

UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH SECRETARY ROBERT GATES
BY FRANK SESNO
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12:36:39 13 MR. SESNO: Welcome, thanks for being
12:36:40 14 here. GATES: Following up on one thing John
12:36:44 15 said. When I was secretary of defense, my
12:36:46 16 assistant comes in and says somebody from U 2
12:36:51 17 wants to come give you a briefing. And I said
12:36:55 18 what can I do? And I was -- the day came and I
12:36:58 19 was all set for a briefing on the spy plane. /(-
12:37:05 20 and in comes Bono and I have to say for all of the
12:37:12 21 celebrities who claim to be interested in human
12:37:18 22 container issues around the world, I quickly
12:37:21 23 realized in that meeting he was the real deal.
12:37:25 24 MR. SESNO: Probably didn't look like
12:37:26 25 most of your pilots either.
12:37:29 1 ROBERT GATES: Nothing like it.
12:37:31 2 MR. SESNO: It is a great privilege
12:37:32 3 and honest for for all of us to be back on stage
12:37:35 4 with you. You and I have done this before and I
12:37:38 5 think the conversation we're having today is
12:37:42 6 unbelievably timely. On behalf of everyone in the
12:37:45 7 room and US G O C thank you for being here today

12:37:50 8 before we go any farther. (Applause.) What we're
12:37:54 9 going to do folks, may surprise you, especially if
12:37:57 10 you've par taken of my industry, the media late,
12:38:01 11 because while the campaign has been roaring and
12:38:04 12 the cane dates have been screaming and the media
12:38:06 13 been pointing and everybody has been worrying, one
12:38:08 14 of the things that maybe hasn't gotten enough
12:38:11 15 attention, heaven forbid, right, are the issues.
12:38:15 16 Things that really matter, that really should
12:38:18 17 engage us as a voting public, as citizens and
12:38:21 18 policymakers certainly. So how about if we do
12:38:24 19 that today?

12:38:26 20 ROBERT GATES: That would be a treat.

12:38:27 21 MR. SESNO: Okay. So we will do
12:38:29 22 that. And I just want to encourage the audience
12:38:32 23 as we get started here today, if you want to be a
12:38:34 24 part of the conversation, you can send up
12:38:39 25 questions or make conversations by Tweeting them
12:38:42 1 at US G L C and we'll be able to incorporate some
12:38:50 2 of that into the conversation too.

12:38:51 3 Let's get down to it. Start out a
12:38:54 4 little bit differently. Imagine an America
12:38:58 5 without some of what governor Kasich or Liz was
12:39:01 6 talking about, a world without American
12:39:04 7 leadership, which is a pretty hard thing to do.

12:39:06 8 And I might even think about the world, the old
12:39:11 9 movie it's a wonderful life, you know, with George
12:39:14 10 Bailey and George played by Jimmy Stewart got to
12:39:17 11 see what life would have been like if he had never
12:39:20 12 been born. Play that game for a moment, a world
12:39:24 13 without American leadership. What would that look
12:39:27 14 like?

12:39:28 15 ROBERT GATES: I think first of all,
12:39:29 16 you need to set the context. So we have a Russia
12:39:35 17 with a leader trying to reassert Russia's role as
12:39:39 18 the international and global power that it has to
12:39:43 19 be reckoned with on every issue, modern nighing
12:39:48 20 its nuclear forces and overall military forces,
12:39:52 21 trying to create a buffer of frozen conflicts and
12:39:56 22 friendly states on the PEFR from an of Russia.
12:39:59 23 You have a China seeking military and political
12:40:03 24 dominance in Asia. You could argue that they
12:40:06 25 already have significant economic dominance. And
12:40:11 1 a country that at 2020 will have 350 war ships and
12:40:17 2 sub Marines in the area. The US will have 70.
12:40:21 3 You have an Iran that is determined to undermine
12:40:28 4 GOFRMENTS across the entire re as well as
12:40:33 5 participating in the destabilization of the civil
12:40:35 6 war in Syria. You have NK that during the first
12:40:39 7 term of the next president will probably have a

12:40:43 8 nuclear BAL list stick missile that can reach the
12:40:49 9 continental United States. So this is the kind of
12:40:52 10 global security environment that BE face. So take
12:40:54 11 the US out of the picture. I would argue that
12:40:58 12 there are actually a couple of historical
12:41:01 13 precedents for what that would look like.

12:41:04 14 The first would be after world war 1
12:41:07 15 when we stepped off the international stage with
12:41:13 16 drew into ourselves and contributed to enabling
12:41:17 17 the rise of in azyism and I am pearl Japanese
12:41:21 18 militaryism and we all know what followed from
12:41:24 19 that. The second more recent historical example
12:41:29 20 of what happens when the US isn't involved is
12:41:32 21 today's Middle East and particularly Syria, and
12:41:39 22 what is happening in a variety of countries in the
12:41:41 23 Middle East, not just Syria. So it seems to me
12:41:47 24 that the absence of the US as the balance, as the
12:41:55 25 fly wheel or if you will, as the anchor of
12:41:59 1 international stability gives rise to a world
12:42:03 2 where the strong prey upon the weak, where
12:42:08 3 countries that have been lib rated are once again
12:42:14 4 I am privileged, for example, the BAL tick states.
12:42:18 5 /(- Ukraine, perhaps others in Asia, where you
12:42:25 6 have claims by a great power like China that go
12:42:28 7 unanswered and the smaller powers have no ability

12:42:31 8 to counter it. The global commons, which the US
12:42:36 9 protects, the freedom of navigation, the Internet,
12:42:41 10 the whole cyber world and beyond has no regulatory
12:42:50 11 or enforcement capabilities, so it dissolves again
12:42:58 12 into the strong versus the weak. So this is the
12:43:02 13 world of an isolation America, of an America that
12:43:09 14 is not engaged and, you know, wince stone church
12:43:13 15 hill in the late '40s said that the burden of
12:43:19 16 greatness must fall upon the United States, that
12:43:25 17 there is no escaping it, that the burden of
12:43:27 18 greatness is the burden of global responsibility,
12:43:30 19 were his words. And if we choose to walk away
12:43:34 20 from that responsibility, ultimately, we will be
12:43:38 21 the ones that will pay the price, just as we did
12:43:41 22 in 1941 and just as millions of sir RANs are
12:43:46 23 facing it today.

12:43:48 24 MR. SESNO: We've got a world where
12:43:51 25 borders have different meanings, whether it's
12:43:54 1 cyber war fair or climate change or pen DEM Mick
12:43:59 2 or anything like that. Moving to a world with
12:44:01 3 close to 10 billion people in it. So it seems
12:44:06 4 that the challenges are faster, bigger, and more
12:44:09 5 complex.

12:44:11 6 ROBERT GATES: Well, there's no
12:44:12 7 question about it and the world is far more

12:44:16 8 interconnected. So one of the gestures of -- one
12:44:21 9 of the arguments in this election campaign where
12:44:25 10 both candidates have come out against trade
12:44:28 11 agreements, the smooth haully tariff in 1930 ended
12:44:35 12 up cutting US imports by 50 percent, but it cut US
12:44:39 13 exports by 50 percent as well, and while there's
12:44:42 14 some controversy among economists, most believe
12:44:45 15 that that action of isolationism, both lengthend
12:44:52 16 and deepend the depression. And we are a far more
12:44:57 17 global lied economy today in the United States /(-
12:45:00 18 . We heard from P&G, we've heard from the
12:45:04 19 governor and various others about and so many of
12:45:08 20 the companies represented here today are global,
12:45:11 21 so are our farmers, so are our ranchers. So our
12:45:16 22 interdennd dense. I think one of the things our
12:45:21 23 political leaders have absolutely neglected to
12:45:24 24 talk about is our economic inter depend dense from
12:45:30 25 the rest of the world. We can't walk away from
12:45:32 1 that. Could we have negotiated better deals,
12:45:35 2 maybe, but the notion that we can just sort of set
12:45:37 3 the rules in this kind of a global lied economy
12:45:40 4 and isolate ourselves from everybody else I think
12:45:44 5 is just completely unrealistic and it doesn't
12:45:47 6 reflect the speed with which things are happening
12:45:51 7 and how interconnected we all are at this point.

12:45:56 8 MR. SESNO: Because I'm an opt miss,
12:45:58 9 I started with it's a wonderful life. Because I'm
12:46:01 10 a movie buff I want to follow up with another
12:46:03 11 movie, comparison perhaps, Charlie Wilson's war,
12:46:07 12 maybe you saw that in which a former Congress man
12:46:11 13 leads the US support for against the Soviets in
12:46:16 14 Afghanistan. The movie ends with Charlie Wilson
12:46:20 15 arguing for a hundred million dollars to support
12:46:22 16 schools and roads in Afghanistan, sort of a mini
12:46:25 17 marshall plan for Afghanistan which didn't happen.
12:46:28 18 So any lessons from Charlie Wilson's war as to
12:46:33 19 what it takes to see what the investments are needed
12:46:36 20 to keep the peace?

12:46:38 21 ROBERT GATES: I think there are a
12:46:39 22 couple of lessons. The first really is that we
12:46:44 23 didn't think hard enough about second and third
12:46:48 24 order consequences from our actions.

12:46:51 25 MR. SESNO: Second and third order?

12:46:53 1 ROBERT GATES: Meaning, we celebrated
12:46:55 2 the role, our role in arming the to defeat the
12:47:01 3 Soviets, but in celebrating that, we had no idea
12:47:07 4 we had empowered gee who had diss in Afghanistan
12:47:12 5 and we had no /(- idea that we would end up back
12:47:16 6 in Afghanistan ten years later or, well, a little
12:47:22 7 over ten years later. And so those were the

12:47:25 8 second and third order consequences. The other is
12:47:29 9 when you do get engaged and you do have a role in
12:47:32 10 something like regime change, which is what
12:47:37 11 happened after the Soviets left, if you haven't
12:47:41 12 thought about the consequences of that and what
12:47:43 13 role you're going to play, then, you end up with
12:47:48 14 what happened in the United States on 9/11 or you
12:47:52 15 end up with lib I can't in its current situation
12:47:58 16 /(- . So I think one of the lessons from Charlie
12:48:02 17 Wilson's war is understanding that there are
12:48:08 18 unforeseen consequences to almost every decision
12:48:11 19 and too often in the situation room nobody is
12:48:14 20 asking those follow-on questions. I asked those
12:48:18 21 questions about lib I can't and once can a do have
12:48:21 22 fee is gone, then what? /(- I also said to the
12:48:25 23 president, can I just finish the two wars I'm
12:48:28 24 already in before you go looking for a third one?
12:48:31 25 To which he -- but the other effect is that, is
12:48:39 1 that this continuing responsibility can be done in
12:48:46 2 participating and in trying to help can be done
12:48:49 3 relatively cheaply. At the end of the program to
12:48:55 4 help the MUSH dean, the United States was spending
12:49:00 5 500 million dollars a year. That money was
12:49:02 6 matched by another country. So let's call it a
12:49:05 7 billion dollars a year that we were spending to

12:49:08 8 drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan. Charlie
12:49:12 9 Wilson, and I knew Wilson, as you said, Frank,
12:49:18 10 asked for a hundred million dollars for schools
12:49:20 11 and roads. And I think what we don't understand
12:49:22 12 is that, it's one of the things that this
12:49:25 13 coalition does that's important, is that it gives
12:49:31 14 people some hope. Building a school, drilling a
12:49:36 15 well, providing an all weather road, where it's in
12:49:41 16 Afghanistan or someplace else, begins to give
12:49:44 17 people hope, and that's what's missing in so many
12:49:48 18 of the places where we confront the roots of
12:49:51 19 terrorism and so on. So this relatively little
12:49:55 20 expense can pay big dividends, but it's always,
12:49:59 21 always an investment in the future, and when you
12:50:01 22 can't prove the negative, if we don't do this,
12:50:05 23 we're going to get attacked, it's a very hard case
12:50:11 24 to make.

12:50:13 25 MR. SESNO: Let me ask you about that
12:50:14 1 and I hold the up end that Bob Taft wrote in the
12:50:20 2 plain dealer, let me quote a piece of it and turn
12:50:23 3 it back to you in the form of a question. With
12:50:26 4 this small but strategic investment like that you
12:50:29 5 just talked about, our international affairs
12:50:31 6 programs build conflict zones, stop the disease
12:50:34 7 like he bow la, and provide economic opportunities

12:50:37 8 to women and girls and help lift billions out of
12:50:41 9 extreme poverty. That sounds great, but
12:50:44 10 translating that into an investment that people
12:50:46 11 can understand, explaining the R O I is harder.
12:50:50 12 How do you do it?

12:50:52 13 ROBERT GATES: Well, I think, I
12:50:55 14 think -- I mean, the way I would go about it is
12:50:58 15 that I think we in some ways cast our engagement
12:51:04 16 abroad in terms that are unrealistically ambitious
12:51:10 17 when we're trying to sell these programs. So
12:51:14 18 we're not trying to nation build in the sense that
12:51:20 19 we've seen the last 15 years. We're not trying to
12:51:24 20 impose our values or democracy in countries where
12:51:31 21 those truly are foreign concepts. The basis for
12:51:36 22 democracy in the long term is building
12:51:40 23 institutions, civil society, and the rule of law,
12:51:44 24 and that begins with baby steps and the baby steps
12:51:50 25 are enabling that woman in tans knee I can't or
12:51:54 1 some place with a micro loan or with some magic
12:51:58 2 seeds to begin making a better life for her family
12:52:01 3 and for her village. It's providing that school.
12:52:05 4 It's digging the well. It's giving people hope.
12:52:07 5 And once people have hope and once they begin to
12:52:10 6 become more self-sufficient, once they see that
12:52:13 7 there are things that can change and get better,

12:52:16 8 then, you begin to build the three things that are
12:52:18 9 the foundation of democracy, but you have to start
12:52:23 10 at the bottom. And the bottom is a relatively
12:52:27 11 inexpensive investment in providing those kinds of
12:52:31 12 benefits to people that help them help themselves,
12:52:35 13 vaccinations, education, agricultural support, and
12:52:42 14 in those kinds of areas, that begins to give
12:52:46 15 people some hope. And I think couching it in
12:52:49 16 those terms and how inexpensive that all is, for
12:52:54 17 me to send one brigade of American soldiers to a
12:53:00 18 foreign country, not counting all of the
12:53:04 19 logistical support costs, is a billion dollars,
12:53:10 20 one brigade, 3500 soldiers, a billion bucks.
12:53:16 21 Cost/benefit ratio is extraordinary.

12:53:19 22 MR. SESNO: You and I were once on
12:53:21 23 stage and you made a fast NATING comment about the
12:53:24 24 number of men and women who serve on the aircraft
12:53:28 25 carrier and the equivalent in diplomacy
12:53:31 1 development.

12:53:33 2 ROBERT GATES: Well, I made the
12:53:34 3 comment if you took every foreign service officer
12:53:37 4 working for the United States government, you
12:53:40 5 would not have enough people to crew one aircraft
12:53:42 6 carrier. Or as secretary rice once put it rather
12:53:50 7 did he rice sievely to me, you've got more people

12:53:53 8 in military bans than I have in the foreign

12:53:55 9 service.

12:53:57 10 MR. SESNO: At which point I asked

12:53:59 11 you which part of your budget you would be willing

12:54:02 12 to give up.

12:54:04 13 ROBERT GATES: Not one trombone.

12:54:07 14 MR. SESNO: I want to ask my next to

12:54:09 15 you by way of polling the audience. I don't know

12:54:13 16 if we can turn the house lights up. If not, I

12:54:17 17 think we can peer out there. Over the last 20

12:54:21 18 years, last 2 decades, has the proportion of

12:54:23 19 people around the world living in extreme poverty

12:54:29 20 increased, decreased or stayed about the same? So

12:54:33 21 proportion in extreme poverty has increased over

12:54:36 22 the last 20 years, raise your hand. Has stayed

12:54:39 23 about the same over the last 20 years, raise your

12:54:42 24 hand? Has decreased over the last 20 years, raise

12:54:45 25 your hand? And the answer is decreased. When you

12:54:48 1 were secretary of defense, you repeatedly made the

12:54:53 2 case that investing in poverty reduction was a

12:54:58 3 critical investment for America. Why as secretary

12:55:01 4 of defense did you put that investment in your top

12:55:07 5 priorities?

12:55:08 6 ROBERT GATES: Understand, I think

12:55:09 7 the headline at the time was that the secretary of

12:55:11 8 defense calling for an increase in the budget of
12:55:14 9 the state department in A ID was truly the man
12:55:20 10 writing his own story. It is because in my view,
12:55:25 11 particularly since the end of the Cold War, we
12:55:29 12 have unilaterally disarmed when it comes to the
12:55:33 13 other tools in the national security tool kit,
12:55:38 14 other than hammers. When I left, when I retired
12:55:42 15 the first time, C I A director in 1993, A ID had
12:55:50 16 16,000 employees, they were professionals,
12:55:52 17 dedicated, many of them worked in insecure
12:55:55 18 locations around the world on projects about which
12:55:58 19 they had a passion. When I came back into
12:56:02 20 government 13 years later, A ID had 3,000
12:56:06 21 employees, most of them managing contracts. US I
12:56:12 22 A, which was an incredible power house during the
12:56:15 23 Cold War, played a huge role in the ideal logical
12:56:21 24 struggle with the Soviet union, had shrunk from
12:56:27 25 the BE HEEM members of the jury it was in the
12:56:30 1 worldwide network it had under the likes of Edward
12:56:34 2 R. Moro, had shrunk to a corner of the state
12:56:38 3 department. These tools were critical to victory
12:56:40 4 in the Cold War, because of the nuclear stand-off,
12:56:45 5 because there was no direct military confrontation
12:56:48 6 or clash between the United States and the Soviet
12:56:52 7 union, that struggle was fought out politically,

12:56:58 8 ideal logically around the world. US A ID
12:57:08 9 programs in so many countries communicated a story
12:57:11 10 about the United States and about democratic
12:57:14 11 values and about freedom that was critical to
12:57:20 12 victory in the Cold War and that led to broad
12:57:24 13 support and admiration for America, particularly
12:57:28 14 in contrast to the Soviet union, across the
12:57:32 15 developing world. And once the Cold War was over,
12:57:38 16 we dismantled all of that, but think if we had
12:57:41 17 kept that, what I like to call that mighty we are
12:57:46 18 lit ZER of the nonmilitary capabilities strong in
12:57:52 19 terms of a presence in the Middle East, in Africa
12:57:57 20 and in Asia and elsewhere. It seems to me that by
12:58:02 21 dismantling those capabilities and by starving
12:58:05 22 them in the post Cold War period, we have, first
12:58:11 23 of all, diminished our ability to communicate a
12:58:16 24 story about America and what we stand for for the
12:58:19 25 rest of the world and that we are a force for
12:58:22 1 good, and we have ended up making it such that
12:58:30 2 most of the time when we have a response, the only
12:58:33 3 tool we have in the kit is the military, and the
12:58:39 4 military when it is used as a weapon, as a means
12:58:45 5 of force, does not win a lot of friends.
12:58:49 6 So my view is, I mean, and, you know,
12:58:53 7 using the military in partnership in terms of

12:58:57 8 training security forces, NERMGs of trying to get
12:59:00 9 civil military relations on a better basis in a
12:59:04 10 lot of countries, can be, can be a useful adjunct,
12:59:08 11 but my point is, by disarming ourselves on the
12:59:13 12 GLAT tick side and the A ID side, the whole
12:59:16 13 civilian side, we have put much more emphasis on
12:59:21 14 military. One of my beliefs and I wrote this in
12:59:24 15 my book, is that one of the consequences is that
12:59:28 16 the willingness, the greater willingness of
12:59:31 17 American presidents to use the military, not as a
12:59:34 18 last resort, but as a first option in dealing with
12:59:39 19 foreign challenges.

12:59:41 20 MR. SESNO: And what you think is one
12:59:46 21 of the things at stake in this election is that
12:59:50 22 tool box has to be much bigger and deeper than
12:59:53 23 that.

12:59:54 24 ROBERT GATES: I think our arsonnal
12:59:57 25 at this point can be a gigantic wheel in the
13:00:01 1 front.

13:00:01 2 MR. SESNO: Which is.

13:00:02 3 ROBERT GATES: Which is the military,
13:00:05 4 department of defense, and we've got these two
13:00:08 5 little wheels in the back and that's not the right
13:00:10 6 balance.

13:00:11 7 MR. SESNO: Which is developing

13:00:13 8 diplomacy see. How do you rebuild the bike.

13:00:17 9 ROBERT GATES: A big problem, to tell
13:00:19 10 you the truth, Congress gets a lot of blame for
13:00:24 11 this, and believe me, they deserve it all, but I
13:00:29 12 will tell you -- and I had this discussion with
13:00:31 13 secretaries of state, the state department has
13:00:33 14 been reluctant to ask for what it needs as opposed
13:00:38 15 to what it thinks it can get. The office of
13:00:43 16 management and budget has been negative and
13:00:47 17 presidents have not weighed in on the importance.
13:00:50 18 Now, President Bush did on some specific, specific
13:00:54 19 programs, such as PEPFAR and some others, but for
13:00:59 20 the most part, the executive branch has not asked
13:01:03 21 the Congress for significant increases in
13:01:08 22 resources for state and A ID and the other
13:01:12 23 civilians, and no small part because it is pretty
13:01:18 24 clear that the Congress could not be receptive.
13:01:20 25 Furthermore, the Congress restricts the ability to
13:01:23 1 transfer money in the executive branch. So I'll
13:01:25 2 give you an example from Afghanistan.

13:01:28 3 We did manage to get some legislation
13:01:31 4 that allowed the secretary of defense to transfer
13:01:34 5 a few hundred million dollars for development
13:01:39 6 purposes to the department of state in Iraq and
13:01:42 7 Afghanistan. So I get a call from Tom, secretary

13:01:47 8 of agriculture, and he says he's got 50
13:01:52 9 agriculture experts in the department of
13:01:54 10 agriculture who have volunteered to go to
13:01:56 11 Afghanistan and help. But he said I haven't got
13:02:00 12 any money in my budget to send them, can you help?
13:02:04 13 The answer is no. The department of defense was
13:02:08 14 prevented by legislation from spending any money
13:02:11 15 on anything having to do with the department of
13:02:13 16 agriculture. So we not only don't give the
13:02:18 17 resources in the first place to the civilian
13:02:21 18 agencies, we then Congress then ham strings the
13:02:25 19 ability the executive branch to have the ability
13:02:29 20 and the agility to be able to make some transfers
13:02:32 21 internally to meet specific needs.

13:02:35 22 MR. SESNO: Were you able to get
13:02:38 23 those people.

13:02:39 24 ROBERT GATES: Never went.

13:02:41 25 MR. SESNO: If they had went -- if
13:02:42 1 they had gone as a university president, you can
13:02:45 2 now fail me -- if they had gone, would it have
13:02:48 3 made a difference?

13:02:49 4 ROBERT GATES: Well, I think that
13:02:50 5 they make a big difference. I mean, President
13:02:53 6 Bush used to have weekly teleconferences with the
13:02:58 7 leaders of provisional reconstruction teams

13:03:03 8 particularly in Iraq. Our brigade commanders
13:03:06 9 would tell him that just having two or three
13:03:10 10 civilian experts working on these on development
13:03:16 11 issues, on helping people with their herds,
13:03:20 12 helping people with their crops and things like
13:03:24 13 that, had a disproportionate, had a huge impact,
13:03:29 14 it was huge leverage for them. So 50 of these
13:03:33 15 experts out in the field would have made I think a
13:03:36 16 real difference.

13:03:37 17 MR. SESNO: I mentioned before when I
13:03:41 18 polled the audience with poverty, the actual
13:03:45 19 interesting thing here is, too when you ask that
13:03:47 20 question of the country generally, two-thirds
13:03:50 21 think poverty has doubled in the world, 29 percent
13:03:53 22 think it's stayed the same, when in fact, poverty
13:03:56 23 has been reduced -- extreme poverty by almost half
13:04:01 24 in the pass two decades. So there's disconnect
13:04:04 25 with the facts in the general public, is a big
13:04:08 1 challenge. Follow up with on ISIS for a few
13:04:10 2 minutes here and ask you, you had mentioned this
13:04:14 3 fight against extremism and the tools that are
13:04:16 4 needed to do that. You have said we cannot kill
13:04:20 5 or catch our way to victory, I've heard you say
13:04:22 6 that more than once about terrorism. So
13:04:26 7 recognizing that and recognizing the limits of

13:04:31 8 kinetic energy, call it that, how do you think we
13:04:35 9 effectively counter extremism and terrorism using
13:04:38 10 these different tools?

13:04:39 11 ROBERT GATES: Well, first of all, I
13:04:41 12 think there is some segment of these Islamic
13:04:47 13 extreme miss who are ER recollect SIEBL and to be
13:04:53 14 blunt, have to be killed, like Bin Laden, but they
13:04:58 15 draw on a significant population of people and
13:05:05 16 recruit from the population of people that I think
13:05:10 17 share in common one thing, and that is
13:05:15 18 hopelessness. And hopelessness and a sense of
13:05:20 19 frustration at being -- at having no say in the
13:05:26 20 way they're governed, of having no benefit as a
13:05:31 21 share of their national economic process part or
13:05:39 22 life, so without economic prospects, without
13:05:41 23 political involvement /(- and without hope, they
13:05:47 24 are ready-made recruits for these extreme
13:05:51 25 misgroups likal KWIE did an and like ISIS and even
13:05:55 1 when we destroy thecal fan, when we take.

13:06:01 2 MR. SESNO: Which you think will
13:06:02 3 happen.

13:06:03 4 ROBERT GATES: Which I think will
13:06:04 5 happen at some point, these fundamental, this
13:06:10 6 fertile soil for radicalization will remain. And
13:06:15 7 I'll just give you an example. Virtually every

13:06:17 8 city in Iraq that has been lib rated is in ruins.
13:06:25 9 There is no infrastructure, there are no
13:06:27 10 businesses, there are no houses. So you have
13:06:31 11 significant SUN knee population that has been
13:06:35 12 driven out of these cities and there's nothing
13:06:36 13 there to go back to, and there is no plan, no
13:06:40 14 will, and no money in bag dad to rebuild. More
13:06:46 15 candidates. So it seems to me that the kind of --
13:06:53 16 the two things that over a long period of time,
13:06:56 17 this is not going to happen any time soon, but
13:06:59 18 over time could begin to alleviate that. First of
13:07:03 19 all, is -- first of all, to rebuild our
13:07:11 20 communicative networks that we had during the Cold
13:07:13 21 War, like we had during the Cold War, to be able
13:07:19 22 to communicate to these people that there is a
13:07:22 23 different and better future, but also through one
13:07:26 24 means or another, and it may be direct, it may be
13:07:30 25 indirect. Also some development programs that
13:07:32 1 begin to give them hope, that begin to let them
13:07:36 2 believe that there will be or can be a better
13:07:40 3 life. And then I think we also have to continue
13:07:43 4 to press for reform on the part of authoritarian
13:07:49 5 governments that are quite corrupt and where there
13:07:54 6 is no trickle down effect, if you will,
13:07:57 7 economically to the people. I think we make a

13:08:01 8 mistake in we think we can impose democracy on
13:08:08 9 them. Church hill once said during world war 2 he
13:08:11 10 was under pressure to replace the Greek military
13:08:14 11 government that was helping theal lies so that
13:08:16 12 they could have democratic government, and church
13:08:20 13 hill's response was, democracy is not some HAR lot
13:08:24 14 to be picked up in the street at the point of a
13:08:27 15 Tommy gun. Democracy has to grow locally. It has
13:08:33 16 to have its roots in local society. It can't be
13:08:37 17 imposed from without, but we can urge continuing
13:08:42 18 reform on these countries together with greater
13:08:47 19 communications and more development. And the
13:08:50 20 development maybe doesn't come from us directly
13:08:53 21 because in a lot of these places, the United
13:08:55 22 States is bad, are two bad words, but maybe we can
13:08:59 23 work it through intermediate, other
13:09:05 24 intermediaries, but the point is that it gets
13:09:08 25 done. It doesn't matter who gets the credit for
13:09:10 1 it. It's that something begins to happen to make
13:09:13 2 these folks believe or let these folks believe
13:09:17 3 life can be better. Until we do that, these
13:09:21 4 societies will continue to be easy grounds for
13:09:26 5 recruiting extreme miss.

13:09:29 6 MR. SESNO: Let me ask you about what
13:09:31 7 is almost certainly the world's leading

13:09:34 8 humanitarian problem right now and let me also say
13:09:37 9 it's so interesting and so different to be having
13:09:40 10 a conversation like this with a Former Secretary
13:09:43 11 of Defense, because most people wouldn't instantly
13:09:46 12 think that this is the kind of conversation that
13:09:48 13 we would be having. You've thought about it so
13:09:53 14 deeply and thoroughly is very, very telling.
13:09:55 15 Syria, 13 and a half million people have been
13:09:58 16 displaced. We have seen this horrible immigration
13:10:03 17 surg as people escape for their lives, pressuring
13:10:07 18 companies all over the world, creating political
13:10:09 19 instability and a real crisis. You know the
13:10:12 20 logistics of the planet so well having led the
13:10:15 21 military, how should we respond, how should the
13:10:18 22 world respond to this humanitarian crisis?

13:10:21 23 ROBERT GATES: Well, I think, I think
13:10:27 24 it's too glib, well, it is glib, but nonetheless
13:10:33 25 true to say that at this point we're a day late
13:10:38 1 and a dollar short.

13:10:39 2 MR. SESNO: Doesn't make the crisis
13:10:40 3 go away.

13:10:41 4 ROBERT GATES: No. I think first of
13:10:42 5 all, we ought to be lead in the west and others as
13:10:46 6 well out to be giving significantly more help,
13:10:50 7 assistance and aids to the Jordan and to the

13:10:57 8 TUSHGs who are sponsoring and housing if you will
13:11:02 9 literally millions of these refugees and these are
13:11:06 10 not two rich countries, particularly Jordan and it
13:11:09 11 also has the potential to be destabilizing in
13:11:12 12 Jordan after a certain point. So that's kind of
13:11:14 13 a near-term thing that ought to be done kind of
13:11:19 14 tomorrow.

13:11:20 15 You know, one of the alternatives at
13:11:23 16 this point that some people talk about is some
13:11:26 17 kind of a safe hey very soon or a safe zone /(-
13:11:32 18 where the refugees could go, those driven out of
13:11:36 19 the KIs cities and so on. And this is another one
13:11:40 20 of those alternatives that may have been easier to
13:11:45 21 organize three or three and a half years ago than
13:11:49 22 it is today. But just thinking about it from my
13:11:53 23 standpoint and thinking about what was involved in
13:11:56 24 1991 in providing protection for the KURDs in the
13:12:01 25 mountains of northern Iraq against SA dam after
13:12:09 1 the war, you can imagine, let's assume that you
13:12:12 2 can establish the safe zone and you end up with,
13:12:14 3 let's say, a million refugees there. Who policies
13:12:18 4 them? How many tens of thousands of troops, U N
13:12:25 5 peace keepers or whoever, are going to be required
13:12:27 6 to keep order? How do you make sure that people
13:12:31 7 aren't -- that the terrorist groups aren't

13:12:34 8 infiltrating their own people into those safe HAF
13:12:38 9 VENS? How do you support it, food, water,
13:12:42 10 sanitation, tents, blankets, the whole works for a
13:12:45 11 million people? So this now has become I think a
13:12:50 12 huge obstacle. Similarly, early on, it would have
13:12:55 13 been a tough decision, but long before the
13:12:58 14 Russians intervened, using our Air Force to ground
13:13:07 15 asad's Air Force so he couldn't use bombs and so
13:13:16 16 on and maybe changing the balance between him and
13:13:19 17 the opposition, that could have worked as well.
13:13:23 18 It would have been a major operation because he's
13:13:25 19 got a pretty sophisticated air defense system.
13:13:28 20 So here are a couple of options that
13:13:30 21 we could have done that would have been tough, but
13:13:36 22 they would have been a lot easier in 2012 than in
13:13:41 23 2016, and so now it's hard to see, Frank, any good
13:13:48 24 options for dealing with this problem, this
13:13:55 25 terrible tragedy, and other than trying to make
13:14:00 1 conditions better in the camps outside of Syria
13:14:03 2 that already exist and helping the governments who
13:14:09 3 are -- on whose territory those camps are located,
13:14:13 4 helping them with the challenges of supporting
13:14:17 5 them.

13:14:17 6 MR. SESNO: Do you see that
13:14:19 7 humanitarian crisis, though, as a top drawer

13:14:22 8 crisis issue that the next president, whoever he
13:14:24 9 or she may be, is going to have to deal with?

13:14:27 10 ROBERT GATES: Yes, and I think the
13:14:29 11 way things are going in Syria, it's likely to get
13:14:31 12 worse.

13:14:32 13 MR. SESNO: Well, just today as a
13:14:34 14 matter of fact, secretary of state said any
13:14:37 15 pretense of some kind of cease fire is over.

13:14:41 16 ROBERT GATES: Some of us believed
13:14:43 17 that was the case a long time ago.

13:14:44 18 MR. SESNO: Subject for another
13:14:45 19 conversation. We'll come back to that. All
13:14:47 20 right. So you told a story of the secretary of
13:14:50 21 agriculture calling you and you're a good story
13:14:54 22 teller. I want to ask you to tell us a different
13:14:56 23 story. You've traveled the world. You've seen
13:14:59 24 military people in uniform and partners in the
13:15:03 25 private sector and from state department and
13:15:05 1 development working on the ground with some of
13:15:09 2 these civilians, you talked about schools, roads
13:15:10 3 and agriculture. What have you seen that has
13:15:14 4 stuck with you that you thought this is making a
13:15:16 5 difference, I wish I could share this with the
13:15:20 6 American people, I wish people could see this for
13:15:22 7 themselves?

13:15:24 8 ROBERT GATES: Well, I think it
13:15:25 9 actually was probably one of my first visits to
13:15:30 10 Iraq as secretary, and the core commander, our
13:15:38 11 core commander in Iraq at the time was general
13:15:41 12 Pete core real Lee who would later become my
13:15:44 13 senior military advisor and assistant, and on one
13:15:50 14 of my early visits, he gave me a briefing, and on
13:15:57 15 how he had taken some of the commander's funds
13:15:59 16 that were available to him and paid Iraqees to put
13:16:04 17 down their rifles and pick up a shovel and they
13:16:09 18 fixed the sewer system in one part of bag dad. He
13:16:15 19 said the impact of that on that part of bag dad
13:16:21 20 would have taken a brigade of soldiers to bring to
13:16:23 21 the same level of security. Just connecting the
13:16:30 22 sewer system in a neighborhood, because of the
13:16:32 23 modest improvement in the quality of life of
13:16:35 24 people made a huge difference in the security
13:16:37 25 situation itself.

13:16:40 1 MR. SESNO: Interesting story. I can
13:16:42 2 imagine if we could do some more of that around
13:16:45 3 the world, that would not only pacify populations
13:16:48 4 but to advise that other side of the United States
13:16:51 5 you were talking about.

13:16:51 6 ROBERT GATES: Yeah.

13:16:52 7 MR. SESNO: How about these

13:16:53 8 partnerships, partnerships of military and
13:16:55 9 civilian and state and private sector to get this
13:16:59 10 done?

13:17:00 11 ROBERT GATES: Well, you know, one of
13:17:01 12 the partnerships that I think -- I mean, I argued
13:17:04 13 for this both in the bush and Obama
13:17:07 14 administrations and frankly to no avail, but I
13:17:14 15 think that I was listening to the president of --
13:17:16 16 the head of the board of trustees of Ohio state
13:17:20 17 earlier. One of the great untapped resources in
13:17:27 18 this country for development are America's land
13:17:32 19 grant colleges and universities, and at Texas A &
13:17:39 20 M, I had dozens of faculty members out in insecure
13:17:42 21 areas, in west Africa, in Asia, in Africa, doing
13:17:47 22 research, helping farmers, doing the kinds of
13:17:53 23 things that A ID used to do, and I would go to the
13:17:57 24 secretaries of state and I would say, why can't we
13:18:01 25 do this? I would go to the N F C, why don't you
13:18:05 1 put somebody in touch and ironically, the guy who
13:18:09 2 was in charge of the association, land grant
13:18:13 3 colleges and universities, was a man named Peter
13:18:18 4 mac fear son who had not only been the president
13:18:20 5 of Michigan state, he had also been the director
13:18:23 6 of US A ID through most of the Reagan
13:18:27 7 administration. And Peter was willing to try and

13:18:30 8 get these land grant universities together in
13:18:36 9 terms of seeing if we could help direct, you know,
13:18:40 10 the impact of people from a college of veterinary
13:18:43 11 medicine in terms of helping people improve their
13:18:46 12 herds in Afghanistan or the magic beans story or a
13:18:50 13 hundred other examples. So my point is, we have
13:18:54 14 resources in this country on the civilian side of
13:18:58 15 assistance that we haven't even begun to tap in
13:19:02 16 any kind of an organized way. So it's not just
13:19:06 17 partnerships with businesses, we have this great
13:19:09 18 university system in this country that has a huge
13:19:13 19 asset that represents a huge asset for the United
13:19:18 20 States, and, you know, when it comes to
13:19:20 21 communications, when I first -- when I first came
13:19:24 22 back into government, I said, how in the hell is
13:19:27 23 it that a country that invented public relations
13:19:30 24 is being outcommunicated by a guy in a cave?
13:19:35 25 Which was the case withal KIE did a.

13:19:39 1 MR. SESNO: Did you get an answer to
13:19:40 2 that question?

13:19:41 3 ROBERT GATES: I never did get a good
13:19:43 4 answer to that question.

13:19:45 5 MR. SESNO: We're still asking that
13:19:47 6 question.

13:19:47 7 ROBERT GATES: Yeah, exactliment my

13:19:48 8 point is that these partnerships are terribly
13:19:51 9 important, but I also would argue they're terribly
13:19:54 10 underutilized and I think there isn't much
13:19:58 11 imagination or creativity on the parts of folks in
13:20:01 12 the government on how you mobilize the private
13:20:04 13 sector in this country to be an ally in this
13:20:06 14 cause.

13:20:07 15 MR. SESNO: Let's go to the floor for
13:20:08 16 a couple of questions. I think we've got people
13:20:10 17 with microphones around, so if you -- if you have
13:20:14 18 a mike and a question, start over here. Go ahead.
13:20:17 19 And then we'll wrap up this conversation. Tell us
13:20:21 20 you who.

13:20:22 21 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Secretary gates,
13:20:24 22 former secretary State of Ohio, thank you both for
13:20:27 23 being here. We heard governor Kasich refer to
13:20:30 24 president Reagan's use of the shining city on the
13:20:32 25 hill, I've heard Robert Kennedy Jr. Use that as
13:20:37 1 well. And we do have a very good historic in aid.
13:20:46 2 What can folks out here do to encourage our
13:20:50 3 leaders to meet the challenges, if we had only
13:20:53 4 done some of the things that you mentioned four or
13:20:55 5 five years ago wouldn't be as big as today?

13:20:59 6 ROBERT GATES: I think a big part of
13:21:01 7 it is again, setting aside some specific programs

13:21:05 8 that have been approved, quote unquote, foreign
13:21:11 9 aid is toxic politely.

13:21:14 10 MR. SESNO: To say to the public or
13:21:16 11 Congress or both?

13:21:17 12 ROBERT GATES: To say to the Congress
13:21:18 13 and the reason is it is an issue that is so easy
13:21:21 14 to DEM ma going and basically say we have so many
13:21:26 15 needs here at home, how can we be sending money
13:21:29 16 over there instead of dealing with our needs over
13:21:33 17 here.

13:21:33 18 MR. SESNO: Why are you building
13:21:34 19 roads in Afghanistan for when we need them here in
13:21:37 20 Ohio?

13:21:38 21 ROBERT GATES: Yeah. So I think part
13:21:39 22 of it is in your own communities doing what you
13:21:44 23 can in the schools, particularly having a say in
13:21:47 24 the high schools, but more broadly in the chamber
13:21:50 25 of commerce and so on, is to do what you can to
13:21:54 1 increase the level of knowledge that this is, as
13:22:01 2 several people said, good for business and that
13:22:05 3 this actually benefits the United States. These
13:22:11 4 kinds of programs benefit the United States in the
13:22:13 5 long run because they reduce the likelihood we're
13:22:16 6 going to have to end up sending soldiers some
13:22:19 7 place, which is dramatically more expensive. But

13:22:23 8 I think there needs to be members of Congress need
13:22:27 9 to have some confidence that the issue will not be
13:22:32 10 used against them when they run for reelection or
13:22:36 11 for election, that it is a -- this kind of thing
13:22:42 12 at a modest level pays benefit to the United
13:22:47 13 States and net networks to our advantage. Trying
13:22:50 14 to get that message across and so that it at least
13:22:53 15 provides some ammunition to those in Congress who
13:22:58 16 might be willing philosophically to support it but
13:23:01 17 are worried about supporting it politically.

13:23:03 18 MR. SESNO: So they have some
13:23:04 19 political support at home? It will be used
13:23:07 20 against them by somebody, but.

13:23:09 21 ROBERT GATES: But if they know
13:23:10 22 they've got a con STIN Wednesday see defending
13:23:14 23 them on this.

13:23:15 24 MR. SESNO: It was interesting
13:23:16 25 looking at the handout today that runs through the
13:23:19 1 benefits with Ohio, it begins with jobs and trade
13:23:23 2 and what that does to business and that in part
13:23:25 3 makes your case. Yes, sir.

13:23:26 4 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Secretary gates,
13:23:28 5 thank you for your very good insight, thoughtful
13:23:32 6 insight of leadership. My name is Peter owe
13:23:35 7 herein, I'm president of the foundation. We're a

13:23:38 8 little company in Cleveland Ohio, actually solely
13:23:43 9 in Ohio to help improve access to healthcare in
13:23:48 10 African countries with help from A ID. We see in
13:23:53 11 that country conflict and great opportunity.
13:23:56 12 There are countries that are predominantly Muslim,
13:24:00 13 some Christian, some mixtures. We see conflicts
13:24:05 14 in crises in South Sudan, but also some of the
13:24:12 15 fastest growing economies in the world. So what
13:24:15 16 in your view should be future US policy towards
13:24:19 17 Africa specifically.

13:24:23 18 ROBERT GATES: I think that US policy
13:24:26 19 toward Africa has actually -- it's one of the few
13:24:32 20 areas where I would say US policy has actually
13:24:35 21 become better and more sophisticated under the
13:24:39 22 last two presidents than in a lot of areas, and I
13:24:43 23 think some of the initiatives the millennium fund
13:24:50 24 under President Bush and a.m. far and many others,
13:24:57 25 various issues, and the partnerships between
13:24:59 1 government and private foundations like the gates
13:25:02 2 foundation in terms of disease and so on, I think
13:25:06 3 has all gotten a lot better. So, you know, I
13:25:09 4 think seven of the ten fastest growing countries
13:25:12 5 in the world are in Africa at this point, and so I
13:25:15 6 think figuring out ways to enable for whatever the
13:25:22 7 US government can do to enable US private sector

13:25:26 8 investment in Africa would be a good thing. But I
13:25:32 9 think also some greater coordination, I referred
13:25:36 10 earlier to a lot of the assets that we have in
13:25:39 11 this country that have not been brought to bear in
13:25:42 12 dealing with some of these challenges, but also
13:25:44 13 opportunities. And as I say a little more
13:25:49 14 imagination and creativity on the part of the
13:25:51 15 government about how to draw in those capabilities
13:25:53 16 and put them to work in Africa, perhaps in a more
13:25:58 17 organized way and in a way that's got better
13:26:00 18 priorities. One of my concerns in Afghanistan and
13:26:03 19 one of the reasons I was perhaps the only strong
13:26:08 20 supporter in the American government in creating a
13:26:12 21 U N overseer for assistance in after began stand
13:26:17 22 was that nobody knew what anybody else was doing
13:26:19 23 and there was no sharing of what was working and
13:26:21 24 what wasn't working, no sharing of best practices,
13:26:25 25 and you would have different -- you would have two
13:26:29 1 districts side by side in Afghanistan and never
13:26:36 2 helping another district. You would have people
13:26:38 3 building a road to get to market and it would hit
13:26:41 4 the district line and it would stop, but the
13:26:43 5 market is another 20 miles down the road or what
13:26:46 6 should have been a road. So there is a
13:26:47 7 coordinating role that the US government can play

13:26:52 8 I think with the private sector, with private
13:26:54 9 foundations and so on, that can better concentrate
13:26:58 10 these efforts and put more sway behind those
13:27:03 11 things that we know are working as opposed to some
13:27:07 12 that aren't working so well.

13:27:11 13 MR. SESNO: Really good question and
13:27:12 14 great point. Another question from the floor?
13:27:14 15 Yes, sir.

13:27:15 16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: My name is Clarence
13:27:17 17 I'm a public SEFRNT and Veteran of the first
13:27:20 18 Persian gulf war, thank you very much for your
13:27:22 19 service to our military. My question is with
13:27:25 20 respect to South America. Recently, there was a
13:27:28 21 peace deal announced in Columbia that in 50 years
13:27:31 22 of conflict. Any thoughts on the lessons learned
13:27:34 23 from this initiative in Columbia which we saw
13:27:40 24 American security coupled with American economic
13:27:42 25 assistance really transform Columbia into the ally
13:27:46 1 it is today and then further, do you see that type
13:27:49 2 of initiative as a model for other conflicts
13:27:52 3 around the world?

13:27:53 4 ROBERT GATES: Yeah, I think plan
13:27:55 5 Columbia and what has happened in Columbia is a
13:27:57 6 real success story. You know, you talk about all
13:28:00 7 of the failures of American policy, what has

13:28:03 8 happened in Columbia is a great success and it's a
13:28:06 9 bipartisan success because plan Columbia got
13:28:09 10 started under President Bush and brought to this
13:28:11 11 fruition under President Obama and it really was a
13:28:14 12 combination of economic assistance, political
13:28:24 13 assistance, trade deals and support. So the trade
13:28:29 14 agreement with Columbia was important, but it was
13:28:31 15 also important the way we trained the column ban
13:28:36 16 military that enabled them to take out a lot of
13:28:38 17 the leadership of the FASHG. So it was the
13:28:40 18 combination of sort of car rot and the stick that
13:28:44 19 has brought us to this point in Columbia.
13:28:46 20 Columbia, you know, I'm kind of a big historian,
13:28:50 21 I'm a big believer in the theory that individuals
13:28:53 22 actually do map outcomes of events and I think
13:28:56 23 that is exactly the case in Columbia. Columbia
13:29:00 24 has been very lucky in having first president and
13:29:04 25 then president Santos which I worked with very
13:29:07 1 closely when he was defense minister. A
13:29:11 2 combination of good leadership in both countries
13:29:14 3 and far sighted leadership and combination of
13:29:17 4 economic incentives and at the same time security
13:29:25 5 training and the pressure on FASHG.
13:29:27 6 MR. SESNO: We are almost out of
13:29:28 7 time. I want to ask just a couple of other

13:29:30 8 questions to bring us in for a nice smooth
13:29:33 9 pleasant landing. We have talked about these
13:29:36 10 issues, as you said, we have not talked about the
13:29:39 11 candidates and we're not going to talk about the
13:29:41 12 candidates now, because we want to keep focus on
13:29:46 13 the issues mentioned. But how do we take these
13:29:50 14 issues and make sure that we are learning what we
13:29:52 15 need to learn from the candidates? I pose it to
13:29:55 16 you this way, I'm working on a book on questions
13:29:57 17 actually that will come out in January called ask
13:30:02 18 more and it's all about the questions we need to
13:30:04 19 be asking as citizens and colleagues and whatever
13:30:07 20 to be more informed and more engaged. What are do
13:30:12 21 you think are the questions that the candidates
13:30:14 22 should be asked going forward, are the questions
13:30:16 23 that we should pose to ourselves as citizens of
13:30:19 24 this country and the world if we are to be more
13:30:23 25 informed and more engaged on this diplomacy and
13:30:26 1 development and humanitarian aid to make this
13:30:29 2 world a better place that we've been talking
13:30:32 3 about?

13:30:33 4 ROBERT GATES: Well, they both made a
13:30:34 5 lot of promises and a lot of sweeping statements,
13:30:40 6 and I think that there is one question that could
13:30:44 7 be applied to almost every major issue to ask each

13:30:51 8 of them: How in the hell do you plan to do that?

13:30:57 9 Just, you know, that's a great generalization,

13:31:01 10 that's a great objective.

13:31:02 11 MR. SESNO: Whatever it is.

13:31:03 12 ROBERT GATES: Whatever it is. How

13:31:05 13 are you going to do that? Where are you going to

13:31:08 14 build the coalition in Washington? Where are you

13:31:11 15 going to get the resources to do anything like

13:31:14 16 what you're saying? I think this is what,

13:31:19 17 frankly, they both have escaped, is the

13:31:24 18 fundamental question, I'm a very pragmatic kind of

13:31:28 19 a guy, you know, I like to set big goals, but then

13:31:30 20 I like to say how in the heck am I going to get

13:31:34 21 that done. And that's the question that I think

13:31:40 22 too many political leaders making promises because

13:31:43 23 they love to tell people what they want to hear.

13:31:46 24 MR. SESNO: And to make it simple.

13:31:48 25 ROBERT GATES: And make it simple and

13:31:49 1 just hammer them on how are you going to do that,

13:31:52 2 tell me step 1, 2, 3, how are you going to get

13:31:56 3 from point A to point B, how are you going to get

13:31:58 4 the ball across the goal line.

13:32:00 5 MR. SESNO: My last question for you,

13:32:02 6 it's now the future, it's the day after the innag

13:32:08 7 GRAL, January 20th, 2017, and your phone rings,

13:32:16 8 and it's the new president and you answer your
13:32:20 9 phone, so it's you've got to take the.

13:32:23 10 ROBERT GATES: Sometimes, sometimes
13:32:24 11 not.

13:32:25 12 MR. SESNO: And this new president is
13:32:28 13 calling you and asking you for your advice and
13:32:31 14 this new president says, help me look beyond my in
13:32:35 15 box, help me look over the horizon, help me figure
13:32:38 16 how the how to do some of those things I saw you
13:32:42 17 telling that audience in Ohio with such he will
13:32:45 18 consequence we need to do, how do you tell him how
13:32:47 19 to prioritize?

13:32:51 20 ROBERT GATES: The first thing I tell
13:32:52 21 him is he does have to prioritize.

13:32:55 22 MR. SESNO: You're using a gender
13:32:58 23 there.

13:32:59 24 ROBERT GATES: He or she.

13:33:01 25 MR. SESNO: Either or.

13:33:02 1 ROBERT GATES: I think the advice,
13:33:06 2 actually the most important advice I would give
13:33:11 3 would be advice well before the innag GRAL and
13:33:15 4 right after the election, and that is pay really
13:33:22 5 close attention to the people you're going to
13:33:24 6 appoint to senior positions around you, can they
13:33:28 7 work as a team, and do you have people who'll

13:33:33 8 argue with you and challenge you and make you
13:33:37 9 think twice about things? Are you going to have a
13:33:43 10 group of people that you can count on to be honest
13:33:50 11 with you and then work to achieve your objectives,
13:33:53 12 are these people who can actually get the job
13:33:56 13 done?

13:33:58 14 So I think that too many presidents
13:34:02 15 put their cabinets together sometimes to pay off
13:34:06 16 political debts or because of the image of
13:34:11 17 somebody in one or another job. But when I had my
13:34:15 18 private meeting with president elect Obama, I had
13:34:23 19 my first two questions to him were, first of all,
13:34:28 20 why do you think you can trust me? We've never
13:34:30 21 even met. But the second question is, who's the
13:34:33 22 rest of the team going to be? Because most of my
13:34:37 23 career, the secretaries of state and defense
13:34:41 24 didn't even speak to each other, and in some of
13:34:44 25 the cases, they hated each other, and believe me,
13:34:46 1 it radiates through both departments, which is why
13:34:52 2 the speech calling for more money for state A ID
13:34:59 3 was so unusual. So those would be the questions
13:35:02 4 that I think are first and foremost. The agenda,
13:35:09 5 the president -- I talked about China, Russia,
13:35:13 6 Iran, NK, Middle East. The new president's first
13:35:18 7 task will come in one of those areas and maybe

13:35:20 8 more than one, and the question is whether he or
13:35:25 9 she has thought about those things and has some
13:35:29 10 idea of what they would do. Are you ready to go
13:35:33 11 to war? And what's the alternative? And so those
13:35:39 12 are the questions that I would ask on November 9th
13:35:43 13 or whatever the day after the election is,
13:35:45 14 November 10th, that I think are really, really the
13:35:53 15 critical questions. January 21st is too late.

13:36:00 16 MR. SESNO: Well, you have treated us
13:36:03 17 to --

13:36:04 18 ROBERT GATES: So that's what I would
13:36:06 19 tell him on the phone.

13:36:07 20 MR. SESNO: You should have called me
13:36:09 21 two months ago.

13:36:09 22 ROBERT GATES: You're two months too
13:36:11 23 late and I'm going fishing.

13:36:13 24 MR. SESNO: You'll have your phone
13:36:15 25 with you. The president will find you. But, you
13:36:18 1 know, the president could call you on the day of
13:36:20 2 the election or the day after the inaugural and
13:36:22 3 then beyond. This is a rolling game. This is not
13:36:27 4 something that gets one and gets done. I think
13:36:30 5 that's why it is so interesting and so important
13:36:32 6 to listen to you. I want to thank you for several
13:36:35 7 things and then I want to thank Liz. One, we need

13:36:40 8 to thank you for your candor, for your
13:36:42 9 thoughtfulness, for your service, and for your
13:36:45 10 ability to help us think deeper about issues that
13:36:49 11 we would all be better off if all of the country
13:36:52 12 and candidates thought deeper about these ongoing
13:36:56 13 issues. (Applause.)

13:36:59 14 And this lady, ladies and gentlemen,
13:37:05 15 I've worked with USGLC for quite sometime doing
13:37:08 16 conversations like this and it is truly a
13:37:10 17 privilege. You are privileged to be part of a
13:37:13 18 conversation like this. We need more of these and
13:37:16 19 more people like -- we need more people like you
13:37:19 20 to be a part of these because it matters, and what
13:37:23 21 Liz and USGLC have done with their work to enable
13:37:26 22 these things is magic, but it needs to be part of
13:37:30 23 our national dialogue ongoing because it's a big,
13:37:36 24 small, complicated, simple, contradictory world,
13:37:40 25 and thank you and thank you so much for making
13:37:42 1 this happen. (Applause.)