



**Celebrating Women Leaders  
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Helene Cooper, *The New York Times*  
Elise Labott, *CNN*  
Missy Ryan, *The Washington Post*  
Margaret Warner, *PBS NewsHour*  
Elisabeth Bumiller, *The New York Times*

***Global Conflicts and Crises: The View from the Inside***

**Hon. Ann S. Stock:** For 19 years we've promoted women's leadership and voices in international affairs and I'm most appreciative that you're here today to support us in this mission. Let me start by introducing my fellow board members: Elisabeth Bumiller, our moderator; Dawn Calabia; Maxine Isaacs, our former chair; Isabel Jasinowski; Marlene Johnson—stand up and we'll applaud you at the end—Theresa Loar; Donna McLarty; Diana Negroponte; Mary Catherine Toker; and our president and fearless leader who helps us do so much, Patricia Ellis. [*Applause.*] I'd also like to introduce our Corporate Advisory Council Members: CH2M Hill, Coca-Cola, General Mills, and Exxon Mobil. If you all would stand and let us recognize you. [*Applause.*] And of course I want to thank our generous, generous contributors who are here with us. Our patron Maxine Isaacs—I almost said patron saint and she's that too—so Maxine Isaacs, our sponsors the Embassy of the State of Qatar and NAFSA: The Association of International Educators, our supporter Donna McLarty and special friend Elizabeth Stevens. Thank you so much. And a hearty welcome to the ambassadors, other diplomats, and government officials who are here with us. Also with us the ambassadors from Argentina, Greece, Liechtenstein, Oman, the Philippines, Ecuador, and Switzerland. [*Applause.*] And the Swiss ambassador is newly arrived so a particularly hearty welcome to you. And from the State Department are two Assistant Secretaries, Ambassador Anne Patterson and Roberta Jacobson. [*Applause.*] Your support is critical to the success of our programs, you participate in so many programs that help us throughout the year, so thank you. And a special hat tip to Associate Director Kimberly Kahnhauser who's usually standing in the back trying not to be recognized. She put together this program today and our programs throughout the year. And my final thank you goes to one of my favorite groups, the interns and volunteers. Believe me, they are the backbone of this program. So let's give these future leaders a hearty, hearty round of applause. [*Applause.*]

It's been an outstanding year for the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We've done 40 major events with the organization that we have. We started our Embassy Series on a cold winter's night at the Embassy of Finland—and as the Ambassador said, it was perfectly appropriate weather, it was starting to snow—and ended about two weeks ago at the Embassy of Japan. In between we traveled the world with the ambassadors of Spain, Singapore, Mexico, Liechtenstein, Ireland, New Zealand, and Italy. Each ambassador hosted an evening of discussion and learning in their residence and learn we did! We covered the world's hot spots, Africa, Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Russia and Ukraine, Turkey, Syria, Venezuela—Roberta, you caused some news this year, some big news—and more. We discussed critical issues in depth: ebola—and Helene, you spoke on that for us—cybersecurity, and refugees to name a few. We celebrated women's leadership with National Security Advisor Susan Rice, with women diplomats and world renowned journalists. We hosted briefings with government officials and convened a superb book and author series. Next year, look at that because there's some little hidden gems in there. We consistently made sure that women's voices are heard in all areas of foreign policy. Most importantly with the help of everyone in this room, we mentored the next generation of young women—over 500 of them and I think that that in itself

deserves a big round of applause. [Applause.] Our next mentoring fairs are February 4<sup>th</sup> at GW and February 26<sup>th</sup> at NYU in New York. Please join us, it's a wonderful night and it's a good chance to give back—and plus, it's fun. It's a couple hours, probably three hours out of your life that you will forever be glad that you did. So we're ending the year in a very good spot and again thanks to all of you. Now, my advice for the holidays is rest up and put your running shoes on when you come back. Here's the reason—next year is our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we intend to celebrate all year long with more excellent programming. So spread the word, tell everybody you know what we're doing and we will be hosting a women's leadership conference in June. For those of you who know us well, again thank you for all that you do for us. And for those who are joining for the first time please make sure that you come back soon. We look forward to welcoming you again. If you're not a member, join us today. There are cards on your table if you want to do a card or at your convenience go online and sign up. We'd love to have you be part of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. And if you're making contributions at year-end please think of and put in the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We'd really appreciate that. Together we can make a difference and ensure that women's voices are heard in all areas of foreign policy. One last reminder, there are cards on your table for questions for the panel. Please fill them out. Ask whatever question you'd like to ask, write legibly, and include your name and affiliation. Again, thank you for joining us to honor women journalists who cover foreign policy and national security. And now, enjoy your lunch and we'll be back shortly with the panel. Thank you very much.

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**Elisabeth Bumiller:** I hope you all enjoyed your lunch and we're now about to begin our program. Here we have these wonderful panelists, all friends of mine, competitors at one point or another, colleagues—a lot of miles on this group, all over the world. I'm going to introduce each of our panelists and then they're going to speak for four minutes about various topics that they've been assigned to talk about and that they know about really well and then I'm going to ask everybody one question—maybe two questions, we'll see—and then I'm going to open it up to you so send your questions up.

Our first speaker is Helene Cooper, Pentagon correspondent for The New York Times, with those great shoes and before this Helene was the White House correspondent of The New York Times, and before that she was the diplomatic correspondent covering Condoleezza Rice all over the world and before that she was an assistant editorial page editor. She has reported from 64 countries. Prior to joining The Times, she worked for twelve years at the Wall Street Journal where she was a foreign correspondent, a reporter, and an editor. She was born in Monrovia, Liberia and is the author of The New York Times Best Seller *The House at Sugar Beach: In Search of a Lost African Childhood*. If you haven't read it you really should read it, it is a fantastic book. It's a great page-turner too. She is currently at work on a biography of the Liberian President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson.

Our next speaker is Margaret Warner, the chief foreign affairs correspondent for the PBS NewsHour. She's also the lead correspondent for the NewsHour's overseas reporting unit which has taken her to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, China, Kenya, and Iran and that's just to name a few. Her coverage of the turmoil in Pakistan won her an Emmy Award in 2008. That same year she also won the Edward Weintal Prize for international reporting at Georgetown. She's worked at Newsweek, the Wall Street Journal, and recently stepped down as a member of the Yale Corporation and is now very involved with the Jackson Institute at Yale.

Next is Missy Ryan, who covers the Pentagon as part of The Washington Post's national security team. Missy and I used to take a lot of trips together with various defense secretaries. She joined the post earlier this year from Reuters. Before that she was posted in Baghdad where she was a correspondent and deputy bureau chief. She's also reported from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon, and Libya to name a few. She began her career working at an aid organization in Chile and as a journalist in Argentina and Peru. From 2012-2013, she took part in the White House Fellowship, which is a non-partisan public service leadership program.

Finally, we have Elise Labott, CNN's global affairs correspondent. Elise has reported from more than 75 countries and has interviewed and traveled around the world with five secretaries of state. Most recently, she has reported extensively on the conflicts in Syria, Ukraine, and Israel. Since joining CNN in 2000, she has also reported on the Arab Spring uprisings, Pakistan's state of emergency in 2007, then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's historic trip to Libya that same year, the war between Russia and Georgia, and the efforts of reconstruction teams in Afghanistan in 2010. Previously she covered the United Nations for ABC.

Okay, lots of expertise here. So Helene, why don't you start off? You're talking about Ebola, the transition at the Pentagon, and the Senate Intelligence Committee Report.

**Helene Cooper:** Four minutes? [*Laughter.*]

Thanks very much Bumiller. She didn't mention that she's actually my boss when she was doing this whole 'we've all been colleagues' thing. It's a pleasure to be here on stage with this awesome group of colleagues and competitors. And thanks much to the Women's Foreign Policy Group for having me here.

So each of the four of us have a specific area we're supposed to talk to you about and I'm supposed to talk about Ebola, the firing of Chuck Hagel, and the torture report in four minutes. And I think I've already used up three, so I'll talk really fast.

The Ebola story is probably the one that's closest to my heart because I'm from Liberia and I've been watching this unfold over the course of this year. It's the worst pandemic to ever hit my home country which has been through a lot to begin with and it was a really tough one to cover. I was trying to think of what I could say today that would leave you with something significant and raise issues also that we could discuss during the Q&A. I think what I wanted to talk about on Ebola is just looking at the way the media has covered this story. I think there's been some fantastic stand-out coverage from really courageous journalists who have gone into these countries and who have done incredible work going into these treatment units at great peril and risk to themselves. The Washington Post, The New York Times, NPR, the TV networks have all sent in people who, even if afraid, have been able to go in there and do this. But then I also think there's been some dreadful, dreadful coverage and that's sort of the Ebola scare here. You see both the worst and the best of journalism. The hysterical coverage of Ebola where the risk is practically non-existent here in the United States verses the really heroic coverage of Ebola where the risk is huge in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and West Africa and Guinea. And that I think has brought out both the best and worst in journalism but I also think that it plays a lot into the fact that at the end of the day we're all human beings. The hysteria of the Ebola coverage here taps into this basic human fight or flight instinct, this human fear that we all have and I think we really saw that this year with the coverage of Ebola.

I was in Liberia for a few weeks in September and October covering Ebola and it was probably one of the hardest stories I've ever covered in part because this is such a horrible, horrible disease that immediately makes pariahs out of the victims. If you're covering a hurricane or a tornado or some horrible natural disaster, the victims you're going there to help. But if you're covering Ebola, the minute somebody comes down with it they're immediately a pariah and you have to imagine a family member being told that the only way they're going to survive is if they don't pick up their crying baby or dying mother who has Ebola and it's such a horrible, horrible thing to have to say to any kind of human being. That was one of the things I really had to grapple with getting that across, this whole idea that the second you become sick you then become a pariah and people are immediately asking questions about what stupid thing did they do that they got it and you're basically left to die on your own.

I came back from Liberia—I've obviously used up like five minutes already—and then did a voluntary three week quarantine and I only mention that because Elise Labott and Bumiller—Elise sent me a care package of chocolate and cheese and Bumiller sent me wine. So I think I gained like ten pounds while I was quarantining. [*Laughter.*]

Then, Chuck Hagel got fired which was going from covering Ebola to this quintessential Washington story which has been the story of this Obama administration and Chuck Hagel's firing encapsulates that—that of a cabinet secretary who is kept on the outside of the White House's inner circle and never quite allowed in and after the midterms when they're looking for someone to cut loose, he was kind of the low-hanging fruit. That doesn't say there weren't issues with Chuck Hagel because I think he had a lot of problems articulating a clear administration strategy but whether or not that was because we didn't have a coherent strategy or whether he couldn't do it, I'll leave that up to you guys to decide. But it was a really interesting Washington story. This is something that has happened to President Obama time and time again where he's brought in these big name outsiders and they haven't really got along or haven't found a way to penetrate his core White House inner circle and so now we're looking at the fourth defense secretary to come in in the Obama term, Ash Carter—and I'm really looking forward to seeing how Ash Carter gets along with Susan Rice.

My time is up, which means I can't talk about the torture report, but we just had lunch anyway so there's no need to go into rectal feedings.

**Margaret Warner:** Yes, I'm only assigned two topics which is ISIS and Ukraine and these are both of course topics that the new Defense Secretary Ash Carter is going to have to deal with. Picking up on your theme Helene—by the way, I think the bravest kind of coverage is to go to an Ebola zone, seriously. For all of us who go cover wars, to go to a place in which the enemy and the danger is unseen, and you personally could be at risk in a way where you can take precautions but it's just not the same as you can in a war zone—I just want to say it's really gutsy. Really, really gutsy. *[Applause.]*

But ISIS, definitely—that is the big story, that is the big issue that the new secretary of defense is going to have to deal with in military terms and after not paying attention to what was going on in Iraq, really ever since, 2010 but certainly 2011, when we pulled all American forces out of there, it came as a shock, a shock to the American administration that some members of Saddam Hussein's former Baathist commanders and other members of Zarqawi's Al-Qaeda in Iraq had seen an opportunity in this ungoverned space in Eastern Syria and moved over there and established their very effective fighters—they really know what they're doing and it made common cause with some of the most jihadi elements there. And so, all of a sudden in June, as you all know, ISIS rolls over a third of Iraq and suddenly the United States is faced with having to defend both Irbil, Iraqi Kurdistan which was being emptied out—people were so scared—as well as all of Baghdad at the very least. So belatedly, the US has gotten involved and I was there, this time in Iraqi Kurdistan which I had never visited before because I thought it was so calm and you know, it's everything from being along the ISIS frontlines and seeing how very close it is and how much of a threat it is to Iraq's economy for example. I mean, that highway you used to be able to drive from Irbil to Baghdad, you now have to make a sharp left over a bunch of rocks because the ISIS flags are literally as far as that mirror, I mean they're right over there. Being in an armored car helps and being with the military helps, but still you could see how people are feeling extremely afraid, but again, the most touching and heart-rending parts of this kind of coverage is talking to people who have been driven from their homes and whether it was right around Irbil and they'd been driven out of certain parts of Iraq or going way up to the northwest portion where Syria, Iraq, and Iraqi Kurdistan all come together—it would be like over here for you all—where all these Yazidis fled and spending day with them. To have mothers say to you, "I wish I were dead. I wish I had stayed and let my Sunni neighbors kill me." That is really something. I met a pregnant woman living in—which is where a lot of these people are living—they're unformed or unfinished buildings, so they're all concrete but they have no fronts and 300, 400, or 500 people from a particular village, these were a lot from around Mosul were living there. This woman was seven months pregnant and she couldn't even get care because even though she was an Iraq she had fled without any of her papers, any of her documents, so she's one of those undocumented people. The human stories are really wrenching and there's nothing you can do. You can hand out all the water you want but these people are really, really desperate. I think the problem, analytically, is what the administration's got against ISIS is—they call it an "Iraq first" strategy—I know there are a lot of high level people in the administration who think it's an "Iraq only" strategy. That is militarily, all it is is trying to roll ISIS out of Iraq first and then deal with Syria. But in Syria, the United States is unwilling to take on getting rid of Assad as a military goal. There is a feeling that there is no either political leadership that is well respected

by all anti-Assad forces nor really in this Free Syrian Army that we sort of helped stand up but not really. They're going to have to create a whole new set of fighting forces. Their timeline is like a year and a half from now. There's no place for them to go. Very senior military officials said to me just last week, "the space for Syrian moderates has shrunk to almost nothing." So there's the big debate, as everybody on this panel knows, with the Turks, who are very willing to help, very willing to let their bases be used for assault operations by us and our NATO allies if we will help create some sort of safe haven. We can save the rest of that for questions.

Quickly on Ukraine, I'd just like to say that I think press-wise not enough attention is being given to Ukraine. I think that what Putin has already done in Ukraine—and no one knows what he's going to do next—really threatens the whole stability of the post-Cold War order that George H. W. Bush liked to talk about and this sense that countries don't violate the borders of other countries. It was on that basis that all these Eastern European countries had to settle all their border disputes and all their ethnic disputes to join the EU and particularly NATO. It really created a kind of zone of our own allies that we could count on. That is now all coming unglued. I mean if you talk to the Poles, or the Latvians, the Lithuanians, or the Estonians, they're not even sure NATO will defend them. And so I think there's a kind of challenge there that really threatens a sort of tenant of the international rules and I'm going to stop right there.

**Missy Ryan:** Thanks for being here today. It's a real pleasure. I'm going to make some very brief remarks focused around a trip I just got back from, which was Secretary of Defense Hagel's final trip overseas, sort of his swan song, and a chance for him to say goodbye to the troops who remain in Iraq and Afghanistan and then I'll make one brief comment about Libya, which I feel like is sort of an underappreciated challenge at the moment.

So first of all, Chuck Hagel stopped off in Afghanistan and as everybody here knows, the United States is ending combat operations after over 13 years of fighting the Taliban and it's gone down from a peak force, US force, of 100,000 in 2010-2011 to just 10,000 today. At the same time, the NATO force is withdrawing. But the Taliban is also continuing its insurgency and in fact there's been a spike of attacks in Kabul, and as we have a former ambassador of Pakistan here and as everyone knows, the situation in Pakistan has not changed to the extent where there's a belief that the safe havens that have enabled the Taliban to launch attacks into Afghanistan during the entire year—they're still around and that poses a problem worth thinking about, what the Afghan security forces will be able to do in 2015 and beyond. And I think in that context what's interesting to note is that the US military appears to be trying to maximize the wiggle room that it has within the constraints of the withdrawal plan that was established by President Obama and so I think that that's why in the past couple weeks we've seen a decision to expand the combat authorities for the remaining US force. That's something that The Times has done some great reporting on and there also was a decision—actually, while I was on this trip—an announcement from Secretary Hagel that there would be a larger than previously anticipated force in Afghanistan in 2015. It was only 1,000 troops, which doesn't seem like a big deal, but I think it's an indicator of how difficult it is to actually end this war and there's sort of a confrontation between the narrative that the administration has of drawing down in Afghanistan and ending the war after over 13 years and the reality of the conflict that is continuing just as it continued in Iraq after we left in 2011.

So after Afghanistan, we also visited Iraq and obviously that visit was focused around the Islamic State and the United States is sort of déjà vu in Iraq at this point. We're expanding the military footprint in Iraq, it's about 1,650 right now in terms of American troops on the ground and that could increase to about 3,000 in the near term. And the troops right now are limited to a non-combat role. They're advising, they're now going to be training a sort of leaner, meaner Iraqi army but all of this will take time to really make sure that the Iraqi forces are able to take on the Islamic State. While I was on the trip I also got to tag along on some meetings that Secretary Hagel had with Iraq's new national unity government and the message was pretty clear from them which is that they are appreciative of what they've gotten so far from the renewed American military involvement in Iraq but that they want more. They want more air power, they want more heavy weaponry, and I think it remains to be seen how much more the Obama administration and Congress will be willing to

support. And I think in Iraq as in Syria, the administration is trying to walk this fine line. Everybody wants to stave off the total catastrophe that a jihadi takeover of such a strategic country in the Middle East would be. At the same time, I think there's a very deep desire to avoid becoming embroiled in another messy conflict in the Middle East.

And finally I'll just mention Libya. And it's hard to overstate the chaos and instability that is gripping Libya and it's been about three and a half years since the revolution there began. There's two governments in Libya right now. There's the internationally recognized government that is ruling out of Tobruk. They were actually kicked out of the capital Tripoli. And there's a parallel government supported by Islamist militia in the capital Tripoli. In addition to that there are various armed factions and militias all across the country. All of this has impaired oil production, it's paralyzed the economy and the security situation is just terrible. And I think that to me this is the top underappreciated threat in the region and it doesn't seem at this point in time that there are direct American interests being threatened but I think that this is the one that we are going to look back in a couple years and think why didn't we try harder to do more to make sure that the collapse of Libya that is occurring doesn't continue.

**Elise Labott:** Thank you and thanks to the Women's Foreign Policy Group and Elisabeth and everybody for being here and it's a pleasure to be on this panel with four women that I respect so much and have been competitors, and traveling companions, and friends whose work I really admire a lot.

All the women touched upon foreign policy issues that are on Secretary Kerry's plate right now and I think one of the issues that we've seen different from Secretary Kerry than Secretary Clinton is his desire to dive right in and be seen as the person driving a lot of these issues. So whether it's on ISIS, he's trying to build a global coalition or whether it's on Ukraine, he's flying off to meet with Foreign Minister Lavrov and I think a lot of times, while there was a criticism of Secretary of State Clinton that she didn't want to get her hands really dirty, Secretary Kerry does want to get his hands dirty and get into the sandbox. But a lot of people have criticized that they're not really sure what he's making out of that—and does all this travel—and you see that he's on the road all of the time. Is he confusing movement in the skies and movement from capital to capital with forward movement? And are we seeing results? On some issues we're seeing results. We saw an agreement with the Russians on chemical weapons. We do see a global coalition on ISIS. We see a lot of things but I think one of the questions where it's so evident on this question of whether the Secretary's desire for this personal hands-on diplomacy is really productive is in the Middle East peace process. Secretary Kerry came to office with a single sales objective really, which was to solve the Middle East peace process. Some people said, "Oh, he just wants a Nobel Peace Prize," but I really do believe that he feels and he hears from his allies as he travels around the world that this conflict between Israeli and Palestinian is one of the main things that's really holding up the region from flourishing and developing and reaching it's true potential and is the source of all the extremism. I might beg to differ on that but that is where I think he's headed. He spent the first year and a half really trying to bring the parties together to get some kind of framework agreement. There was some progress in the sense that through all these talks the parties' positions became much clearer, what exactly those parties were looking for. But it's a double-edged sword because the more evident those positions became, the more evident it also became that they're very far apart. These parties despite years and years of talking are very far apart and so by April when the deadline was drawing to a close, then came the recriminations. I think the US pretty much laid down the gavel on blaming Israel a lot more because of the settlement activity, because of Prime Minister Netanyahu's—what they saw as intransigence on his part, his not making good on his promises. But I think also that the Palestinians didn't really come to the table ready to make those compromises and I also think that the parties were humoring Secretary Kerry for a good part of the time. They saw he was determined, they respected his efforts, and also they didn't want to be seen as the one as we say with the dead cat on the porch—they didn't want to be seen as the ones who broke down the peace process. And some people say when there's a peace process, this is good because even if there's no deal, it stops there from being a lot of violence. We did see during that year and a half that there was relatively little violence and when the peace process broke down you've seen since that time a lot of violence increasing since June. We saw the Israeli teenagers kidnapped, we saw the war in Gaza, and a spate of violence between Israelis and Palestinians. Lately, most

recently, this stabbing in the synagogue. A lot of people feel that did Kerry's efforts bring this peace process backwards? It certainly doesn't look very good right now, we have a really rocky period ahead. Israeli elections are coming on and you're facing a lot of action on the international stage. Prime Minister Netanyahu has called for early elections but you also have the Palestinians looking to go to the United Nations for some kind of action and you also have a lot of European nations very frustrated with Israeli settlement activity, the lack of a deal—they're recognizing a Palestinian state. There's going to be movement at the United Nations for a UN Security Council resolution that puts down a framework agreement and Secretary Kerry is in Rome right now on another meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu trying to calm the tensions but I do feel that the US is in for a period where they're also frustrated. And when you see all these international efforts going on, usually the US is the first to pick up the phone and call the French, call the British, saying listen this is not helpful, really go 150% in terms of offering this unequivocal political support for Israel. I don't think we can count on that anymore. Obviously, where security is concerned that's very sacrosanct but in terms of political support at the UN and elsewhere, I don't think it's the kind of 150% that we saw and as everyone was saying, we forget that these are people who are just looking to live side by side. When you get the recriminations on both sides you forget that these are people who are looking for peace and security and the right to self-determination.

I'll just talk briefly about Iran. We're coming off that extension of Iran talks on a nuclear deal. When the parties came to that final round of talks, it was already pretty evident that there was not going to be a deal, that the parties were just too far apart. The positions were just too set in stone. Diplomats say there was progress, Iran did come with ideas but not enough, not enough progress. The main sticking points remain, which is really around the pace and scope of the lifting of sanctions and how much of Iran's nuclear program, particularly its uranium enrichment program it's able to keep. The Iranians are talking about magic numbers—"Oh, we can reach this magic number"—but the US and its partners and the so-called P5+1 are not really so romantic about this. They say this comes to cold, hard math. How can you stave off Iran from what we call this break out capacity to develop a nuclear weapon? Some people say it's as little as three months. Right now the international community is looking to prolong that for about a year. And the Iranians kind of want to meet the international community in the middle, like, "Hey you say this, we say this, let's meet in the middle". But diplomats are saying, "No, you're the one who violated the international obligations, you need to do what we want to do". And so the question I think on the table is not whether they can arrive at some magic number, it's whether the Iranians are ready to make that strategic choice—to curb their nuclear program. Yes, they want to stave off sanctions. There could probably be a deal to do that. But unless they're ready to make that strategic choice to end it, I don't really think anybody is really optimistic about a deal and then lastly, will an Iranian nuclear deal lead to greater cooperation with the US and others on ISIS on the Syrian civil war? I would argue no. You see Iran taking some actions against ISIS, that's because ISIS is a threat to them and that's in their own interests. But you've seen the Supreme Leader put down US overtures for greater cooperation with that letter from Obama and overtures from Secretary Kerry and that's because there's a debate in Iran right now between the moderates such as President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Zarif who feel that Iran's future is moving towards opening up cooperation with the West and a rapprochement and hardliners who see that opening up is a threat to the survival of the regime. So with that I think we can open for lots of questions.

**Bumiller:** Thank you all. So I'm going to do just one question each and then open it up to the crowd. Helene, the torture report. Why did Obama walk such a careful line in his response? The White House said torture was terrible but they wouldn't answer the question, does torture not work? They wouldn't say they agree with that. What was the reason for that very careful line?

**Cooper:** Because at the end of the day you just saw President Obama and in some ways his CIA Director John Brennan really try to thread this needle. Just think about how it would look if after they threw the CIA under a bus at this point. President Obama is well aware that he still really needs the CIA. These are guys who took direction from higher ups and you're talking about morale problems there and there's also the issue that there's so many people at the CIA who were not on board with this. It's not as if the CIA is some monolith, it's not. You had a lot of push back as well and so at the end of the day, you see this torture report coming

out and you just saw President Obama distancing himself even though I thought the John Brennan press conference last week was a spectacular sort of televised event. To see how far he's come, some of us were joking that he looked like he'd been turned. So I thought that was really interesting and I just think that the administration reaction versus Brennan talking about this partisan—a guy who's appointed by a Democratic president—talking about this partisan report, that we've had enough disclosure on it, it was just really interesting to watch.

**Bumiller:** Margaret, what is the real reason the administration will not go after Assad?

**Warner:** Well one, the president doesn't want to get involved in another war as many of us have said—

**Bumiller:** Beyond that.

**Warner:** Beyond that, I think that there's an understanding that you've also got this whole new Cold War going on in the Middle East between Tehran and the Saudis and that if you start going after Assad the anti-ISIS coalition may even fracture. Certainly Iran and Russia still support Assad. Now there's a debate whether they're wedded to Assad versus the Assad regime. The administration is now currently looking at, could you really send a message—though I think they've been doing this for two years—to Alawites in the high command there, people in the government, that in fact we're not talking about getting rid of all of you, we're not making the same mistake Paul Bremer made in Iraq, we understand that you can make the country run, you've just got to help us get rid of this guy, there is a discussion about that. But there's a recognition that the US still needs Iranian and Russian support for a lot of other plates on the table. Meanwhile, the Saudis of course are incredibly upset that we're dealing with Iran on the nuclear arms talks. They very much want to get rid of Assad and so do many of the Gulf States and so it's just geopolitically incredibly complicated and finally it's not at all clear how you get rid of him.

**Bumiller:** Right, thank you. Missy, two quick questions—not hard, you're not going to be able to answer. [Laughter.] One of them is easy, to what extent is what happened in Iraq and the fact that we're building up again in Iraq, driving decision making about the size of the military force in Afghanistan, you know the US force—to what extent are the lessons learned from Iraq driving American policy in Afghanistan and the second question is, what does Afghanistan look like in ten years? That's the one you can't answer.

**Ryan:** On the first question, I think that very clearly you see a worry within the US military about this drop off period that we're entering in 2015, the end of combat operations. You're having this small residual force that actually goes on a pretty swift timeline from about 10,000 American troops at the beginning of 2015 to a military force of zero at the end of 2016. And I think there are a lot of people within the US military who felt very uncomfortable with the way things happened in 2011 when there was an effort and a plan originally to keep a residual force in Iraq. It didn't happen for reasons on both sides, for political reasons in Iraq and political reasons here in the United States. And so I think that it's very much driving this questioning that's happening about, what's a safe way to do this, within the parameters that have been set by the president and the American commander in Afghanistan, General Campbell, is pretty clearly suggesting that he may ask for some sort of slowing of the timeline for departing Afghanistan and potentially keeping a residual force larger for longer.

And on the second question, what does Afghanistan look like in ten years. Well, let me just consult my crystal ball. But I think that Afghanistan has been in a state of some sort of civil war, civil conflict for at least 30 years and I don't think there's any reason to think that this is going to end now. All of the drivers of the conflict remain as I said before, the safe havens in Pakistan, the proxy war between India and Pakistan within Afghanistan and then the just sort of poverty and sort of regional factions and competition that happens within Afghanistan. I think that there's some things that I would hope cannot be rolled back, such as the important rights and protections that have been gained for Afghan women over the last 13 years and the increase in life expectancy. I think it went from something like 50 years at the time of the American and NATO invasion in 2001 to like 63 in the course of 13 years, which is pretty amazing, so hopefully those gains



can be protected. But I think it's a pretty safe bet that there's going to be some degree of ongoing insurgency there for the next decade.

**Bumiller:** Elise, you talked about the difference in the two sides of the Iran potential deal. What possibly could a deal look like? You know, that everybody would agree to?

**Labott:** Well, I think that a deal would preserve—anybody that says that Iran is going to walk away from this deal without some kind of enrichment capacity I think is fooling themselves. Iran is not going to sign a deal that doesn't give them some kind of face-saving, and even more than that, a significant enrichment program. The questions really is—can they come up with a number? So I say the deal looks like this: Iran ships out a majority of its already enriched uranium stockpile, which is considerable, to Russia where Russia would reprocess it—we won't get too technical about it—they'll reprocess it and send it back to Iran for nuclear use. Iran is either going to have to either get rid of but more likely dismantle and make ineffective it's some 19,000 centrifuges, so that it cannot enrich any further uranium. There is an Arak heavy water plant that produces plutonium. Iran would need to make that ineffective, disable it, and then there need to be some pretty heavy spot inspections by the international community. Whereas one of the concerns is that Iran is not able to develop a military program and that's one of the—military dimension to its nuclear program—that's one of the aspects that Iran has not been able to deal with yet, so that question isn't necessarily on the table right now, but they're going to have to come up with something with the IAEA, and then the sanctions are going to have to be lifted in order for this deal to work. Iran needs to get something out of it and so sanctions are going to need to be lifted and the question is, what is the pace and scope according to what Iran is already able to do? And then the question is, how long is this deal for? So, Iran is balking at the idea that it could be for ten years, but then after ten years you're right back to where you are again, so I don't think that this deal is going to permanently deal with the Iranian question. I think it's just going to kick the can down the road as we say.

**Bumiller:** Thank you, I've now got questions from the audience. Here's two that are similar for Helene. The first one is how do Secretary Kerry and Susan Rice get along? [*Laughter.*] The second one is, was Ash Carter eager to take the DoD job? Do you think he realizes the difficulty of getting his point of view across if it contradicts Susan Rice of the NSC?

**Warner:** Oh, you asked for this, Helene. [*Laughter.*]

**Cooper:** The first question—I'd love to defer that to Elise but I'll take a whack at it—you know, there's been a lot of discord between the NSC at the White House and what they call their vaunted interagency process. We have some assistant secretaries of state here, I would love to have them take a whack at this but without saying anything about whether John Kerry and Susan Rice get along with each other—I have not spoken with either of the two of them about the other—I have however spoken to lots of people within the administration both on the NSC side, the State Department side, and the Pentagon side, and I can tell you that there is certainly a belief outside of the NSC and even within the NSC that the process there is very, very difficult, that it's dysfunctional and that there's not necessarily a lot of love lost between Ms. Rice and her cabinet secretaries. Ash Carter definitely wanted this job, this is a job he's wanted, I think, for a long time. He wanted the Hagel job two years ago and he was passed over for it. He is for many, many reasons—there are a lot of reasons why for career defense specialists like Ash Carter, this is a great job because you don't get too many shots at Secretary of Defense. A lot of people will say that there are only two years left in the administration, why would anybody take this job? But for somebody who's come in through the Pentagon—Ash Carter practically grew up at the Pentagon—this is sort of the ultimate and I don't think he's going to be a push over. I don't think he's somebody who is going to roll over. It was really cool during his nomination ceremony—Hagel didn't show up at the ceremony—but Obama said nice things about him and then afterwards when they're all milling, talking to people in the crowd, Ash Carter goes straight up to Susan Rice and the two of them do this big, huge bear hug for like ten seconds. I was counting it and it was just sort of amazing to watch, and you're like wow, this is going to be really interesting. He's very, very smart and I think he's very secure and confident in his own opinions and in his view of what should be done in a way that

Chuck Hagel was not seen as being necessarily that assured. I think, if the White House was hoping that they were going to get somebody who would roll over and play dead. I think they're in for a surprise.

**Warner:** The only thing I'd add to that—which, excellent and personal—is that what you've really seen is this tremendous growth in the size and power of the NSC in the Obama administration, and it really started under Jim Jones when Tom Donolin was his deputy but speaking to someone who works for the director of national intelligence—I'll leave it at that—who has returned to the administration at a very senior level, he said it's stunning the difference. We used to deal mostly with the secretaries and assistant secretaries of state and defense. And he said now we spend most of our time dealing with the directors of Middle Eastern whatever it is. And so that is sort of the big picture and I don't know if anyone, it's gone from something like 30 professionals to they've now got some 600 people at the NSC—so it's like a mini foreign policy and defense operation.

**Labott:** I'll just quickly say—don't forget that Susan Rice wanted the job as secretary of state and with the whole Benghazi issue, it kind of fell through her hands. I think John Kerry wanted this job for his whole life and now that he's got it, he does not want to be dictated to by Susan Rice. There is no love lost there, I mean he barely listens to anything the White House says anyway. [*Laughter.*] So I don't really think that he's listening to Rice but what I will say in line with what Helene and Margaret are saying is you also saw stories about Secretary Kerry in that he was out of favor with the administration and how Hagel was out of the administration and I think what the White House was doing in many ways was trying to deflect from the problem that the problem is at the White House. The problem is within the NSC process and there isn't anybody in any other agency that will tell you otherwise and there are questions about whether—as Helene said—whether Secretary Hagel was the right man for the job and whether he was up to the task and able to articulate a thoughtful strategy for the Defense Department but if this administration thinks that getting rid of Secretary Hagel or kind of bashing Secretary Kerry behind his back—which I think is you know, this is not me talking from a State Department affect, but I just think is unprofessional and extremely unfair given that he's carrying a lot of water for this administration. I think they're fooling themselves if that's going to cure the ills of this administration's foreign policy. The problem is that the president is relying on a very small coterie of aides and not really paying attention to what his cabinet secretaries and commanders in the field are telling him and that's where the problem lies, not with Secretary Kerry or Secretary Hagel—it's at the White House.

**Bumiller:** I've got a question for you too. Sort of eastern European questions. What more can the US do to protect Ukraine from dismantlement by Putin and for history, was it a mistake to encourage former communist bloc, eastern European countries to join NATO?

**Warner:** Well those are two pretty hefty ones. In the interest of time I buzzed over Ukraine in one sense—I mean, there are two fronts. There's a fighting front in the east which the UN said today now 4,500 people have been killed, 1,300 just since the ceasefire but the real issue is in Kiev itself. And this new government, I mean it's in desperate financial shape and so the US has been giving—quote—“non-lethal aid”. A national security official in Ukraine told me a month or two ago, “only two-thirds of our guys have bullet proof vests”. It's pathetic. Now there is a move afoot to up that, to give some sort of lethal assistance but the US is still highly reluctant to give true military, offensive military, or even aggressive defensive military equipment. Nobody knows what Putin's intent is—there's two theories. One is he just wants to create this frozen conflict so that Ukraine is never attractive enough for the EU to join the EU because it will have these unresolved conflicts and so he's already accomplished that. The other is he wants to establish a land bridge all the way from Russia down along the coast to Crimea because Crimea is just like dying on the vine and we're going into winter and it's going to be very tough to get supplies across. So nobody knows and anyone who says they know—there's many theories. The second one was—

**Bumiller:** Was it a mistake to—

**Warner:** That is a roiling debate. Did the US kind of get a little too corky, a little too full of itself and NATO that during the Yeltsin years which were so tempestuous in Russia and in which Russia was so weak to go

ahead and allow all these not only former eastern European countries—which after all had been countries like Poland and Hungary—but former republics like the three Baltics and to take the border of NATO right up to the Russian border. And you hear Putin talk about this, you know he thinks so. History will never know—we will never know from history—it will remain one of those conundrums and you know, you'll have some on one side and plenty of other people on the other and I'll leave it at that because I mean, I can't say. I was heavily involved in covering that because I was the diplomatic correspondent at Newsweek but the feeling was Russia was fine with that—they never raised a peep and you know Putin's saying—"yeah, well that was the wrong Russian you were talking to".

**Bumiller:** Let me ask of this of Missy, but I want all of you to jump in—the question is when has your gender been an advantage as you've covered global issues? I would also ask, when has it been a disadvantage? And I think I'll ask you because of all the military coverage.

**Ryan:** Well I think that in my experience it's been an advantage in certain situations that may not be obvious, like reporting in Afghanistan for example. As a woman often you have access to people you can interview that you wouldn't have if you are a man—for example I could go in and interview, if there was somebody in a village I could interview them—the wife and the family and the women who are in a different part of the house. A male reporter wouldn't be able to do that. It's sort of a weird situation as a Western reporter, female reporter, in a place like Afghanistan or a country like Yemen where it's often unclear at what times does the local gender norms apply to you and when they don't but I certainly have found it to be an advantage in that kind of situation. The obvious disadvantage—I don't think it has come up for me so much like in doing imbeds with the military or anything like that. I just think that the disadvantages are sometimes the feeling of vulnerability that you have if you're out and covering protests or the perception that you might be more vulnerable as a female reporter in a conflict zone or in a place where there's lots of protests going on because of the possibility of sexual assault which of course doesn't only happen to women but I think there's a perception that women can be more vulnerable to that and so that sort of feeds this sense of risk that we have but you know it's something that I think we keep in mind and try to train and be aware of and there's only so much you can do.

**Bumiller:** Anybody else before I ask the last question?

**Labott:** I'll just quickly give an example—I think largely it's been an advantage because of the reasons that Missy says and also because a lot of times men feel like "oh, they're just talking to some young woman and they don't really know what they're saying" and the next thing you know you're like "thank you very much!" [Laughter.] One area where it worked at a disadvantage was in Israel when I was covering the story of the religious and what their role with the army would be and I went into Yeshiva and I interviewed a rabbi and he kept going like this and going like this and this is all on camera and he wouldn't even look at me in the eye and I thought maybe he had a disability or a handicap or something and I said to my cameraman—"was that weird"? And he said "no, you're a woman and he doesn't want to look at you". Because the religious in Israel. So there is like a segregation in some areas. I experienced it in Israel, I experienced it in Libya where they try to segregate the men and the women. But I find largely that it's not a huge issue.

**Warner:** I think that summed it up.

**Bumiller:** Last question, what will be President Obama's foreign policy legacy?

**Cooper:** The White House thinks that the biggest thing—they really want the Iran deal. I think if you ask the White House, what are the big things that you think that you will have gotten, they will say Iran and they believe that they can get it. Beyond that, speaking as somebody from the peanut gallery—you know I don't know the answer to that. I think in many ways the Obama administration is going to be—if you're measuring it against the George W. Bush administration, if you look at the sort of the Hippocratic Oath of 'first do no harm' I don't think you're going to be seeing because of President Obama a lot of good things that we see now are happening in the world that people point to that may not have happened if President Bush had not

gone into Iraq—I don't think you're going to see that sort of thing coming out of Obama. But I also don't think you're going to necessarily see that huge—a great narrative coming out that lays out a coherent foreign policy path that this president put the country towards. It's much more about minimizing the risk for the United States and not necessarily leaving it in a worse place than he found it.

**Warner:** And picking up on that, I would say that the other two things that President Obama promised when he ran for office—he wanted to get us cleanly out of Iraq and then he said he had to shift focus to Afghanistan and get us cleanly out of Afghanistan and neither of those will be true. And I think the criticism of President Obama's administration or of him will be that he in trying to do no harm and to extricate the United States from being an occupying power—and I do think that will be a lasting legacy. I think Bob Gates said it first, former Secretary of Defense, when he said any defense secretary who recommends to an American president that we should do another land war or occupation should have his head examined. He of course being a Republican, but President Obama, I think, has made clear that as far as he's concerned is not going to be US policy but what we haven't seen from him is what replaces that? In fact the two things that he hoped he would be able to point to he's not going to be able to point to. They'll both be left as messy conflicts for the next person to solve.

**Ryan:** I think on the military front what I see as a really important component of the legacy will be this shift from—as you all were saying—these large on-the-ground nation-building counterinsurgency/ occupations that we had in Iraq and Afghanistan, to this new model which is largely a focus on sort of this new counterterrorism partnership where it's a very small number of troops involved with supporting foreign forces, foreign special forces to help them combat their own counterterrorism or militant problems at home combined with a heavy use of drones and occasional US special forces raids and that's sort of at the very other end of the spectrum and I think it's important to note that we haven't really been able to take stock yet of what the long term and medium term consequences of that will be. And I think it's worth noting that the jury is out—we just don't know how that'll actually play out on the ground.

**Labott:** I think all that's right, particularly what Missy was saying—I think that Helene is right when she says that an Iran deal could be the legacy although it's far from clear. I think they'll probably get something whether that's going to be enough to stave off Israel and the consequences of that I'm really not sure. But I do think unfortunately that a lot of the legacy of President Obama is that he'll be dogged by these foreign policy crises that we're going to see to the end which is ISIS—are going to really lose Iraq in a major way or will Iraq once again become Obama's war—we're leaving with a cold war with Russia that was worse than when we came in. I mean one bright spot is Burma. The administration re-engaged Burma, lifted the sanctions—things aren't 100% good but they're going in the right direction but I think a lot of, unfortunately, the president's foreign policy pledges in the campaign to engage allies—sorry—to engage enemies like Cuba, like Iran, like North Korea—Burma was bright spot—unfortunately that doesn't seem to be materializing in the pivot to Asia. You know, I think because of all these other foreign policy crises the administration hasn't been able to put as much emphasis on the Asian question as it wanted to.

**Bumiller:** Thank you all very much. [*Applause.*]

**Patricia Ellis:** What an incredible program we did hit lots of hot spots. Maybe we didn't get to everyone but they'll have to come back again soon because they were all so really, really fantastic. So I want to thank Elisabeth first for doing a great job as moderator, for her excellent questions—I want to thank the audience for your great questions. So Elise, Helene, Missy, and Margaret—from listening to you we've all gotten a lot smarter and definitely we hope to have you back soon.

So on behalf of the group, if you could just step forward because we're going to give you a little certificate of appreciation. So please accept this award for being a role model for the next generation of women covering foreign affairs and national security. Thank you all for coming. This concludes today's lunch. It was wonderful to see you, we hope to see you in January.