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THE VIEW FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

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THE VIEW FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

MR. REGINSKI: My name is Brian Roginski, (phonetic) I'm a PhD candidate in security studies at the George Washington University and one of this year's Aspen security scholars. I'm delighted to introduce our next session, "The View from the White House." The President's Homeland Security and Counterterrorism advisor is going to tell us what keeps her up at night and how she's working to keep the homeland safe.

Moderating this session is Michael Isikoff. Michael is an award-winning journalist and bestselling author who joined *Yahoo News* in 2014 as chief investigative correspondent. He previously served as national investigative correspondent for *NBC News* between 2010 and 2014, and for *Newsweek* between 1994 and 2010. Isikoff is the author of two *New York Times* bestselling books, *Hubris: The Inside Story of Spin, Scandal, and the Selling of the Iraq War*, co-written with David Corn and *Uncovering Clinton: A Reporter's Story*, which chronicled his own reporting of the Monica Lewinsky story.

And with that the floor's yours, Michael.

MR. ISIKOFF: Okay, thank you. And it's great to be back here at Aspen. We've got a real treat here this afternoon, because I know we've had a lot of experts and current and former U.S. counterterrorism officials here. But few have been more directly involved in both implementing and setting U.S. counterterrorism policy than Lisa Monaco.

Lisa was the chief of staff to FBI director Bob Mueller towards the end of the Bush administration. She then joined the Obama administration at the Justice Department, she was Assistant Attorney General in charge of the National Security Division, and since 2013 President Obama's Homeland Security and Counterterrorism advisor.

So on that note, given that the title of this talk or the subtitle is you were going to tell us about

what keeps you up at night, tell us about your last few sleepless nights.

(Laughter)

MS. MONACO: How do you -- thank you for that caveat there. How long do you have? I think we've got a limited time, but --

MR. ISIKOFF: We have 45 minutes to go.

MS. MONACO: So you know people talk about sleepless nights and the images invoked of people tossing and turning. So the assumption is that you've actually made it to bed --

(Laughter)

MS. MONACO: -- and gotten into the beginning stages of REM sleep. So I can challenge that assumption. So really the question is, do you actually make it into the sleep state? I usually don't because the phone calls keep coming.

You know, the sleeplessness started very early on in my tenure. As you mentioned I started in 2013. About three weeks into the job we had the Boston marathon bombings that affected obviously, Boston, and my hometown. And well into that week, I remember vividly it was Thursday night, the manhunt was still ongoing for the Boston marathon bombers, and I got home to my house about 1:00 a.m. And shortly thereafter I got a call from the Situation Room telling me about a carjacking that had occurred in Cambridge and the death of a MIT policeman, which we all of course know the story now.

And it had all the hallmarks of something that I was going to need to be concerned about, based on everything we'd been seeing previous week. So a flurry of phone calls including with the then FBI director, Bob Mueller, his deputy, a number of other folks, and I was back on my way into the office at 3:00 a.m. And three weeks into my job waking up the President from a sound sleep so he also had a sleepless night, at 4:00 a.m., to

tell him that one of the bombers was dead and the other one was on the run.

MR. ISIKOFF: Let's -- there's been a lot of talk at the conference here about the successes that U.S. policy has had in degrading al-Qaeda, core al-Qaeda has been described as nearly finished at this point. But clearly ISIL, the threat from ISIL is very much with us, nearly 10 months after the President announced the military campaign. They're still holding large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria including Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. There's this unbelievable propaganda offensive on social media that's drawing people to them. Why is -- why has progress against ISIL been so slow?

MS. MONACO: So I think there's several dimensions to that to take on, right. So ISIL and its efforts in Iraq and Syria and then of course the thing that we've been focusing on here I think quite rightly and we should talk more about it today, which is the threat, the unique threat that they pose to the homeland now.

With regard to your specific question, look, I think there are a number of factors here. And the President has spoken to this most recently a couple weeks ago at the Pentagon. They are posing a unique threat in Iraq and Syria, which is why we began the military campaign 10 months ago, because they could demonstrate an ability to take and hold territory. That was a new feature and something we knew we had to go after.

Now, they are now embedded in communities and that poses a difficulty in going after them from the air. But that's not going to be the sum total and continues to not be the sum total of what we're doing, and it won't be the way we ultimately rout them, the way we're going to rout them. And we have had significant success. They've lost a quarter of the territory that they previously had. We've taken a number of some -- between 5,000, 6,000 strikes between Iraq and Syria with an unprecedented coalition including a galvanized, a really incredibly galvanized, unified Gulf government.

But it's going to take time. And so they're embedding in the Sunni community, they're embedding in the civilian community, makes them hard to root out. And ultimately how we're going to go at this is going to be through local forces. And frankly the military would be the first one to tell you this is not going to get done by military force alone, which is why we've got a strategy that talks about going after the finances, that goes after the foreign fighters, that goes after the incredible humanitarian issues.

MR. ISIKOFF: Let me ask you a little bit about goals here, because when the President gave his speech September 10th last year, he said, "Our objective was to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL." And British Prime Minister David Cameron just the last week gave a TV interview in which he used the same -- similar language, "We have to destroy this Caliphate, whether it is in Iraq or Syria."

But in his press conference, the most recent one, about a week-and-a-half ago, the President used some different language. He said, "I think my goal, when I turn over the keys to the next President is that we're on-track to defeat ISIL, that they are much more contained and we're moving in the right direction and we have pushed back ISIL." So just to clarify, what is the administration's goal here? Is it to destroy ISIL or is it to contain and push it back?

MS. MONACO: So the goal as the President has said is to degrade, defeat and ultimately, ultimately, to destroy ISIL. But we've got to be very clear-eyed about this. It is going to take time, which is also what Prime Minister Cameron, anybody who's a serious person looking at this will tell you.

This is going to be -- it's been described as a generational struggle. The campaign itself is one that is not a year, it's not two years, likely those -- that is not the measure to bring to this. It is going to be an issue that is going to take a lot of time, there's going to be progress, that's going to be setbacks.

But our goal is to degrade, defeat and ultimately to destroy, and that means going after what is their claim. Their claim is to build a Caliphate, right, their claim is to establish an Islamic State, and that is rooted on their ability to take and hold ground, and to pursue this ideology and to extend it, whether it's through propaganda on social media or through other means. We've got to delegitimize that effort, we've got to attack and basically make clear to people that you shouldn't buy what they're selling.

They can't actually continue to hold territory and maintain legitimacy, they can't actually ultimately govern, and we see examples of it all over the place -- they're not actually providing services, they're actually killing some of the people that they're trying to recruit. So we've got to attack not only their ability to hold ground, but ultimately the message that they're trying to perpetuate.

MR. ISIKOFF: The President in that speech last September also said, "The campaign will be waged through a steady, relentless effort to take out ISIL wherever they exist." Now since then, ISIL has spread to Libya, to the Sinai, to Afghanistan. Are we at war with ISIL in Libya and those other countries?

MS. MONACO: ISIL is undertaking an effort to establish an Islamic State, first in the heartland of Syria and Iraq. But as you said they're trying to expand to at least eight provinces at this point, Libya being the most advanced and concerning in terms of sending actual operative focused on external attacks, but everywhere, from North Africa to the Caucasus. So yes, we're absolutely concerned about their ability to find safe haven, to take root, and to attract fighters and to then extend their reach against our partners, our allies and ultimately to the homeland.

And we're going to make sure that we're taking steps. If there is a threat posed to the United States from Libya, from one of these places, there should be no satisfaction amongst ISIL that they're going to have a safe haven and that that threat won't be addressed.

MR. ISIKOFF: So just to be clear, because I know you asked for a new authorization to use military force against ISIL, you didn't get it so you're still relying on the old, 2001.

MS. MONACO: Yeah.

MR. ISIKOFF: But the President in the White House's view has the authority now to order military strikes in Libya, in the Sinai, in any place in Africa or elsewhere where ISIL rears its head.

MS. MONACO: Look, the authority -- the President has the authority to conduct the military operations that we're doing, rooted in the 2001 AUMF. What we have said however is, we ought to provide the people who are conducting and putting their lives on the line, and we ought to show our partners and the American people that we are unified as a government amongst branches in supporting the efforts of the people waging this fight. That's why we asked for another AUMF which does not have a geographic boundary as you noted. So in fact we can address threats that come if ISIL establishes more than a foothold and actually an operational capability.

MR. ISIKOFF: You have spent a lot of time on the social media component of this, how ISIL is using social media. You had a countervailing -- Countering a Violent Extremism summit a couple months ago at the White House where it was noted that Twitter, which has been the prime vehicle for ISIL to spread its propaganda, no Twitter executives appeared or spoke at that summit. Are you getting enough help and cooperation from Twitter and the other social media companies in policing their networks?

MS. MONACO: So, there's a few things I'd say about this. One is, the cooperation has been getting better, but it needs to get even better. So for instance there's the tactical approach, right, there will be a horrific beheading video on social media on a particular platform, maybe Twitter. And I think what the law



enforcement experts would tell you is if you seek out and go to Twitter or some of the other companies to say help us address this specific issue, that there is a good deal of cooperation.

What we are all struggling with and what we need more from the companies, more help with, is a systematic way to go about addressing what I feel has become an exponential threat posed to the homeland by ISIL and its use of social media. So what do I mean by that?

MR. ISIKOFF: Yes.

MS. MONACO: So we've had a lot of discussions here about ISIL's prolific use of social media. When you think about the sheer math involved, right, you've heard the numbers, 2,000 fan boys that ISIL may have, hash tag jihadis that are actually really pushing out some of the most egregious content.

If they have, and by some number they do, 50,000 followers each, just simply do the math there. That is an exponential threat of potential vulnerability and radicalization to vulnerable and troubled minds that can pose a real threat to us in the homeland. So we need social media companies to help us address that.

MR. ISIKOFF: So what do you want them to do? Do you want Twitter to take these people down more aggressively?

MS. MONACO: We want them to take these accounts down more aggressively. But let's be clear --

MR. ISIKOFF: And when you say that to them, what do they tell you?

MS. MONACO: So, I think there's an ethos that is out there that there needs to be this is in part a free space, and I think there's a valid discussion to have. I think there is a brutal irony in the fact that a group that gets its entire inspiration in the rejection of modernity, which is ISIL's ethos, is using a platform that

has been -- allowed us in a wonderful way to express, to have free expression and express ideas.

But we've got to have a discussion about how we use that platform also to counter that narrative, because we're not going to delete our way out of this, we're not going to kill our way out of this. We need to have -- and in my discussions with tech-industry executives, we need to do what's called "adding more inventory," right. So I convened a group of tech executives, social entrepreneurs, NGOs, philanthropists, who are really concerned about this, and I got together with them in Silicon Valley, because by no means does U.S. government have a corner on the wisdom here, a corner on the market of wisdom on this. And we are not the best messengers.

Any message to counter ISIL's narrative that comes with a U.S. government seal is by definition not going to be something that is appealing to the target audience here. So what can we do uniquely as a government? We can use our convening power, we can bring together tech executives, NGOs, alternative voices and put them together to try and solve this problem.

So when I raised this with some of the folks I met with at Stanford, at a wonderful place called the Design School, the d.school, which is -- does some tremendous innovative thinking, they said we would love to suppress those search results like they do for child pornography, and use algorithms to -- when somebody is seeking out a beheading video, they don't get that, that comes back at, you know, "view page 30 instead of number 1."

But we don't have any inventory to replace it with. And that is a really bracing concept. So we need to have, put those smart-technology minds and distribution platforms together with alternative voices, legitimate voices who can counter this narrative and create that laboratory and spread that message out.

MR. ISIKOFF: We had a lot of talk about policy here. But you've had some personal gut-wrenching experiences as the government's point person in dealing

with the families of the hostages that were being held by ISIL and others. I wonder if you could just sort of take us into the room, into the White House, or wherever you were nearly a year ago when the James Foley beheading video was released by ISIL and tell us a little bit about what it was like to watch that, what your thoughts and reaction was and how you told the President about it.

MS. MONACO: This issue is one that I think has been one of the hardest emotionally, policy-wise and humanity issues to deal with sitting in my seat, and for all of us in the intelligence and law enforcement communities and in the counterterrorism community.

On that day that, and I remember it vividly, I was sitting in my office in the ground floor of the West Wing, the same one that Fran (phonetic) just referenced, and I was actually on the phone with Ben Rhodes, who was traveling with the President at the time, he was on his way up to Martha's Vineyard. And one of my staff came in to say that this video had appeared. We didn't have advance warning of it.

And I watched the pretty lengthy video and recounted it and described it quite horrifically to Ben Rhodes who was traveling with the President at the time. And how did I feel? I was sick to my stomach. It was a horrific thing to see. And having spent time with Diane Foley and John Foley and John Foley Jr., it was -- gut-wrenching is the right word for it, and it was horrible. And the videos that came after were equally so. And it galvanized us even more to try and take a hard look at what we need to do to do better by these families and that's what we did.

MR. ISIKOFF: Did you call the Foleys?

MS. MONACO: I did not call the Foleys after that, the President did. I had spoken to them before, several times before that video came out. I had spoken to them a few days after the President did, but I was not the one who informed them of the video.

MR. ISIKOFF: How much of an impact did that video and then the subsequent one a week or two later, a few weeks later, the beheading of Steve Sotloff, and the knowledge that you had another hostage, Kayla Mueller still being held by ISIL, how much of an impact did that have on the decision to launch a military campaign against ISIL in September?

MS. MONACO: So it is something that was not out of our minds certainly, but we also -- you know you had demands in these videos for America to -- and for the President in particular in the United States to undertake or to not undertake certain operations, and we could not have our foreign policy decisions impacted by a murderous band of brutal, brutal thugs. And that is a hard thing to understand, it's a hard thing to say.

But I will tell you, I also spoke to a number of parents who at the time had their children still in harm's way, and a few of them were quite clear with me that they didn't want it to change our calculus.

And just a point on this, Mike, I have to say, I spent a lot of time with the parents of the Americans who were killed, and those who still have their loved ones in harm's way. And to a person, I have been awestruck and inspired by the grace, the courage, the smarts and the dedication and determination they have to turn some light from the just incredible darkness that ISIL has been perpetrating. And their help in our hostage-policy review was invaluable, and the fact that they had the courage to engage with the government who they feel and who they rightly feel at times let them down is really a testament to what's great about this country.

MR. ISIKOFF: Yeah, and as you mentioned, they were not entirely satisfied with what they were hearing from the government. In particular, a member of your staff made comments that both the Foleys and the Sotloffs interpreted it as threatening them with criminal prosecution if they tried to raise money to pay ransom. You've since announced a new hostage policy, which you described as, "The U.S. government will not pay ransoms or make concessions, but it's not going to abandon families

when they make private independent decisions about engaging or negotiating with hostage-takers." What does that mean exactly? If another family comes to you because a loved one is being held by a terrorist group and says, we've got these ransom demands and we'd like to raise the money to pay them, what would you tell them?

MS. MONACO: So, first on the point you raised, no one, no family should ever be threatened with prosecution, and that was made very, very clear and that was made clear in the announcement of the results of our policy review. We did not change the policy of the United States government, which remains and will continue to remain that there will not be concessions made of any kind to those holding hostages including ransom.

That said, what it means when we said we will not abandon a family is just that. And I'm not going to stand here or sit here and describe every tactic or operational undertaking that might help a family and help us glean intelligence about the location of an American hostage, or help a family work with and communicate to hostage-takers. I don't think any member of this audience would want me to disclose that. But what it means is we will work with families, we will use a number of means at our disposal to try and develop intelligence to develop options, including but not limited to sending our military operators into incredibly dangerous situations to try and get our people home.

MR. ISIKOFF: Another issue that you have spent a lot of time on is Guantanamo. And I believe you're about to present a plan to Senator McCain to fulfill the President's commitment on his first full day in office to shut Guantanamo down. You've obviously run into a lot of roadblocks including opposition from Congress. We heard just this morning from Chairman McCaul of the Homeland Security Committee, he does not believe that detainees should be transferred out of there, what's left is the worst of the worst. What can you tell us about your new plan, where you would put the detainees, and why it will succeed any better than your previous plans that have failed?

MS. MONACO: So, my hope is that those who -- in Congress, including Senator McCain, who's been thoughtful on this and who is a supporter of closing Guantanamo, as is the President in a responsible way, my hope is that we can work with him and his colleagues to get this done. This is not something that the President wants to turn over to his successor. And the plan, and it's -- I think maybe it's worth demystifying, is consistent with what the President has said all along - we're going to transfer safely and securely everyone who has unanimously by the President's National Security Team been deemed eligible for transfer, that's 52 people at current count, subject to security arrangements with the receiving country.

So that doesn't mean just unlocking the door and having somebody go willy-nilly to another country. It means a painstaking establishment of security protocols that would govern the transfer of that individual. So we're going to transfer everyone who has been deemed eligible for transfer, consistent with security. And we're going to prosecute those who can be prosecuted.

But here I will say is one of the roadblocks you described. Right now we've got 10 people subject to the military commissions. There are some other number who could be prosecuted in federal court and sent to a supermax prison. Right now we are barred by statute from bringing anybody here from Guantanamo even to put them in a supermax prison.

MR. ISIKOFF: But you've also got, what, about 58 who have been deemed too dangerous to release and not enough evidence to bring to trial. Where would you put those detainees in the United States?

MS. MONACO: So this is something again, ever since the first term, we've been quite clear. Those who are too dangerous to release, and we've been very clear that there is a number that that is -- the National Security Team has made clear are right now too dangerous to release. That was a unanimous decision of the President's National Security Team. So right now, let's give some numbers, 116 detainees in Guantanamo today. On January 21, 2009, that number was 242. In the last

administration before President Obama took office, some 530 detainees were transferred, have already been transferred out of Guantanamo Bay. So we're at a 116 right now, 52 of them are deemed eligible for transfer subject to security restrictions and the balance are in what we call the "law work" (phonetic) category. They have been deemed right now too dangerous to release.

Now, what the President also did was say that group who either can't be prosecuted, or are too dangerous to release, we're going to continue to evaluate their status. And he put in place something called a "Periodic Review Board." To date we have held 13 of those Periodic Review Boards, and in 10 instances those individuals have been transferred to the transfer bucket. So we are going to whittle down this group to what I refer to as the "irreducible minimum," who would have to be brought here to a secure location, held under the laws of work, continuing under military detention.

And that's the only way we're going to be able to close Guantanamo, and then subject those individuals either to prosecution in Military Commission, or Article 3 courts and a supermax cell. And ultimately that's the way we're going to do it. But we've got to work with Congress and right now we aren't even able to put that facility together because of the legal restrictions.

MR. ISIKOFF: Right. And I think the President has said that he will veto a National Defense Authorization Act if it does not lift the restrictions on transferring detainees to Guantanamo. If he does that, then he will then act unilaterally and bring these detainees out of Guantanamo into the United States if his veto was sustained?

MS. MONACO: No, what I'm saying is we're trying to work with the Congress and Senator McCain has been very forthright about this. Secretary Carter and I have had discussions with the Senator. He said, rightly, give us a plan how you want to do this, and most importantly I think his concern and others is if those individuals are brought to the United States, how can we be sure that they can

continue to be held securely and will not be let out on some legal technicality.

MR. ISIKOFF: But, I just want to be clear, if his veto is sustained, he will act unilaterally to bring those detainees into the United States?

MS. MONACO: We're going to work with Congress to try and get this done, and we've got -- I'm going to take Senator McCain at his word that he wants to work with us because you know, like let's look at this Mike, I mean why hand over this albatross to the President's successor? And we have made clear that we've got the legal strictures in place that would -- these detainees, if they're brought to the United States and held in a military facility, they would not be afforded relief under the immigration laws, they would continue to be held, they'd either be prosecuted in a military commission or put in a supermax, which by the way the cost involved here, and this I think is why Senator McCain and some others believe we really should close Guantanamo, today, right now, \$3 million dollars per detainee per year to house them in Guantanamo.

MR. ISIKOFF: The -- are we --

MS. MONACO: We can be spending that money on a host of national security threats that we've been talking about all week.

MR. ISIKOFF: The basic argument for shutting Guantanamo down from the beginning was that it was a recruitment tool for al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda is now almost finished, and ISIL's propaganda-recruiting young people has very little if anything about Guantanamo. Isn't the whole premise of the argument for shutting down Guantanamo somewhat diminished now?

MS. MONACO: No --

MR. ISIKOFF: Because it is not the recruitment tool that it was.

MS. MONACO: I don't think so, because there's number of arguments for closing Guantanamo. One is that



it's used as a propaganda-and-recruiting tool, and that continues. The other is that it has caused a lot of -- a number of our partners to constrain their cooperation with us because of their concerns about Guantanamo and the third is the sheer cost. So the number I just gave you that's today's cost. This is an aging population and an aging facility. That cost is going to go up.

In an age of sequestration and the incredible burden being put on our military, cycling guard forces in-and-out to do what they do frankly quite professionally and with dignity, but it is not something that their talents -- that they joined the military to do, we need to be putting that money and those talents of those servicemen against other threats.

MR. ISIKOFF: The President gave a major speech back in May 2013 about drones, and he said he wanted to be -- facilitate transparency and debate on drones. And -- and talking about it, he said something quite note worthy about drones strikes. He said, "It is a hard fact that U.S. strikes have resulted in civilian casualties. For me and those in my chain of command, those deaths will haunt us as long as we live." How many civilians have been killed by U.S. drone strikes?

MS. MONACO: So, if it won't surprise you then I'm not going to be able to give you a specific number.

MR. ISIKOFF: Why not?

MS. MONACO: Because quite frankly, and this goes to something that the President has also said that we're trying to shed more light on our counterterrorism operations. We're trying to do so in a way that allows us to continue to use the tools we need to keep Americans safe.

There is a tension here. Now, the President has been quite clear that we want to put more light on our counter terrorism operations. Not transparency for transparency sake, but because if we can talk more about what we're doing, how we're doing it, the standards that we are applying when we do it, we're going to have more

legitimacy and more trust in our partners, and most importantly from the American people.

MR. ISIKOFF: So central to that debate --

MS. MONACO: Yeah.

MR. ISIKOFF: -- is this issue of civilian casualties. We've had --

MS. MONACO: Yes.

MR. ISIKOFF: -- enormous discrepancies and reports about how many civilians have been killed but credible reports from Human Rights Watch and others about fairly significant civilian deaths particularly in Yemen. How can the public have a debate about the central thrust of your policy if you can't answer the simple question, how many civilians do you think have been killed by U.S. drone strikes.

MS. MONACO: It's an absolutely valid question, right, and there is -- and this is why we have been disclosing and reading out and describing the military strikes taking place in Iraq and Syria, which is why over the course of the last 18 months you have seen the military describe every kinetic operation they have taken in Somalia, right.

Now there are going to be -- and including civilian casualties, you've seen the military describe where we assessed there may have been civilian casualties in strikes in Syria or Iraq. And that is a commitment we make. There will be times that we cannot discuss specifics of counterterrorism operations, and that will be done based on the fact either because we have a partner that we can't expose, a source or a method that we're using that we can't expose, a law that prohibits us. That is something that we would like to keep to a minimum, but the reality is the President's commitment to increasing the transparency around our counterterrorism operations has been shown in the last several years in the areas that I mentioned including in the most recent strike we took in Libya.

MR. ISIKOFF: And after the President acknowledged and apologized for the drone strike in Pakistan that killed Warren Weinstein and an Italian hostage, Giovanni Lo Porto, Josh Earnest said at the White House that the families will be compensated. Is it U.S. policy to compensate the families of innocent victims of drone strikes, and if so does it only apply to western -- westerners or does it apply to the families of those killed in Yemen, Somalia and Pakistan?

MS. MONACO: So, this is something that we are actually working quite hard on in terms of trying to come up with a framework that can be consistently applied. So, to answer your questions specifically, it does not -- it's not confined to westerners, it's not confined to Americans. After every strike where there is a credible allegation of a noncombatant death there is an after-action review that is conducted, there is a review on lessons learned, and working with partners, an effort to make compensation payments including to civilians resident in the country where the strike took place.

MR. ISIKOFF: So how many times have you made compensation payments?

MS. MONACO: It's interesting. Your title as "chief investigative correspondent," is abundantly on display but --

(Laughter)

MR. ISIKOFF: We know that I'm getting that much but --

(Laughter)

MS. MONACO: Yeah. But it's an A for effort.

MR. ISIKOFF: So, you won't give an answer to that question?

(Laughter)

MS. MONACO: And again your -- your investigative skills are clear.

MR. ISIKOFF: Okay. I've hit the wall here, so I'm going to open it up to the audience. Shaun Waterman there.

MR. WATERMAN: Yeah, thank you, Ms. Monaco, for doing this. So, last Thanksgiving, North Korean hackers attacked Sony and the administration said that because it was a nation-state attack, because it was a destructive attack, because it was designed to have a coercive effect on a free speech issue that's at the heart of U.S. values that they were going to name North Korea, and they sanctioned people and they were going to take other actions.

Also, last year the Iranians destroyed the computer network of the Sands Casino. Also a nation-state destructive attack aimed at punishing or dissuading Mr. Adelson, the owner of the Sands, from making further remarks about turning Iran into a car park. Why hasn't the administration done anything like they did to North Korea about that? And I will accept the answer, "Because we were in nuclear negotiations with them.

(Laughter)

MS. MONACO: That is not the answer. Look, I think Edward Rogers (phonetic) got this exactly right when he said, as some of you may have seen in his discussions a few days ago, every case is going to be different and there is a number of factors that we're going to take into account. Do we have an understanding of who did it, what's the attribution? There's going to be a number of things that go into that - technical, forensics, investigation that gets done by experts from agencies represented in this room. There is going to be a question of what -- even if we know or think we know, what's our level of confidence in that judgment. Those two things don't always coincide.

And then there's a question of what can we say about what we know and with what degree of confidence?

What can we show to the world to substantiate our attribution? You talked about North Korea. We did make a clear judgment. We were able to attribute through some amazingly good work by the intelligence community, by the FBI and others that that action was conducted by North Korea. We had the ability to declassify that information in a way that it was not good -- disclosing it was not going to hurt our further efforts.

That is just not always the case in every situation, and we're going to make judgments in each case and to try and determine what we can do and in that case we could disclose those sources and methods. Now, we were questioned about that by I would argue some in the private sector who had an interest in undercutting the government's judgment. But, again, it's going to be a case-by-case determination and sometimes those things won't always align.

MR. ISIKOFF: All the way in the back there.  
Kent.

MR. DILANIAN: Hi, thanks.

MR. ISIKOFF: Yeah.

MR. DILANIAN: Ken Dilanian from the AP. Although Michael hit a wall, I want to try to break through it a little bit on the drone casualty issue. I think we understand why you can't talk about maybe some specific strikes in specific countries, but how does that track to not being able to discuss the broad number of civilian casualties writ large?

MS. MONACO: So, you know, the -- I could give ranges here and --

MR. ISIKOFF: Please do.

MS. MONACO: I know.

(Laughter)

MR. ISIKOFF: It will be progress.

MS. MONACO: Yes.

(Laughter)

MR. ISIKOFF: Towards transparency.

MS. MONACO: Look, it's -- your frustration is, I think, justified. And let me say this. Right now, those numbers continue to be classified. The reason is because to disclose them even in the aggregate would pose legal challenges to certain operations, which is the most I'm going to be able to get into sitting in this seat.

But what you should know is that is a discussion that is very, very, very much ongoing, and where we can make discreet declassification decisions, where we can do so that will not jeopardize our ability to use tools going forward and to keep the American people safe -- and you saw this on tragic display in the case of the strike that killed Giovanni Lo Porto and Warren Weinstein -- we will make that disclosure. But what you should know is that even without being able to detail each one of these, there is an active review that goes on and real lessons that are learned when tragic mistakes are made.

MR. ISIKOFF: Did I hear you say you will disclose the results of the review the President ordered into the Weinstein strike?

MS. MONACO: To the extent we can, absolutely, there will be as much transparencies can be made, which is consistent with what the President did, when we announced that it was the U.S. counterterrorism operation that took the lives of Warren Weinstein and Giovanni Lo Porto.

MR. ISIKOFF: We have room for one more and I see General Hayden in the back, there raising his hand.

MR. HAYDEN: Thanks Michael. I'm Mike Hayden, Chertoff Group. If we move the 5,000 detainees to the United States, as I understand the plan we will try some but there would still be some residual group we'll keep under the laws of armed conflict.

MS. MONACO: Yeah.

MR. HAYDEN: With Guantanamo behind us, would the administration then be willing to keep some future detainees inside the United States under the laws of armed conflict?

MS. MONACO: So, it's a great question, and I think, again, there is another discussion we need to have with Congress right now. We have said, very, very clearly and we have demonstrated this, where there is a counterterrorism threat posed by a group or an individual, we will use a host of tools to disrupt that threat. We will use kinetic action when there is no other means or where the government, where that threat is coming from is unwilling or unable to address it.

We will conduct to capture operation, which Mendelson talked about, which by the way, was one of my sleepless nights, the Abu Khattala capture operation and we will conduct prosecution. Right now, we do that and in any of those events, our first goal is to get intelligence from that captured individual to determine whether there are additional threats out there. Right now, we do that and have done it in the case of Abu Anas al Libi and Warsame, where we conduct that intelligence interrogation on a ship, and we've done that in a few instances. We need to have a conversation about that authority going forward.

MR. ISIKOFF: The wife of Abu Sayyaf, who was captured in the raid in May, she's been held in indefinite detention for the last several months. Is she going to be put on trial in the United States or will she continue to be held in indefinite detention?

MS. MONACO: So, those discussions were ongoing consistent with the policy we've articulated very clearly -- first and foremost, let's get the intelligence resident -- and there's already been a tremendous amount of intelligence through the amazing work of the military operators who conducted that raid -- let's get the intelligence from that raid and from her. Let's determine

what it could provide in the form of a prosecution, and we'll look to the prosecutors to make that judgment and if not then is there a way to have her be prosecuted, if that's an available option in another form, perhaps in Iraq or some other form.

MR. ISIKOFF: Well, unfortunately we are out of time. So, I want to thank Lisa Monaco for sharing what she could. I did my best but hopefully we may have moved the ball a little. Anyway, thank you.

(Applause)

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