The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

GENERAL ANTHONY C. ZINNI

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INTERVIEW

Q: When and where were you born?

ZINNI: I was born on September 17, 1943 right outside of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia suburbs, where I grew up and lived. My parents were immigrants, came from Italy, both of them from the same region. They came when they were young. My grandparents and mother's family settled in South Philadelphia; my father's family in a small suburb outside of Philadelphia and that's where I spent my youth.

Q: Do you know much about your grandparents on both sides; where they came from and what they were engaged in and why they came over?

ZINNI: Yes. On my mother's side, my grandfather was a tailor and he's from the Abruzzi region of Italy and came at the turn of the last century, established himself and then sent for the rest of the family, which was the typical way things were done. About five or six years after he got here, the grandmothers came with all the brood. My father's side of the family almost the same thing, also from the Abruzzi region. They were basically farmers and my grandfather came and established himself here, got a job, sent for the grandmother and the kids and that's how my parents came. My father was 14 when he came, my mother was three. They obviously met here, both from the same region of Italy and again, met here and I grew up in a really big, extended Italian family.

Q: Did your father continue in the tailoring business?

ZINNI: No. My grandfather on my mother's side was the tailor. My mother was in the garment industry. I mean, she made handmade buttonholes for Jacob Reeds. My father not long after he was here was drafted into the army, went back with the American expeditionary force in World War I, and was in an aviation unit actually in France. Then he began doing work in factories and mills that sort of dotted the river leading out of Philadelphia, did some landscaping work and eventually became a chauffeur for a family on the mainline of Philadelphia and that's where he spent most of his career.

Q: Now, did your mother and father, how far up did they get on the educational front?

ZINNI: My father about third grade, my mother about eighth. Obviously, in those days, again, this was early 20th century, when they came most of the kids immediately went to work and they both did, so, you know, that's the way it usually worked out.

Q: Did you speak Italian at home?

ZINNI: I did when my grandparents were alive. I was the youngest child, came along way late in life. My parents were in their mid to late 40s when I was born. After my grandparents died, we didn't speak it that much. Obviously, my older brother and sisters spoke it much better than I did. I did, again, until my grandparents passed away. Then we tended not to use that much of it. I've tried to maintain it but it's difficult.

Q: I served in Italy and so many children of immigrant parents came and they thought they were talking Italian and the Italians kind of looked at them because they were speaking a real dialect.

ZINNI: As a matter of fact, I was back in Italy. I had an incident where an American couple in a restaurant where I was asked me if I could ask the waiter in Italian, because they heard me speak a little bit of Italian, where the bathroom was. I asked the waiter and he didn't know what I was talking about and I called my brother and said, "I always thought bathroom was _____." He laughed and said, "That's back house." When they first came here, you know, their bathrooms were outside and before they had indoor plumbing and it was "back house" and of course, the dialect became _____. I thought it was an Italian word.

Q: In your family how important was the Catholic Church?

ZINNI: Oh, very important. Our local sort of Italian Catholic Church. Our neighborhood was basically Polish, Irish, Italian and Mayflower Americans and African Americans. The Polish, Irish and Italian each had their own Catholic church. Ours was Saints Cosmos and Damien. I went to the grade school that was associated with the church and I went to Catholic high school. The Irish Church, if you will, Saint Matthew's, had the community high school that we all went to. So, I had a Catholic education in elementary school and high school and then I went to Villanova University so it continued on to college.

Q: The Italian church in the United States always seemed to have, what I gather, a less heavy hand than the Irish Church on families. Did you notice this at all?

ZINNI: I didn't particularly notice any comparison. I mean, the churches were actually very close and in my neighborhood there was a Polish, Irish and Italian Catholic Church and there was a lot of intermarriage. As a matter of fact, my brother and sisters and myself, we didn't marry Italians. So there was a lot of association and obviously since there was one high school I didn't notice that much difference. The churches were very much cooperative. I remember when we were building a new church, the Italian church and the Polish church offered us to use their facilities for mass and other things until our church was built so again. You know, we all went to the same high school. The nuns were different orders at the grade schools but then there was a mix of the nuns in a high school. To me they all seemed to be pretty much at the same sort of level in terms of dealing with their communities.

Q: What was it like growing up as a kid?

ZINNI: The area I grew up in was called Conshohocken, an Indian name. There's a whole series of towns leading out on the Schuylkill River outside of Philadelphia and they were traditionally mill towns along the river. In those areas, you know, basically those are blue-collar communities. You graduated high school and you went to work in one of the mills. That was kind of the routine. You got a job in Ellinwood Steel Company, Lee Tires, Hamilton Paper Mill, you know, one of the big mills out there,

since all gone obviously, since all heavy industry is gone. Actually, the towns have been rehabilitated into yuppie communities outside Philadelphia now in beautiful old houses that where there. It was kind of a typical blue-collar neighborhood. I think families were very close. We tended to do the normal thing in terms of sports. It was probably a good, solid environment to grow up in, I thought. Again, the influence of the church, the friendships, it was an interracial, interethnic neighborhood so you were exposed to everybody.

Q: There weren't Irish gangs and Jewish gangs?

ZINNI: No, nothing like that. I mean, we had community centers where we all went together. You know, nothing more than maybe the normal frictions you might see but nowhere near to any kind of ethnic friction or racial friction at any level. In growing up we played sports together, we went to school together. It was a fairly, you know, I think, healthy environment.

Q: At home in the family, was there much discussion on what was going on?

ZINNI: Yes, my parents were very politically astute. My father was a Republican and my mother was a Democrat.

Q: Your father was a Republican? I find that incredible, coming from an immigrant, working background.

ZINNI: Well, because he went into the army and when he came out he worked up on the main line with all these very wealthy families as a chauffeur and I think that influenced him. Of course, my mother was in the garment industry and I had relatives who were in the union but they were very much politically knowledgeable and astute so I grew up in a house where politics was discussed a lot. But I guess what I liked about it is you heard all views and to me it was kind of a healthy environment. My father really believed in education despite the fact that he didn't have much and my brother and sisters were not able to go to college. I was the only one able and I had to work. I didn't go away to college; I just commuted every day and worked. But he was able to afford the tuition and I worked for the rest of it. The one thing that always impressed me growing up, we had every magazine in the world, Time, Newsweek, US News and World Report, Look, Colliers you name it, we had it. My father really believed in making sure you were very aware of what was going on.

Q: This is an era when magazines were extremely important.. This is how so much information was delivered.

At school, were you much of a reader?

ZINNI: Yes, I was. I mean, you had to be in Catholic school. The good sisters, you know, your homework was unbelievable. I think we did like three hour's worth of homework a night was the requirement and the academic load was pretty heavy. If you had

experienced, good nuns, then you better have your stuff together, so it was pretty demanding. I mean, you could not help but be a reader. But besides that, my father worked up on the main line and besides being chauffeur, he really ran the estate for a very wealthy family. They would give him a lot of books and things that he would bring home. One thing that I always remembered, we had a lot of reading material, books and magazines and newspapers and everything in the house.

Q: Do you recall any books that were sort of influential?

ZINNI: There were a lot of policy books. I mean, he brought home a lot of books that dealt with trying to advance world politics. His boss had been an officer in the First World War, was a stockbroker, came from a very wealthy family line and so did his wife so it was a lot of old money. You know, he was a member of the Union League in Philadelphia. My father used to drive him down there for his Union League meetings. I received an award from the Union League. I thought it was interesting. My father used to drive his boss up there. I received an award in Philadelphia. I always saw that building which is very unique in Philadelphia. So the books tended to be current events kinds of books, which made me I think, much more aware maybe than anybody else in my situation about what was going on in the world.

Q: Were you interested in military history, in the military particularly or was it just one of many things?

ZINNI: All the male members of my family served in the military. My father was drafted in World War I, my cousins were drafted in World War II, fought in Europe and the Pacific, my brother was drafted during the Korean War, my two brothers-in-law were in the military and so military experience ran in the family and of course, all the war stories and everything else. So when I was a little kid I was interested in that. I was always much aware. In those days, with the draft and everything, it was kind of an expectation. I mean, I remember the men saying that's something you had to do, sort of a rite of passage to manhood, to put your time in the military. I didn't think much about it. I kind of accidentally joined the Marine Corps in college but I fully expected that I would serve in the military. That was the expectation.

Q: What type of work would you be doing after school?

ZINNI: I worked in a haberdashery, a men's store and I was basically a stock boy and a salesman. I also did other odd jobs, cut grass, did other things to make money.

Q: At Villanova, did you major in particular courses or concentrate on something in particular?

ZINNI: I attended the business school and I was a business major. I received a degree, a bachelor of science in economics.

Q: Did the outside world intrude much on your way of thinking during this time? It was the Cold War.

ZINNI: Yes. Like I said, we were very aware of what was going on. You asked about books. I remember reading Red Star Over China and all these books and the newspapers and magazines. I was very aware of what was going on. Amazingly, I have memories going back, even though I was born in 1943, I have clear memories of President Truman and the Korean War because my father was in the Korean War. It just seemed to be around me. We did seem to be very conscious of all of that. And conscious of politics. When I was in high school I worked for the Kennedy campaign, actually met John Kennedy and so that was my real first exposure to politics in a way. And again, when you're in high school you're basically working on handing out pins and bumper stickers.

Q: But it's being engaged.

Did you get any feel for Philadelphia politics at all? Or the area of politics?

ZINNI: Yes, we did. My brother had run for political office, just local political office, and we were aware of the local politics, not overwhelmingly so, but, you know, certainly conscious of it. I think my interest or at least what I mostly read had more to do with national politics.

Q: How did you get into the Marine business?

ZINNI: I was the only one of my family to go to college and of course, I had to commute as I said. On my first day on campus they had confused my major and enrolled me in the engineer course when I was supposed to be in the business course, so the first day at registration I was trying to sort this out. I was very confused about all this business and I ran into someone from my high school who was also going to Villanova. There were very few of us that went on to college. I hooked up with him early in the morning and he said, "You know, while you are in college you have to join the military" which wasn't true but I didn't know that. I thought, "Oh my God. This is another thing I didn't know about and to try to unscrew" and so I had that on my mind. During a lunch break I went over to the student cafeteria and there were two marine officers in dress blues beside a table with some posters on it and material and I walked over to them and said, "I'd like to join." You know, they kind of looked at me, "Join what?" they said. "I don't know but I'm on my lunch break and I've got to take care of this." I thought it was like a registration.

They signed me up for the platoon leaders' class which is a program that while you are in college, you are in the reserves. You go away for two summers during your college time and then upon graduation if you maintain a C or better average, you are commissioned a second lieutenant. So I joined that day and later went down to the main Philadelphia Navy Yard for my physical and then went away in the summer between my freshman and sophomore years and then between my junior and senior years, which was sort of, in effect, like boot camp and OCS (Officer Candidate School), and then when I graduated I was commissioned a second lieutenant.

Q: How did the marine process, the boot camp and all hit you?

ZINNI: I think it helped me mature and put a lot of discipline in what I was doing. When I first went down there, I've always been a questioner of things. I question things and you can take that for being a wise guy, I guess, sometimes.

Q: You still have that reputation.

ZINNI: I still have that reputation. The pressure they put me under didn't faze me that much. As somebody down there said, "How come this doesn't bother you that much?" I said, "If you've gone to Catholic school and been under the nuns and doing stuff, this can't put any more pressure." I really think that whole process of being part of the Marine Corps during college and the two summers especially, you know, the traditional hard discipline of the military created, I think, a couple of things in me. One, it gave me a lot more self-discipline and self-control. The other thing, I really sort of was involved in athletics peripherally. I played a little bit of basketball in high school, Babe Ruth league baseball and that sort of thing but I wasn't that conscious, I don't think anybody was, of physical fitness in the sense of the Marine Corps and, of course, it gave you that sense of taking care of yourself in those terms. By the time I graduated from college with my experience in the Marine Corps, I was excited about this potential. I mean, I always thought when I got out of college I would probably be drafted and serve my time or something but my future looked like it would be in some sort of business somewhere. I wasn't too clear what that would be. I wasn't too thrilled about all that, it didn't seem too exciting and this was like an opportunity to spend a few years doing something that would be an adventure with the military, particularly the Marine Corps, so I was looking forward to it and I was greatly relieved that I didn't have to look for a job right away. So the Marine Corps was appealing to me.

So I graduated in 1965. I went off to Quantico, to our basic school where we train lieutenants. While I was in basic school, we put the major ground deployments into Vietnam. Prior to that there was no war, so to speak, so Vietnam did not come until after I was in the Marine Corps and of course, that changed my life because of the Vietnam War and my time there. I extended in the Marine Corps and I accepted a regular commission in the Marine Corps from the reserve commission and, you know, really didn't make a conscious decision. It seemed the war was going on and I was involved in the war in the beginning as an adviser to the Vietnamese marines, went to language school, spoke the language, wore their uniform with them in villages and saw the war from a different perspective. And the war really affected me and moved me. I went back for a second tour as a company commander with the Marines. The next thing I knew, by the time the war was over, I had 10 years of active duty and 14 years total in the Marine Corps. I hadn't really made a conscious decision to stay in but by then it seemed like I was committed and of course, I'm glad I did.

Q: I would like to talk to you in this interview about your foreign affairs experience, your experience with the South Vietnamese Marines. Did you know anything about Vietnam before?

ZINNI: Nothing. Until the time I joined the Marine Corps I had never really been outside the Philadelphia area, probably not more than a 50 mile radius from my home and then in the Marine Corps I went to Quantico for training and my first year I spent at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina in the second marine division, so when I went to Vietnam, I mean, this was like going to a different planet. I went to Army special warfare school before at Fort Bragg and there we had language training by Vietnamese and Vietnamese families were contracted down there to not only teach us the language, but also to expose us to the culture. And when I got there it seemed so remarkable. The fact that here as a young second lieutenant I was immersed in a totally different culture, new culture. I rarely saw other Americans and the Vietnamese had a quartering act so when we were in the populated areas we lived in the villages and of course, there were only two officers to the battalions so I worked so I didn't have any other Americans around me. I saw the war from a different perspective. When I came back, and went to Quantico to train the second lieutenants, my contemporaries were coming back from tours of duty with the first and third Marine divisions in the north near the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) in that area. The Vietnamese Marines were their national strike force so they were the most elite of the Vietnamese military. But they moved all over the country so I saw the war from the Delta all the way up to the DMZ; in every poor area, every special zone, capital of military District 1, everywhere. When I came back I had an entirely different perspective on the war. I not only saw the war as it was being fought throughout the country, because there are many differences, I saw it from the perspective of the Vietnam people and the Vietnamese military and so I had a different sense. In many ways, this whole business of hearts and minds struck me because I began to realize we were not connecting to the hearts and minds and this is more than just war in sort of a traditional, conventional sense. I think that made an impression on me that lasted throughout my career.

Q: Let's take the first tour while you were assigned to the South Vietnamese marines. This was from when to when?

ZINNI: This was 1967.

Q: What was your impression of, in the first place, the South Vietnamese Marines?

ZINNI: The Vietnamese Marines were very small when I was there. There were really only five battalions fielded and a sixth battalion coming online. They were very elite. They had sort of the same socialization process, as in the U.S. Marine Corps, with a boot camp. They tended to be much more aggressive, courageous fighters. They were considered along with the Vietnamese airborne, as what they called the national strike force. So they were moved into hotspots all over the country where they were needed. My impression of them is they were, in terms of small unit tactics, small unit leadership, they were excellent. Obviously, they did not have the firepower or conventional capability that the U.S. military had. They didn't have the width and the logistics and

things like that. Our role as advisers became to make sure that when they operated with American units, that we did the coordination, providing them with fire support, naval gunfire, air artillery, logistics requirements. But in terms of their ability to operate as small units down in battalion companies, platoon squad size, they were excellent. And I learned a lot from them in terms of jungle craft, small unit operations and how they operated in and around villages. They tended to be very tough fighters. The exposure to the Vietnamese people, especially living in the villages and everything gave me a whole sense of a culture that was very different and alien to me but it also gave me a sense of, as I said before, a perspective on the war that I don't think many Americans had.

Q: You know, as an adviser, a young second lieutenant, you weren't really bringing an awfully lot to the table. It was a great training experience.

ZINNI: I was the only second lieutenant, true second lieutenant. I think there were specialty advisers like motor transport officers and others that had been enlisted and the more senior staff NCOs were commissioned. I was the only sort of pure second lieutenant ever assigned to the advisory unit, as I was told and that was because the advisory unit had a number of casualties and sickness. We were also suffering casualties in the north. There was a shortage of officers and so where this would normally be a captain's assignment, I was picked because there was a shortage and they were down to the Z's, I guess, and sent over there.

You know, I would say in the overall scheme of things I learned a lot more than I imparted. But, you know, the Vietnamese Marines tended to look at an adviser and they wanted, first of all, to get an assessment of your courage and how you handled yourself under fire and secondly, in the things they really counted you on, your ability to deliver fire support, logistics support, transportation, you know, helicopters and that sort of thing, how you got all that. And I have to say, the American Marines in the advisory units, the captains and the majors that were in there that I sort of had to get a fast lesson and learn from, really schooled me up well, so it was a rapid learning process. I think I was able to come up one step quickly because you have to. There was no other way.

Q: How did you find this unit worked with the local population because this is often one of the key issues, when you talk about hearts and minds, I mean.

ZINNI: What I discovered in Vietnam is from region to region there were different loyalties so we operated in certain places, obviously, where there were strong loyalties to the South Vietnamese government, if you will, for one reason or another, certainly in Catholic communities they tended to be, obviously, very much more strongly oriented to the south and in communities maybe where they received some benefits from the government, which I had to say, was maybe not the most responsive to the needs of the people. There were other places we went that were traditionally going back to the years of the Viet Minh, were traditional Communist strongholds. Up in the northern part of South Vietnam where we operated, we operated in an area of Binh Dinh province where the high school diplomas and everything else had Ho Chi Minh's picture on them. These were areas where Ho Chi Minh had left behind cadres after the French Indochina War,

again, to begin the insurgency. So, you ran into places where you weren't as acceptable or they weren't as receptive to you as they might have been in other areas. It was an awakening to me because the Vietnamese Marines had to go up in the northern ICOR and put down the Buddhist revolt.

Q: I was going to say you were there at the time of the Buddhist barbecue.

ZINNI: I was there right after that. The Vietnamese Marines had gone up there and actually confronted the first _____; the South Vietnamese Army division, and there was a confrontation. While I was with the South Vietnamese marines, we actually attacked another South Vietnamese unit. So, I mean, you know it was interesting because you could see the differences. Obviously, we were all over Vietnam, so not only among amongst the Vietnamese but some of the ethnically different tribal groups and all that. You found it was a mixed bag in terms of where you went. But the Vietnamese Marines were sensitive to that. They were not that oriented to what I would call hearts and minds work. They viewed themselves as combat troops. We did, while I was there, the first real work of trying to get them to do things that involved sort of reaching out to the community. We used to run these county fair operations that involved bringing medical aid and working with them.

Q: You had a program of sending out the Marines.

ZINNI: The Marines in the north did the combined action platoons where they intermixed with the people, with the local regional popular forces in the villages. We were in the process of exposing the South Vietnamese Marines to more of this sort of interaction with the local communities there. At first they were very resistant to it. They really saw their job was to fight. Then, as they began to see that it was successful and it connected to the villages and it paid off in terms of in intelligence and cooperation, they were much more amenable to it. I think bottom line is they really saw themselves as the national strike force and war fighting was their business.

Q: Looking at the situation there, particularly the corps commanders or whatever they were in the Republic of South Vietnam, they tend to be their rice bowl as far as there was a lot of corruption involved and all this. They were not as willing to go out and fight.

ZINNI: I think there were certain Army of the Republic of South Vietnam units that were a mixed bag. You found some regular army units that were fairly good and they ranged from that to terrible but I think when you looked at the more elite units like the Vietnamese South Vietnamese Rangers that were in each of the core areas and then the South Vietnamese airborne and marine corps, they were very different. They were very courageous, very willing to fight. You know, our recruits had "Kill Communists" tattooed on their arms and the Vietnamese Marine Corps, the equivalent to USMC (United States Marine Corps), and those were tattooed on their arms so that if they were ever captured, they were marked as South Vietnamese marines and it made them fight harder and not be willing to be taken prisoner. They had a lot of pride in what they did. I do think though, they were politicized a great deal because they were the ones that took

down the palace at Yaminu and actually, the battalion I spent most of my time with was actually the battalion that took Yaminu and executed them. While I was there, in 1967, there was an election and we brought all the Vietnamese Marine battalions around Saigon and ringed Saigon for the election, ensuring the outcome. So the Vietnamese Marines were seen as coup makers or, you know, if you wanted to win the presidency, you had to have them on your side.

Q: Were you up against the North Vietnamese regulars or was it its first time there?

ZINNI: Because we were all over, we fought everything from what I would call the Vietcong farmer by day, guerrilla by night, to the mainline Vietcong which were, you know, full-time fighters, to South Vietnamese insurgents, to NVA (North Vietnamese Army). We had experienced all of that and usually they knew by the area they were going into what they might confront, which made them, they went in stronger with more troops into certain areas than they would go into others. What was interesting was not only experiencing all the geographic differences from the Delta to the mangrove swamps in the south, to the mountains in the north, to the villages along the coast and all that, you also experienced this difference in enemies. One of the quickest things you had to learn is, of course, there's a big difference between sort of part-time guerrillas in the south and fighting them and the North Vietnamese regulars that you tended to find more toward the north along the borders that were much more formidable. So it wasn't a consistent kind of enemy that you faced and it required, I think, the ability to adapt to that. So we faced it all when we were there.

Q: Looking at this, when you're the new boy on the block, so you have often a clearer eye, did you see an equivalency of North Vietnamese to the Marine Corps? I mean, were these fighters as dedicated or was it a mixed bag there too?

ZINNI: I think clearly in terms of courage and willingness to fight, they certainly had that. What you would expect. They were certainly not as well-trained or technically competent. They were certainly not on a scale to manage the kind of fire support and logistics in all the kinds of integration in a major way. In other ways they might have been more skilled. I mean, in terms obviously, because of their affinity to the people and when we got into the villages and all, their ability to communicate and operate in amongst the people was much better. Also, I thought some of their jungle craft and that sort of thing were much more, they were much more skilled in that area. We didn't have rations, for example, so when we operated in the jungle, for example we spent time along the Cambodian border and elsewhere, really, truly in the jungles, we would go out on patrol. We had to spend two hours a day foraging or hunting for food. So you know, you learn a lot about what you could eat in the jungle, what you can shoot and kill and how to prepare it by doing it all tactically at the same time. Those are skills you don't have in the American forces because obviously they know they're going to get resupplied. There was even reluctance on their part even if they could be resupplied, they didn't like having helicopters coming in to their position unless it was absolutely necessary, like a medical evacuation or whatever. They didn't always get priority of American helicopters and things so you know, for example, you take casualties, we took wounded and in one case

where we had to keep the wounded with us for a number of days and so you now have to treat wounded over a period of time and it isn't like an automatic evacuation. So in many ways, some of those kinds of basic skills, interaction with the people, they were much better. I learned a lot from them that you wouldn't have gotten. But in terms of the mood shoot and communicating those skills, our NCOs are much better equipped to handle that. Their training is much more involved. Obviously, we had much more technical capability. I think it kind of panned out that way. I have to say the Vietnamese Marines were very courageous. They were willing to put their lives on the line, they were fighting and they viewed themselves as very elite. They were very successful and performed well, especially in the small units.

Q: When you left there after' 67, at the time, wither South Vietnam? What did you think?

ZINNI: Well, I left right at the beginning of the Tet Offensive, you know, one of the first battles of the Tet Offensive we'd fought in and by then I had lost a lot of weight. I was down to about 123 pounds and I had contracted hepatitis and mononucleosis. I had dysentery and malaria so I was evacuated right after some of the first battles. We had a major battle up in Quang Tri and I left and watched the Tet Offensive you know, basically from hospital beds.

It was clear that militarily we had put a defeat on them but now we were beginning to see the erosion of the American role in this.

Q: You were in the States at this time?

ZINNI: Well, I made my way back through Guam and hospitals and all. I was now an outpatient at Philadelphia hospital. I went down to Quantico at the base where we train all our lieutenants and I was training them there.

But I think we still felt this was winnable militarily and that we had to, you know, you had to get through that, although we could see the erosion of the American will. But what I began to wonder about after I left is what I had heard from the Vietnamese people was this you know, what are you asking us to die for? They would look at the government in the South in Saigon and say it's corrupt, it's not responsive and what is it we're putting our lives on the line for? I think as I reflected more back on it, I saw the people becoming more and more apathetic if nothing else. They were just trying to get through this, survive this. There were some very loyal to the south, like I said, Catholics and others that were adverse to any kind of communists, but the vast majority of people I ran into, they didn't relate to a side in this war. I mean, most of these people were trying to survive. They didn't know if they were going to make it from day to day. They didn't want to see American troops, South Vietnamese troops, North Vietnamese troops or Vietcong around. It was all violence they could do without. So as much as I was hearing about these hearts and minds, what I was seeing was more body counts. There wasn't enough investment in this hearts and minds.

When I went back in 1970 as a company commander, we obviously had started a withdrawal. I began to wonder how this was going to work out because it didn't seem like we were doing anything to end the insurgency. We were doing at a cost and a price that probably we couldn't bear back here; definitely we couldn't bear back here. We were winning every battle but we were not turning the tide in terms of the people and so I began to doubt that this thing could turn out positively. I saw two things that were missing; one was the ability to convince the South Vietnamese people that there was something to die for, a government, a future. You know, they didn't see it. It wasn't there. There were rotating generals and coups in the South, we seemed to tolerate it and I think we were losing them. The second thing, I believed that if you couldn't bring the war home to the north, that was the second part of this. As long as, you know, some odd bombing and all didn't make a difference to them, as long as the war wasn't brought to their backyard of the North, for Ho Chi Minh and his successors this war was going to continue on. They were going to continue the pressure. They would fall back, come back, fall back, come back until they won the war in the South. I think after the Tet Offensive they saw a crack in our goal and how to exploit it.

Those two pieces were never in place in my mind, so by 1970 when I was a company commander, I began to have real serious questions about how this was going to work out. I just didn't see how we were going to "win" and, of course, I was wounded there and evacuated.

Q: When you went back, you went through an experience very few military officers would have and particularly in something like the Marine Corps. You must've been the odd guy out. People who are used to going together and a whole group of like-thinking Marines and all this and all of a sudden you're seeing it from a different perspective. Did you find that people kind of looked at you a little bit askance or were you a problem?

ZINNI: No, just the opposite, I think, in many ways. Not only did I have that first experience, but when I came back between tours of duty they valued that experience. When I was at Quantico training second lieutenants, I was teaching counter insurgency, I was teaching some of the unusual things that nobody had experience in, like river operations. Since I had a connection to the people, the language, and the South Vietnamese forces are much more interested in that. We ran a mock Vietnamese village that we ran the troops through. I was put in charge of that so I don't think they looked askance. They saw it as a valuable set of experiences that they wanted to capitalize on so I found myself, in the two years that I was back, the 2 ½ years that I was back, that I was concentrating more, studying the insurgency, reading about it but people were coming to me and other advisers. There were a few of us and drawing on that because that was much different than the vast majority of experiences elsewhere. We knew parts of Vietnam that no one else did because basically Marines were concentrated in the north. Obviously, the language and the experience with the people was very valuable to them so that by the time I came back, people recognized you had a set of skills and experiences that was additive to everybody else's and valuable.

Q: Did you have any contact while you were with the Marines with the State Department, the CORDS (Civil Operations and Rural Development Support) program?

ZINNI: Only peripherally. In some of the areas where we operated, they were there. We would meet them. What always struck me was when we would take prisoners, we could obviously communicate with them right there on the spot and deal with them and sometimes, as a matter of fact, some of the North Vietnamese and mainline Viet Cong prisoners we took had actually gone to military school with some of our officers and had relationships there. One place we captured a regimental field hospital and the doctor had gone to school with our battalion doctor and they knew each other. So, in talking with the people, it always seemed to me, with the revolutionary development cadres that came into the villages, the CORDS program, those things were more feared by the enemy than were combat units and they were more highly prized and targeted because obviously, that could undermine the basis of the insurgency. I really came away with the impression that we put too much emphasis on winning the war militarily and that stuff, despite the rhetoric that was more marginal when it should've been more balanced, because what I saw is like I said, you couldn't win this war unless you had the people willing to sacrifice for it. We didn't give them anything overall that they could sacrifice for and, secondly, if you weren't taking the war to the door of the North, you know, they were getting a free ride. They chose the time and place. And even at a tactical level I think something like 80 to 90% of the engagements were initiated by the enemy so they chose the time, the fight, usually the place to fight and how they wanted to fight and I don't think you can win a war like that. I even became convinced -- because there's elements of fighting and war activity but it's in the context of a larger conflict that has a political, humanitarian, social, economic element to it -- that we weren't paying as much attention to that I thought we should.

Q: When you came back you were with a unit. Where were you?

ZINNI: In the north, in I Corps, outside of Da Nang in the west. Most of our operations were in the mountains.

It just seemed that everything was just going through the motions at that point. We had committed to withdraw. One of the Marine divisions were out, we were on a downward slope, we were the remaining Marine division and they were planning to remove one of the regiments so it was, the war was winding down for Americans. The South Vietnamese military units seemed to be at that stage of the game well equipped and I think conventionally capable. This was before we pulled the plug on support of, you know, they had a 50-50 shot of fending off any major attacks and of course, they did in the first eastern attacks and then in the second offensive, you know, when they didn't have the wherewithal for full funding. But I think the whole idea of a free-market economy, democracy, all the words that we were saying, the rhetoric of free South Vietnam that had seemed to have worn thin. It didn't seem to be there anymore. I don't think anybody was seeing a clear way out of this by then other than we were going to leave and declare victory and, you know, people were talking about maybe a decent interval. But to me, it would be a matter of time. I felt the South Vietnamese as long as

they were given the wherewithal militarily, could fend off defeat but I think over time they couldn't sustain it because nothing was happening in the South politically, economically, socially to make the kinds of changes that struck at the heart of the people.

Q: Did you find with the Marines being an elite unit, were they feeling some of the problems that certainly our Army felt?

ZINNI: Oh yes. I mean there was a draft. The Marines also had to receive draftees as the Army did during Vietnam so it wasn't the all volunteer Marine Corps that it had been in the interwar period and obviously, there were issues back here, the racial issues, the drug culture and everything. I mean, all militaries are a reflection of society, so those issues were washing over into the military too. I mean, arguably, we didn't see it as bad as the Army but certainly we had our moments that were very bad and you could see it. I think still the camaraderie and still the sense of duty and pride was there. It amazed me watching the courage of my troops and their performance in combat when clearly we were out. This was an unpopular war. We had gone from anti-Vietnam to antiwar to anti-military back here and so no one was under any illusion that they weren't going to come back, couldn't wear a uniform. What you saw or what you tend to see is troops performed for each other. They performed for the unit, they performed for the military organization, they performed for their buddies and there was no sense of we were here doing the same kinds of things we were doing at the beginning of the war.

Q: Did you have problems with the racial problems?

ZINNI: I didn't in Vietnam but when I was wounded and I was evacuated I spent 30 some days in Guam and of course, in different hospitals in Vietnam and the Philippines. I was sent to Okinawa to finish out my tour and so I spent a number of months in Okinawa. I commanded a headquarters company and then a guard company there and the racial problems were really bad there. I mean, we reacted to race riots. Of course, at that time the Okinawans had Okinawan communist groups and they used to attack our posts and so I saw as much combat in Okinawa dealing with race, there were racial gangs out there, Mau Maus, bushmasters and actually, KKK's on all sides and my guard unit was reacting to all this. I think we averaged about every third night we had some sort of major confrontation. I learned a lot about riot control and all the measures that the police use when they have to deal with major riots. So that was an interesting experience.

Q: To move on, after you had an education of a future general dealing with these matters, you had a pretty good education, didn't you?

ZINNI: Yes, and of course, in the years after that. The marine corps tends to be an organization with a lot of deployments. I counted up, I served in over 70 countries in one fashion or another; made deployments in the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the Pacific and was in Europe for several years with my family based there, in Japan and so you really got this tremendous exposure to a whole number of different cultures. And of course, in reacting to crises, different crises, humanitarian missions, security crises in the

Philippines and elsewhere and as a general to the Kurdish situation, at Darfur, in Somalia three tours of duty there and so on and on.

Q: Well, I want to, in these various deployments, I mean obviously we'll come to the Kurdish thing and the Somalia thing but prior to that, did you have any what you might call significant education as far as what you were doing and also what you processed when you were deployed in any of these foreign countries?

ZINNI: Well, I think besides the military sort of evolution of your experience, the war colleges and schools and command at different levels all the way up, I think the most significant thing was the exposure to the different cultures. Living overseas, operating in a number of different environments, working with forces from different nations, so being involved in their environment and in their culture so I think this whole exposure. I mean, we had a mission during the Cold War to go to Norway so we had cold-weather training. We continued our jungle training, mountain training, desert training and exposure to those environments out there so it was sort of this global environment, being exposed to that. And then not only commanding a unit in Okinawa, but I commanded a camp, so then I was required to interact with the local community.

Q: This was on Okinawa?

ZINNI: This was on Okinawa. I had to work with the mayor of Kin, a town that my base was located in and the assembly and so that gave me more exposure to, you know, interaction of working with them and, you know, the social aspect and all that, going to their funerals and to their weddings and everything else and getting to know them on a personal basis, too. And the same thing in Europe and elsewhere and so I think the most significant thing beside the military experiences during that time was the exposure to such a variety of cultures.

Q: Speaking of cultures, talking about the higher education in the military, the war colleges and all that, I have interviewed many Foreign Service Officers who have gone to various war colleges and almost invariably when I asked them to talk about their impressions of the of the armed forces they come up and say to me that the Marine Corps officers who reached these higher institutions of military learning were always the sort of intellectual and thoughtful and I was wondering, can you give any reason for this?

ZINNI: The Marine Corps is unique in several ways, in my experience. I spent a lot of time in the joint world and that's not to take away from the other services to produce magnificent officers. I think that first off you have to understand that we grow up in an environment that puts us constantly around the globe. I think until recent years the other services tended to be base-oriented. We're not. We're in small units scattered around the world, make frequent deployments. I think you're much more, you adapt and are much more comfortable in that environment. I think because of that, too, you see the non-military dimension more and so you get a greater appreciation for the other things that you need to understand. You need to understand economics, politics, you know, cultures and history. I also think in many ways the Marine Corps is much more tolerant of

mavericks. I mean, we tend to have a history of mavericks and a history of people who are outspoken or their drummers are a little different than most others. Despite the fact that it's almost a contradiction of being such a highly disciplined organization, there is that tolerance for people and so you can probably get a group of senior Marine officers in a room and be amazed that there isn't a cookie-cutter sort of dimension to who they are.

Q: You know, looking at it from the outside one would think while, you know, jar heads, you know, I mean. Who was the general in Central America in the '20s and '30s? Yes, Smedley Butler.

ZINNI: The Marine Corps has always, because its existence isn't automatic and it's always been under challenge and under the gun; it's always had to ensure it could clearly articulate what it contributed. I mean, there were debates after World War I whether we should become more like the Army and large conventional forces, whether we should focus on amphibious operations, whether we should focus on the kinds of operations we were doing in the Caribbean and the Philippines. Basically, we focused on the amphibious operation because I think we were pressing enough and there were mavericks in the Marine Corps that saw the war coming in the Pacific but we never left any of these. We tried to stay balanced enough to deal with all of these. Plus, the Marine Corps has always been innovative, not only in tactics and organization but technology. I mean, we were the first to really develop use of the helicopter, amphibious tractors, amphibious operations, special organizations within the military, very adaptable structure, the air ground task force organized at a very low level. Even now with the Osprey and the amphibious, which are very controversial, it tends to be where we are. We tend to stay on a cutting edge in all these things and we are highly willing to experiment, not only in terms of organization, tactics and equipment but, I mean, in terms of thinking too. When General Cray was the commandant, he actually generated a revolution in military thinking for the Marine Corps, sort of a renaissance in looking at what was then called maneuver warfare but it was not so much what the term might imply in terms of movement of military. It was how you think about things, how you maneuver mentally and mind set as opposed to thinking in terms of attrition, you know, where we had sort of evolved to in the U.S. military to an attrition based thought process, where you processed terrain and enemy troops. He wanted to think differently about that. It exposed us more to thinking about, again, the non-military aspects of conflicts you might face.

Q: Your next sort of really major commitment of foreign operations was the Kurdish one, wasn't it? How did that come about? What had you been doing?

ZINNI: Before that I had been involved in the Philippines in some humanitarian work.

Q: Let's talk a bit about the Philippines. When was this?

ZINNI: This was in the late '80s, mid to late '80s. I was based in on Okinawa, commander of the regiment in the marine expeditionary unit and there were all sorts of problems in the Philippines with the NPA (New People's Army) and the Communist guerrillas and other things and they had threatened an attack and killed some airmen at

Clark Air Force Base. They killed the attaché, Colonel Rove, who had been a prisoner of war for a long time in Vietnam and so we went down and reacted to a lot of that on security missions, spent a lot of time down there, conducted humanitarian operations when typhoons came through and other things and so that tended to be where we were for most of the crisis that we faced.

Q: What was your impression of, you had obviously faced, developed pretty good antennae for the foreign troops and the foreign government; what was your impression of the Philippine army and other units and of how it was working?

ZINNI: We tended to work with the Philippine marines a lot and again, in comparison to the other organizations within their military, it tended to be maybe the more elite. And at the same time I was out there we were worked with South Koreans, the South Korean marines which were again, very tough, an elite force. So, the Marine units we operated with, in a relative sense, the others, seemed to be and where they have the most problems is where they put the Marines in terms of the Philippines. They tended to deploy them in the parts of the Philippine Islands where they had the biggest problems.

Q: That goes back to the Philippine war that we had at the turn of the century.

ZINNI: That was the tradition in the Marine Corps. If you served on Samar, everyone had to stand when you entered the room. You know, they'd say, "Stand, Gentlemen. He served at Samar," because it was such a bloody, brutal battle.

Q: Did you see or were you there long enough to see the Philippine government with its military force doing some of the things you sort of learned in Vietnam?

ZINNI: You know, I didn't understand the insurgency that much. We tended to be out operating on a military to military level. Obviously, your exposure to the Philippines at that time, Marcos of course was president, there seemed to be from what I could detect a strong difference between the government and the people's reaction to it, the government, in my mind. I don't want to overstate this but it seemed to be headed for bigger problems in terms of its people feeling that the government wasn't serving it. And, obviously, what happened to Marcos later on.

Much later in life I was to go back to the Philippines and do peace mediation work with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the government of President Arroyo.

Q: We'll turn to the problem of the Kurds. Where were you at that time?

ZINNI: I was the deputy director of operations for the European Command in Stuttgart Germany and when the Gulf War kicked off, we put units into Turkey to conduct airstrikes and special operations out of Turkey into Iraq, mainly in the north. I was involved in the planning that went down called Proven Force, the operation out of there, flew some missions with them, worked with some of the special forces and others down

there and had also worked in bringing Patriot units down. I went down into Israel when we brought the Patriot units.

Q: Could you explain what that is?

ZINNI: Patriots were missile defense batteries that fired missiles to intercept the scuds that were being fired by Saddam and so we had put a number of those batteries into Israel. The Israelis were training on them and we had to speed up their training and get one battery into there and I went down there to coordinate with the Israeli Defense Forces, which was a very sensitive and touchy mission because they did not like the fact that they were not able to, for political reasons, not able to attack Iraq. For the first time they weren't able to respond and react.

Q: I've interviewed our ambassador there and he viewed Saudi Arabia, where we were trying to keep the Saudis in the war and keep the Israelis out of the war. I mean it was quite a …

ZINNI: When that ended…

Q: Before we leave that, what was your impression of the Israeli military, because they are in the best and worst sense of the word a very aggressive force and I would think that it would have been … We have never had a very happy military relationship with the Israelis.

ZINNI: The Israeli military doesn't want anybody else to fight for them, and that's the first thing you have to realize. They do not like the idea that somebody else has to come in and defend them. They want, they feel very strongly that they want to do it on their own. The Israeli military has always struck me as they clearly understand what's involved in their survival, who their enemy is. They are very focused on those things. They tend not to get caught up in peripheral things, in other words, you won't find an Israeli marching unit. When you look in terms of the kinds of things we value in the military besides the war fighting that we do, they dispense with all that. They are totally focused on things. I found that, for example, when I was down there, they were being "scudded." They activated all their scientists, chemists and physicists and everything and they would go to the scene of a scud impact, even one we shot down. They would almost overnight reconstruct the scud and study it and they were able to reconstruct and see. There were experiments Saddam was doing with increasing range and warheads and everything else and so they are very technically oriented, they are very adaptive, they are very focused on those sorts of things.

I think over time they have become confounded a bit in the way the war or the way their conflict has moved from conventional, where they were dominant, to unconventional where they are having major problems with that.

Q: The Patriot was supposed to be sort of the salvation. Everybody was very excited about the Patriot and then after the war there was talk, well, they really weren't that good.

ZINNI: I think that was the first deployment of Patriot missiles. It was the first generation of Patriot missiles. We found initially, we learned some things. For example, when you put them on automatic, they would launch on atmospheric clutter. So we learned some things that, you know, you can't put them on sort of an automatic mode. The young lieutenants in the vans when these scud missiles came in, because they were being fired at the max range they would break up, and in the beginning literally what you saw on the scopes of the screens was sort of fragmentation points and you didn't know which one to go after because one is the warhead and the rest are pieces. They later learned that they could, and the eyes of those lieutenants were so good that they could see out of this sort of dispersal, this sort of fireworks like explosion you see on a screen, they were able to pick out immediately the warhead because it retained the same velocity. The others slowed down. I saw the tapes of that and I couldn't tell you. They could and so they adapted to that and were able to nail the warheads. Then one of the things that people misunderstand, it's a point defense target. It defends, like, an airfield or a unit. When it reaches out and hits something and engages it, that something is going to fall. Well, when you're defending a city, when you defending from Haifa to Tel Aviv in that large area, you defeat the missile that's incoming and you hit it but all that debris is going to fall somewhere to and cause problems. I would say if you would look at that, you saw how they adjusted and adapted and you saw, you know, the impacts of successfully intercepted missiles. And again, you were seeing first-generation, first deployment so when you looked at that I think overall it was successful. Had it not been there and those scuds were allowed to just rain in, I think there was only one casualty death and I think was a heart attack.

Q: I believe so, an elderly woman or something like that.

ZINNI: And of course, we have later generations now of the Patriot and other mechanisms for dealing with the missiles.

Q: Did you initially when you were working on the Turkish thing, were the Turks sort of with us at that time?

ZINNI: I think when we first were sort of thinking about opening up a second front, first of all, from the European command perspective we had to be very careful in that, you know, we were going to do everything to support General Schwarzkopf and Central Command. General Galvin who is our boss says, "Give him anything he wants." This was unusual for European Command because in the Cold War we were the ones supported. Everything came to us. Now, for the first time, we are supporting somebody else and things were leaving us that were coming in so it was an adjustment to make. We sent units down, Seventh Corps, I mean, most of the heavy units came out of European Command. The idea of opening a second front was a little bit sensitive, first of all, from the military perspective, in that General Galvin wanted to be sure it was acceptable to

General Schwarzkopf. General Schwarzkopf said, "Sure. We could open up a second front and it makes sense." And then the question became could we sell the Turks on this? We went down to see then Ambassador Mort Abramowitz, who was ambassador to Turkey. Marc Grossman was DCM. Frankly, I thought the Turks would never buy this. Well, the first thing Ambassador Abramowitz said was, "Yes, it could be possible if we do this right." Then I watched him. He, working with the Turkish government convinced them to do this. The Turks obviously wanted Patriots and other things for their own protection and security and obviously, there was some quid for that. I think they were very worried about their relationship with the Kurds in the north, border controls and that sort of thing. They suffered a lot economically for that commitment because the oil and gas trade that was going back and forth across the border was stopped and halted. We tried when we went in, in the aftermath, to work with the Kurds to ensure that we did as much as we can to help support the Turkish economy. In other words, when we started feeding the Kurds and other things we, and actually was in our interest, taxpayer interests, we went to local trucks for transportation, local foodstuffs which are more in line with their cultural food and actually much cheaper than providing MRE's by airdrop.

Q: MRE is "meals ready to eat."

How did the operation, Provide Comfort, evolve and what were you doing? Before I get to that, when you're talking about a second front, what were we talking about at that point?

ZINNI: Obviously, there was a limit to the ability for example, for airstrikes and everything else into Iraq from the south. This would expose all of Iraq to attacks, would give us easier access into what was called the H areas in western Iraq where the scuds were launched. So, you know, this did not get a safe haven, you know, for Saddam anywhere in the country. I'm convinced that that is one of the things that caused him to send airplanes to Iran, because he couldn't move them back up into the North and keep them out of range or anything. So it had advantages in terms of exposing all of Iraq. You gained another ally in Turkey and a commitment into it and obviously because we did it with British and French and all, you brought NATO involvement, not under a NATO flag but you brought European involvement in from another area and a major NATO nation like Turkey providing the base support. So there were a lot of advantages to it in the long run.

Q; Well, we weren't talking as we were 10 years later of putting the fourth division through and all that.

ZINNI: Yes, yes. No, we considered that. Actually, the only reason it was decided not to do it was because the war plans were already put in motion and General Schwarzkopf felt that he had sufficient forces. There was no need for it but we had actually worked up a plan for bringing ground forces, sizable ones through Turkey. It just didn't seem necessary to do more than air and special operations at that point. We actually even considered a deception where we made it seem like and we set up headquarters, communications and other things. But the deployment of forces in the south and the

planning was so far along that it didn't seem necessary. Remember, the objective was to remove them out of Kuwait. Nobody was talking about going in.

Q: We had a UN resolution that didn't call for the …

ZINNI: Right. We did plan for it and it was acceptable to everybody. It just wasn't necessary or the time had passed to do anything and even looking at a deception move in terms of that. We in EUCOM (United States European Command), ever since the fall of the Wall, we were supposed to have this peace dividend and new world order, the place was in a constant state of crisis. We had three evacuations out of Africa, non-combatant evacuations, Zaire, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The Balkans was starting stirring up; we had operation Provide Promise, we were working in the Balkans. It was clear that Yugoslavia was coming apart and then we had this commitment down in Darfur in the second front. So European Command, what was normally, you know, NATO as the war fighter, European Command tended to be the American support entity of that. The focus was in the planning and logistics, very little on the operation side. Now all of a sudden the operations piece of this was exploding. Ever since 1989 when the Wall came down, our crisis action team and battle staff had been in being, the whole time I was there. Those are members of the staff that come out to man a 24/7 operation and so our command center, our people, were really beat. When the war ended, or supposedly ended in the signing of the peace, it looked like for the first time that we would get a break. It was on a Thursday we made the decision to stand down the crisis action team and the battle staff and we get a call saying that we knew the Kurds had revolted, if you will, and there was some fighting going on and they were beginning to flee into Turkey and so we got a call that, not so fast. There might be some need to react. Then we got another call on that Friday that said, don't worry. Stand down. So Friday morning for the first time in well over a year, we had issued the order to stand down the staff and the battle staff. Now we had not been allowed off the post or anything. I mean, I had been down into Turkey and into northern Iraq with a proven force mission but we weren't even allowed off post because it was a threat to be out of barracks. They had found some people observing and there were riots by anti-war people, not riots, but demonstrations outside the gate.

So that night myself and the J3 admiral, my boss, Admiral Leighton Smith, we decide for the first time, we're going to go out to dinner. I mean, for the first time this is over. You go out to dinner on Friday night and all of a sudden in comes one of our colonels and says, "You have got to get back right away. We've got another flak." We had just issued the order to disband the battle staff. We had to bring it right back in a matter of hours and when we got there we got a call that Secretary of State Baker was flying to Southeast Turkey to look at the Kurdish situation. We had to send some helicopters to support him, to get him you know, from Incirlik out to the area. And he gets out there, he's knee-deep in Kurds and sees this disaster and of course, the implications were that they were incited to do this by the administration. Now they were left stranded. It really looked bad. We get told right away that Baker says, he talks to Cheney and talks to Powell and says, "We need to get humanitarian relief." We get a call saying within 36 hours we want food, medicine, water dropped to these Kurds that are fleeing all throughout the hills of southeast Turkey and northern Iraq. So we have to move back in the Air Force, the U.S.

Air Force Europe package. This time more emphasis on lift and bringing in riggers and everything to airdrop supplies in addition to fighter escorts and all because this is still Iraq we are over. So we had them back in in 36 hours and began to do these drops.

Now it's beginning to look like the flow of Kurds, the numbers are astronomical, it's wintertime there, there are huge snowdrifts in the passes and there are obviously deaths and it looks like we may have to do something more. I get told get down there right away, just go down there for about a week and determine what's happening and see what we need to do. So I leave and go down and I'm there with the Air Force two-star, General Jim Jamieson, who is running the airlift operation and it's now looking clearly like we are going to have a humanitarian disaster on our hands. We're going to have to morph this into a humanitarian relief effort so we're going to have to create a bigger operation center, look at bringing some expertise down like civil affairs. We bring down Special Forces battalion out of Europe with our special forces, the commander of our special operations command Europe to get into the camps to try to organize them and get some control.

Then it evolves into a mission where we have 500,000 Kurds in Turkey that were we are taking care of. We have about 10,000 that have died in the hills. We can't sustain them in the hills anymore and we're going to have to bring them down into northern Iraq. We are going to have to bring in other units to clear this. Now the British and the French and you know, 13 nations have decided to commit to us, the Italians, the Belgians. So this thing begins to explode. A seven day mission, I stayed for seven months. We ended up having in the first phase to get them organized and controlled and sustained and stabilized in the mountains, which is very difficult. Then eventually we issued a demarche to the Iraqis to pull out of the northern areas as we began to move in and move the Kurds back home. Then we were stuck with the security zone that we have to maintain and we did through air patrols and the military coordination center down there. We had demanded that the Iraqis provide us a general officer for liaison in coordinating all these efforts and pushing them back they did. They later executed him.

We ended up running Provide Comfort from the time I got there until the time it sort of went over into an all air operation, sort of maintaining the security zone for a period of about seven months. So when I went down there, I immediately became the deputy commander of the operation under General Jamison. Then, when we brought a large ground force down to go into northern Iraq, General Shalikashvili came down, who was the deputy of the US Army Europe. General Jamison became his deputy. I moved down to chief of staff. Then, when General Shali left, when that phase was over, we went back up to General Jamison and back up with me as the deputy.

Q: How did you find one, putting together all these people? The French, incidentally, and in this thing, was it Mrs. Mitterrand? She was red hot. How did you find the French?

ZINNI: We had a bunch of things that were unique to this mission. One was coordination with the United Nations. The High Commissioner for Refugees at that time, Madame Ogata, because now we had refugees, had sent a liaison down so we had this United

Nations humanitarian and refugee organization we had to work with. It wasn't simply a matter of you just pack them up and move them back. You had to account for every one of them, everybody had to sign an agreement that they were willing to go back. I mean, the procedures and process and the uniqueness of the military coordination with this refugee and humanitarian effort was different. The second thing that was unique is we had 60 nongovernmental organizations, NGOs, in there working with them, Medecins Sans Frontieres, CARE, you name it. Getting them organized and creating a bridge to them, we took what civil affairs normally structures a civil military operation center, it's called a CMOC, an acronym, and we now used the CMOC as the link with the NGOs It was the first time we really did that. That became the model.

Q: I have to point out that this is really the first time that the non-governmental organizations... There was a learning curve wasn't there, on the military on both sides to you know, I mean this is now a right arm.

ZINNI: This was a model that was to repeat itself in the Balkans, in Somalia, in Haiti and elsewhere and I think each time we learned something more. There were some built-in problems. There are many NGOs that could not associate themselves with the military by virtue of their charter or their ability to remain neutral. How do you exchange information, coordinate but not do it in a formal way that jeopardizes them? Obviously, the military presents I don't want to say a threat, it's too strong a word, but there are friction points in conflicts and how you do business. You know, they want to go where they want to go and not necessarily where we see their need is, as the military, and who are we to say where they're needed? We found ourselves, for example, in medical treatment trying to fill in around them. They resent military involvement in humanitarian missions because they feel that it detracts them from their credibility or even their credit which they rely on for donors and all, when you're doing it in a military sense.

In many ways these were aspects we had to take into account of the operation that I was unfamiliar with. For example, the Center for Disease Control was briefing us on cholera and disease rates and water and all these sorts of things, that you know, we aren't used to doing with a traumatized civilian populations at this level at that time. That had to be figured in. And then there is the security element that they don't normally take into account. So all these things were very different. We have the Turkish government we had to deal with, who are very sensitive to this, did not want to see the Kurds come flowing into Turkey. They were keeping them in these camps that were very difficult to maintain up on the border. We had a liaison; Marc Grossman the DCM came down as a liaison with us, with the team from the embassy, which worked very well. They were very helpful in getting us connected with Turkish contractors and allowed us to shift over to local transportation, local foods, which as I said before, benefited everybody. The Turkish government set up a parallel military chain dealing with us so we had this sort of dual chain working with them. We're using their bases and coordinate all this you know, with limited air strips and things out in the region and we had to work with the NGOs and others who were competing for control of these bases. We had to build a logistics network, not only for military support but for humanitarian support, a distribution system through that rugged area, through the mountains out on the border between Turkey and

Iraq. We had this military coordination center where we had to deal with the Iraqi military to de-conflict movement and had to meet with them all the time and that was a sensitive and kind of touchy business to do every day. So, there were a lot of very unique elements to this thing not to mention that there were mines out there. There were some confrontations with Iraqi forces. We had some shootouts and other things that we had to get a handle on right away and clamp down. We had the Peshmerga, the Kurdish guerrillas, that were operating on their own, attacks on the Iraqis, you know, in the context of this. We had the threat of Dead Soul, which was a terrorist insurgent group operating in Turkey that we had to watch.

Q: These were Marxist?

ZINNI: Marxist elements, yes, inside that we had to worry about. We had the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) that we weren't unsure of their status because the Turks were engaging them and although we never had a direct confrontation with the PKK, they were on our terrorist list from the State Department and so there was another element back in sort of the Turkish areas we had to work with. So this was a very complex operation. I mean, since then you look at Somalia and you look at the Balkans and look at Haiti and other things you see that that is not as uncommon but at that time it was a very unique operation.

Q: This was not a NATO operation although a lot of NATO people. This was what, a UN operation or was it just sort of cobbled together?

ZINNI: This was the US-led coalition operating under a UN resolution. Thirteen nations, the only non-NATO nation was Australia. They had a small contingent.

Q: The Turks must've been dancing all over the place in concern about they didn't want a Kurdish state but that they didn't want all the Kurds to come in.

ZINNI: Well, they had a series of problems; they had the Dead Soul problem, they had the PKK problem, they had their own Turkish problem. This is one they were just beginning to recognize. Up until that point you couldn't even call them Kurds. They were mountain Turks and even identifying them, you couldn't refer to Kurdistan as such. They were very sensitive about what went on on that border. We were very clear from our point of view, meaning the U.S., that we were not there to make any political statements about Kurdish independence or something else. But we had the British with a political office set up who were making noises and Madame Mitterrand, in effect. This had nothing to do with their militaries. Their militaries were fantastic, the French and the British and Italians and everybody, the Spanish had sent a large group. They were magnificent on the ground. There was a political element that was not in sync, that was kind of washing around, you had to be careful with.

Q: What about on the Kurdish side?

ZINNI: Barzani and Talabani had agreed to cooperate with each other so we worked with them. Again, they were not a problem. Their past friction between the two, they resolved and they were cooperative in any way. They did manage to control the Peshmerga, which we were concerned about.

Q: Were the Peshmerga, did you find them or pay an effective force?

ZINNI: Oh yes. It was clear to me that if you took away the Iraqi artillery and attack helicopters that the Peshmerga would have waxed the Iraqi military up in those mountains.

Q: What about in the return? Essentially, we created a kind of a Kurdistan, didn't we?

ZINNI: A de facto security zone that became a Kurdistan. And, you know, initially the Iraqis wanted to keep their police force and government organizations intact up in those areas and we agreed to it but as soon as the Kurds came in, the Peshmerga literally wiped out the police stations and mukhabarat and other secret police so they couldn't keep anything. We had agreed that they wanted to keep security and Saddam had eight palaces up there. They wanted to keep security. Some of their security forces we allowed them to keep in the palaces opened fire on the Royal Marines, which was a big mistake. We waxed them so then we had to make them all leave. So basically the line was drawn and that was it.

Q: How about Kirkuk? Where did that fall?

ZINNI: We only went as far as Kirkuk.

Q: As long as you were involved with that, did you see an effective Kurdish state evolving?

ZINNI: At this time, believe it or not, Barzani and Talabani were going down to Baghdad to confer with Saddam and, of course, Saddam is on the ropes now. I mean, he's been defeated in the South and kicked out of Kuwait. He's been humiliated. He has us now lodged in the north and he was making offers to them about reconciliation and all this. Barzani was coming back saying you know, should we accept some sort of arrangement? And basically, what I heard him saying was, we can't accept anything that you won't underwrite. In other words, the United States and the coalition had to underwrite it because without your backing he could renege on it the next day.

Talabani seemed more rejectionist to all this. He seemed to believe there is something happening here. This could lead us to the state. Don't sign anything with Saddam. You'll want to keep the security zone here. You want to keep the planes flying. I mean, this is a way toward an end. I think Barzani was sort of wondering if this wasn't a moment where they had an advantage. You had this underwritten, they can get some sort of status, semi-autonomy or something like that or a great deal of autonomy. Of course, the Turks were very nervous about that. Every once in while the Turks, while we were there, were

running incursions there to whack the PKK. You know, they were pretty heavy-handed with it. So this whole issue of whether this was going to lead to independence or not and, of course, the French, Madame Mitterrand making noises, the British political office they had running around out there in the sector making noises. You know, we were trying to avoid this question, I mean, to bring this up. This is not, you know, any indication of a Kurdish state or anything else. We were trying to keep the lid on all this. Basically, it tended to die down once we had gotten established.

Q: Did the Iranian Kurds play any role in this at the time? Were they a problem?

ZINNI: The Kurds in Iraq fled mostly into Turkey and also a large number of them fled east into Iran and initially, the discussion was how do we work with the Iranian side? The Iranians were very resistant on any outside involvement or support, humanitarian or otherwise with the Kurds that had fled across their border. When the Italians first came in and were considering joining our coalition, they actually went out to see if they could maybe participate with the Iranians in this relief effort because there was a big need out there and the Iranians rejected them a little too hard and they rejected the United Nations involvement. So we basically were confined to working with the 500,000 Kurds that had fled up into Turkey and were still stuck in the mountains of northern Iraq. The Iranians did not want any outside assistance and said they would care and take care of the refugees that had fled across their borders so that was completely separated.

Q: Were there while you were there sort of movements around?

ZINNI: No movements out of Iran that I was aware of or anything like that. The only thing out of Turkey were the activities of the PKK. The larger Kurdish community outside the PKK weren't making any noises. Barzani and Talabani were trying to show cooperation with the Turks because obviously they didn't want to, you know, we needed them, the Turks, for this thing to work.

Q: With the PKK, were they just fighting their own war or were they a destabilizing force or what?

ZINNI: The PKK were Turkish Kurd insurgents, if you will. I mean, they were fighting for a Turkish Kurdish state. They were obviously using terrorist tactics, blowing up civilian targets and other things.

Q: Well, was there any affinity between the Barzani and the Talabani elements of the Kurds and the PKK?

ZINNI: Officially, just the opposite.

Q: Officially but I mean?

ZINNI: We could not detect that. I mean, the Turks were always suspicious of it thought there was safe haven inside Iraqi Kurdistan. But Barzani and Talabani would cooperate

with the Turks, at least officially and openly. The Turks came across the border, did what they had to do, would notify us of what they were going to do and there was no reaction by the Barzani/Talabani Peshmerga to that, that we could to determine. I'm sure there was private communication.

Q: What about events down in southern Iraq? The Shia revolt there was put down. Did this have any impact on the north?

ZINNI: No.

Q: What was your impression and contact with the Iraqi military at this time?

ZINNI: The Iraqi military were very reluctant to cooperate but they had been cowed by the defeat in the south so on a day-to-day basis they assigned a one-star general who later was executed by Saddam. As I understood it, some members of his tribe were suspected of a coup since he was connected and talking to us because he was assigned to talk to us, as a liaison. Saddam, taking no chances, called him back. When there were big issues to be discussed, General Shali would go down to the military coordination center, they would send a three-star general from Baghdad; he was the director of intelligence. Or, some high-ranking intelligence officer would come up. We were basically dictating to them, "You will move back past this line, no ifs, ands or buts." They would object and go in and try to get exceptions and we would just say, "Do it, do it." The last one at the provincial capital of _____, Shali wanted to, since they had been cooperative, since we are pushing them back, why don't we try to do this as sort of an open city? We will only bring in military police and then engineers and others. We will bring in no combat units if they withdraw since they have been cooperative to this point to, you know, to sort of create a sense of goodwill and cooperation because we wanted to leave the Kurds in good standing. As soon as _____ heard that he said, "No." Shali just exploded all over and if you don't pull back, you know, we'll come in and. And then he said, "Okay, we will." And that was kind of a strange exchange. One of the Kurds there said, when we were trying to figure out what that was all about, is he felt that, he sensed some kind of weakness. Why would you, if you have all the guns and power offer to do that? So there must be something wrong. He refused to probe to see. You know, as soon as Shali came back and said, you know, we'll move you if you don't move. Okay, you know. So basically they cooperated but there were large numbers, there were numbers of Iraqi units in the north that had not been in the war in the south. The ones that came up that were in the South, there is a big difference. You flew over them with a helicopter or a jet and they dove for cover, cowards. The other ones would take a pot shot once in a while. We had to work through the coordination. As I said, we had some small firefights and contacts. There were mines strewn all throughout the area. We lost some troops to mines, the French did and others, we did, Americans. There were constantly civilian casualties, little kids and all. These were minefields that Saddam had planted all over the place.

Q: When you returned from there you had gotten a real Ph.D. in the Middle East, hadn't you?

ZINNI: Yes.

Q: So you came back. How were you looking at Yugoslavia? Was somebody sitting around making plans for Yugoslavia?

ZINNI: No. We were seeing the beginnings of things falling apart. We were starting up this; well, first of all, I got pulled off on another mission, on Operation Provide Hope in the former Soviet Union. Secretary Baker wanted to start, or he titled an international Marshall Plan, to work with the republics of the former Soviet Union to sort of build a relationship. General Galvin wanted it to connect military to military to ensure that the Russian military wasn't going to go back and try to snap things back, that this sense of hey, the winners in this are the Soviet people, they're friends, there are no winners and losers in this. So when I came back I immediately got sent to join Rich Armitage. We were running a goodwill military mission where we were taking the medical and food and other stocks we had stored for the Cold War in the mountains of Germany in Pirmasens and other places and we were moving it to the capitals of the republics for orphanages and the needy as a goodwill gesture. We were running that military operation out of EUCOM and I was coordinating it for EUCOM. We were based out of Frankfurt with Armitage and his team and I was then assigned to his team. We were working with the government, especially the Russian government, and trying to work with them on bringing in some investment, on trying to convince them to move the ruble to a convertible currency, to bring in some assistance and help and then moving toward international auditing standards, working some humanitarian efforts. Armitage was going around Europe and other places to try to create this international support for like a Marshall Plan to help them build this bridge. We could never generate that international support but I was caught up for about six or seven months doing that.

Q: What was your role?

ZINNI: I was officially the military coordinator where there was a need for a military mission like Operation Provide Hope where we did the airlift, we did the supplies, the military supplies, and delivered them the medicine and if there was any other military requirements. You know, support requirement.

I was also working the military to military contacts under General Galvin and General McCarthy, our deputy commander, where we were going over a number of other NATO generals connecting with the Russian military, holding a series of conferences the theme of which was to sort of share with them how militaries function in a democracy, building communications and bridges. So I was doing both those efforts.

And then Armitage sort of brought me into the inner circle of his team and so I was involved in some of the other economic and humanitarian issues. As you know, we were beginning to look at mortality rates and medical conditions throughout. The Russians were opening up much of their stuff to see where we could be of assistance. I had another nonmilitary effort in working with Armitage too in that area.

Q: How did you find working with the Soviet military, it was still Soviet at that point, wasn't it?

ZINNI: No.

Q: It was the Russian military at that point.

ZINNI: They were resigned to, you know Marshal _____ was the head of the Russian military. We met with their generals and senior leaders. They had just accepted it. They were resigned to whatever fate this path was going to take them on. They had no position one way or another. They weren't going to go to the streets. They weren't going to try to do anything influential in any political direction this thing took. They were wrestling with tremendous internal problems. They had Russian units stranded in Germany and elsewhere, no place to bring them back to. Soviet intervention military living in boxcars, families stranded in the former republics in Eastern Europe. They had these tremendous problems that now were beginning to surface, the hazing of troops was causing thousands of deaths in the ranks, you know. And extortions by NCOs and others, but they were really open about all this. They had a number of internal problems. They were open to our discussion of, you know, the function of the military in a democracy and all and how all that works. They would host us at these conferences. I didn't think they were particularly enthusiastic but neither were they resistant to it.

Q: Did you find it was pretty successful?

ZINNI: I think any views you might have had that there was going to be some sort of counter action, you know, to snap things back, then you realized that wasn't going to happen. In the meantime, we're also doing military to military in Eastern Europe which was much easier. I mean, Eastern Europeans were completely ready to go west and so I was going around to some of the militaries in then Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, where we were connecting to them building military relationships. I was speaking at their war colleges and other things and so we were doing that piece of it too.

Q: What were we thinking about in Yugoslavia?

ZINNI: The more prescient of our intelligence officers were saying this place is going to come apart like a cheap suitcase. Our senior intelligence officers were focused on the former Soviet Union and ignoring it. I became convinced that the junior intelligence officers were right. When Shali became the commander of EUCOM we were asked, each of us senior staff officers, to tell him one thing we thought was very important for him to hear and at this session I told him, "Sir, the most important thing you're going to deal with in your tenure is SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe), the most important issue in crisis, is going to be Yugoslavia. It's going to come apart." I was basing this on intelligence. The senior director of intelligence, an Air Force three-star, jumped all over my case and said, "That's BS. That's not going to happen. It's Russia and the former Soviet Union. That's where he needs to be focused."

I said, "Sir, I'm just telling you this is what I think is going to happen." Of course, we were watching it as it was coming apart. Obviously, the Croats, the Serbs had been letting things fall apart within Bosnia and then the whole thing devolved. I left before…

Q: You left when?

ZINNI: In 1992, in the summer.

Q: Was anybody sitting around and saying, "All right. We'll move the First Division into Bosnia?"

ZINNI: They weren't there yet. I think there were a lot of people that were beginning to sense that this thing is going to become a crisis. But they were very reluctant on committing a military. We just now did Iraq, we did Provide Comfort; we did all this series of evacuation operations, we didn't really want to become involved in this. The debate was whether this was a European problem, whether it really should be NATO. We don't want to do a US-led coalition. Maybe it should be the UN. NATO was still wrestling with out of area stuff.

Q: Did you feel you were getting tagged as sort of the person to do exactly what the line officers in the military didn't want and that was these equivalent to peripheral things?

ZINNI: I was getting tagged to do all of this stuff. I mean, I was always gone and I was involved in all of these weird things. I mean, there was the business with Armitage and humanitarian operations, these strange security lash ups, the interaction with NGOs, the diplomatic missions. But I loved it. My sense was that everybody else was beginning to feel this is the future. You've got to step ahead into the future.

Q: I've talked to people involved in the sort of the diplomatic Foreign Service, saying that their impression of the military was well, if we go into Yugoslavia, we'll have to have half a million troops and all. In other words, saying we can't do it. This had become the name of the game. Even our government was very unhappy. We had sort of Yugoslav hands in the State Department and elsewhere.

ZINNI: You have to understand what was happening. At the same time, despite General Galvin's warning, we were into this peace dividend; cut the size of the military in Europe. We don't need them anymore. Bring them home. He was trying to say, "whoa." Before we do anything, let's understand what we want to do. Where is NATO going, how many troops do we need to have here to be a significant player in NATO? What are the potential threats rising up out of this because, you know, you're popping the cork and it's going to be a different kind of world. Nobody was listening. We were getting congressmen coming over saying, and we were in free fall. So the Army and the Air Force particularly in Europe were seeing these tremendous reductions in forces, these cuts. Officers were suddenly getting their pink slips and senior NCOs. So the military was just sort of evaporating before your eyes out there. Over 300 some thousand going down very rapidly trying to reorganize, get rid of some of the infrastructure we had, and

questions within NATO, do we even need NATO anymore? Should it go away? It was total, I don't think chaos, but there was such a confused state. There were so many things going on positive and negative. The last thing somebody wanted to do was get involved, get us all involved and jump the gun into something that maybe wasn't necessary. Would Yugoslavia really come apart? Is this going to be a smaller conflict? We don't want to take this on as a US-led coalition. Should this be a NATO mission? Is it appropriate for NATO? Is it in the charter? Is it a European issue? Remember now, Europe was trying to separate from NATO. There was this WEU (Western European Union) and these other efforts that wanted a non-NATO, all-European alternative to NATO.

Q: And this was a little later, but Europeans were saying Yugoslavia is our problem and we'll take care of it.

ZINNI: I don't think it was that clear. Germany was in the midst of trying to figure out reunification. Kohl was announcing the mark was going to be equivalent, that they're going to retire senior officers but keep the Eastern European military mechanism. There were so many things going on. I don't think anybody was that focused on it and was willing to commit to it. There were too many things going on that were affecting the military and the politics and everything else in Europe. It was in a state. It was an interesting time.

Q: May you live in interesting times, the Chinese curse.

I'd like to talk about some of the African dimensions. Somalia, of course but also we had these Marine troop carriers, what do you call them?

ZINNI: Amphibious ships.

Q: Which were helping evacuate Liberia, Sierra Leone and Zaire, I guess. That was part of your business, wasn't it? There was this peculiar thing where we had a command that was sort of in the marble halls of Europe but then it had the responsibility for a very turbulent Africa.

ZINNI: Well, part of the European Command -- with the exception of the Horn of Africa which is Central Command -- but the rest of Africa is under the European Command.

Q: We'll talk about that and then Somalia.

How did you see your responsibility for Africa?

ZINNI: When I was in the European Command as the deputy operations officer, we had most of Africa in our regional responsibilities, with the exception of the Horn which was under CENTCOM. Frankly, I think European Command was obviously oriented toward Western Europe, NATO, Eastern Europe. We had the Soviet Union that just really collapsed and Eastern Europe opening up. I think our view was more east-west than it was north-south. There wasn't much attention paid there. Our deputy commander in chief

was sort of responsible for looking after Africa and certainly General McCarthy at the time, an Air Force general, and he tried to get down there. We had formed an African committee that the chief of staff of the European command headed up. The purpose was to look at what we could do in the way of engagement and sort of helping any way you could toward stability in the region. What struck me from that time was, first of all, European Command's obvious focus was elsewhere and at that time we had the Balkans beginning to come apart, we had the events with Saddam, we had the events with Saddam in Kuwait, the Middle East peace process, so we were even consumed besides the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe which was coming up. Every time you tried to do something in Africa it seems almost every year the so-called promising countries or the takeoff countries had changed. What we thought was a takeoff country no longer was, so it was like rolling the dice newly each sort of cycle we'd go through; who to visit, who to engage with, who to look at security systems programs, that sort of thing. Our role then became one primarily of crisis management. There were three non-combatant evacuation operations we had begun in Zaire, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Liberia was a chronic one. We were just continuously, we were there for, had ships positioned off there to really try to sustain the embassy there and we just became a travel service for everybody coming in and out.

And there were other problems in Africa; near evacuations, other things where we were sort of put on alert and ready to move. I left the European Command with a vision of Africa of this constant and chronic cycle of crises, humanitarian or man-made problems and, you know, peacekeeping requirements that seemed to, you know, you could fully commit the United Nations and the African Union and coalition countries for the Anglophile and Francophile countries where they, you know, obviously, they were sort of French led, British led missions to do the same thing. I left CENTCOM and came back to be the deputy commander of Quantico, where our research, development and education is based.

Q: I'd like to move you back to Africa. Here you are a Marine in a field of army officers. The Marines are trained to handle land troops and here in Africa you had Marines whose job was basically to get people off the shore and get them out rather than in. Did you have special training or how did you get your people, your commanders there on these amphibious ships, to be ready for this peculiar type of work?

ZINNI: Marine expeditionary units that deploy in the Mediterranean and the Western Pacific, we used to have a Caribbean deployment, and in those deployments in the Mediterranean, the Western Pacific often times go into the Gulf and elsewhere and some other deployments that we had that are not routine ones but are scheduled as needed. There are 23 missions that you could simply be trained for and one of them is non-combatant evacuation operations. So, that type of mission, which is sort of an immediate crisis response mission, is done with the Marines because their local sense of training stimulates doing this before they deploy, to test it and that sort of thing.

Q: You've got Liberia, Sierra Leone and I suppose Zaire and all. Were you having consultations with embassy officers? I mean, to figure out how is this going because these are pretty obvious places.

ZINNI: Yes. First of all, from the position in the Unified Command you have that connection day to day. If it looks like there's a crisis brewing or periods of tension that there's sort of a voluntary evacuation or something more severe, we began right away dusting off the evacuation plans, the embassy plans, and communicating to them. Obviously, you have Marine security guards down there. Sometimes we would even maybe deploy additional security like Marine security guards and bolster it up. The Marine expeditionary units that came out, if they were coming to EUCOM and those places they usually looked at those embassy plans too, especially if they were places where we suspected there might be a problem, so they were very much up to speed. When they went into those types of missions they structured themselves. Like there was an embassy liaison team that the Marines could form and they had already been pre-trained and pre-briefed to go in and connect and provide the communication to work with the ambassador, obviously, to make sure that they were working, obviously, he's the president's representative, to his desires and how to coordinate everything within his diplomatic security, his Marine security guard and that sort of thing.

Q: During this time how did you view the cooperation between basically the embassies and the Marines who might be called in?

ZINNI: I think was excellent. First of all, the embassies know the Marines. They know them as Marine security guards so I mean a Marine isn't an alien, in those terms. I think especially since the mid-1980s and maybe a little before this sort of connection to ensure we could do these sorts of things there was a lot of practice, rehearsal. When we would do the simulation and training sometimes we would get State Department people that would come down and role-play for us, the role of the ambassador to make sure we understood the considerations in the ambassador's thinking as you go through this sort of thing. So the connections were very strong and I never really saw on that level any friction or any problem. It usually worked out well. Sometimes at the command level, the unified command there might be some issues. In Liberia, for example, our initial mission was to go down and conduct an evacuation. We got down there and obviously some Marines went ashore to protect the embassy and the ambassador felt now that the Marines are here, a company of Marines in our embassy and the battalion landing team out there too, well, I don't need to leave.

Well, we couldn't afford to leave those ships down there and the amphibious ready group down there full time. We ended up having to leave a ship so between DOD and DOS, you know, DOD wanted to get those troops out of there and back to other missions, they had and training and everything else. State wanted to retain them down there because this allowed them to maintain the embassy. Later on, in CINCOM, I ran into the same situation after the bombing in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam but in Nairobi, in particular. You could get cross ways in some of those missions and I've got to say -- and I'll talk later about Nairobi and some of the other things -- sometimes I felt the State Department

was right. Sometimes I felt DOD was right. I mean, it's not their mission to sustain an embassy that should be evacuated, unless circumstances allow it. But, at other times -- and again, I'll talk about Nairobi, and DOD didn't agree with me on this but as the regional commander, unified commander, I won out -- I said, you know, the embassy was in a transition and we needed to sustain the embassy there. The temporary embassy, which was the best place they could get, was not in a very secure area and it took a company of Marines to keep them in being. I thought it was critically important that our embassy be up and running and it was critically important that there was sufficient security. There was no other way around it and there was no other alternative so I actually fought DOD in favor of a security, you know, State's position on that.

Q: Did you feel, I noticed you said your, sort of the commander for that area was an Air Force General.

ZINNI: The commander, in those days, the commander in chief was General John R. Galvin, an Army four-star but he was also double hatted as Supreme Allied Commander Europe. And so European Command is the American command and NATO is obviously the alliance. So, he spent his time as commander up in Belgium and 90% of his time was focused on the SACEUR job. So, the deputy commander who was also a four-star Air Force, he basically ran the American command, the European Command. In doing that, obviously, that was 95 countries from South Africa all the way up to Norway, north Norway, so he had the broader sort of the U.S. commitment. He tended to be the one that focused on Africa.

Q: Looking at Africa, I mean there are certain places of kind of ours, Liberia being one, you know, I mean traditionally and all, but there were other places that were French or British and it seems just looking at it from a distance that we all reached a certain agreement that the American Air Force, we supplied the lift and other people sort of supplied the troops. Was that kind of the situation?

ZINNI: There were other evacuations in Francophile and Anglophile countries while we were there and the French and the British took the lead. There was this understanding. There were places where we might take the lead; there were places clearly where the French and the British took the lead on the evacuation or the peacekeeping mission or the humanitarian mission and we might support it in some way. In some cases they did it all but in other cases, we did support it. You primarily looked at several areas; its strategic lift, its logistics, its communications and its intelligence. Those are four areas of support that oftentimes we may be called on to deliver. If we're not involved in the boots on the ground we may do something in those areas.

Q: How did you find down in Africa cooperation with the French and the British?

ZINNI: Excellent. Because of the nature of the kinds of problems we faced there, you know, again it was either a natural disaster or some sort of peacekeeping or peace enforcement mission or it was a non-combatant evacuation, and those things tend not to be politically charged or controversial in any way.

The French forces and British forces were used to working with us and obviously through NATO and everything else.

Q: I think we mentioned before but although technically France wasn't in NATO but I understand the military side and the intelligence side, their cooperation was very close.

ZINNI: Yes, that's true, especially in those kinds of missions.

Q: Then you left. Where did you go?

ZINNI: Well, I went to Quantico.

Q: When was this?

ZINNI: This was 1992. I came there as the deputy commanding general. I wasn't there very long before Somalia obviously had gone to pot. President Bush 41 decided on a purely humanitarian basis, actually, made the decision after he had lost the election but waiting for the inauguration, that he would send a U.S. force in there to jumpstart the UN mission that was stalled. The UN mission was very small, it was put in there under Chapter VI that was basically an agreement by the parties there which had broken down. The UN committed there one small Pakistani battalion. It was insufficient to protect the flow of humanitarian food and shelter and medicine and the necessary things for the traumatized population. His intent was to send a military, U.S. military, force in there to provide sort of a military jumpstart to protect the areas to let the flow of these humanitarian goods take place and then I think, President Bush foresaw that within a few weeks or a month, the UN would come in there, they'd strike their new mission and pull us out. I was at Quantico and we were beginning to hear that the President had decided to do this and the question became whether it would be a Marine-led joint task force, predominantly Marines, or it would be the 18th Airborne Corps who would get it. The decision was made that it would be Marines and it would be the First Marine Expeditionary Force, California-based, who had CENTCOM responsibilities, Marine component responsibilities and they would take it on.

I went to my boss at Quantico and I told him, "You know, I just had this experience, not only in Africa with the meals and other things but I had the Provide Comfort experience with the Kurds and all that" and I said, "You know, I could help in some of this because of, we understood how to work with the NGOs, United Nations." I had just been through all this experience and Quantico, basically, because it's our schools, our doctrine center, development center, we try to help the operational forces. He called the commanding general, Bob Johnston of the First Marine Expeditionary Force and the Marine Corps and offered my assistance. I thought it would be in the nature of assisting with the planning, maybe going out and planning. I knew General Johnston from way back when, we were lieutenant colonels together and he said, "I would like to have you come as part of the joint task force." The commandant then said, "Okay, you can go out there as the chief of staff." I mean, it was going to be a joint task force so they looked to be getting an Army

two-star general; General Johnston was a three-star. I was brigadier general still. He said he would, the commandant said, "You can have him as the chief of staff for the joint task force. " General Johnston called me up and said, "I don't want you to be the chief of staff. I want you to be the operations officer. I need you to run the operations." And he said, "I know it's a little awkward because the chief of staff will be a colonel and you'll be a brigadier general."

Well, of course, I loved it because I wanted to do the operational side. It's much more fun than the chief of staff's side. I said, "I don't have any problem." I convinced the commandant that that this was the way to go and so I went out to Camp Pendleton, joined up with them, helped them with the planning part of this and then deployed to Mogadishu. We had the Marine expeditionary unit out there that landed. You might remember that the lights and all that and they seized the port and the airfield and then we came in right behind them, about half a day later we flew in with the staff.

We had on the way out there we stopped to see the commander in chief of CENTCOM who was then General Joe Hoar, who I had known for a long time and actually had briefed about all my experiences with Provide Comfort. He really supported me going out and being part of the task force. General Hoar's vision for this, because he saw it as a short time mission, he had a, what he called, a 3-3-1 composition of this task force. He wanted three African countries to join the combined task force, he wanted three countries from the Gulf because CENTCOM was focused on the Gulf, and he wanted to demonstrate that the Gulf States, we are working together, we are coalition and one Western NATO country in there too.

Well, the Canadians had made a commitment to come so they were sending ships and planes and had a pretty good force out there. They were working on getting the African countries. They had a commitment from three: Nigeria, Botswana, Zimbabwe, but it was going to take a little while with them to get there. The Kuwaitis, the Emiratis and the Saudis would be the Gulf countries that would take a little while to get there too.

So our basic planning was around this idea. On the way out there, were flying out there, while we are in the air literally, we get a call that the French had decided to play. The French were going to come join us and the forces from Djibouti are going to come in to Mogadishu. Then, we get a call that the French insist that their general in Djibouti be the first general officer on the ground, even before General Johnston. This sounded like Truman-MacArthur and the legend about it and they insisted. And so General Johnston said, "No way. The Marines are on the ground. I'm coming in as the first commander and the French can come in later. We can work up a, initially, it's Marines, it's U.S."

In mid-air there was this big political brouhaha so finally we went out and we land and General Johnston is, who by the way spoke fluent French, was Scottish by birth and he had been battalion commander that first went into Beirut so he's a little bit incensed by this. The poor French general that arrives right after that, he's a great guy. I mean, he was a fantastic and the French forces were fantastic. He was just a victim of the political

back-and-forth. He lands on the ground and he didn't care when he landed. He just wanted to contribute and help. So that was kind of our introduction.

We landed at the airport. We were trying to figure out where to set up the command post. There were all sorts of alternatives; do it at the port and the airfield which would be much better for security, much easier to maintain and supply but we made the decision that it should be in the former U.S. embassy. So we had to literally seize the embassy and the embassy was gutted, literally destroyed. The wiring was pulled out of the wall, the granite floors ripped up and everything else. When we got up there there were actually bodies all over the place. There were some refugees or displaced people living in the embassy which we had to round up and move out somewhere else so it was a horrible, horrible stated condition. Obviously, people living there and not much paying attention to sanitation, dying animals and dead bodies lying around. So we cleaned up the embassy as best we could which was a gutted, burned out set of buildings. It was a nice compound in the sense of the way it was structured. So we set up our headquarters there.

In the meantime, the president and the State Department had sent Ambassador Bob Oakley as the president's special representative for the mission there and, of course, he had been ambassador to Somalia. He was extremely helpful. He knew everybody. He knew the military, he knew the situation and knew the people so he came in. On the ground was the UN operation which was basically paralyzed. It was under an Iraqi Kurd who was the special representative of the secretary-general. It was like, as I mentioned before, a Pakistani battalion down there and there was a brigadier general they had but they were basically at the airfield under Chapter VI rules and really couldn't do much.

Q: Chapter VI means you can't use force. They are there sort of by mutual agreement.

ZINNI: Exactly. There were over a hundred NGOs operating there. I think at one time 120 so. A lot of NGOs running around, many of whom were really at risk and there had been NGOs killed and other things happening where it was impossible for them to deliver food. They had Somali gangs as security that they had hired. That's where the term technical came from. The gangs had turned against them, and I think they were paying them off and paying them bribes and allowing certain amount of the food to be bled off. It got to the point where nothing ever made it to the point where it was needed. So they were in pretty bad shape.

We had General Johnston in with a task force commanding it. We had Bob Oakley on the ground and Bill Johnson who was the president of CARE came in to run the UN's humanitarian operations center and if they were ever three people who clicked, their personalities, objectives, were all on the same sheet of music. It was remarkable. Bob Oakley comes in and asks for a meeting of the three and they sort of structured this amazing concept that they would be sort of an executive committee, one working on the political and other issues, one on the security and one working at the humanitarian and that we need to make this commitment to work together on all this. There were a lot of friction points, believe me, but certainly not at the top. Bob had asked that obviously, he had a very small team. I think he had less than a dozen people in there even if you count

public-relations and some of the others and the cooks and the bakers and everything else. He had asked for support from the military side for some of his political efforts. We had a small task force that was operating out of Mogadishu doing airlifts and drops and there was a Marine brigadier general, Frank Libutti, down there, perhaps he was a colonel at the time running that operation, so he came up and we made him, we put him over with Bob and his people on the political side.

In the course of events, Bob wanted to form all these committees; a security committee, a judicial committee. Every place you saw an opportunity to work with the Somalis and do something constructive, he wanted to form a committee to work it out, work with the Somalis and we were dealing with 15 faction leaders at the time. He didn't, obviously have the people so he asked if we would provide the people. So basically we did, because we kind of brought in a stable of officers and took them out of the ranks, especially senior officers, colonels and such, to work with Bob. They actually had to send home for their civilian suits. They were to go off to Addis Ababa for the peace meetings, they worked on these committees and I was on some of these committees and I became the chief of police of Mogadishu and around the security committee. I was on the judicial committee, the political committee.

Also, we set up the civil military operations center so working with Bill Johnson's people and working with the NGOs, we sort of had a clearinghouse where we could share information, we could ensure that security was there. NGOs that couldn't work directly with the military because of their charter, some faith-based, some had to retain neutrality, the Red Cross and others, we were able to sort of exchange information at a distance. They could check in and wouldn't give the appearance of you know, anything more than slight cooperation and coordination. It wasn't easy to run that. We put a number of colonels down there to run that and other people, civil affairs and others to run that. NGOs weren't comfortable with doing that in a real military setting at our headquarters so we set that up in Mogadishu so it would be a separate entity with security to coordinate it. It wasn't easy. It was probably the most complex operation I've ever been involved in. We thought our mission was only for a few weeks and that we would basically jumpstart it but we quickly learned that Boutros-Ghali was not going to go after a Chapter VII and as we talked to his representative in Mogadishu he says, "The Secretary-General is not going to buy a poisoned apple." So basically the United Nations wasn't moving forward on what the first concept was at the jumpstart and so what we thought would be a few weeks, turned into seven months.

Q: When you got there and in the interim, how did you find the Somalis you had to deal with?

ZINNI: There was chaos. There obviously was no government structure. There were basically 15 warlords that had all staked out their piece of ground. Bob immediately brought the two most prominent warlords who had split Mogadishu, Ali Mahdi Mohamed, and Mohamed Farrah Aidid, and several other warlords together and Bob started to work toward this sort of reconciliation, sort of the creation of some sort of process for them to come together to eventually evolve into an interim government and

sort out how this was going to go. It was well received initially and when we got there it was a very short time before we actually had a meeting between Mohamed and Aidid. It was an interesting meeting where we had dinner and brought the two together. They basically had agreed to try to work something out. Bob had gotten them to agree to freeze everything in place. Nobody would try to launch offenses or take land or anything like that. Now of course, all the rules that were laid down were constantly broken. There were always firefights. You had a mix of, besides the warlords you had these rogue gangs out there. They were basically just armed gangs.

They really felt they were Bruce Lee. They had to be out on the streets and shoot or fight somebody. When we got there it was the Wild West. We simply stabilized all of the outlying lands and Mogadishu, although it had its problems and there were fights occasionally, we got it down to a reasonable security at the time. We started getting in the situation where you know, to use sort of the Pottery Barn example, not even if you broke it, you touched it and you owned it. We touched it, we owned it. I wasn't there a week before there was this group of so-called Somali intellectuals who wanted to meet with me and they came to see me and they wanted to talk about when we were going to start the jobs program and when we were going to do these other things. And Bob had realized the police were always respected. They weren't part of the previous dictator's regime of oppression. A couple of the old policemen put their uniforms on, came out on the streets, started directing traffic. People gathered around them. Market stalls opened up. They brought this sense of security and hope back. So, he decides we need to reinstall the police. The United Nations wouldn't take the job on and we were getting a little close to the wall, our own wall, about the military training police. We weren't training police, we were reestablishing the prisons, setting up the courts, we were doing everything in there. Basically, we were into nation building big time. We were running the peace mediation and we were overseeing and securing the humanitarian work. We were beginning to even get into economic reconstruction. I mean, people were brought in to look at the monetary system, sort of different monetary kinds of money running around and how it would be balanced and work, and how the monetary system would work. NGOs were now moving in some cases beyond just providing basic needs but creating markets, beginning to sell food at a nominal rate to create trade and business and some places were beginning to move on.

We had about nine sectors. We were in southern Somalia, northern Somalia. Somaliland is stable and didn't have a requirement for humanitarian aid so basically we worked from mid-Somalia down to the south. We had a lot of incidents. The warlords would go at each other. We would get hit or attacked, so there was this on again off again kind of low grade conflict that would spike once in awhile. But by the time May rolled around, and we went in in December…

Q: This was '92?

ZINNI: We went in in December of 1992, and finally Boutros-Ghali had extracted from the Clinton Administration, which inherited this mission, the agreement that if he were to solicit for Chapter VII for us, the United States would provide a quick reaction force.

They wanted a strong military U.S. presence and would provide logistic support and the logistics. The U.S. military was not interested in doing this. This was supposed to be a couple of weeks, and now it has turned into months and months. Now it has turned into we're going to get a major commitment to this UN operation and that was sort of the extortion for him going forward on the Chapter VII. The Clinton Administration agreed to it so basically, in May we turned over the operation to the UN.

And the other requirement Boutros-Ghali made later on was the special representative to the secretary-general had to be an American. So retired Admiral General Jonathan Howe, who had been on the National Security Council, rather came in as the special representative and frankly, we were involved in the turnover which took forever with the UN staff, both the secretary-general's representative staff and the military staff. The military was under a Turkish general, General Cevik Bir. It was obvious that from the military side they were not getting, other than the Americans, many significant contributors, many that would be willing to stay around and contribute, not the numbers they felt they needed on the ground and they were very hesitant to take it, take control of the command. They finally did in May.

As we were getting ready to leave and we were sort of turning over and at that stage of the game it looked very promising. There were meetings in Addis Ababa that Oakley had orchestrated, the UN had run. The warlords had written some agreements on an interim government and a future way of moving forward on consultations and conferences to develop a permanent structure.

Mogadishu was relatively quiet but the vision of the United Nations really concerned us as we were going out. They didn't understand the fragility of the situation and they didn't understand how to deal with the warlords. I think they thought we had the warlords completely cowed and they can walk in and begin to dictate who plays. Oakley's philosophy was everybody has a seat at the table. We're not going to tell Somalis who should sit at the table. The only reason we would take action to expel you from the process if you did something unacceptable. He kept them all at the table. The United Nations came in and began to decide, Aidid is out, this guy is in, and make these decisions.

What concerned me and General Johnston, the Somalis were getting confused. Now there was a shift in policy, a shift in approach. Everything we had done, now the UN is coming in and had a different approach. When Bob Oakley left and his successor came in, he had a different approach than Oakley. So you had now the Somalis who had seen the first UN operation, UNISOM I which didn't work, and then they saw the U.S. led coalition come in, now they were seeing the UN and so they were seeing another change. We had great fear that this thing was going to come apart. We felt it was in good shape but very fragile, moving in the right direction. We saw all the approaches that Admiral Howe and the United Nations were going to take that were going to not work.

As we were leaving, the day we left, we did the changeover of command, if you will,

Q. This was when?

ZINNI: May of 1993. We were the last ones out. We were in two Humvees driving from the embassy down to the airport. You've got to imagine that either before or after in two Humvees, we had a couple of Marines with rifles but just that kind of minimal security. We couldn't have done that before we got there and we certainly couldn't have done it after we left but we drove down and it was a beautiful, sunny day. It was very quiet. The incidents in Mogadishu were very light.

Bob was just very quiet, just had nothing to say after it and he suddenly saw a couple of kids, young kids with schoolbooks on a street corner. He told us to stop. We got out and went over to the kids and talked to them. And he asked all of us, "Give me all your pens." We were reaching in our pockets, getting all our pens and pencils and things and he collected them all and gave them to the kids who were very appreciative and the kids were thankful and went off. And he just stood there and we had our plane waiting, we're going to get out of here, we were done. And I said to him," What are you thinking about?"

He said, "30 days."

I said, "What do you mean, 30 days?"

He said, "In 30 days this place is going to blow up."

I said, "Really?"

He said, "The UN approach to this thing is a disaster."

Thirty one days later we had the attack on the Pakistanis that took place.

Q: Tell me, there is another aspect. You talk about Mogadishu. As I recall a real emphasis at the beginning was to get food and there was a central place inside Somalia which was the place where the trucks kept getting ambushed on the way. How was that?

ZINNI: The most difficult places were out along the Ethiopian border or on the way out. The places like Baidoa and Mandera, those with the most extreme places. It's desolate country. There's scrub growth just desert-like terrain. The people out there were really in bad shape and of course, the gangs were out there. It was outside Mogadishu. We really didn't have many problems in Mogadishu. We pretty quickly gained cooperation and we had enough troops in there. In less than 19 days we had security in all of that area, and that area was bigger than the size of Texas, we had security in all the areas; we had the flow of food and everything. From nothing going out there, in 19 days we had it fully operational and with sufficient security for the convoys, the distribution points, the NGOs to go to these areas.

We broke the place down into nine sectors and basically we took a large contingent, like the French or the Canadians, they had a big sector, and then some of the smaller commitments that would come in from other nations, we would put them with them. What turned out to be this 3 – 3 – 1 concept quickly ended up in a flood of people offering forces. By the time we left in May we had the forces from 26 countries in there and it almost got to be too much and many of the contributions really didn't add anything. They became more of a drain logistically than they contributed. The State Department was sending a list everyday of potential contributing countries. They wanted as many as possible to show their flags. We were running out of the ability to cope with these. We didn't have that many big contributions that were sort of self contained, units that come that are solely totally self-contained, provide their own logistics like the Canadians and the French. We were getting little contingents that were totally dependent on us and when we left they had 44 possible contributors. We had 26 but they have 44 on the books willing to contribute. I don't know where we would have put them all but they were in line to come had we not turned it over to the United Nations. That willingness to come under U.S. command and be part of this operation, that didn't carry over to the UN piece.

Q: Okay. You've got Baidoa which is way up. You've got these technical bandits running around. How did you face them down, you and your troops?

ZINNI: Well, several ways. Obviously, out at the places, at the towns and at the distribution centers we had security there that they couldn't come in and take a shot in the middle of the night and run away. Where we were actually located, the civilian population, the humanitarian distribution points and that sort of thing, we had plenty of security. The routes out there were secure. In other words, when we ran convoys, we had security. But obviously, they could run around between these areas. There was a lot of open area. We ran patrols out there, we ran reconnaissance units you know, special forces, Marine reconnaissance. We had helicopter and aerial surveillance and satellite intelligence so we had a lot of ways to look at the ground. It wasn't perfect, obviously, but a lot of ways to look at the ground in between.

We had some pretty significant dustups. If they attempted to come at us, they paid a great price. They learned that pretty quickly. You had the odd gang in Mogadishu that would take a shot, a couple of times they took a few shots and we took out a few of their compounds. We had agreed to let the militias canton their weapons but they couldn't move the weapons in and out. We conducted inspections. I think in the total course from December until May we had two killed and seven wounded on the U.S. side and some other coalition casualties but they weren't significant. We did mix it up a little bit. We did inflict some casualties on the other side but they had initiated it.

I was on the security committee and the security committee was composed of the senior security officers of the militias and the warlords. Any time you had one of these dustups we would come in and meet and I would always explain what had happened. Of course, they always had a different version from their gangs and all. We had developed a very close personal relationship and I was always saying, "Look, this could be the end of the

matter. Don't you trust me to say we were prudent in the use of force? It was only self-defense. If you're not, and you decide this is a causus belli, we've got to go to war, so be it. Do you really want that?" And in each case they didn't. As a matter of fact, I actually had them, they confided in, me although their bosses may want you to please you, to give you a sense of their power, that they control all these clans and militias and they are all loyal to them and under their absolute control, they were not. There are some deals that are cut, rogue militias that are sort of quasi-compliant with the chain of command and go off on their own, do their own thing. They are like gangs that sort of sign up. We knew that from our own intelligence, so you know, they didn't have full control. If those gangs got off the reservation and we had a dustup, they weren't going to use that as a cause for the entire warlord structure to go behind them, certainly.

In many ways, we defused many things. When the UN started coming in before we turned over [inaudible]. [Inaudible] told me there were gangs even within his own organization that were going to shoot up UN vehicles because they were painted white. But, he said, if you have the green vehicles, meaning our Humvees, mixed in with them, they won't take them out. So we made sure there were patrols with the green Humvees. The one guy that violated the rule, no white vehicles out on their own, was the U.S. deputy commander of the UN military task force. His driver went out and got the vehicle shot up but, fortunately, he wasn't hurt.

Q: How about the NGOs? How did they fit in?

ZINNI: Very difficult. It was not the same relationship that we had. In Provide Comfort, I would say we were feeling each other out. There were a number of NGOs that were very hesitant, reticent to cooperate but we really didn't have a lot of friction. Somalia was different. The NGOs resented the fact that they were there before we got there. They had been through hell. Now we came in and looked like the heroes. This was their perception, when they had been there before and been out in danger delivering food as best they can, we suddenly come in and we get all the press and the headlines, the military. It was clear that this was not a humanitarian mission. We did not get humanitarian service medals for this. Our job was to provide security. It was actually a security mission, security for the NGOs. They were doing the humanitarian work. We did some of an emergency nature that was needed. The NGOs perceived that we were stealing their glory that they had earned.

The NGOs were suffering casualties. They had suffered three or four killed. While we were there a number were wounded, they were being ripped off by their own security. Their version of security and ours were different. They saw that we would come in and assign them their own platoon of Marines. There were 500 and some NGO facilities in Mogadishu. It was impossible to secure all of them. I mean, we could provide general security for Mogadishu but they had 500 and some warehouses, offices, residences and when we asked them to try to consolidate some of these so would be easier to secure they snapped back at us. We couldn't dictate to them where to go. They thought that they should have full-time security and at night they would have their social events, parties and all that. We in the military weren't doing that and they expected us to provide

security for that. We got off in many ways with some of the NGOs, maybe many of the NGOs on a wrong foot. The civil military operation center worked well with them but they kind of viewed the uniformed guys in that sort of differently from the rest of us. There was a lot of tension. Bill Johnson and Bob Oakley helped a lot to smooth that over. I think the cultural differences with so many NGOs in there, and not just American NGOs but from all over, they had a sort of natural reticence to deal with the military and again, looking at us, in their view stealing the glory I think, didn't help. So over the seven months we made it work. We tried our best I think, on both sides to get the relationships going. In the aftermath of all that, we learned a lot and we agreed to sit down and kind of go over where the rubs were and try to work them out.

I came back from that and became the commanding general of the First Marine Expeditionary Force. We had started a program and we brought NGOs out there. We brought people from the political side, it was a program designed to sit down and talk through these kind of humanitarian missions, how we work better with each other, how we explain to each other our roles and coordinate all this and this was sort of burned into my soul from Provide Comfort and Restore Hope in these missions.

Q: You say you went back twice. What were they and when did you do that?

ZINNI: I'm back at Quantico in my job as the deputy and I'm watching. Now we have the attacks in June on the Pakistani group and the radio station and they go into a war mode. The UN is basically at war with the [inaudible] clan and others. And the casualties, the daily reporting. I talked to Bob Oakley. He was back here and we were both sick. It seemed like everything we had tried to build had just collapsed. I was down at, I had been selected for the grade of major general. I went to this course we had down at Maxwell Air Force Base where it's a joint course for two-stars. Newt Gingrich came down to speak to us and Gingrich had started to talk about Somalia. Somebody said, you know we have somebody here, and I happened to be sitting right next to him, who had been to Somalia so he said I'd like to talk to the guy. We struck up this conversation at the break and there was this long discussion about Somalia. And he was asking me a lot of questions. A few weeks later we had the Black Hawk Down incident. It seems to me October, you know, the incident with the Rangers and the special operations forces. I got a call the night that that happened from Newt Gingrich.

Q: He was Speaker of the House or the majority leader?

ZINNI: No, he wasn't Speaker of the House. Yes. And he said to me, "Look, the president," it was President Clinton, "has called a meeting at the White House, bipartisan, to discuss the future course in Somalia." He said, "We're looking into options; one is to send a massive force in, tanks and everything else because Montgomery wanted tanks or to completely withdraw and pull out." He said, "What's your take?" I said, "Well, if those are the only two options on the table, pull out." I said, "If you just send all those forces and tanks, you're going to kill lots of Somalis and going to get more of our troops killed and you're not going to accomplish anything." So, I said, "That's not why you're there in the first place, you know, it's descended into this hail storm." And he said,

“Well, what other option is there?” I said, “I believe you could fix it. I believe this thing got off because there was a misunderstanding and the policy at the UN but I think you could right the ship.” And he said “Well, who can do that? I said, “Bob Oakley can do that. Bob is the guy the Somalis listen to and respect. He can go over there and get the shooting to stop and get it back onto some sort of political track and sort it out.” He said, “Well, thanks.”

The next night I’m at home and I get a call from the commandant of the Marine Corps and he says, “What do you know about Bob Oakley going to Somalia and Newt Gingrich recommending and all this stuff?” I said, “Well, I have to confess, Gingrich called me and I recommended this.” He said, “Well”, and this is going on midnight, “at six o’clock tomorrow morning you be at Andrews Air Force Base. We’ll have the whole kit packed up because Oakley has requested that you go with him on this mission.” Oh, God. I was at Quantico and I had to be up I was up packing my stuff, you know, and I show up at Andrews Air Force Base and there’s Bob Oakley. In the end we got this Air Force C 21 revving its engines, ready to go and I got there and I said, “You know, what happened?” He said, “You got me into this mess and you’re going with me.”

So he had with him, too, a member of the National Security Council, Rand Beers and so there were the three of us. So I said to him, “What are you going to do?” “We’re going to get in the airplane; we’re going to head east and are going to figure out in the airplane what to do.” So we went up in the airplane and Bob was thinking out loud and Bob was deciding, what do you want to have happen? We are going in there, so he decided number one, to get a cease fire. Number two, you try to make a connection with these people. Number three, you got to get them to release the American prisoner they had, this army warrant officer and we weren’t sure we had all the American casualties accounted for and that sort of thing, to get that sorted out. And then, get an agreement to start a process, like a peaceful resolution process. So, you know, basically just to get things done.

So the first issue then became how do we contact Aidid? Bob decides we will land in Ethiopia -- Addis Ababa -- and Eritrea, Asmara, because the Ethiopians and the Eritreans have liaison with Aidid’s people. They had a liaison team. So we use that as communication. So we stopped there shortly, met with the Prime Minister and President and they’d agreed if we contacted Aidid through their liaison and we told them they we were coming in, we had a point of contact there and we would set up a meeting and they would decide where to meet. They would not come to any U.S. or UN facilities so we decided to meet at Bob Oakley’s old sort of compound. There were some Somalis sort of taking care of it. There were no Americans because they had been pulled inside the wall. That would be the meeting place and we would ensure that it was safe.

We fly into Mogadishu and first stop at the airfield where the Somali people were, who had suffered all these casualties. So we meet with them and we tried to explain what our mission was. We wanted to be sure that if they see us talking to Aidid what we’re trying to do is get their prisoner out. We were still trying to sort out if they had accounted for all the bodies. They had but they didn’t realize it. There was some confusion.

General Garrison was really supportive, really felt the absolute need now that this was the right thing to do, so we had no problem there. That was important because that command was not under the UN or anything. That was a U.S. stovepipe command, that special operations unit.

So then we flew up to the old embassy where the UN was and we meet with Admiral Howe. Howe did not like us being there. He did not want us there, he did not approve of the mission. Aidid had declared a cease-fire; he would not declare a cease-fire. He said, "I won't engage in any more offensive operations, I won't start any, I'm not declaring a cease-fire. He is the enemy, I don't agree with you being here, we shouldn't be talking to him." So he and Oakley got into it a little bit. Oakley had to explain to him, "read my lips," because President Clinton says. It was pretty tense there.

So Oakley wanted me to go down and sort of work with the military. So I went down to see General Bir and General Montgomery and it was a strange military arrangement. Bier was the UN commander and Montgomery was his deputy in the UN but Montgomery was also the commander of the U.S. forces which were not under UN command. So really, within the UN structure you had two separate commands and then you had the special ops guys, which was a third military command, and then you had these two Marine amphibious units off the coast under a brigadier general which is not under anybody's command there that were making noises, and you had another joint force task force coming in which was another military command. These were not together. There were five military commands on the ground. One of the things Bob wanted me to do was make sure they understood we were going to go out and meet with Aidid at this place and then meet with his people initially, but we don't want any military operations going on. We want to ensure that this is truly going to be a cease-fire, whether it was undeclared but supported on one side and declared on the other side. So I went around to make sure these were all shut down and I was shocked to see there were five stovepipe military commands which didn't have much interaction with each other.

We went off to the first meeting. But Aidid decided not to come. We met with his chief lieutenants. We were dropped off out of this place and they came and met us there. We sat down and it was a really heated discussion. The UN had 80 some of their people on an island in the south as prisoners. They had had reports that these people were being mistreated, not bad, sick. We had promised to look into that. It turned out there was some truth to all that. Some of their key people, Osomanado, one of the chief lieutenants for Aidid and a number of others were being held there. They wanted to negotiate a prisoner swap; we'll give you one, we get our prisoners back. Oakley said, "No negotiating for prisoners. I'll tell you right up front the president will not do that. You have to release one officer to the command unconditionally." So then they said, "Well," they kind of offered this wink and a nod. "We won't say it's conditionally but you promise us you'll look into these matters" and he said, "I can't do that. I can't in good faith say something because then it looks like and it becomes a negotiation for prisoners. We can't do that." He said, "All I can tell you is you have to release one officer, adhere to the cease-fire. When those things are done we'll meet again." So and I'm sure this angered him because

this was a back-and-forth and they were calling their people and they finally left saying, "Okay. We'll take it under consideration."

So, we waited and waited. Finally we get the callback. They will offer they will release one officer and their first offer was to release them to Bob Oakley. Bob said, "No, no." They said they won't deal with the UN so he said, "You release them to the Red Cross." So we make the arrangements to release them to the Red Cross. And so now you have this cease-fire declared by Aidid and now you have Aidid going to give one officer to the Red Cross.

We waited at the airfield for that announcement. We were sure that that was over. Bob says, "Let's get out of here. We're going to give it time to settle. We're going to let this happen. We want to focus on what's happening there. We don't want to be visible in all this. Let this all take place and try to settle. It's all positive information." So we went back to Addis and a couple of other places and Eritrea, sort of reported back to the president and the prime minister. He communicated back to Washington and we then set up an agreement with Aidid to come back and meet with him. The second meeting would be with Aidid. This would be within a week or so, to give it some time to settle in, for the cease-fire to take hold.

We came back and now the arrangement was that we would be dropped in the center of Mogadishu and there would be the three of us and Aidid's security people would come and pick us up and they would take us to his hideout. So this was one of these rides with all these technicals and guides through the streets and driving at 90 miles an hour. We came to Aidid's headquarters and he is glad to see us and he's embracing us. So we sat down and we started to talk about, you know, reestablishing the relationship we had and upgrading this thing, getting a cease-fire. Aidid basically agreed to all of it. The question became then the status of Aidid because the UN had a $25,000 reward on his head. We had a very emotional Congress and American population with our soldiers having been dragged through the street.

Aidid gave his side of the story how this all started and, I've got to tell you, there was a lot that I saw though Intel and the facts and Aidid's side of the story that this wasn't a deliberate ambush that started this all off. This was an over-eager UN operation that broke into the radio station. Word went out on the street that the radio station being shut down and attacked and they were doing this inspection. They had actually killed a couple of people and then you had this massive uprising of Aidid's clan, sort of spontaneous. Aidid made a big mistake because once the spontaneity took over and they slaughtered these poor Pakistani soldiers who were monitoring the station, they went up onto the road as the Pakistani troops were coming out of the radio station and attacked them. Aidid, instead of trying to calm everything down and say let's get this back to order, he decides to take credit for all this. This was a mistake he made to sort of pump his chest out and that just compounds the problem, one mistake followed by another mistake, in my view.

The number of civilians killed was appalling. On the Black Hawk Down thing there were…

Q: We lost 18 men or something.

ZINNI: They killed about 300 militia but there was about another 800 or so civilian casualties and that was backed up by the hospitals and actually our own intelligence because I talked to senior intelligence officers out in Somalia.

This stuck in everybody's craw because Aidid was sort of left in limbo. There was no decision. He was neither accepted with open arms and forgiven nor was he pursued. On several of the meetings and such, he was actually moved by our people to meeting sites and everything else and people got really upset about it, so it was really a delicate situation. We came back the third time, the three of us, and Bob had set up a set of meetings in Addis Ababa. He began this sort of reconciliation and establishing all this, and Bob threw his heart and soul into this and now he was going to restructure the political part of this. My job in the coordination of the military was pretty much done so I bowed out of this. Then I discover that the president has decided to leave in six months and poor Bob has set up, has reestablished ourselves back to where we were, has made these long-term sort of commitments and plans and the president has decided to pull the chock with the U.S. forces. So Bob's whole effort had the rug pulled out from under it, it seemed to me. He went there and did everything the president asked, remarkably well and had put this process, the political process and the security situation, back the way it was and there was no intention to stop. I can understand that but Bob was not led to believe that. He was led to believe that he could fix it.

So I leave the scene. I now go to be commander of the First Marine Expeditionary Force And the United Nations in 1995 decides it's had it with the mission. It's pulling out. Now we are gone. We left after six months and the United Nations comes to the United States and says, "We can't pull out on our own." There were intelligence threats of surface to air missiles, handheld, so they couldn't pull out with their capability. They didn't have the amphibious capability to pull out over the beach so they had this Pakistani brigade, this Bangladeshi battalion and other odds and ends and their administrative staff. They were at the port and airfield but they couldn't get out. They appealed to the United States to withdraw and the Pentagon was just not up to this. General Shalikashvili had been burned by this before; he didn't want to go back in but they feel they have to do it. The president says we have to protect the UN. It's obviously a Marine mission because you've got to withdraw them over the beach, amphibious. You can't fly them out because they would be coming right up to the planes and shooting them down out of the air.

So the task of the First Marine Expeditionary Force is to be the combined joint task force to run this operation. In 1995, we had plenty of time to plan, so we planned it thoroughly. We went out on our ships. The Italians joined us, Italian Marines, and we had some Pakistani ships and some odds and ends of, the Brits provided a ship, but basically the forces on the ground were the Italian Marines and the U.S. Marines and Special Forces, U.S. Army Special Forces.

I went to Pakistan, Islamabad, to brief them because they were going to be the last to land troops on the beach. We had worked out in a military context a series of evolutions that are most difficult to perform. It was going to be a passage of lines at night, there was going to be an amphibious withdrawal in the middle of the night over the beach. I mean, these are the most difficult, complex things you can do. There were like nine evolutions that had to take place. In the military context these are the most complex things you could do. The Pakistanis were very good, very professional so we get there. Dan Simpson is now the U.S. representative with Somalia, the Oakley three times removed and we go see Aidid and Ali Mahdi and others and basically, I was there to tell them we were leaving. We don't want any trouble. Basically, we get concurrence from them that they aren't going to cause any trouble. Everybody's kind of sad this whole thing didn't work out but Aidid had said there are a lot of gangs that will not let you go easily. I guarantee you it won't be my clan. It might be some of the others. So we basically evacuate everything down, get the Pakistanis up. The UN logistic system was just terrible. They send some rickety old ship to pick up the Pakistanis. They had no food for them; the master of the ship was drunk so we got all held up. I had to get food for the Pakistanis. The master the ship got out. He almost ran aground which would have been disastrous. They had contractors in there, they had crooks, they had their own gang.

There was one contractor there that was a thug, he had these Khmer Rouge security guys, and had threatened the United Nations forces on the way out and had the military to deal with it. I had to go down and threaten him that if he caused any trouble, I'd sink his ships and knock out his planes and all and finally had him out of there.

The withdrawal had been going fine but the last night at the beach we had to come off in the middle of the night. We had these big berms around the beach, had two companies of marines and some point come down and get in our tractors and go to sea. In the course of the night, they just started to come in waves. They would attack our positions and we would mow them down. They would attack our positions, we would mow them down. We would try to broadcast, not to fire, not to shoot. But it didn't matter. They were held back. So the night was really heavy fire fights.

We finally got to the point that everything was off the beach except the tractors and we pulled back on signals, jumped in the tractors and were hoping we didn't get a RPG in the back and we made it out to the sea. And of course, it was midnight with heavy squalls and the tractor I'm on, catches on fire. So we start to drift out to the beach, another tractor tries to take us in tow, that tractor breaks down, so we go through this horrible night with all this stuff, trying to transfer troops on the small Navy safety boats, overloaded, salvage the tractors. So was about three o'clock in the morning when we got to the ship. We did not lose a man. We did not take any casualties and got everybody back to the ship and that was the last I saw of Somalia.

In the course of that, some of the militia leaders wanted to see me. I had set up at the airfield and they came in and these were guys I knew from all my past times there. We met on a hill overlooking the airfield and it was kind of a poignant moment because looking at all this, here's this airfield with all this stuff. They were leaving all this

logistics and stuff they had and it was just being looted and they were just saying, “My God, all the money and effort that went in, nothing out of this and nothing worth it.” And so we were kind of sad about what had happened. But that was the end of it. We came off.

Q: As you came off, what were your lessons? What stuck in your mind?

ZINNI: A couple of things. One, you can’t conduct limited missions in a tsunami. Once you intervene, you own the whole problem. It’s sort of to paraphrase Secretary Powell’s the Pottery Barn, it’s not a matter that you just break it; if you touch it, you own it. If there was a metaphor for this the first days we were there, the French had set up positions in Mogadishu down by the port and they had a roadblock. They were stopping all the traffic because they wanted to screen it because it went through their lines and all to make sure there were no bad guys with guns. And a Somali bus came rumbling through, wouldn’t stop for the French security. The French security opened fire and they killed and wounded a busload of people. We ended up taking these Somalis; there were some of them very severely wounded. We brought them out to one of our ships, a big amphibious ship that had an operating room and everything else because nothing else was sure to take care of them. These were people in very unstable conditions. They would be operated on and would be cared for. It came time for that ship to rotate and we were going to rotate them out and the ship couldn’t move because we had these Somalis in there and the Somalis could not be transferred. There is no place ashore for them. They were too unstable to be transferred to another ship, so this big amphibious ship had to stay there until these Somalis were stabilized which was weeks and weeks later. To me that was kind of a metaphor for, “You touch it, you own it.” You took this poor traumatized society under your wing and you thought you were just going to do a limited mission; you can’t, once you took them in.

The second thing is we didn’t have the doctrine and the coordination for this kind of mission. There were a lot of disparate parts here. There was a political element, a complex security element, you know, with all the coalition countries and the Somalis, there was the humanitarian element and there were all sorts of other elements; training police, reestablishing order, capacity building. We didn’t know how to do that, how to coordinate and pull all that together. We were learning on the job. We were nation-building as much as we wanted not to be in that business and we didn’t know how to rebuild societies and restructure nations, especially one in as bad shape as that was for so many reasons.

The other lesson was culturally, we didn’t understand the culture. We didn’t understand the Somalis. We didn’t understand the clan system. I mean, Bob Oakley did but he was rare. Some of the decisions that get made don’t bring into consideration the factors of culture, the factors of history. For example, we had the Nigerians on the ground. We put the Nigerians out, sort of, in positions. They were like magnets. They attracted every fire, every shooting spree in town. I couldn’t figure out why. Later I found out Siad Barre was in next exile in Nigeria. They had granted exile so everybody was upset with the Nigerians. We didn’t know that.

The Egyptians come in. The same thing happened to the Egyptians and it's because there was this myth that Boutros Boutros-Ghali when he was deputy foreign minister in Egypt had cut a deal with Siad Barre to transfer a million poor Egyptians down to the Juba Valley, very rich, and settle them in there and take out the Somalis and this myth about Egypt and everything else. Everybody believed it.

So you have these cultural and historical and political issues that you weren't aware of, didn't get into your mix in terms of your intelligence. There were a whole bunch of things like that that we didn't know that would have made you do things differently had you understood them.

Q: Admiral Howe as often I have heard people talk about it say he was the guy that got us into this. What was your impression of Admiral Howe?

ZINNI: First of all, I liked him personally. He is a true American, a patriot. Second of all, he's one of the most brilliant men I have ever met. You talk about an intellect. I had served with him before and had great respect for him. I think he was in a third world environment that he didn't understand and he came in with a very noble objective in mind. I think he really saw that he was going to eliminate the warlords and push to reestablish Somalia in some sort of idealistic manner, where Oakley was a realist. You want stability; you want the best you can get. Let's get it stabilized. Don't try to shoot for the moon and create something that isn't going to be possible. The difference I saw from Howe was a very American approach.

Q: I was going to say it was very, very American.

ZINNI: Yes. In effect, we're going to get Iraqis Jeffersonian democracy. It was well-intentioned. You cannot knock him for his enthusiasm, for his intellect or his hard work, for his dedication. I just think he, from the first, didn't get it. When we tried to explain it to him, he dismissed us in many ways. There was some friction in that he wanted us to stay around. The combined task force was called UNITAF. He wanted to keep UNITAF under the UN command, to be transferred to him. What he didn't understand is that DOD and the secretary of defense and the president wanted us out. They wanted to turn this back to the UN. They didn't want this to be a U.S. mission and he, I think, blamed us for that.

Q: Almost on a personal level, but here you were dealing with the Clinton administration early on and there had been the problem of Clinton avoiding service in Vietnam and his "Don't ask, don't tell" about homosexuals and all in the service.

ZINNI: That was in the beginning and then of course, all the way through my CENTCOM time to 2000. Although he didn't come in with much understanding of the military, he was very interested in the military. He wanted to know about the military. I briefed him on strikes in Iraq, I briefed him on a number of things when I was CENTCOM and I always found he had this real thirst and curiosity for, "Explain to me

how this mission goes, explain to me what you are doing, why are you doing that?" and very much in detail, not to micromanage but to understand. The other thing that impressed me was he got it. He was a quick take.

I think in Somalia two things happened with the administration. They were handed this. They didn't get into this on their own. It was given to them. I think they embraced it. I think they saw because, when they came in now in January, we were doing good out there. You know, it was the CNN effect that got us in there. This was Christiane Amanpour amongst the stick people and suddenly we are feeding them. This was a good mission and it was done for all the right reasons by President Bush. We had no political interest there we were protecting, no political gain. He made this decision after he was defeated in the election and I think the Clinton administration said this is kind of a signature thing of that we want to do. This is great. We are going to use our power for good and they embraced Somalia and I think in many ways didn't understand what they were getting into. In many ways I think Boutros-Ghali trapped them into some things that they may be any savvier or more experienced or maybe the Clinton administration later on would have been more careful about. They saw all good in this mission and when you were on the ground, you just saw that this was, as I mentioned, was fragile but not only fragile, not only complex but had the potential to go south. It was always a heartbeat away from things like eventually happened. A miscalculation, a misunderstanding and we could have a problem. So I think there was a degree of naïveté, there was a degree of idealism in their approach. There was a certain aspect of being driven by the desire to want to use our power for good. I think he, if anything marked his administration, it was this engagement and reaching out and this sort of fit the mold. And he was burned by it and was burned by the experience. We all were. I think later on, as he said, it affected his decision on Rwanda and Burundi and he regretted that but the Somalian debt came in, Congress beat him up on it, Aspin, secretary of defense, had to resign over it.

Q: We were talking to Milosevic about Bosnia. The Serbs used to sort of taunt some of our people by using Somalia saying that we couldn't take casualties and therefore we wouldn't commit ourselves and I think, you know this whole thing made it Vietnam tainted.

ZINNI: It goes even deeper than that. Beirut, it's a, you know, the USS Cole gets hit, we leave Yemen. The Khobar Towers gets bombed, we pull out of the eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia. I mean, there are many examples where we take a lick and the political decision is to immediately withdraw or desist. I think, my personal view is, if it's one of those missions where we have been attacked or we've clearly been wronged and the American people have a clear understanding of why we are there, they will endure the casualties for the duration. In Afghanistan the Americans will stay in Afghanistan as long as it takes because it is Al Qaeda, it's the 9/11 perpetrators.

When you get involved in something, let's take Somalia, the initial mission was humanitarian. But suddenly the Americans wake up some months later and it has shifted now to hunt the warlords and go into the streets and what's this about? It went from a humanitarian mission to some sort of going after, anti-warlord, in a remote part of the

world. In Beirut, we had Marines sitting there with no real purpose. Iraq, we go in on a premise that later is proven false, it's WMD (weapons of mass destruction). I think people could misjudge the American people. If the mission is clear to the American people and the mission is in a sense where we have been wronged or we're clearly on the moral high ground and it's vital to our interests, I think the American people will gut it out. They're not going to gut it out on a vague missions or missions that are based on false premises that are later discredited.

Q: This goes to World War II. The Japanese certainly, and the Germans did too, felt we were too soft. Obviously it proved wrong.

What was the feeling you are getting about Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the leadership at the UN at this particular time?

ZINNI: Terrible. Terrible reputation even dealing with his representative on the ground he was very difficult to deal with. Oakley would go in there, we wanted a restructured police force, we wanted UN help, and all you have to do is to commit to do it. You know, reestablishing the police force, we will stay here, and we will be part of it. They wouldn't touch it. They wouldn't do anything. But they would dictate things like it would be, we will never take over the police if there is a Somali in charge. That's why I became head of the police force. Why not have a Somali in charge?

Q: Speaking as a former INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) Horn of Africa analyst, this is back in the '60s, but the police force was the one sort of major force that had a real reputation.

ZINNI: And we had that. The Italians were willing to provide them with equipment, uniforms, we had people who were willing to train them. We set this all up for the UN. The other thing they would do is these ridiculous things like try to tell us, we called ourselves "combined task force." It had nothing to do with the UN, that's a military term. A combined task force is a task force made up of coalition countries. He said, "You can't use that term, combined task force." "We can't?" "No. You must call yourself "unified task force, UNITAF." Well, you know a lot of these things… But, we didn't want to do anything to upset the apple cart because we wanted to get this thing passed over to the UN. So we called ourselves UNITAF.

There were these ridiculous dictates that would come out from him and Boutros-Ghali. The UN forces were on the ground in April, early April. The UN command element was there but they wouldn't take command. What we ended up with is the most ridiculous situation in the world. Bob Johnston and his staff, we had no more UNITAF forces, they were all gone. We commanded the UN forces. Their staff was there but their staff would not take command. They were sitting next to us. I had the UN operations officer next to me, he had the UN commander next to him but they refused to take command. For six weeks our staff commanded the UN forces and had the responsibility and I think had we not pushed the issue in Washington, they were perfectly happy at that there. They were

there to sort of kibitz like advisers. We had no forces, yet we were commanding their forces. It was the most ridiculous situation.

Q: Was this coming from the top?

ZINNI: It was Boutros-Ghali. And again a little bit of criticism of our own. I don't know why we weren't in their face in New York on this stuff or calling for a resolution on Chapter VII or something. We, maybe because the administration was new, but Boutros-Ghali played us like a fine violin. He extracted the demand for the U.S. military to provide the logistic support and command, to provide the reaction force, the major reaction force. You know, he set all these conditions out. If he hadn't finally exhausted the president's patience, he would have continued on like that.

Q: Did Madeleine Albright as our U.S. ambassador to the UN come out there at all or not?

ZINNI: No. President Bush came out. It was the last thing he did before the inauguration. I can't think of in our time there any senior visitor. It might have happened during UN time.

Q: How about Congress? Were they coming around and looking?

ZINNI: Jack Markell was out there. Right after he was out there, as soon as that Black Hawk Down thing, he was out there the next day. We met with him. When we landed at the airport he was already there. He was with the special ops guys.

We saw dignitaries from the different units. We even had Kraus, who was the NATO military committee head came down. Why? There weren't any German troops there. The only NATO were the French and Canadian but he came down to visit. We had everything from presidents to senior officials from some of contributing countries that came down.

Q: You left there in 1995 and then what?

ZINNI: Yes. And of course we had a commitment in Korea, and a commitment in CENTCOM for Iraq and Iran, so my time was spent staying boned up on those war plans, going through those sorts of things.

I was nominated to be the deputy commander in chief of CENTCOM, the number two at CENTCOM. So in 1996 I went to CENTCOM and spent a year as the deputy and then I was nominated to be the commander and became the commander in 1997 until 2000.

Q: Well, while you were with the Marine expeditionary force, Korea. I was in Korea twice, once during the war and once 1976 until 1979 and you know, we were very aware of the problems of the Korean Peninsula. What did you see your role as the situation was, vis-à-vis Korea?

ZINNI: Well, our mission there was, I commanded the Marine operational forces for any Korean military operation or military mission. So we would go over there several times a year to go through extensive exercises in training and that sort of thing and so I spent a lot of time in Korea. When I was in Okinawa, I would take my regiment there for the Team Spirit exercises. When I was commander of the First Marine Expeditionary Force, we did the exercises. There were extensive, lengthy exercises on exercising different options on how we would execute the war plan for Korea. I knew many of the Koreans. First of all, there's a big Korean presence in our school and, of course, military to military relations and I knew a lot of Korean marine officers very well. So we were really well-connected and really well steeped in the whole potential war fighting of this thing and by the constant time spent over there we got to know the Koreans and their situation very well.

Q: What was your impression of the Korean military?

ZINNI: Excellent. I would tell you there is no doubt about their courage, their toughness and willingness to fight. There's obvious things that compared to our military, sometimes logistics, fire support, planning and those sorts of things obviously, they were not in the league certainly with ours, but in terms of tough units, willing to fight, knowing what they have to do, executing. In the scheme of things I had Korean units under my command, Korean divisions, Army and Marines and they were superb. Their officers were all trained mostly in the United States; they basically had our doctrine and understood our war fighting system.

Q: What was your impression of the how, and we're talking about the time you were there, had this, how our war mind developed?

ZINNI: Well, there were all sorts of reasons a war could start. It could be a miscalculation, there could be some sort of a situation in Korea where they sort of became trapped and desperate and needing to do something, or their economy is collapsing and control is collapsing. There were all sorts of scenarios for starting. From a military point of view, you didn't care how it started. It would've been very difficult, especially in the wrong times of the year where you have climate working against our obvious advantage in airpower and other things. You have the Koreans dug in into the hills and into the mountains so they're very hard targets to get at. This vast array of artillery, rockets and other missiles that they have lined up. You have a situation where Seoul and the environs of Seoul have 25% of the Korean people in them. That's about 11 million packed up right up against an artillery and rocket range. So it's not like you have a distance or sort of a battlefield. You have the capital of South Korea plus a huge percent of its population plus a lot of Americans right under the gun. If the war started as a surprise, it would be very vulnerable. As you move into place it becomes a rapid deployment to try to make sure you can close the space and time. You're going to have to evacuate civilians. Seoul could be devastated. If it's the wrong time of the year you're fighting up in those hills. That's Korean War vintage slogging infantry war. It's not a place where armored units initially can operate. And then the wrong kind of weather, the digging in of their capabilities, the use of WMD, all compounded make it a very difficult

situation. There’s no doubt in the end that we would prevail but it would be difficult, bloody and it would take some time.

Q: Well CENTCOM, you were in CENTCOM both as deputy and the commander from when to when?

ZINNI: ‘96 to 1997 as the deputy. ‘97 until 2000 as the commander.

Q: Talk a bit about at that time how was CENTCOM seen as an instrument.

ZINNI: Well, it was interesting because when I was in European Command when the Soviet Union collapsed, people were talking about disbanding CENTCOM and CENTCOM was going to become a sleepy little backwater. I mean, Carter had created it to protect against Soviet incursion through the Zaragoza Mountains and then that all went away. It looked like CENTCOM might be a joint task force, sort of a unified command. Well, the Gulf War changed all that and now CENTCOM became the sort of centerpiece for potential military action. We had the two major theaters of war, the 2 MTW strategy that the military was programmed and shaped around this sort of notional ability to fight two wars. And the two wars were Iraq and Korea and in CENTCOM you had two threats. You were in the era of the dual containment policy that Iran and Iraq both pose a threat. So when I got there the principal sort of threat and everything that the delivered planning is geared against was at Iraq and Iran and the containment of Iraq and Iran and the preparation to go right into major conflict with either one. Then beside that, you had the terrorist extremist threat which was alive and well. I mean, I got there right after Khobar Towers so that was a problem. Security force protection was a big issue. Then you had all sorts of humanitarian problems, peacekeeping problems in the Horn of Africa and elsewhere.

We opened up Central Asia and that came under CENTCOM’s area of responsibility while I was there so it was a whole another area and region. We had Pakistan and India. We had the Israeli Arab conflict, although Israel wasn’t in CENTCOM’s area during my time. And I had Pakistan and not India and so, I mean, this was rich in crisis and potential large-scale conflicts and that sort of was the mood out there. Since I had previously worked in European Command and then Pacific Command, you know, now coming here, I was now immersed in day-to-day crises. You didn’t go to sleep at night. The Iranian patrol boats would ram our ships. I’m amazed that our captain of the ship didn’t blow somebody out of the water. We were worried about a terrorist attack, we didn’t know if Saddam or Rafsanjani or somebody would end up doing something that would be unacceptable and we would launch into something more significant. We had all the problems in Africa. We were running humanitarian missions and operations and other things in Africa. We had emerging countries like Yemen and Central Asia that we were beginning relationships with, that were really in bad shape and we couldn’t really get the right kind of policy decisions out of the administration. We were trying to build military to military relationships. I mean in the Seychelles Islands, every nation out there, the entire time I was there, was on a high terrorist threat level. So I mean, it was an interesting environment.

Q: What did you have to use?

ZINNI: Well, everything from, and we had this sort of loose coalition. I mean, unlike NATO or SEATO or something like that, we always advertised this Gulf Coalition, that was the term. There was no coalition. There was just an informal relationship based on our bilateral setups with the GCC countries, Gulf Cooperation Council and Jordan and Egypt. These required constant maintenance. We had, you know, a forward presence out there. It was very difficult for them to sell on their own street. It was even difficult back here, although I think we did it on the cheap. We did it with less troops. These are rotational units. We didn't own any bases out there; we didn't have any force structure dedicated to CENTCOM. These were rotated to medic commands so I had to constantly be out there. I spent over 70% of my time out there in the region although my headquarters was in Tampa, Florida.

Everything is based on personality out there, so you had to build these personal relationships, you had to maintain them. There was always crises at every level, some of them relatively minor but you had to deal with every one of them. It's obviously a very different culture from Europe and Asia and we're not used to operating in that culture. I liked the hell out of it. I enjoyed it. I just liked the people, I liked the sense of mission. Every day was a new challenge or adventure out there.

Q: Did you find that we were drifting apart from the Saudis?

ZINNI: Not in my time. As a matter fact we were under difficult situations because, you know, our presence out there was a hard sell for them on their own street. We did everything to remain as invisible as we could. We did everything to work with them, to try to work on a positive image. It's not the kind of relationship like a NATO relationship, where you create a document and then it runs on its own steam and the relationship is going to be automatic because of basically some cultural affinity. You have to be constantly working. It's something you can't assume anything. You're either going up or you're going down. You're not going to just retain some sort of status quo without working. We had great ambassadors out there. The military and State relationships out there were superb from my point of view. I think they would have said the same thing. We tried to be mutually supportive of each other. I think one of the things that made it work in my time was that I had the kind of relationship and support from the bureaus back in State. I mean, part of the problem is that State's geography is different than ours. I had four regional bureaus that I worked with but none of them were obviously all encompassed in my AOR (area of responsibility) and I wasn't all encompassed in theirs. They lapped over and it made it a little difficult to align priorities and policies but we made it work.

Q: Could you talk about blowing up our embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam?

ZINNI: In 1998 Osama bin Laden issued a series of fatwas. For us in there, they were watching him pretty closely. It was clear to our intelligence people that this was his

coming out party and he was announcing that all Americans were targets, not just military. He announced he had the right to a weapon of mass destruction. He was setting the stage for, I think he had finally jelled this network together and he was now making the announcement that he was coming onto the world scene. The first, of course, major act we end up with is the bombing of the two embassies. Of course, Kenya was in our area of responsibility and the one in Tanzania in EUCOM's AOR.

The Nairobi bombing occurs and I immediately sent a team down there to take charge, to set up a joint task force, provide military support, medical, engineering support, security. We had a magnificent ambassador there, Prudence Bushnell. She was wounded. I went down there. You know, the Kenyans blamed the Americans. You know, it was not easy for her to see this Embassy blown up and she was personally wounded and she carried on like a Marine. I have tremendous respect for her.

They set up the embassy in the only place they had available which was in the middle of this, you know, cluster of buildings in the middle of Nairobi, a really terrible situation in terms of the security. We had a company of Marines in there and found that among the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon many would bail out on this thing. You know, they kept arguing that this was State's responsibility. We went and took care of the emergency part. I kept coming back saying, "You can't leave these Americans. You can't leave them." I lost one of my troops killed in that embassy bombing, a security assistance sergeant, Air Force, and you know, you have to be there. You're going to take time for them to find another property to buy, to make sure the security arrangements are in place and we had to provide protection. I put my foot down. I mean, this was a, you know, "fire me but we're going to stay there and stop making an issue out of this." So finally they didn't fight me on it, although they were really tough. They really chipped away at me.

The other thing that is hard to talk about, six months before the bombing, I sent a personal forward message to the Secretary of State saying we have two embassies in my AOR that are going to be blown up by a car bomb. One of them is Nairobi, the other one is Qatar and I said I'm willing to help with a security assessment and willing to help in any way I can. These are vulnerable embassies and I said that because both ambassadors had come to me because they weren't getting any answers. Basically, I got a message back saying butt out. It is not your business. Thank you for your interest, but sorry. The only two embassies and of course, I had security assistance people in those embassies. There were obviously Marine security guards and attachés but my own people and Prudence and at the time Pat Theros was in Qatar. Those two embassies were a security assessment nightmare, right on the streets, very vulnerable. And they kept coming back saying well, the Intel says there is no threat. You know, the threat is going to go where the vulnerability is. We hardened everything else in the region and I couldn't get their attention. I didn't say anything about it after the bombing. A reporter had gotten it and State just sort of dismissed it. But I sent the message.

Q: Prudence Bushnell noted that she had been talking about this for a long time and got nowhere. Everyone talked about what a great heroine she was, she said, "Where were you when I needed you?"

ZINNI: And she was the one who had asked me. So I sent the message.

It hurt our relationships in Kenya, you know, but the military to military relationship always stayed strong. The difficulty became in the region, you know, I felt it important for security reasons to keep strong military to military relationship but you take the countries like Pakistan and Kenya, where non-proliferation, human rights, issues with the government and everything else, it punished the military. I would get restricted in places where we had excellent contacts like General [inaudible] in Kenya, we knew from our own intelligence had cleaned up the military, had gotten rid of the corruption. The military was clean, he was doing everything right, no abuses in military and I would be limited in what I can do with him because of Moi's administration. Thompson would come to me out of frustration and say, why are you punishing me? We what you want me to do? March to the palace and takeover of government? Is that what you advocate?

In the same way out in Pakistan, when we had Kalimat as the commander of the military, trained in the United States. I mean, the Pakistani military, important to keep them in the fold, keep them educated here. Everything came down to breaking the military to military relationship. Then when we needed them, like when the Jordanians discovered the Y2K (year 2000) plot to blow up American targets over the turn of the millennium, tourist targets, and they fingered the leadership coming out of Peshawar and all, then they wanted me to go to Musharraf and ask him to arrest them, to provide the discs they had confiscated. You could not defend that. And we blew them off. Certainly after 9/11 when we go running to embrace them then, their people said screw them. I mean, they're the ones who left us high and dry after the first Afghan war with 500,000 refugees. They're the ones that we bought F-16s, they kept our money and the planes while our pilots were flying obsolete planes and crashing. They're the ones that because we responded to an Indian test and tested one of our own weapons of mass destruction, I mean, rightly or wrongly, on the street it made it difficult for Western leaning people like Musharraf and his predecessor to stay connected to us without worrying about how it's going to be received on the street. And today it's an even bigger problem.

Q: During the time you were there how did we view Iran?

ZINNI: Well, it's interesting. When I first got there we really saw Iran as maybe not an immediate threat like Iraq but we saw it as long-term threat. We saw it as a hostile regime. The actions, like I said, day to day in the Gulf were really bad. There were all sorts of incidents. The relationship was very, very tense and hostile. Then Khatami gets elected president and all of a sudden there is a change in mood and attitude. All of the ship incidents stopped. The bridge to bridge communications become professional and we noticed this whole change of attitude, not that they were reaching out to us but it just becomes normal.

I told President Clinton this and at the same time obviously, the Clinton Administration was wrestling with what does Khatami's election mean? The president said, "Is there anything we can do?" and he wanted to look in all areas to sort of test the waters. We

can't go too far on this but can we test the waters? Can we reach out but not in a way that would looks like we are coming after them or goes too far to sort of evoke a response? And of course, State dropped the restrictions on pistachio nuts, and Persian carpets, and we sent some wrestling teams over there. I took it seriously to say what could we do on the military side? We looked at it and we offered some things that were never really adopted but that we could offer a program of cooperative search and rescue. In other words, if there is a fisherman or one of our sailors we want to work together. You know, there were several things we could do in, like, an oil spill in the Gulf, we could work together; certain things that were innocuous and humanitarian in nature could be a reach out but not in reaching too far and the president liked it. Eventually, he wanted to build a measure to all these sorts of things that could be done. The initial gestures never really seemed to go anywhere. It didn't seem to change the attitude in my time there but they never really seemed to take hold.

In the meantime, the reformists were really beginning to gain some traction there. They were really beginning to feel their oats and more and more, the hardliners are having to give in. A little more freedom in education, academic freedom, freedom of the press and it looked like it might be going somewhere but then I think Khatami turned out to be a big disappointment to everybody. It couldn't go that far. The hardliners kind of pulled back. So by the time I left in 2000, I would say we were still in a containment policy in Iran. It seemed to me the hostility and the tension levels had been greatly reduced. We sort of agreed to disagree, you know, but not in a way of creating any significant battles from a military point of view. And Iraq was fully contained. I was more worried about Iraq imploding and collapsing than I was about some sort of hostile act.

Q: What about Iraq? Was there much pressure in the United States, well, from your intelligence? Political-wise, in the United States were we looking at Iraq as being anything other than just a problem that was contained?

ZINNI: Well, I think we let ourselves believe he had an ongoing weapons of mass destruction program and I believed that in the beginning because the Intel people kept saying that until 1998, when the inspectors came out, Richard Butler, and President Clinton says we'll do a military strike to remove the WMD program. And I said fine. But when I looked at the targets I got, there were no WMD targets. They were targets that would hit things that would support a WMD program like the Toji missile facility but he was allowed to have the short range missiles or use facilities or special republican guards that used to be keepers of the security. But when I looked at it I said, "You know, I go up on the Hill and testify every year" and I say, "This guy has a WMD program and this guy is dangerous" because I'm told that, but now when punch time comes and produce me a damn target, it isn't there. I mean, I began then to have serious doubts about an existing WMD program.

Now, I didn't discount the fact that, you know, not everything you used to have is accounted for. There could still be some artillery gas around or docking grounds or SCUDs or something but over time those things become less valuable. Obviously, if he still has the scientists, he could start a program. Toward the end of my time I just began

to believe, like in last year of my time, this guy is no threat. What began to worry me is this guy could collapse. You know, this country could go into chaos. And what scared me is no matter how we got into Iraq, whether he did something to cause us to react or he collapsed and we had to go in, because it would generate all the problems, we would really be in trouble. I asked during an interagency conference, we did a war game which is to look at scenarios if we went in under any conditions. It was called Desert Crossing. We did it up here at Booz Allen Hamilton. I had an INR assistant secretary level, I had DOD, the CIA, everybody we can think of that might have a role. Remarkably, they predicted everything that happened. If you went in there this place would fragment, come apart, that you had better go in with sufficient troops to secure the borders, to control the population. You're going to have problems with ethnic cleansing and retribution. You're going to have floods of people coming across the border from Iran, Syria and outside, the Al Qaeda, the supporters, the Shia groups, you're going to have, you're going to have these humanitarian problems, an exodus of refugees and brain drain. This was all predicted. And what scared me, if my war plan didn't account for any of that other than we had planned on the numbers of troops being up to 400,000 to go in, which we felt were needed, so I was in complete shock after I retired when Rumsfeld decides to go in on the cheap and believe this is a liberation. When they start talking about flowers in the street, I was almost as shocked as when I was heard this WMD, mushroom clouds, grave threat. I was doing work for the CIA after I retired and I saw the intelligence right up to the day of the war and I didn't see any of that in there. Just the opposite.

Q: How about Afghanistan? Did we just write this off?

ZINNI: Yes, I think in my time there if I had to look back and see something we should have done better, we never put pressure on the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. They got a free ride and sanctuary. We blew up any consideration of supporting the northern alliance until after 9/11 or, at least encouraging them or supporting them in some way. It was difficult to get support for places like Uzbekistan that was a major drug route for Al Qaeda and Taliban were using them to move the drugs through. And they were running their own operation, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and others. We didn't, we weren't giving enough support to make them worry about their own backyard.

I think at the time there was hope that we could convince the Taliban to expel Al Qaeda or come around. Remember, Bill Richardson went and the Saudis were making offers, we were going there and trying to talk to them. I think there was still a belief that at that time that the Taliban could be either pressured or brought around or cajoled to clean up Al Qaeda. That probably was naïve. We probably shouldn't have done that. We didn't even have a war plan for Afghanistan. You could direct it with war plans but in retrospect, it was a free ride. It was a sanctuary with a free ride. Maybe naïvely hoping that somehow the Taliban would come around. We should have realized the Taliban was not going to come around. We needed to do something about it. But you know, we were focused on Iran and Iraq and Korea and other things, Kosovo and everything else that was going on. The Nairobi bombings were somewhat of a wake-up call, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, but still, you know, it wasn't anything that people had to, were thinking through. After the embassy bombings when the president wanted to find targets for Al Qaeda, and we shot

those targets, we shot those camps, there was a 50-50 chance you might have civilians in that camp. It looked stupid. You destroyed a bunch of jungle gyms so it was worth a shot. We could not not take the shot. And then the CIA came up with these targets in Khartoum which I didn't understand.

Q: They blew up an aspirin factory.

ZINNI: Yes and there were more targets. We got rid of the other ones. They wanted me to shoot this one and I shot it because, you know, at one time twice removed it seemingly supported some program. And that made us look even worse. That one I never understood. It wasn't even on my target list. It was a surprise to me.

Q: This brings up a question. Maybe I'm treading on the wrong ground. When you get to intelligence, one is not overly impressed by the intelligence that we get. I mean, the major one being of course the Soviet Union collapse and we had spent billions of dollars closely examining this. We didn't pick that up. The other examples, we just get it wrong.

ZINNI: What I learned at CENTCOM because I had two great intelligence officers, they were phenomenal. I found that most of the intelligence they gave me, 80%, was from open sources. I would go to Bob Newman and say, "Bob, answer this question for me." And I would give him a question he would answer the question. He would always say, "Why are you asking the question?" I would always say, "What you mean, why?" "Because I need to know what you're going to do with the information to make sure you understand it, not out of context." Then he would tell me you're not going to do anything stupid, you know. You know, that's the kind of intelligence person you want. If George Tenet said to the president, "Why are you asking me this question, what are you going to do with it, are you going to use it as a justification for war?" I've got to tell you, it's shaky. I mean, because it was shaky. Curve ball and yellow cake and all this stuff, aluminum tubes all of this turned out to be hokum. That's the first part. It's not so much the intelligence; it's somebody who has made up their mind to take an action and they're just looking for justification for the action. Then you can cherry pick what you want. Intelligence officers have to be brought into the decision-making and understand the context to be more effective in what they present. That's the first issue.

The second issue is it is true we don't have the human network, we don't understand. We see things very well. I could see Saddam doing things. I can see, you know, he had these little science projects he would work on, he would move units here, he would do this. I didn't know the meaning of those things. I didn't know what he was doing. You had no sense of why these things were occurring, what the intent behind them was. We can do a lot to gather what I call order of battle intelligence. I can tell you where the Hammurabi Division is on a given day but why is it there is it there? So intelligence isn't perfect.

The third point about intelligence is this terrible term, "actionable intelligence." It also almost means that the intelligence in and of itself predetermines the action. Actions are political and operational decisions. You know, you get a piece of intelligence. The action isn't you know, tied directly to the intelligence. It is an operational political decision you

do based on the intelligence. When you begin to believe the intelligence person delivers you the course of action, that's when you get into trouble because there are too many other factors that go into that. I guess what I'm trying to say, part of it is a lack of certain capabilities we have within the intelligence but much of it is understanding how to use the intelligence. And much of it in the intelligence side is about how to present it and you won't know how to present it unless you understand what this guy is going to do with it, what's his intention, what's he want to use it for, what's he got going on in his head.

I had these two sort of irreverent generals that weren't afraid to get in my face and say "what I give you, I've got to understand how you're going to use it. I've got to caution you about things or put it in the right context or maybe add other things in you haven't asked about that impact on that decision." So if you don't have that confidence in that interchange then just getting intelligence doesn't serve you well no matter how good it is.

Q: Well, there's another factor that seems to get in and that is conventional wisdom, that once we get into a mold, as with the Soviet Union, that this is a very strong centralized government, which in a way was true but we didn't see it ever ending. You know, I mean, conventional wisdom just draws a straight line.

ZINNI: Yes, that's the other point. Don't just get yourself involved in containment for containment's sake and then surprise yourself when the containment works. You know, we have contained North Korea, Cuba, the Soviet Union, Iraq until the Iraq War and now Iran for how many years? Well, at some point in time if you do it right, the containment works. But then you've got to understand what does "works" mean? What happens when the North Korean economy goes finally completely bust and they're really on the rocks? Are they going to be trapped rats and strike out? Is somebody communicating the golden parachute and a way out for them? Is it going to be some sort of soft landing you can orchestrate?

And then the intel has to be keen to perceive when they're heading in that direction. You know, everybody is going through the scenarios in a post-Fidel Cuba. Well, what does it mean? What's going to happen? How's the change going to come about? Are there going to be Cubans rushing for Florida or Cubans in Florida rushing for Cuba? How is this going to go down? You can't just decide in the huddle. I was in Europe when the Soviet Union collapsed. General Galvin had a plan: immediately engage with militaries on the other side, immediately create this military to military relationship, immediately tell them, don't snap this back, you know, this is the chance. Go over there, he told us, not as conquerors and winners but as brothers and tell them your people won this and let's work together.

Baker had a plan and sent Armitage out there. I worked with Armitage, as I told you, on Provide Hope to try to do something along the lines of a Marshall Plan. But he could never get it off the ground. But I was shocked at how unprepared we were for all this. Everything we said would happen happened. And then we were shocked.

What happens if Iraq collapses or North Korea collapses or even in Iran? What happens if the reformers get stirred up in Iran and things begin to happen and they challenge the regime? What's our role in that? I don't think we've answered those questions.

Q: You retired in 2000. All hell broke loose again and you have played sort of a role of one of the, I have to say, many critics, of how things were done. How did you view this?

ZINNI: Well, I did some work for the State Department after I retired. I became in effect the envoy for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. I was sent to Indonesia to work with the Free Aceh Movement and the government in Indonesia, and to the Philippines to work with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the government of President Arroyo. That taught me a lot about this whole idea of the war on terrorism and everything else that was going on. It wasn't just a war in the military context; it was going to be for the hearts and minds of these young people, these groups that had issues with their governments and how are we going to take it down? It struck me we had to stay completely focused on Al Qaeda initially and we also had to be focused on, obviously, we will eliminate the Taliban in Afghanistan so Afghanistan has to be tomorrow. Afghanistan, you have to fully concentrate your resources and your attention on Afghanistan. The advantages are the world is with you, we have just been attacked so today everybody's American. You have popular support, you have moral justification, you're focused, you luck out and get Karzai, a charismatic leader who looks good, sounds good. You've got an Afghanistan that looks reasonably reconstructable in some manner. You've got to stay totally focused on there. The opportunities now and the conditions mean you can reach out to the Pakistanis and others. Maybe if you have other issues you can take away some of the political restrictions and reopen a dialogue and encourage that. You have a tense situation in the Gulf because many those bombers in 9/11 came from there so you're going to have to work seriously to make sure those relationships don't go south on you and you should building them. You're going to have to do a lot to communicate to the American people and I think the president at the beginning did. He said, "This is not a Muslim-Christian issue." He said all the right things so in the beginning, it looked good. I mean, it looked like we were on the right track. I also thought the peace mediation work that I was doing here now was helpful because I'm dealing with Muslims in all three scenarios. Some of these groups were on the edge and could easily get on the terrorist list. They are fighting within their own groups between the young people who want to go to Osama bin Laden and the older people who say no, this is an issue of us with issues with the state. Now we can wean them away from Osama bin Laden and Jamal Islamia and all these other groups who are trying to grab them. And I thought there is your strategy. The strategy is the hearts and minds of the young people. Every young man, when their anger is caused by political, economic or social conditions, are ripe meat for Osama bin Ladens of the world who preach a radical form of Islam as a rationale for doing what they do. So you've got to work to take away the anger. You've got to work on all these fronts; the diplomatic front, the economic front, the social front, and to a certain degree, the military and take it in a very measured way.

So when all of a sudden I start I seeing the war going deeper, I say, "What are we doing? This guy, Saddam, is not part of the problem. He's contained." Why would you want to

distract yourself, why would you want to get into a controversial conflict, why would you want to immerse yourself in a situation which is going to drag you into a real black hole? Because, you know, I had looked at all this post-conflict, post-Saddam environment and then to hear the way they were going to do it with too few troops, with this naïve belief that this was a liberation, with this neocon philosophy that the road to Jerusalem led to Baghdad and this was constructive destabilization. Some of the terms they were using were ridiculous. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe we have gone over the edge that far. What was happening to the president? He may be inexperienced, I understand, but Dick Cheney? I know how Colin felt, I think I know he thought this was a bad idea and going about it in the wrong way and he was trying to provide sanity.

Q: A real puzzlement is Paul Wolfowitz.

ZINNI: A neocon leader.

Q: He had a pretty good reputation before in Indonesia and elsewhere dealing with things, was what I picked up.

ZINNI: We just experienced the worst secretary of defense in our history. He not only failed as, in directing and conducting the war in every respect, he never made any adjustments within the military. He claimed it was going to be a long war. Prior to this his vision of transformation was to cut the Army 56,000 troops, reduce ground forces. In four years he never increased the ground forces to fight this war. You know, its transformation philosophy was completely wrong. His war fighting capability was completely flawed. His leadership style was horrible. His whole philosophy of resource management and acquisition, where he was supposed to be a superstar, we didn't cut any programs. Basically it's been off the page. We couldn't support the troops and supply them. I watched the wheels come off this administration.

Q: Had you picked up any of this before? Obviously, you had very good connections right after you retired to the existing command thing and the new administration came in prior to 9/11.

ZINNI: The only piece I was picking up was, again, the neocons getting ensconced in the Department of Defense. Noises were starting to come out, they had their own agenda and I ran afoul of the neocons in my time in CENTCOM because I opposed the Iraqi invasion and the neocons really took me on. I was their arch enemy. My POLAD (Political Advisor) was Larry Pope.

Q: Larry Pope was not confirmed as an ambassador.

ZINNI: Right. And again, the neocons undermined it, with Jesse Helms. I watched this crowd get themselves well positioned. They came in with Wolfowitz and Richard Burr and Douglas Viper, this whole crew. It's clear to me and I'm hearing from the Pentagon their visions of transformation. They have always wanted to get into this business in Iraq,

meddle in Iraq and bring their boys a solid regime and so before I was hearing they were trying to push this even before 9/11.

Q: Were you picking up while you were at CENTCOM what about Chalabi and that crew? Were they these Iraqi dissidents, I mean outsiders, were they a factor at all?

ZINNI: Well, they were running around town here telling everybody, give me the money and I'll go in and start this revolution from the inside, put CENTCOM under my command, make them give me special forces and air support. There are people signing up to it in Congress. Believe me, this was in that wonderful silent song that how you could do something on the cheap, which was ridiculous. Every leader in the region was telling you, how could you guys work with this guy? He was wanted on an arrest warrant in Jordan, the Petra Bank scam. He had some issue in Lebanon, another one in Saudi Arabia. I mean, he was seen as a scam artist out there in that part of the world. And the stuff he was pushing and his people were slipping a war plan promoting him in Congress was floating around. Had a retired general working with him. I mean, I was in CENTCOM for NATO. I knew the war planning and they are doing it in Congress, staffers are doing it in Congress. I mean, this was ridiculous. And so when they got all of that they resented it. I got on their enemies list.

Q: When you were out, did you find yourself involved? I don't know if, you shouldn't call them loyal opposition, but an opposition force around the Iraq War? Did you find yourself getting involved?

ZINNI: Yes. There were a lot of retired officers, you know, senior officers who couldn't believe this, especially the way we were going to do it. The last four commanders of CENTCOM, myself, General Peay, General Hoar, General Schwarzkopf all publicly, you know, cautioned against this. And going against it they had concerns about the way they walked away from 10 years worth of planning and altered troop numbers that would be in their plan. And then to watch in horror the performance of the CPA (Coalition provisional Authority) and Bremer. We had spent years on this program of sending messages to the Iraqi regular army that the time comes, you don't play with that carrier. He just axed them. We knew that you had to do a reconciliation not a debaathificaiton. They closed -- 50% of the paychecks were paid directly, another 25% indirectly and they go in and close all the state-owned factories because they're state owned and the principal are, and put all these people out of work. We're watching things that we all knew beforehand. These snap judgments, there was no corporate memory because they didn't want it. It was Clintonian even though it had nothing to do with the administration but that's how it was branded.

Q.: I take it, how about almost the phrase or the mentality of war against terrorism? It always struck me as this is an intelligence and police thing with maybe some military component.

ZINNI: Yes. My belief is World War II was a perfect war. It was a perfect endeavor, the most perfect endeavor the United States was ever involved in. We were wronged, we

were attacked. We were morally right. We mobilized the nation. We remarkably in four years created the greatest superpower in history. We defeated our enemies, unconditional surrender, and reached out and picked them up and made them into a democracy, with free-market economies. It is a movie.

So what have we done since then? We want to repeat it in everything we do. We declare war on illiteracy, war on drugs, war on poverty; we declare war on everything. It's a metaphor and so when we're faced with this we declare war on tactics, terrorism is a tactic. We don't take the greater context, you know, what I infer you're alluding to. The greater context of this is this is a society in transition, the Islamic world. They're going to come out of this in varying degrees of success or failure. It is trying to come to grips with modernity. You've got those factors -- political, economic and social factors -- and angry leaders. You've got those that will capitalize on it, like Osama bin Ladens of the world. So there are places where you will not be taking military action. But this is something more than just a war and something more than, you can't win this thing if there is such a thing by killing enough of them and breaking down their finances and breaking down their cells. That's tactics. But strategically, when you look at this, what is going to win out in the end is winning over the youth and the youth have to be won over in that they see hope and a degree of prosperity and a voice, you know, that they can have. If that's denied to them, you know, 9/11 defined our youth, 9/11 defined their youth. It's a battle for the youth and if we make this in terms of war, we pit our generation of the future against their generation. But we play into the hands of Osama bin Laden. So we're not seeing it in the broadest context, we are not seeing it at a strategic level. We only see this at a tactical level. Because we don't understand the new world order. We have never developed a strategy for dealing with it. There are no Kennans and Marshalls out there that understand this new, very complex world.

Q: Speaking of complex, you mentioned with Clinton he was a learner, is a learner. What were you getting from your colleagues in the upper ranks of the military about George W. Bush? Vis-à-vis the military.

ZINNI: You know, I think that in terms of the military and the Vietnam experience, I think that stopped being an issue when Clinton got elected. You know, the fact that he was elected and he was antiwar, basically, and grew up away from it. Initially, there was a big emotional effect but after eight years, that kind of passed. That issue didn't really come up. Vietnam tainted everybody. There were no heroes in this thing. You know, you have Clinton who opposed the war so he alienated a lot of people because of that but still got elected president. You had Bush who was in the military but avoided Vietnam through the guard and maybe parental influence or whatever. You had Kerry running, who had a mixed Vietnam record. He went and did it, some question about his performance, but then he came back and threw his medals while in his uniform or whatever, so I think the military has seen this all now. They are not innocent anymore of that stuff. So I do think it becomes basically a non-issue because the only remaining hero who might be president of our generation is McCain possibly. And McCain has issues too so, you know, it was an era that I don't think people look at it anymore in that way. I think that also people think that the military, the senior leadership, constantly worry

about those sorts of things. They don't. They have personal political feelings but they tend to be professionally apolitical.

Q: But I was really thinking about George Bush, not the background. Was he asking the right questions of his military people, showing intellectual curiosity or not?

ZINNI: I mean, of course he was. He hadn't shown that curiosity, but I think the bigger issue revolved around Rumsfeld because you either love him or you hate him. There's no mixed views on him.

Q: Did anybody kind of love Rumsfeld?

ZINNI: A lot of the generals that remained extremely loyal and some retired guys that liked his philosophy. You know, go to a high-tech, all air power, you know, intelligence, and technical systems military. I don't think… I think even some that maybe were on the fence he lost and maybe some that maybe were with him in the beginning he certainly lost by the time he left there. You know, I think people read too much into what senior military officers think in those terms. They basically get permission and figure out how to do it. The big issue becomes when civilians come into the business of the uniformed military. You can give me the political objective, you can tell me what you want done, you can give me the political constraints or whatever, but when you start dictating troop numbers and troop movements and tactics and those sorts of things, then I think we have got a serious problem and that's what happened in Iraq.

Q: Before you finish this off, it's been fascinating, could you talk a little about what you were doing on the peace things in Southeast Asia?

ZINNI: Yes. On Indonesia, I was asked by Rich Armitage and Colin Powell to work with the Henry Dunant Center, an NGO in Geneva that does peace mediation work, because they had engaged the Free Aceh movement and the government of Indonesia to try to come to some sort of peaceful resolution of the violence in Sumatra with the Acehnese. Our government was supporting the effort, actually some resource support for HDC, the Henry Dunant Center, and Henry Dunant Center wanted to bring in a number of mediators and they had some interesting constructs since they're a very professional mediation business. In this particular one they wanted to use what they called a group of wise men, senior figures that would oversee the mediation process and being figures that are somewhat removed from it and oversee it and can work at another level. They asked the United States to provide preferably a military, a senior military person, retired and we had a former foreign minister from Thailand, we had a member of the House of Lords that was very much interested and his Ph.D. work was on it. We had a Norwegian; you know, we had a number of people, about four or five of us. So the State Department asked me to fill that role formally as a private citizen but, you know, they supported it. So I did this work with them and I have since done other work with HDC too.

On the Philippines, President Arroyo asked President Bush to help with mediation and working with the Moros and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. She wanted to reach out

to them, and she asked for U.S. support in some of that. USAID had come down there and did some projects and did some other things so the president asked the U.S. Institute of Peace to take on the project and U.S. Institute of Peace asked me to participate in the mediation process. In that role they were looking at me sort of concentrating on the military aspects. We would get into the military monitoring regime or military issues, the security issues and all because I have done that kind of work before on how you set up monitoring programs, how you set up some sort of process where complaints and getting through issues and concerns that are brought up in the way you set up the monitoring committees, investigating teams and that sort of thing. So they wanted me to concentrate on that but also be part of the broader mediation process. I worked both those along with the Israeli-Palestinian thing.

Before that, in the Clinton administration, he had asked me to work with Tony Lake on trying to get Ethiopia and Eritrea not to go to war so we sort of had the "Tony Tony strategy," it was called. It ended up they went to war anyway.

And of course, the first one was with Aidid with Oakley that sort of got me into this business, the mediation business. And I've done a couple of other things like that too.

Q: How do you find your, it's gotten more structured over time, the mediation process.

ZINNI: It's interesting because I got invited to this mediators' forum, which they hold in Oslo every year. They sort of pick a dozen or so mediators around the world to come in and it's sort of a, what have we learned about mediation? Let's share our experiences. It brought in a number of other, you know, really people who have done major work and did it consistently. And like working with HDC, we brought in some professional mediators because this is becoming a now discipline in and of itself. We had Bill Ury who wrote the book, *Getting To Yes* and getting past no and that sort of thing. You know, that was maybe more the labor-management and other kinds of things negotiation. But this whole business of mediation, facilitation, negotiation now has exploded. There are even now, not just courses in universities around the world, there are majors and you can receive degrees in this now. It has become that elaborately designed and structured. I've learned a lot about it. I've seen the processes work in so many different ways and I've seen so many different approaches. It's great to have a kickback of all these because no one size fits all. I mean, in some cases you bring in international mediators, like the United Nations or some political organization that's regional rather than international and fits, and sometimes you bring AID. Like, I think the United States has got to be the principal mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian for a lot of reasons. And in other places, because of sovereignty issues or something else, the private NGOs are right. It isn't seen as interfering, it doesn't present threats. Who mediates is another thing and whether you mediate or facilitate you know, because they each have meaning so it's become a science and an art all rolled into one.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much.

End of interview