and the killing.

What could this mean? It could mean civil affairs changes from just being a tactical organization doing basic humanitarian care and interaction with the civilian population, to actually being capable of reconstructing nations. That we will have people in uniform that are educated in the disciplines of economics, political structure, and we're actually going to go in and do that. We're actually going to be the governors. The CINCs that are the proconsuls will truly be proconsuls and given that authority to do it; that you will set regional policy. This is scary stuff. I know in the five-sided building if this echoes over there-they hate me anyway, but they probably would be shaking in their boots to think this. But either get the people on the scene that can do it, get them there when they need to be there, give them the resources and the training, create the interoperability that's necessary-or validate the military mission to do it. In my mind, that's the most important question we have now. This list of missions I gave you will not end here. I'm doing work for the State Department in the Philippines and in Indonesia. I'm working with breakaway separatist groups-the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the

Free Aceh Movement in the jungles-trying to bring them to the peace table. We're going to find more and more throughout a section of the world that runs from North Africa to the Philippines, from Central Asia to Central Africa; that we have got an entire region of the world that is chaotic and in turmoil, and we have just seen the beginnings of it. For decades more, we're going to be dealing with this problem. You're going to be fighting terrorists, you're going to be fighting against failed or incapable states that are sanctuaries for problems. You're going to try to rebuild nations. You're going to deal with crises and threats that threaten our people and our property. And it's all going to be mixed into one big bag.

It's going to be hard to define. It's not going to be clear cut. The enemy isn't going to be in formations. You know, we fought one idiot here, just now-Ohio State beat Slippery Rock 62 to 0. No shit! You know! But we weren't ready for that team that came onto the field at the end of that three-week victory, with great guys like [Marine Corps General] Jim Mattis and others that did remarkable things that we know our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coasties can do out there. We could be in danger of losing the sacrifices that gained us that three-inning lead in this game, right now on that battlefield.

Right now, in a place like Iraq, you're dealing with the Jihads that are coming in to raise hell, crime on the streets that's rampant, ex-Ba'athists that are still running around, and the potential now for this country to fragment: Shi'ia on Shi'ia, Shi'ia on Sunni, Kurd on Turkomen. It's a powder keg. I just got back from Jordan. I talked to a number of Iraqis in there.

And what I hear scares me even more than what I read in the newspaper. Resources are needed, a strategy is needed, a plan. This is a different kind of conflict. War fighting is just one element of it. Some people on this battlefield are different; they don't come in those formations and with that kind of equipment. And they come in many different forms. All their agendas are different.

"We are great at dealing with the tactical problems. . . . We are lousy at solving the strategic problems." How do we cope with that? On one hand, you have to shoot and kill somebody; on the other hand, you have to feed somebody. On the other hand, you have to build an economy, restructure the infrastructure, build the political system. And there's some poor lieutenant colonel, colonel, brigadier general down there, stuck in some province with all that saddled onto him, with NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] and political wannabes running around, with factions and a culture he doesn't understand.

These are now culture wars that we're involved in. We don't understand that culture. I've spent the last 15 years of my life in this part of the world. And I'll tell you, every time I hear somebody talk about this, or one of the dilettantes back here speak about this region of the world-they don't have a clue. They don't understand what makes them tick. They don't understand where they are in their own history. They don't understand what our role is in moving this away from a disaster for the entire world, and for us and our interests.

We are great at dealing with the symptoms. We are great at dealing with the tactical problems-the killing and the breaking. We are lousy at

solving the strategic problems; having a strategic plan, understanding about regional and global security and what it takes to weld that and to shape it and to move it forward. Where are the Marshalls today? Where are the Eisenhowers and the Trumans, that saw the vision and saw the world in a different way; and that understood what had to be done and what America's role is?

For the military, the implications are great. Right now we're wringing our hands about how many troops we have, how many divisions we have, what kind of rotation we're going to have to go through, whether we can get coalition allies or support to share the burden with us and the dangers. That has to be built from scratch. No longer does the military just sally forth and do the killing and the breaking. It has to be engaged, day in and day out, building these alliances and coalitions, training others, seen out there as a force of stability.

Right now the question that has to be answered is: does our military expand its role beyond the military aspect, or will we continue to stick it with this mission without the resources, the training, the cooperation from others or the lack of authority needed to get the job done? If you're going to make the military the governors out there, if you're going to make them the proconsuls, if they're going to be the humanitarians and the reconstructors, then legitimize it in some way. Because we can't go on breaking our military and doing things like we're doing now.

"We need to train our officers and leaders for a different kind of mission out there." This administration came in with an idea of transforming the military into something-God knows what-lighter, smaller, quicker, whatever. The bill payer was going to be ground units, heavy units. And now we have a shortage of exactly what we needed out there. Nobody listened to the CINCs. As a matter of fact, they got rid of our name; we couldn't even be called CINCs anymore. You know, we're no longer commanders-in-chief; we're combatant commanders, whatever the hell that means. But you're at the edge of the empire and you see it firsthand. And you know what the requirement is. And we keep screaming back here into the system that we need more. We need to train our officers and leaders for a different kind of mission out there.

I don't need someone who's only good at the killing and breaking, I need somebody that has the breadth of education experience and intellect to take on all the rest of these missions that he or she is going to be saddled with when the shooting stops or when it subsides to some level. They're the ones that are going to count on the ground out there, more than anything else.

And I think that's the issue in any discussion as to what happens to our military from here on out. Let me just finish by saying that we should be-as I know you've heard plenty of times here-extremely proud of what our people did out there, what our men and women in uniform did. It kills me when I hear of the continuing casualties and the sacrifice that's being made. It also kills me when I hear someone say that, well, each one of those is a personal tragedy, but in the overall scheme of things, they're insignificant statistically. Never should we let any political leaders utter those words. This is the greatest treasure the United States has, our enlisted men and women.

And when we put them into harm's way, it had better count for something. It can't be because some policy wonk back here has a brain fart of an idea of a strategy that isn't thought out.

They should never be put on a battlefield without a strategic plan, not only for the fighting-our generals will take care of that-but for the aftermath and winning that war. Where are we, the American people, if we accept this, if we accept this level of sacrifice without that level of planning? Almost everyone in this room, of my contemporaries-our feelings and our sensitivities were forged on the battlefields of Vietnam; where we heard the garbage and the lies, and we saw the sacrifice. We swore never again would we do that. We swore never again would we allow it to happen. And I ask you, is it happening again? And you're going to have to answer that question, just like the American people are. And remember, everyone of those young men and women that come back is not a personal tragedy, it's a national tragedy.

General Zinni has held numerous command and staff assignments with the U.S. Marine Corps that include platoon, company, battalion, regimental, Marine expeditionary unit, and Marine expeditionary force command. His staff assignments included service in operations, training, special operations, counter-terrorism and manpower billets. He has deployed to or served diplomatic missions in the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean, the western Pacific, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

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