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23rd Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference

*Framing and Charting the Region's Issues, Interests, Challenges, and Opportunities:
Implications for Arab and U.S. Policies*

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"ARAB-U.S. DEFENSE COOPERATION"

Chair:

Mr. Christopher Blanchard - Specialist in Middle East Affairs in the Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress.

Speakers:

The Honorable Mark T. Kimmitt - Former Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs, U.S. Department of State; former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Middle East Policy, U.S. Department of Defense; Retired General, U.S. Army; former Deputy Director for Plans and Strategy, U.S. Central Command.

Dr. John Duke Anthony - Founding President and CEO, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations.

Professor David Des Roches - Associate Professor and Senior Military Fellow, Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense University; National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations Malone Fellow in Arab and Islamic Studies to Syria.

Dr. Kenneth Katzman - Specialist in Middle East Affairs in the Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress.

Dr. Imad Harb - Distinguished International Affairs Fellow, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations; former Senior Researcher in Strategic Studies, Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (Abu Dhabi, UAE).

Remarks as delivered.

[Mr. Christopher Blanchard] Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

We're joined on our panel here by Dr. Kenneth Katzman, my colleague, a specialist in the Middle East section at the Congressional Research Service. As you all know Ken is an expert on the Gulf States, Iraq, Iran, and is leading our effort on the response to the Islamic State crisis. We're also joined today by Dr. Imad Harb, who is a distinguished international affairs fellow here at the National Council and a former senior researcher at the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies. To his left we're joined by General Mark Kimmitt who served over 30 years as a U.S. military officer in a wide variety of command, operational, and policy positions. Former Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, and also the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Middle East Policy. To my immediate left here, Professor David Des Roches, who's a senior military fellow at the NESAC Center for Security Studies. Prior to this he was responsible for defense policy in the Arab Gulf states, in Yemen, and also served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in a variety of positions.

As I said I've asked our commentators to somewhat shorten their remarks so that we can get the conference somewhat back on schedule. We'll begin with my colleague from the Congressional Research Service Dr. Kenneth Katzman.

[Dr. Kenneth Katzman] Thank you, Christopher, and thank you again to John Duke Anthony and the Council for inviting me again to speak before this esteemed audience. I'm going to be fairly brief.

This is the thirty-second year in a row that people have forecast the imminent demise of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The chorus grew somewhat louder over the past year over the schism between Qatar and some of the other states, but just like betting on the fall of the house of Saud, betting on the collapse of the GCC has proven to be a very bad bet indeed.

As with most issues, the GCC states see Iran and Iraq, which I want to talk about with you today, the two large states in the Gulf in similar terms, but they're divided on what to do about them. The GCC states all see Iraq as no longer a strategic threat. It's fighting for its own life right now, and the GCC states perceive Iraq as having fallen out of the U.S. orbit and into the arms of Shiite Iran, the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The GCC sees Iran as insidious, trying to basically exert its influence all over the Middle East including Sudan, Yemen, to some extent Egypt, Gaza, Bahrain, Lebanon, Syria, as well as Iraq.

But the title of my talk really is the GCC relations with Iraq and Iran – hardliners, soft liners, and floaters. And I'll describe who's in each camp. The hardliners are the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. One soft liner is the Sultan of Oman. The floaters – I have as floaters, Kuwait and Qatar. The term floater comes from reality television and refers to a contestant who doesn't enter into any one alliance or not, but just decides where they want to go later on.

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and UAE are generally aligned. They take a hardline in Iran. They see Iran as a key threat to regional stability. They perceive a nuclear deal with Iran as basically giving Iran more resources and opportunity to meddle in the Gulf.

The three have expressed significant support for military options against Iran's nuclear program should Iran try to make a nuclear breakout. They've accused Iran of openly fomenting unrest in Bahrain, which is obviously one of the GCC states. Saudi Arabia and UAE sent ground forces to help the Bahraini government suppress the Shiite uprising in 2011. Some of those police units, UAE units are still there. In fact one UAE police officer was killed earlier this year in an IED explosion. All three are highly critical of former Prime Minister Nouri al Malaki of Iraq and blamed him for Iraq's collapse, the collapse of the security forces earlier this year.

Oman is my soft liner. It's on an alternative pole. Oman sees Iran as a threat to the GCC, but Oman believes engagement and dialogue is the best way to deal with Tehran's ambitions. Sultan Qaboos' position is that Oman has had good relations with Iran throughout its history, and the fact that Iran's regime is now an Islamic Republic does not change the fact that Oman has had good relations, and Oman doesn't distinguish between the regimes. Sultan Qaboos, in fact, visited Tehran just weeks after the disputed 2009 election, reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at a time when Iran was being vehemently criticized for suppressing the peaceful protests there. Oman also brokered the U.S.-Iran talks that led to this interim nuclear agreement that we're still under. Oman has not supported any of the opposition groups in Syria, perhaps because Oman does not want to antagonize Iran because obviously Iran is supporting President Assad of Syria.

I have Kuwait and Qatar in my floater category. That's not in any way to criticize their policies but instead to analyze. It is to assert that in many ways the policies

of Kuwait and Qatar towards these two big powers, big countries, is somewhat inconsistent. Even within this I would distinguish between Qatar, which I would call an aggressive floater, meaning that it often acts in seemingly disparate ways, but as a product of deliberate policy to affect outcomes, and to try to show that it is not basically a puppet of Saudi Arabia.

Kuwait I would have as a passive floater, which means it often defers to the Saudi-Bahrain-UAE axis, and rarely takes bold action on its own. This is in part because of Kuwait's vibrant domestic politics. There's a vocal and visible opposition that must be taken into account before the government takes action. In practice this often creates a level of paralysis in Kuwait's external actions.

Qatar is an active floater, in that it tries to engage all parties in the region, build as many relationships as possible, even if these relationships sometimes conflict with each other. Qatar has consistently engaged Iran while at the same time hosting the largest and perhaps most significant installations that are used by the U.S. military in the Gulf. Unlike Oman, Qatar has been actively supporting anti-Assad groups in Syria even though that has upset Iran. On the other hand, Qatar has supported Hamas to some extent whose main benefactor has been Iran, and which still gets some Iranian support. Qatar did not intervene to support the Bahrain government in 2011, although that likely had more to do with the Bahrain-Qatar dispute that was resolved by the International Court of Justice.

Kuwait's membership in my floater category is primarily a product of its position on Iraq, whereas the other Gulf States essentially declared former Prime Minister Malaki as persona non grata, Emir Sabah of Kuwait visited Iraq while Malaki was prime minister and Kuwait hosted visits by Prime Minister Malaki. Kuwait during Malaki's term - Kuwait in fact resolved most of the residual issues from Saddam's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. And Kuwait completely sidestepped the Gulf-wide view that Malaki was a sectarian instrument of Tehran. Kuwait concluded it simply could do business with Malaki, and it did business with Malaki. Kuwait's ambivalence again at the height of the 2011 uprising in Bahrain, Kuwait intervened in support of the Bahrain government but only with naval forces not ground forces, which did not seem really materially relevant in that situation. Kuwait was trying to show that it was aligned with the Gulf States in cooperating to help the Bahrain government but not really doing anything to materially help the Bahrain government or intervene really that directly in that situation. It was primarily symbolic. Kuwaiti authorities have been not shy about arresting alleged Iranian spying cells in Kuwait. Yet Emir Sabah also visited Tehran earlier this year and met with all the senior leaders there. And Kuwait has not directly supported any of the Syrian rebel groups. It has given humanitarian aid through the U.N. to help civilians and displaced persons in Syria.

So to sum up, the strength of the GCC is that its six members are able to sometimes pursue disparate policies while in no way jeopardizing their membership in the cohesive unit, which is the GCC. The disputes in my view within the GCC are little more than family squabbles that do not in any way undermine the integrity of the GCC. With the GCC forming this stable, cohesive grouping of six relatively domestically stable partners – possible exception of Bahrain – it is not difficult to see why the GCC is now the center of gravity in an increasingly violent, fragmented, and unstable Arab world.

Thank you.

[Mr. Christopher Blanchard] Thank you, Ken, for those insightful remarks. Dr. Katzman has provided us a framework for looking at the GCC, which as Ken said is really an anchor for U.S. partnership, particularly as it relates now to ongoing military operations in Iraq and Syria. Perhaps we can explore that a bit more in the Q&A, which is my hook to encourage you all to look in the center of your tables and you'll find note cards. This panel would gratefully benefit from the questions you may wish to write on those and send forward. You know how this process works here at the National Council conference. So please take a look at those, write some questions for us, and we'll have a lively discussion.

Next up we'll hear from Dr. Imad Harb.

[Dr. Imad Harb] Good afternoon. Thanks for being here. It's really a pleasure to participate with this group of panelists on this very, very important topic. I'm going to be speaking about the repercussions or possibilities that may come from one of America's best allies in the Middle East and the Arab world, Egypt.

Egypt has in February and August of this year signed some arms agreements with Russia, and to actually quite sizeable arms agreements and so I'm just looking to see what might these arms agreements mean, what might the Egyptians want from the United States by signing these. Because as far as I'm concerned these were not necessarily arms deals to really change the strategic balance of the Middle East. Egypt paid a lot of money for acquiring some Russian arms, but these Russian arms can also be acquired from the United States, so the idea is why is Egypt doing this and what might the American response be, or where might these arms deals or future dealings between the United States and Egypt be like in the foreseeable future and longer term.

First of all the arms deals in February and August basically constituted the acquisition by Egypt of some Mi-35 helicopters from Russia, some anti-ship weapons, some ammunition basically, and possibly some people spoke of Egypt

being able to get the MiG-35 from Russia which would be really a very, very interesting development if it were to come to pass. The MiG-35 is really a very prized weapon and proudly supersedes F-16s that many in the region have and Egypt itself has. So we really don't know if that's going to pass or not.

But the concern here is why did Egypt - by the way in February when now President Sisi visited Russia he was met by Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, who basically wished him luck on his presidential ambitions, and by that time Sisi had not actually announced if he was going to run for president, so maybe President Putin had something to tell us then.

But at any rate, from the Egyptian point of view as far as what did Egypt try to do by trying to strike this rather independent course of action from traditional United States-Egyptian relations. And first of all obviously Egypt wanted to just show the United States that we can do an independent thing or two, and we really don't care what you say. And in that sense they're actually not different from any other state, any other government that comes after a military takeover of power. All of them try to strike some sort of an independent deal where they want to show everybody that they are really independent and they can do whatever they want to do. In the Egyptian-American case was rather very, very interesting because the Egyptian armed forces, specifically the Egyptian armed forces, have been the product of United States relationship since 1979. So the United States I think has contributed to the tune of almost over **70 billion dollars** since in foreign assistance to Egypt both economic and military and other aspects.

The second one is basically that the Egyptian government simply wanted to look at basically an international not necessarily sponsor, but an international power that would basically provide some sort of an international legitimation or an international support for domestic politics, for issues that the Egyptian government was dealing with, is still dealing with at the time which is basically trying to put its house in order, and specifically get rid of the Islamist opposition, whether moderate or violent.

The third Egyptian message was basically it's also - Egypt acted as a conduit for a GCC message that was told publically and secretly to the United States about United States basically policy towards its allies in the Middle East, and specifically the issue of whether the United States was going to actually truly rebalance to the Asia-Pacific theatre, and whether it can or it can't. So there was a whole lot of discussion of this since the announcement of the new defense strategy in the beginning of 2012, and the GCC countries were rather very, very upset about this turn of events because in the strategic environment of the Middle East basically it's very, very difficult to see things in grey colors - it's either black or white - and GCC countries had a lot to worry about and think

that maybe a rebalance to Asia was actually a basically an abandonment of the Middle East and specifically the Arabian Gulf. So basically the Egyptian message was also a GCC message.

The other one, fourth one was that Egypt wanted the United States to really make sure that hey, we are your strategic partner in the Middle East. Don't try to find other strategic partners. This specifically came out after the November deal between the P5+1 and the Islamic Republic of Iran with a nuclear deal. Egypt had been worried about what might happen to the relationship between Egypt and the United States, and actually the Gulf and the United States as well. So this was also yet another message about the importance of Egypt in the American strategic picture, and also a GCC concern about where does Egypt fit into the American strategic picture now?

A fifth possible one was maybe just simply some sort of tough love, so to speak, to the United States because the United States did not come out very, very fully in support of Egypt when Ethiopia decided to build the Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile. So the United States basically cautioned everybody should talk to everybody else. You guys work it out a little bit. But they did not necessarily just jump into the fray and say well we're going to prevent Ethiopia from doing this. So the Egyptians said well if you are our friend and you don't really support us in this, and this is really a life or death situation for us. Maybe we can do something about it.

As for what the possible potential way forward would be - I think that Egypt is on the way to be striking even though it doesn't necessarily, it can't necessarily fully afford to do so, but it will continue to strike an independent course of action from the United States and that specifically on the issue of domestic politics. I don't think that the Egyptian government is in any mood anymore to really allow a whole lot of interference in its domestic politics. I think it's up to the Egyptian government. The United States has always said this is a sovereign issue obviously, but I don't think the Egyptians were very happy with the United States not necessarily fully supporting the Islamist government of Mohammed Morsi, but generally also was not necessarily very happy with the Army move in July of last year.

Second, the United States - I see the United States as, because things are the way they are in the Middle East the United States is going to start to again reemphasize its strategic relationship with Egypt. I don't think it can really give that up, specifically because at least of relations between Egypt and Israel, and Egypt's respect for and adherence to the 1979 peace treaty with Israel. So I think this is rather a very important issue.

The other issue is that the United States really does think that Egypt is a strategic partner and is very, very important for the strategic environment of the Middle East. President Obama and President Sisi met in New York last month, and administration officials all the way from the President to State Department officials consider Egypt to be really a pivotal actor in the Middle East.

A third one is possibly a potential way to go forward is basically maybe that Egypt now does not necessarily have an active role so to speak – it's not flying airplanes or sending soldiers to fight ISIS. It would be interesting to look into whether Egypt changes that stand once ISIS becomes truly a threat to northern Saudi Arabia on the Iraqi-Saudi border. And that would be really a very, very interesting kind of development. What would the Egyptians do if truly Da'esh decided – Da'esh as far as geography is concerned, Da'esh is in Anbar Province in southwestern Iraq, and that's specifically on the border with Saudi Arabia. So it's interesting to speculate whether the Egyptians are willing to actually go and defend Saudi Arabia if they were called upon to do so. Maybe the Saudis won't do it, but it's interesting I think to speculate about.

Another one is that Egypt will always be important for the United States for northern Africa, specifically because Libya is thinking the way it is. Unfortunately things in Libya, in Tripoli, and Benghazi are not that good, and if Libya continues to deteriorate, if the situation, if the security situation in Libya continues to deteriorate it's going to be really very difficult for the Egyptians to stay out of it simply because it will become a direct threat to Egyptian stability or actually security.

Another one is possibly what will Egypt do if truly the Houthis of Yemen who have actually now – a lot of people say they are in control of the Saana government – if the Houthis truly decide to do something on the Bab-el-Mandeb on the southern Red Sea. Would that be something that the Egyptians would be really concerned about? I would imagine that they would be concerned about that if for any reason the Houthis decided to basically play politics with the freedom of the shipping lanes leading up to the Suez Canal. So these are important things to think about and I thought I'd share them with you.

Thank you very much for listening.

[Mr. Christopher Blanchard] Thank you, Imad. Just to sum up there. I think we heard that perhaps this new development in Egyptian-Russian relations may in retrospect in a few years as a sort of blip on the radar, a temporary redirection that had more to do with the desire for a declaration of independence from the new Egyptian authorities, a desire for legitimacy and recognition, and a conduit for regional security communication.

Next we'll hear from Professor David Des Roches.

[Professor David Des Roches] Thank you, Chris. Thanks to Dr. Anthony and Pat Mancino for having me today. It's an honor to address such a distinguished group. I'm particularly pleased to notice that we have both West Point cadets and Virginia Military Institute cadets. In past years we've had Naval Academy Midshipmen, but presumably their parole officers wouldn't let them attend this year.

I want to thank Christopher Blanchard for his adroit chairmanship of the panel, and it's truly an honor to be seated next to General Kimmitt in a public hearing where neither one of us have been compelled to appear under subpoena.

The topic of U.S. defense in the Middle East is particularly timely and controversial right now. Sadly this past week Corporal Jordan Spears and Lance Corporal Shawn Neil have been the first two American soldiers to die in operations against ISIS.

America is at war.

I'd like to stir up a bit of controversy in this august setting by pointing out a few facts, which are, both counterintuitive, not well known, then I'll drop the mic and leave.

Fact number one. The American military commitment to the Gulf is strong, much stronger than it's perceived both in the Gulf and in the United States. There are actually more American tanks in the Gulf than there are in Europe. Last year was the first year since 1944 that there were no American tanks in Germany. Today, there are two brigade combat teams sets of equipment in Kuwait.

The U.S. Navy has more mine countermeasure ships based in the Gulf than it has in the United States. The pivot wasn't away from the Gulf or the Middle East. It is planted firmly in the Gulf. The pivot was away from Europe.

Fact number two. There is a misconception that Iraq was solved in the Sunni awakening and then was allowed to fall apart. The famed Sunni awakening did not solve Iraq and probably sewed the seeds of today's conflict. While the corrupt government of Al Malaki certainly played a critical part in the disaffection of Iraq's Sunni regime, the rise of Da'esh can also be seen as a logical and predictable consequence of one of the key tenants of the famed Sunni awakening in Iraq – the formation of local Sunni militias in the Sunni heartlands. Paying Sunni tribesmen to provide muscle against al Qaeda-affiliated groups,

thus sanctioning an ethnically based armed force beyond government control was achieving a short-term success as the expense of the long-term viability of the central Iraqi state. And on that Max Weber and I are both in agreement.

Third fact. He's dead and I'm not getting any younger. Third fact. It is in the United States' political interest to prevent Da'esh from winning in Syria and Iraq, but it is definitely not in the United States' political interest to swiftly defeat Da'esh in Iraq, and it may not be in its interest to swiftly defeat Da'esh in Syria. Prior to the rise of Da'esh, there was no impetus for reform in the Iraqi government. We are bit players now in Iraq, as I was recently told by one expert returning from Baghdad, and our entreaties to the al Malaki government to become a true national government were largely in the absence of the ISIS threat ignored.

Similarly, the unprecedented Arab participation in operations against Da'esh in Syria - not unprecedented in that they did it, but unprecedented in that they wanted it to be known publically that they did it. Arabs do many things more than they want publicized. Our partners are generally more muscular in private than they are in public, suggests that the Gulf-U.S. freeze in relations since the ill-named Arab Spring have thawed out considerably. Nothing overcomes a difference of opinion more effectively than a shared enemy.

Fourth inconvenient fact. American weapons sales policy in the Middle East, and indeed globally, will continue to be mostly devoid of economic motive. Let me say that again. American weapons sales policy in the Middle East, and globally, will continue to be mostly devoid of economic motive. This is hard for people to settle in but it is. The American government continues to have a conflicted and dysfunctional system of arms sales.

The stop and start nature of U.S. holds and suspensions of sales to Bahrain and Egypt for example reflects the unsuitable nature of a system which is not designed to send messages or register disapproval of actions at a state to state level. Unfortunately the only message we have managed to send from our recent actions in suspending arms sales is that we are an unreliable partner. The United States has not gained any practical leverage from these actions, but we have compromised our reputation as a reliable security partner in exchange for next to no change in behavior.

The people who administer the system, however, are not driven by commercial considerations unlike in European countries, and we have an expert here who can correct or amplify my points on that. We have, for example, foregone sales of drones and missiles to our allies and see other nations, most notably the Chinese, swoop in and capture this market.

Fifth and final point. And in spite of the rather sour note by the inconvenient facts above, the United States remains the partner of choice and the acknowledged world leader in most high-technology defense systems, particularly combat aircraft and air defense systems. Even with our disliked system of long Congressional consultations – consultation in this instance being a metaphor for indeterminate delay – and our detested releaseability system, detested by our partners who want to buy things from us – our partners in the Middle East know that the United States is the only country that will deploy in militarily significant numbers to protect them, and thus if they wish to participate actively in their own defense they have to be militarily compatible with us.

I've been brief in my remarks to stimulate questions. I welcome your points and promise to answer them honestly, although I have to warn you that if the questions are too difficult once again I may break out in tears.

Thank you for your attention.

It shouldn't need to be said after those remarks, but my remarks do not reflect the position of the Department of Defense, the National Defense University, or any agency of the U.S. government.

[Mr. Christopher Blanchard] Which is usually a signal for someone about to say something interesting. Thank you, Dave.

Mark, I'll toss it over to you after that. I think that speaks for itself.

[General Mark Kimmitt] Yeah, what I'd like to do is narrow down a little bit from the strategic level which we started out with down to the tactical level. I want to talk about a poorly trained, poorly resourced, poorly equipped, poorly motivated army that can't fight. And I think that's one of the fundamental problems that we have in the Middle East is we have those types of armies. But I'm actually not talking about the Middle East armies. I'm talking about the United States Army in 1980 that I first came up in.

The Army of the United States in 1980 was miserable, and anybody that was part of that army knows how bad we were. It is just the grace of God that we didn't get into a war at that time because we couldn't have fought our way out of a paper bag. And I think one of the reasons I bring that up is because this whole topic of defense cooperation comes to the understanding of why the United States is uniquely positioned to train, equip, resource, mentor armies in the

Middle East, navies in the Middle East, air forces in the Middle East, because for God's sakes please learn from the mistakes that we made.

You've got to ask the question how can an army like ISIL, which is a couple of thousand well-equipped soldiers, why are they so successful on the battlefield against the Syrian army, against the Iraqi army? What's their secret sauce that has caused them to do what we haven't seen in the world since the Germany Army went through the French army in 1940, which at that time was the largest and best equipped army in the world?

My answer would be I think we have some, in various degrees of responsibility within the armies, in the militaries, and the security forces in the Middle East, symptoms that the American defense community, whether it's the defense offices in the embassies or whether it's many of the corporations that are represented here today primarily by ex-serving officers, what they try to bring to the region.

So I want to bring it down to just a couple of factors that all of the countries in the region I've seen because I spend most of my time over there - I just got off the plane from Cairo and Baghdad on Friday - and I continue to see a series of consistent problems that quite frankly are far less than those same problems we had in the U.S. Army in 1980. They really come down to - like everybody else here I've got my list of five as well. It comes down to training, it comes down to logistics, it comes down to leadership, doctrine, resources - that's five. Let me talk about them in turn.

In doctrine and training, the fact remains if you want to take the specific instance of Iraq it has not trained since the Americans left in December 2011. So it shouldn't be a surprise to anybody that when they had to fight on the battlefield they didn't demonstrate that they were ready to do that. People say how can we put a couple of billion dollars into the Iraqi Security Forces and then see such results on the battlefield, and the answer is if you stop training a pilot, three years later he's no longer a pilot. If you don't shoot your weapon in three years, when the time comes to shoot your weapon you're not going to be ready. When it comes to platoon exercises, if your platoon training area, your company battalion training area is closed down then when your platoons and your battalions and your brigades are asked to fight they're not going to be ready. It's that simple.

And so I would advocate that throughout the region and to some extent one of the great arguments we're having in the sequestration debates and the defense budget debates in the United States is, where is the money left for training? And the fact is if you don't train you can't fight, and if you can't fight you're going to lose, and we've seen that recently on the battlefield. I believe that within the

United States military and within the Middle East military at least one-third of their budget ought to go to routine, regular training at the individual level where they learn to shoot their weapons, at the collective level where they learn how to maneuver as squads, at the battalion, brigade, and so on.

Do they need to be at the same capability as the United States Army? Probably not. But to be able to be swept aside and lose almost the size of the state of New Hampshire to a pretty motivated, lightly equipped militia, which is what ISIL really turned out to be, is indicative – number one – of poor training.

The second area that I think needs to be looked at is the logistics. The fact is one of the hard lessons that the United States military learned is you can't just buy a truck. Soldiers also have to maintain that truck. There are a number of people that have sat here as young officers and pulled dipsticks out of trucks every Monday morning in the motor pool. They have learned how to keep their equipment running. They have not depended on somebody else to do that. They realize that if the tank doesn't work, the tanks not going to get to the battle, and if it doesn't get to the battle it is useless. And that's what we've seen in recent battlefields in the Middle East, most particularly inside of Iraq. And quite frankly one of the reasons they were unable to fight is because they were unable to get the equipment that hadn't been maintained, hadn't seen repair parts, hadn't seen spare parts done for a number of years, ever since the U.S. military pulled out and took that combat ethic and that maintenance ethic with them.

We could talk all day about leadership. Soldiers won't fight if they don't trust their leaders. Soldiers won't stand and put their lives on the line if their sergeants aren't going to be next to them, if their lieutenants aren't next to them, if their commanders are not worthy of their loyalty, and if the commanders are not worthy to stand up and fight along side of them. And if you have a military where you select leaders not on the basis of merit, but on the basis of perhaps political affiliation or any other reason, your soldiers are not going to stand up and fight.

You can talk about all sorts of reasons, about politics and how the maps were drawn in the Middle East. Soldiers fight for one reason only, and that's because they have somebody to their left and their right that they believe in, that they can trust, and that they are willing to stand and fight with. It has been seen time and time again since the days of Thermopylae, up until the fights we see going on in the region now. If the leaders aren't there don't expect your soldiers to be there. If the leaders won't fight don't expect your soldiers to fight.

So what would I recommend? I would finish up by saying as the United States continues to support defense cooperation at the strategic level, please understand

that the United States Security Assistance Offices and all the embassies, and whether it's in the United States Military Training Mission in Saudi Arabia, Office of Military Cooperation in Kuwait, the Military Assistance Program we have in Jordan, you've got groups of young combat professional soldiers that are willing to help out your countries so you don't make the mistakes in your country that we saw made in the era after the Vietnam War.

It remains our committed purpose that among the relationships between our countries, whether it's diplomatic, whether it's diplomatic, whether it's ideological, on a day-to-day basis the people that are there most frequently and most visibly are those soldiers inside the embassy and inside those units that are trying to help. That to me is the tactical lesson of the subject of this panel of defense cooperation.

American soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, standing next to their Middle East counterparts, trying to learn from each other about having a way to make an army, a navy, an air force that is responsible to its people, accountable to its laws, and is able to defend the country from both interior and exterior threats. I've been doing that for the past thirty-some years. I'm proud to go to the Middle East to try to help out whether it's in uniform, whether it's wearing a coat and tie as part of the State Department or as an independent.

I suspect that probably one-third of the people inside this room know exactly what I'm talking about because they've stood in my shoes before, but if we're going to get this defense cooperation right we've got to enhance the capability of the militaries in the Middle East to fight not only against high-level, high strategic threats, but also against low-level nuisances, which quite frankly when it comes to military capability that's all ISIL really is.

So thank you very much.

[Mr. Christopher Blanchard] Thank you General Kimmitt. I think that was a very clear-eyed prescription for U.S. partners in the region and an agenda that should, I think, guide the future of cooperative defense relations between the United States and its partners.

We're lucky to have now Dr. John Duke Anthony to serve as our commentator for our panel, and he's well known to all of you. I'd just emphasize a few notes about his military service, and also his continued service to the United States military. Not only is Dr. Anthony a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, he served in artillery in the United States Army, and as many of you know has provided decades of support to soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines across the region, continuing to guide study trips and provide educational and tutoring

support to officers, including the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey I understand, and we're lucky to have him here to provide commentary on remarks you just heard and set the table for our discussion and Q&A.

[Dr. John Duke Anthony] Thank you, Christopher. My remarks will be more in the realm of comments that were not made, but I think are relevant, timely, and applicable to some of the policy-related challenges, and also some of the assets that we have that many people think we do not have in the region, and there would be many that would like to see us vacate it – many Americans, rather – and have the focus more on domestic, economic, and political issues, infrastructure issues in the United States. And so my comments would be in these contexts that the speakers didn't make, and I'll take issue with one of them.

I think the area of the Eastern Arabian Peninsula, the six GCC countries from Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman is unique among the 22 Arab countries, the 28 Middle Eastern countries, the 57 Islamic countries, and the following a rather fundamental, pervasive, massive way that every second for the last 400 years external defense of these six countries has been attended to, administered by a foreign power, a non-regional power, a Western power, a power linked with Christian faith more than Judaism or Islam or any of the Asian faiths. You cannot say this about Arab North Africa. You cannot say it about the Levant. You cannot say it about the Fertile Crescent. You cannot say it about the Nile Valley Basin or Eastern Africa. So this makes this region unique in the sense that cooperation on the defense issues with western powers has been the norm, not the exception.

And mind you there were no independence movements in the area of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the Emirates, and Oman. No general strikes, no delegations that went to the British and others that said it's about time you fellows leave, we'd like join the League of Arab States, United Nations. My point being that there's a degree of "us-ness" in this one particular region that does not pertain to Arab North Africa, where France has a great overhand, or in East Africa where Italy in regard to Eritria and Ethiopia, had a footprint in Libya as well. Not to mention the British throughout Eastern Arabia. But we saw with the Portuguese 400 years ago, then the Dutch, then the British, and then increasingly the Americans, and the footprint, the standards, the weights, the measurements, the plugs, the things that work were pretty much laid down by the British, not by the Americans. And so there is a debt there that would be very difficult to pay.

Several other points here. There are defense cooperation agreements with four of the GCC countries – Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, but preceding them by 10 years is an older one that set the pace for the others,

namely an access to facilities agreement in 1979 with the Sultanate of Oman right after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In early 1980. President Carter fashioned that agreement, and it still holds strong.

You might say well, what about Saudi Arabia? There isn't one for Saudi Arabia, there is one for the others. Here's where we don't want to have form be confused with function. Saudi Arabia doesn't have one, but substantively I would argue it has more than all the others combined, put together, in terms of longevity from the early 1950s, and in terms of not just the U.S. Military Training Mission, but the advisory mission to the U.S.-Saudi Arabian National Guard. This is where I first met General Dempsey. He was the American who saw then Crown Prince Abdullah almost daily for weeks on end, where the American Ambassador might be lucky if he saw the Crown Prince once every six weeks. So that kind of a foundation was not mentioned by speakers.

One speaker said that American weapons policy is devoid of economic motive. I couldn't disagree more. The two controversial ones that broke the Israeli lobby's lock on advanced technological weapons sales to Arab countries were in the late 70s with the F-15s and the early '80s with the AWACs. Now, had those victories not been won, and they were won largely by the public global corporate community, the Lockheeds, the Northrops, the Northrop Grummans, the Raytheons, the Allied Signals going into senators offices there saying senator, a yes vote equals 13,000 jobs in your state. A no vote equals zero jobs in your state. Thank you senator very much for your time. It was very effective. And had those victories not been won in June or July of 1984 an Iranian fighter pilot was streaking towards Eastern Saudi Arabia, right over where 5,000 Americans go to work every day at Saudi Aramco then. They were knocked out of the sky over the Gulf by a combination of those F-15s and AWACs. Couldn't have been done otherwise. The point is Iran has never done something like that since.

So it's hard to prove a negative that these cooperative agreements have contained or deterred Iran, but the evidence is that it has not tried to defy any of those agreements and arrangements. So that's good news there.

On the Peninsula Shield, this is probably the most misunderstood and underappreciated aspect of what the GCC countries have tried to do. Late in 1984 it was established as a collective force in northwestern Saudi Arabia. People have said truly it cannot fight its way out of a paper bag. And some say wait a minute, a wet paper bag, it cannot fight itself out of. True. And none of the GCC armies are naïve or believe to the contrary. Its existence has a strategic aspect, not a tactical one. A strategic aspect because all six say that an attack on one is an attack on all six, and it is much easier to get France and Britain to come, and American to come, and China and Russia to come when you say six are asking us

to come to their defense, their national sovereignty, their political independence, their territorial integrity. So this is the context in which I would see the Peninsula Shield, not in terms of its tactical flaws, and shortcomings, and limitations.

With regards to Dubai – people want to have the brand name Dubai, Shanghai, Mumbai, whatever – some other “ai’s” there. This is a place where more American sailors, men and women, set foot ashore every year than any other place on the planet outside of the United States for the last 15 to 20 years. No small manner there.

With regard to the no economic motive – it’s there. The aerospace and defense industries are big contributors to the American treasury, taxes as such. They help to extend production lines. They help lower per-unit cost. They bring about an “us-ness” in terms of monetization, development, and technology, and human resources, education, and training. All of that is wrapped in together with the economic motive and it’s largely served the United States well in comparison with the aerospace and defense sectors elsewhere.

[Mr. Christopher Blanchard] Okay, ladies and gentlemen. We’ve been directed to conclude our panel unfortunately without much Q&A. The powers that be, such as they are, have pulled the plug on us in order to reset the schedule. I would encourage you however to pigeonhole our panelists here in the lobby.

I can prime some of that discussion by suggesting several of the questions that were submitted focused on how our partnership with Iraqi forces or with Syrians ought to be guided by some of the lessons learned from the last ten years in Iraq and Afghanistan. The future of GCC, deeper integration – all of these issues are on the table. By all means please grab them by their elbows and talk their ears off over coffee, but time marches on and so do we.

[Dr. John Duke Anthony] Here’s some of the questions.

How do the GCC countries perceive a military attack by the US or Israel against Iran given the views of many that such an attack would put multiple GCC countries and their respective infrastructures in dangers? How can the US better work with their GCC partners on cyber and work that into joint defense training? How is it that we can increase the level of budgetary support for the Arab components of the International Military Education and Training Program? This provides the “us-ness” between us and the leaders of other countries. They may be lieutenants, captains, majors, lieutenant colonels, colonels when we work together and train them, but there is created thereby an “us-ness” that serves both peoples well thereafter.

[Mr. Christopher Blanchard] And with that I believe we're adjourned.

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