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# Security Issues for the U.S. Military in the 21st Century— Why Alexander the Great Is Still Relevant and Pirates Remain a Problem

AN INTERVIEW WITH ADMIRAL WILLIAM J. FALLON

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*In January 2009, Forum editors interviewed Admiral Fallon about the a range of security issues, including threats posed by pirates, strategic cooperation with China, Middle East policy, and advice for the Obama administration concerning the current challenge in Afghanistan.*

**FLETCHER FORUM:** *The Department of Defense counters a broader range of threats today than it ever has in the past. These new threats include those posed by regional and global terrorist organizations, weapons proliferation networks, and even pirates off the Horn of Africa. At the same time, however, it still must be prepared for major theater war and conventional conflict as well. How can the Department of Defense (DOD) retain its superior conventional warfare capabilities and, at the same time, expand its competence and capacity to counter these newer threats?*

**ADMIRAL WILLIAM J. FALLON:** First of all, I do not think that there is too much “new” here. Most of these threats have existed for as long as I have been associated with the Navy and armed forces, but the reaction to the challenges has varied over time, and clearly there have been periods when we have emphasized countering certain threats over others—that is just the reality. In the last several years, we have had to deal with major challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the skill sets that were most needed there were the ones that got the attention of people, the emphasis, and the resources.

There has been an unusually long period of increased DOD budgets ever since 9/11, unusual in the sense that these periods usually are on a cycle that lasts only a couple of years and then they will change and go in another direction. Since 9/11, however, there has been a sustained financial boost to the armed services. Of course, most of this has been consumed

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by operations, by fielding forces and purchasing the equipment needed by troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. It’s been heavily skewed toward ground forces, so the Army and Marine Corps have used the bulk of these resources.

As the armed services face the future, they will have to balance current and long-term needs. This is sometimes very challenging, particularly when funding decreases. There is also the reality that our economic situation has a lot to do with things and, certainly, Congress—the ultimate decider in terms of what resources are given—plays a major role. How to

do it? It requires a lot of help internally among people in the services. Balancing the current and long-term funding is made all the more difficult because each service is responsible for only a part of the pie and is a strong advocate for support and resources to those particular challenges or areas of responsibility which it believes are most important.

As I see it, we have a couple of things facing us in the near term. We still need a tremendous amount of resources to sustain the large number of forces that are deployed overseas. Until those numbers come down, this will be a major factor on the operations’ budgets of the services. While the Army and Marine Corps have attracted a lot of the current revenue, the Air

Force and the Navy have been making do with what they had. They have been treading water in some respects, not able to make substantial investments in their future capabilities. This will present some real challenges because many of these future capabilities are expensive. There is never going to be enough money (there never has been) to satisfy all the desires. There will be some difficult decisions to be made about how much continues to be spent on near-term costs, and how much is invested in future capabilities. It may be that some things will continue to be deferred—and that is a risk, and you have to balance risks.

My view is that there is an impulse to continually upgrade everything, a natural tendency, as things wear out, to replace what has become obsolete with something new and which, of course, is more expensive. That's the way things go. But again, this will entail difficult choices. I suspect, as the next couple of years unfold, people are going to be challenged to really think of innovative ways to try and maintain some kind of balance between near- and longer-term demands.

I'll use an example with which I am very familiar, one from my own experience. When I was a younger officer, I flew a particular type of aircraft that had the ability to carry almost any kind of ordnance in the Navy inventory. For each pilot to be top-notch proficient with every weapon was a major challenge. It would take a great amount of effort and resources: money, weaponry, training, time, and a lot of expertise on the part of people. Even so, you cannot do everything at the same level of competence. At various levels in the armed services and among the operational commands, they will have to make choices about what will be prioritized for a high level of current competence and which things can be kept at a lower level of readiness. This is a continuing process that needs careful attention.

*FORUM: Possibly including even major funding shifts?*

**ADMIRAL FALLON:** If you look at the way resources have been applied historically, you will find that major .....  
shifts in funding among services are rare. It is just so difficult because of .....  
the bureaucracy and other factors that come to play here, but there are some .....  
trend lines. The most important and .....  
the most expensive component of all .....  
military capabilities is people. Now the .....  
focus tends to be on hardware, but, in reality, it's people. The draft ended

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decades ago, and ever since that time, the incremental costs of personnel have been increasing. In the old days it was relatively inexpensive; that's certainly not the case now. Any consideration of increasing the number of people in the services, which has been underway now for a couple of years within the Army and Marine Corps, needs to be looked at very carefully because of expensive personnel costs.

***FORUM:** What do you envision to be the greatest challenges to America's naval pre-eminence in the 21st century?*

**ADMIRAL FALLON:** One of the challenges, certainly, is going to be the ability to continue to fund and resource the force at anywhere near current levels. A country cannot create a naval force overnight; it takes a long time to engineer, design, construct, and put these vessels into service.

It's worth looking at a little recent history. Since the end of the cold war, there has been constant debate about the optimal size and composition of our fleet. Some people have suggested that big vessels are very expensive and maybe we could use smaller ones instead. Some have argued that aircraft carriers are obsolete: too old, too big, and too vulnerable. Despite these arguments, however, these vessels have proven to be quite adaptable and highly prized. The United States has used these carriers in many ways, some not as originally intended—in Haiti in 1994, for example, to move Army troops and helicopters. Aircraft carriers are very large, very fast, and have a lot of space to change out various loads. They are exceedingly useful in my experience. Whenever there is a real crisis somewhere in the world, the first questions asked are usually: "Where are the carriers? And how fast can they get here?"

In my most recent experience as Commander of U.S. Forces in the Pacific and Middle East, I had to balance these demands. I found that it was very difficult to keep people away from aircraft carriers whenever a situation intensified because they are so flexible and you don't have to worry about imposing on the sovereignty of other countries.

Over the past twenty years, the number of U.S. ships has steadily decreased. The Navy's challenge is going to be to identify a red line below which the U.S. Navy loses its functional ability to respond to crises. We tend to think in terms of ones and twos. But if you get into a conflict that requires sustained capabilities, you may need several to be able to conduct the mission while you have multiple simultaneous challenges.

The fact is that the numbers are down significantly from the cold war days, and the Navy is struggling to put a foundation under this so they can continue to have an effective, around-the-world capability.

The Air Force has a similar problem in that they have a force of equipment that has been around for quite a while that needs to be replaced. For example, there has been a long-running debate on how best to retire the tanker force, aerial refueling, and airplanes that have been flying for decades but which now must be replaced because the capability is an essential requirement.

The United States needs to modify, upgrade, or replace lots of capabilities. This requires large capital investment. So how do you accomplish such a task? I think this is probably the biggest challenge. There are people who say, “You have not used that in a while, and so I guess it isn’t relevant anymore.” We cannot predict

the future, so we have try to maintain a reasonably balanced, responsive force. The challenge is having enough capability to deal with problems that are guaranteed to come up.

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**FORUM:** *Do you foresee that the U.S. Navy will have to change its role in order to deal with these challenges?*

**ADMIRAL FALLON:** No, I do not anticipate much role changing. The U.S. Navy has traditionally forward deployed to distant waters for several reasons. First, to maintain a visible presence and signal of U.S. interest, engagement, and commitment in the regions. In specific areas, such as the Far East, we have certain security arrangements—for example, with Japan. Following World War II, the Japanese accepted a constitution that renounced war, though they organized a relatively small self-defense force. The strategic arrangement was that the United States would provide for the defense and security of Japan, and this arrangement has been in place for more than half a century now. The most visible signs of this are the forward deployed forces that are based in and around the Japanese islands.

The Japanese government and people pay about 75 percent of the cost of all of these forces—not just the basic costs, but the personnel, the operating, the family-support costs, etc. We have about 35,000 people, mostly Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps forces, based on the Japanese islands.

Several years ago when I was in Honolulu at U.S. Pacific Command, I took part in discussions between the U.S. government and Japan to

review our strategic posture and relationship. In the end, the two sides reached agreement to continue with many details of the previous arrangement including the security umbrella that the United States provides for Japan. However, there were some changes including reducing our troop footprint in the southern part of Japan, and moving some of that force to Guam. The Japanese agreed to fund a significant portion of the cost of moving those forces and to reassemble capability there. By doing this we will reduce encroachment pressure on southern Okinawa, which has grown significantly in population, but still maintain a robust forward deployed force in the Western Pacific.

We keep our forces in Japan not just as a visible presence but also to be able to react quickly to a crisis in that part of the world. In large measure, we have been quite successful. If you look back at the past 50 or 60 years, things have been generally stable in the region. Our presence there has been well received by the Japanese, with some local exceptions. If you were to solicit opinions from the countries in the region in which our troops are stationed, with very few exceptions, you'd find that most people are pleased and want us to continue to serve there.

A third key objective of this forward presence is to operate together with forces of other countries. This serves multiple purposes. It is a visible sign of commitment to the area, but it is also a way to work with and improve the confidence of smaller countries in the capacity of their own forces. In a perfect world, each country would be responsible for its own security and we would just help out as need be, but that is not always the case, as some countries have not demonstrated the necessary capabilities to deal with their security challenges.

Another reason for the forward deployments is to make sure that sea lanes stay open and secure. We haven't had a real problem with this on a large scale, but the piracy issue brings this to the fore—as some issues do not seem to go away. Piracy is a challenge that the United States had to face two centuries ago. Is addressing this issue important? Yes, because the pirates are operating very close to the main sea lane through the Suez Canal and other nearby major sea lanes for oil and gas coming out of the Gulf. This piracy has a chilling effect on commerce and it has a negative influence on the price of traded goods.

Several years ago we had to deal with a piracy problem in the Strait of Malacca, which is very heavily traveled. About 60 percent of the world's cargo passes through this waterway. In response to repeated instances of piracy, the insurers of the world decided to charge wartime insurance rates on all shipping. This was a bit unfair, because the pirates were not challenging the big

ships; rather, they would prey on the smaller, more vulnerable vessels. Nonetheless, it took several years of engagement, with the United States playing a major role, working with countries of the region (not to have us address the problem alone) by helping them develop their own capabilities. We acted as a broker to pull these countries together, to encourage them to work together—which in many cases they were disinclined to do—so that they could be more effective. Eventually we got a handle on this. Incidents of piracy dropped significantly, and the insurance rates came back down. As a result, shippers were happy and consumers were happier because prices for all these goods went down. But the point is that piracy is a continuing problem. We need forces to go out there to deal with it. Usually these things occur in places that are loosely, poorly, or un-governed. Somalia is an example of a country that has had a dysfunctional government for years.

We need forces to be able to deal with these issues. Challenges will come and go. But, one of our key national objectives is for forces to remain forward in these areas. It doesn't do us much good to have a large fleet of ships, or aircraft, that just sits at home, waiting for something to happen.

*FORUM: What do you think the United States' role should be in fighting piracy?*

**ADMIRAL FALLON:** We are the de facto leaders when it comes to security in virtually all areas of the world, and certainly in this area the commander of the U.S. Fifth Fleet and his staff have been organizing and coordinating the contributions of other countries. Some of these countries have volunteered their help, while we had to ask others to join the effort. As with many security initiatives around the world, we find ourselves in the position of organizing and using our capabilities to encourage international participation.

At the same time, the piracy threat presents opportunities for international cooperation and engagement. For example, the Indian Ocean region has many points of friction; the tension between India and Pakistan is a noteworthy example. Yet operations at sea can facilitate engagement between countries. Participants are spared worry about territorial sensitivities and meddlesome onlookers. For these reasons, maritime operations are sometimes easier than land-based situations. Pirates off the coast of Somalia—who has an interest? India certainly does because many of their small cargo vessels have been hijacked. Pakistan is also interested because this is happening a lot closer to them than to India, and the Pakistanis are interested in demonstrating their capabilities in the region. Well, this might be an opportunity to have India and Pakistan work together at sea on something constructive that might otherwise be unlikely to occur.

As for cooperation with the Chinese navy, there are a couple of issues. First, the United States has tried to engage the Chinese navy in bilateral training with very modest success to date. To a certain degree, the requisitions for joint operations are not new because the U.S. armed forces engage with countries all over the world in exercises, operations, exchanges, and so forth. But, this has been a very slow process with China: there has been only one exercise to date between the two navies. It took a long time to organize, and although we have a long way to go, it was a start.

The Chinese proposal to send a ship out to the Indian Ocean for anti-piracy patrols represents a second issue. The execution of this proposal will be both interesting and challenging—particularly in sustaining a vessel away from China's home waters.

Despite challenges, the prospect of China's participation in a multi-lateral effort still represents an opportunity. The United States has extensive experience sustaining ships on distant stations, and there are interesting contributions from other countries. Japan, for example, has operated a refueling force in the Indian Ocean since 9/11 that has been used by many countries to sustain their operations. It appears that Japan might be kind enough to make this fuel available to China too, which is no small thing. So, can the Chinese operate off the Horn of Africa? That remains to be seen, but I would welcome an initiative by the Chinese to engage in operations or training with us.

Success in settling the piracy issue will almost certainly depend on U.S. leadership. My personal expectation is that sooner or later we will have to go to the source to take care of the pirates. This problem is not going to get better with time—these things usually fester, so eventually we'll have to go deal with it. There are risks when you contemplate working in someone else's territory, but Somalia is a land that is basically ungoverned and at some point we will have to take some action to get rid of the problem.

These pirates are being paid handsomely in ransom money. I would postulate that this money is not being used for the betterment of the Somali people to alleviate hunger and suffering. Instead, it is probably being used for things that are destabilizing and unhelpful, things that prolong the country's insecurity. These pirates are criminals who have robbed and murdered, and the extent to which they are allowed to revel in their success, just adds to Somalia's aura of instability. We will have to deal with it sooner or later.

*FORUM: Transforming Somalia may take a generation. Are there any shorter-term fixes to the piracy problem?*

**ADMIRAL FALLON:** In my experience, you have to get rid of an affliction.



This one has become a chronic problem. Solving the problem of pirates is not going to save Somalia or turn it around, but it has got to be dealt with. Where there is crime, you have to get rid of the criminals. We have a lot of things going on in the Middle East, and the extent to which the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan get cleaned up will allow us to focus more of our attention on other issues, including this particular problem. But if the problem continues to manifest itself—in terms of more ships being seized, more people being put at risk, and the cost of doing business increasing—I suspect that the scales will tip and action to eliminate or severely damage the pirates will be taken.

*FORUM: Changing gears a little, what is Central Command's role in Lebanon?*

**ADMIRAL FALLON:** I traveled to Lebanon last year and was the first senior military officer in several decades to visit the country. I believe Lebanon is also an important country for a number of reasons. It is certainly in a critical geographic position and it is one place in which the United States has been seen as an entity trying to help the Lebanese population. We certainly haven't done much physically in recent years, but it is difficult because of the neighborhood and the political realities on the ground in Lebanon. If we could help to increase the capability of the Lebanese security and law enforcement forces to be able to deal with their internal problems, I think many people in the world would be pleased. Of course, some will disagree, some like it just the way it is.

The Lebanese armed forces (LAF) were given a boost when they responded positively to a terrorist problem in the Nahr-al-Bared refugee camp. The LAF routed the insurgents, and when faced with that problem they showed that the political leadership and the military had the courage to actually deal with it and be successful. That invigorated them.

There have been additional positive developments, at least in terms of military presence, such as the Syrians pulling out of Lebanon. This is a good start, but many political and security challenges remain, particularly the negative role of Hizbollah. In addition, Lebanon would be a lot better off with less meddling from the outside. We can be helpful and play a role there, too. If the Lebanese government were to become stronger and take more responsibility and control of its own destiny, the Israelis would certainly be happier, and it would take some pressure off that volatile border.

We have yet to figure out exactly how we are going to deal with the Syrian regime. We have a longtime ally to the north in Turkey—and we will continue to work with the Turks to provide stability in the region—but

I envision Lebanon as a key geographic location. It has traditionally played an outsized role relative to its territorial size and population. Lebanon used to be the financial capital of the Middle East, and there were many who had a vision of Rafik Hariri, the former prime minister who was assassinated by a car bomb in 2005, as someone who could rebuild that image. In some respects, Lebanon might be an opportunity and example for political improvement in the Middle East, working with diverse groups—different religious, ethnic, and political persuasions—to form a well-functioning government. In the old power-sharing formula, people were reasonably represented and felt they had a stake in the government. That is not the case right now. Having seen Lebanon during its glory days before the civil war, I felt a lot of pain when I saw it being torn apart. Then, in the 1990s we saw the country rebuild and improve before Hizbollah's domination of the south tilted the scales again in the negative direction. The situation has waxed and waned, but Lebanon remains an important country, and I think it is one in which the United States will hopefully play a constructive role.

**FORUM:** *What have been the most effective aspects of the surge in Iraq? How relevant are these lessons for operations in Afghanistan, particularly as President Obama indicated that his administration would like to place greater emphasis on military operations in Afghanistan?*

**ADMIRAL FALLON:** The effectiveness of the surge needs to be understood in the context of all that transpired. It was far from just a surge in people. The additional troops were very helpful and necessary; however, the new strategy to actually go out and engage in active counter-insurgency in populated areas in and around Baghdad was the critical tactical change. The success is undeniable and remarkable. We have significantly enhanced the safety, security, and confidence among the people, levels of violence have dramatically declined, and the number of civilian and military casualties are down substantially.

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The salient parts of the surge were the conventional forces that General Petraeus had moving out into the cities, towns, and neighborhoods to be a very visible, engaged presence. They were not just hunkered behind a barricade with a flag flying, rather they were actually on the streets

demonstrating to the people that we were present and going to stay there. This gave the Iraqis confidence that we could actually help them and that they could fight the insurgents and terrorists. Continuing to increase the confidence of the Iraqi security forces is a long-haul task, but the forces are slowly increasing in numbers, improving their competency, and are taking on more responsibilities.

Another aspect of the plan, a very aggressive front on our part, was to go against al Qaeda and their Iraqi (mostly Sunni) supporters. This was a delicate thing because a lot of these people were homegrown terrorists and insurgents—disenfranchised Sunnis who felt that with Saddam gone, the Shi'a were running the country, so what was in it for them? They felt that they had nothing to lose, so they said to one another, "Let's go kill Americans, kill Shi'a. Better yet, let's incite a civil war. Then we will have total chaos and an opportunity to return to power." There really wasn't a civil war, despite a lot of media coverage that would have you believe otherwise. There were certainly very bloody instigators on both Sunni and Shi'a sides that tried hard to get the populations to go after one another, and there was some ethnic cleansing of neighborhoods. But, by and large, most of the violence was perpetrated by a small number of people. So U.S. forces went out to neutralize al Qaeda and have been successful in doing it.

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The other remarkable event was manifested first in the west of Iraq, in the Sunni areas, where the tribal leaders were given a degree of empowerment. They used that power to cooperate with the Americans, to rally their forces against al Qaeda and start denying them the safe havens and support that they had previously provided. The majority of people may not have been actively aiding al-Qaeda fighters before, but by turning a blind eye they certainly helped al Qaeda. That changed when the United States adopted its counter-insurgency approach, and with the change a substantial area of sanctuary for al Qaeda was lost.

There were a number of reasons for the turn against al Qaeda. A lot of the people were fed up with the violence. They saw that it was becoming self-sustaining and absolutely destructive to their future. But, they needed some encouragement and they needed something to believe in. Al Qaeda would kill them in a heartbeat if they even raised a finger. The thing that was convincing was our visible presence—we are there, we are staying, we are going to get these bad guys, we are not going to run away, and the

Iraqi people can count on these commitments. For a while in 2006 and 2007, things really hung in the balance. Everyone was watching. The Iraqis didn't really want us there, but we were a lot better than al Qaeda. As the governor of Anbar province said to me, "We have seen al Qaeda, and we don't like it. We know what they do, and we don't like it." It was a tipping point. Things started to change, though it was tough. There were some difficult months with high casualty rates. Gradually the tide turned, and things became more and more secure. And eventually, in many areas, we were able to transition to Iraqis taking responsibility for their security.

The Sunnis need to be enfranchised; they comprise 20 percent of the population and for a while they refused to play a role in Iraq's central government. Saddam Hussein had given them key positions in the bureaucracy, and following the United States' toppling of Saddam and the installation

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of a new Iraqi government, they walked off the job. Not only did they not help, they actively undercut the political process. Among the Shi'a, there is still lots of infighting and factionalism today between the clerics and political leaders who want to be in charge.

But you can only accomplish so much so fast. There were people in the United States who wanted the surge to accomplish all of this in six months. It doesn't work that way. It took a while to turn the tide—but it has changed, it is not going back. The people of Iraq will figure it out. They are making good progress.

In Afghanistan, we have a different situation, starting with fundamentals. Unlike the population of Iraq, two-thirds of Afghans are illiterate; and while education in Iraq was biased, there was strong basic education. Certainly this is not the case in Afghanistan.

In addition, communication among people in Afghanistan is primarily by word of mouth. You can reach some people by radio—and we have tried to help in that way—but in general, communication is through word of mouth and rumor, which poses a challenge for us. And unlike Iraq, there is very difficult terrain, with rugged mountains and a tough climate; it is extremely challenging. But, Afghans are tough people. They are resilient, and because they have never had much, they have not had great expectations.

A big challenge is that Afghans have rarely taken to central government. Historically, they have been isolated people because of the terrain.

There are many examples of outsiders coming in without much success. Alexander the Great may have had the best approach to Afghanistan. He did not bring a lot of troops. Instead, he counted on locals to help him out. He went out of his way to get the local population on his side. I'm not saying that was eminently successful, but he had a lot fewer problems than subsequent would-be conquerors or pacifiers.

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The main lesson is that you have to engage the local population. In the present circumstance, the Afghans will have to get the job done. They must be convinced that we are not going to impose a solution on them from the outside. We should help them build their own institutions. We have been working on this with the government. One of the positive things has been, despite certain tribal and ethnic friction, the majority of the people still have confidence in President Karzai and his government. They have been at times disenchanted and there have been all kinds of issues, but by and large they still support him and his government.

Another key difference between Iraq and Afghanistan is that security forces in Afghanistan are very small—not just compared to Iraq, but by any measure. However, they have tough and experienced leaders. They were young fighters against the Soviets in the mujahideen days. They know how to operate, work together, and make use of scant resources to survive.

We need to help the Afghans build their capabilities in a very measured and smart manner. They are going to be the solution. So we need to encourage them by giving them opportunities. The Afghan people have lots of needs; electricity is almost nonexistent and they need roads, water management, and agricultural improvement, among other things.

Another point is that I believe most insurgents are cast, inaccurately, as Taliban. There certainly are Taliban still operating, but my experience is that most of the Afghan people don't really like the Taliban. They had a dose of what the Taliban can do when they were in power, and they don't like it at all; they don't want to go back to that lifestyle. They want their kids to have an education and a better future. They don't like the Taliban, but they have allegiance to local leaders and there are all kinds of frictions, issues, and problems. These need to be dealt with at a local level—that is one of the lessons that we learned in Iraq that applies to Afghanistan as well.

There are also general principles to take from Iraq: Engage with the local people to the maximum extent possible, and use local security forces

to have the people gain confidence in them. Don't come in with heavy forces and chew the place up, because if you leave a lot of dust, do a lot of damage, and break a lot of china, then you've got to fix it. A lot of the techniques that we have used in Iraq in the last few years are exportable. But, thinking back to the surge, Afghanistan doesn't particularly lend itself to large numbers of foreign troops. The number one need that I had before I left Central Command was to get additional troops to train the Afghans. I wanted—and I would suspect the leaders still want—to have seasoned, tough, top-notch combat troops who know how to deal with these people. They must have the respect of the Afghan security forces, and by setting a good example they can create the kind of Afghan security force that can effectively deal with Afghan problems.

So, some of the lessons from Iraq are directly exportable, but there are other differences. Afghanistan is a landlocked country, but we do not have the luxury of superhighway lines of communication such as we had from Kuwait. Everything that comes into Afghanistan comes in the hard way: through torturous mountain roads through Pakistan, primarily, and some air supplies. A fraction of it comes in from the north, some fuel, but nothing is easy in Afghanistan. And the bigger our footprint, the more difficult it becomes to sustain.

**FORUM:** *The Obama administration has identified the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as a first-order national security threat. How can the U.S. military best contribute to non- and counter-proliferation efforts?*

**ADMIRAL FALLON:** Because the world is so interdependent, and technology flows in many directions, the idea that we can tackle nonproliferation from the United States alone is unteneable. We need help. We need cooperation from many countries, and we have seen a willingness to cooperate in some areas, but not in others. Certainly our relationship with Russia lately has been anything but good. With China, suspicions linger because they still have

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a Communist government running the country, despite economic and commercial reforms. Frankly, we have also had a problem with some of our longtime allies, a lack of trust and an unwillingness to work together. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, it seemed to me that we had remarkable cooperation from a number of countries, but then some of that waned. So,

the first order of business is having the right atmosphere to make it conducive for people to work together.

I was recently in China and had unofficial discussions about their willingness to approach things like counter-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In practical terms, we need cooperation and help from other countries to take active steps to cut down on the transfer of certain technology. Some countries help, some turn a blind eye. There are also non-governmental actors at play. The world would benefit from a united stance against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We need to figure out ways to incentivize the necessary changes of behavior.

Iran is a real problem now. We certainly do not like its behavior, and the Iranians are not particularly fond of us for a host of reasons—some historical, some otherwise. They have needs, but we have needs, too. We have a need, generally shared, to live in a world that is free from the imminent threat of nuclear destruction. What do the Iranians want? And, how might it fit into the needs of other countries? These are things that I suspect are on the agenda for discussion in Washington, D.C., and in other capitals in the coming months.

My experience is that in approaching these complex security challenges, you benefit by coming at them in a couple of different ways. You must have the military strength and the capability to deal with the problem if need be. In addition, one of the strongest positions that one can have is international solidarity, cooperation, and a willingness to work together among both friends and allies. The majority lining up on one side surely has more of an impact than no consensus, and when countries can get played against one another—this is what I think Iran has been able to do—we don't get where we need to go.

We have to figure out how we are going to actually engage Iran to identify a mutually beneficial future. Iran is afraid of us, no doubt. They are waiting for us to attack—at least that is what the regime keeps telling the people. We have done some things that have probably put them in that mindset. On the other hand, we have got to make it very clear to them that we are not going to tolerate the kind of nonsense that they have been perpetrating. They have to be convinced that other people, collectively, do not like their behavior and are not going to tolerate it. They also have to realize that it is going to hurt them and cost them.

With Iran, there is a need for a balance of firmness, but a willingness to give them a light to get out of the tunnel. Iranians are smart, but they are led by clerics who want to stay in power in addition to providing religious guidance.

**FORUM:** *What do you think is the military's role in humanitarian operations?*

**ADMIRAL FALLON:** In the aftermath of the cold war, it is my experience that we began to look at other ways in which the military forces and capabilities might be relevant. We were not going to be fighting a big war anytime soon—or so we thought. In the early and mid-1990s, we had a number of discussions and exercises that tried to bring together military capabilities with those involved in humanitarian operations. First of all, no matter what the disaster might be, if the area is insecure or unstable the effectiveness of the humanitarian relief effort is compromised. There should be a way for the two to work with each other; for the military to create the stability that allows for humanitarian action.

There are times when the military ends up dominating—because the response is needed quickly or because the security situation is challenging. In my work, I have tried to leverage humanitarian and civilian leadership efforts

*To be effective and to maximize the positive results, the military and humanitarian actors need to work together. Instead of debating, we should leverage each other's strengths.*

because they are experts at this. There are a range of capabilities and desires on both sides. To be effective and to maximize the positive results, the military and humanitarian actors need to work together. Instead of debating, we should leverage each other's strengths.

I have done a number of exercises involving NGOs and humanitarian agencies and have a few takeaways.

First, if homework is done in advance, most of our problems would be worked out. Next, when conducting joint operations, there are certain prerequisites that have to be satisfied on both sides: the military would like to know how many people, where they need to go, what aid is needed, and the timing. From the humanitarian side, people want to know the operating rules, including what they are going to be allowed to do and so forth. Sitting down periodically in advance of disasters to discuss the perspectives and needs of both the NGOs and the security forces is a good foundation for successful humanitarian operations.

**FORUM:** *Thank you for your time. It's been a pleasure speaking with you. ■*