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The Future of Command: Leadership Through Crisis and Change

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FEATURING

Admiral Christopher W. Grady, USN (Ret.)
Former Vice Chairman,
Joint Chiefs of Staff

General David L. Goldfein, USAF (Ret.)
Former Chief of Staff,
U.S. Air Force

General Austin S. (Scott) Miller, USA (Ret.)
Former Commander, Joint Special Operations Command; Former Commander, NATO Resolute Support Mission and United States Forces-Afghanistan

CSIS EXPERTS

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Seth G. Jones: All right. Welcome, everybody. We are moving on to a superb panel. It's nominally titled "The Future of Command: Leadership through Crisis and Change," but it's also something along the lines of the warfighting panel too. So what I'd like to do is get into how a lot of what we've talked about today actually impacts people with battlefield experience, and how to translate some of the private sector discussions we've had with bringing it down to implications for the warfighter.

So we've got a great panel. I think, from my left all the way around. We've got Admiral Chris Grady. Was recently the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Dave Goldfein, the former chief of staff, U.S. Air Force. And then General Scott Miller, who was commander of Joint Special Operations Command and commander of U.S. NATO Resolute Support Mission and U.S. Forces Afghanistan. So thank you all for taking the time.

Admiral Grady, I wanted to start with you.

Admiral Christopher W. Grady (Ret.): Sure.

Mr. Jones: And ask all of you this question that's sort of come up, but I want to be really blunt on this. It is, are we in a transitional period – and you can define it however you want – or a really truly transformational period? And part of the sort of background of the question, because people have talked about it as we're potentially in a transformational period, but I want to go back to 1993. Andy Marshall, the former head of Office of Net Assessment in the Pentagon in the tail end of the Gulf War. And he writes what's now a declassified memo on the revolution in military affairs.

And one of the things that he says in this is it's probable that we are near the beginning of a real revolution in military affairs. With stealth, we saw that – its use in the Gulf War. Precision strike, big change from what we did during the Vietnam War. And he said, what are our goals in the military revolution which may unfold over the next 20 years? What is our strategy for doing well? How are we going to deal with them, these new technologies as they emerge? How can we position ourselves to maintain a preeminent position? So a range of these questions coming out of that, and that's sort of a little bit of the historical context. So, first to you, how would you define where we are right now?

Adm. Grady: Yeah. Thanks. Well, let me just start off by saying, it's great to be on a panel with you again, Seth. This is our second or third of these. It's a real honor to be here with you, and to be with all of you, but particularly to be with these

two gentlemen. And I feel very privileged to be up on stage with all three of you. So thanks for – thanks for including me.

I think this question of transitional versus transformational is, in fact, one of the seminal questions we, as part of this ecosystem, have to think about. Because are we operating in a linear system within the paradigms and the rules that exist now? Or, are the rules changing and we have to adapt and go with it, right? And if it's a transitional period, then we're working within the system. If it's a transformational period, then the system itself is changing. So, to me, answering this question is really important because it's about how we think about the future. If it's a transitional period, then we're going to operate within the system. We're not going to break paradigms. We're not going to break china. And we're going to react to the future. If it's transformational, then we're going to help shape the future going forward.

And the answer to your question, I think, is, it depends, right? As always, right? I think because there's many elements of the system that we need to look at. I think it's arguably the case that we could be in a transformational period, when we think about things like the rules-based international order and all the post-1945 strictures that were put in place. Those are changing very, very rapidly. What draws us into a question, though, is, are we just reverting to the norm, though, what history would tell us?

From a military perspective, you talk about things like second and third offset that Andy Marshall was keying up with the RMA, and certainly, then how we think about the warfight, I think, could very well be transformational. The key for us here in trying to define the answer to that question and whether we are shaping the future or just reacting to it are the lessons that we're learning around the world, right? So we can look at Ukraine as an example. Many do.

We can look at what happened in Epic Fury or is happening in Epic Fury. We could look at what happened in the Battle of the Red Sea and ask ourselves, are things changing – is the system changing and how we fight.

And I think the answer might be yes, but we have to make sure that it adapts to all the other environments. What we learn in Ukraine may not exactly be the same as what we learn – what we need in the Western Pacific. I tend more toward transformational, that the system itself is changing and that we need to think that way so that we can shape the future rather than react to it.

Mr. Jones: So if I can ask you a follow-up then, what are one or two examples of how the system may be changing?

Adm. Grady: Yeah. I think in the – if you go to the larger geopolitical world that we live in, nations are now operating under the principle of what is our best insurance policy; can we rely on institutions that have been created before.

I think that answer is, in many respects, changing. And so then how does the nation and all of its instruments of military power operate within that? So that's one on the larger geopolitical scale.

I think on the other is the whole question of mass, right? And so I think we have transitioned from massing steel to massing effects. But now the question is how do you do that and what the cost point is, and this brings us to the question of elite, exquisite systems versus affordable mass.

That could be a transformational way to look at warfighting.

Mr. Jones: All right.

General Goldfein, how do you – how do you see it? Maybe we'll get some disagreement here, by the way. How do you see it, particularly from an Air Force background?

General David L. Goldfein (Ret.): Yeah, thanks, and thanks for – thanks especially for not lining us up according to college GPA – (laughter) – because I would – I would be off the stage to the left, I think.

I used to live in constant fear with Chairman McCain that he was going hold up a piece of paper and say: Really, General, a 1.9 GPA? You've got to be kidding me. (Laughter.)

So –

Mr. Jones: Come on. (Laughter.)

Gen. Goldfein: Let me just tell you that I thought a lot about your question and I kept coming back to whether it's either/or or /and. Are we in a transitional or transformational period, or are we in both? And I think the answer is we're in both.

And here's an example of transformational, building on Chris' comments. We're transformational based on the technology of AI and autonomy and how it's applied to platform sensors and weapons and changing the very nature of warfare.

We're seeing that, and it's challenging our traditional strengths in many ways as we're seeing in the Strait of Hormuz and others. So in that regard, we're transformational.

But here's where we're transitional. One of the common themes in every panel so far today has been this digital transformation or digital transition that we're in, right? Connecting platforms and sensors and weapons and access to data so that we have decision superiority, and how we continue to do that not only with the joint team but also with our allies and partners. That's a journey that never ends that's transitional.

So I actually believe we're in both a transformational for all the reasons Admiral Grady talked about, and a transitional based on the journey that never ends.

Mr. Jones: Do you want to –

Adm. Grady: Yeah. I think, Dave, you're spot on.

But I would say, since you referenced the digital, I think that's a transformation. I think there have been four major transformations – the neolithic, the scientific, the industrial revolution and the digital transformation – and we're in the middle of it now, and so how we adapt to that is going to be important.

Mr. Jones: So I wonder if we can go to General Miller and as part of the question if we can pull up the videos.

See, we're better than all the other panels because we've got videos in our – in our dialogue. (Laughter.)

General Austin S. Miller (Ret.): OK. So, first of all, thank you everybody for allowing me to be here. It's an honor to sit with all three of you.

I'm going to say transformational, and, now we can argue whether the United States is transforming or not, or transitioning, but I can tell you our adversaries are transforming.

So this video right here actually has some sounds. You can, like, hear launch and stuff. This was a – I stumbled upon this scene. I was a commanding general at Fort Benning, Georgia. And I had just – I had just come back from Afghanistan. I was fascinated with drones because, quite frankly, I used them a lot in my command to maintain dominance. And I came across this on this place called the Lee Drop Zone. It's a research team from Georgia Tech. I go, what are you doing? I couldn't find anybody from Fort Benning associated with this. It was just the academics out there working it. And they were launching a series of model airplanes, if you will. And I said, what are you trying to prove? And what I'll do is I'll go to the next video. And you can see above, what they were trying to do is show that you can build autonomous

capability, the lead, people would follow, and you'd start building the algorithms.

That was 2014. And I looked at that video of these drones flying above me. And I said, if those are mine I'm feeling real good about everything I could do right now. If those are not mine, I feel like I have an awful lot of dilemmas on my hands. So I brought it back and we kind of huddled around at Fort Benning. And I said, hey, we got to – we got to do something with this. We're Fort Benning. You know, this is where George Marshall built the Army in the thirties, or late-twenties. And, you know, we're going to have our Marshall moment here.

And trying to get some money behind this. I don't think – General Dunford might have been the chairman. He might have been the Marine Corps commandant. But trying to get money from TRADOC to start looking at this was impossible. We couldn't – so what we did is you go out and you find guys who are retired who were working prototypes. And they'd loan you stuff. But I could get more money to test a handgun to determine how to replace the Beretta with a Sig than I could for something like this.

And this is all at the same time – for those of you that have read Cole and Singer, Peter Singer and August Cole came out with this book called "Ghost Fleet," which I found fascinating, because it allowed us to imagine the future based on very nascent technology, and put it in a combat environment. And they actually started writing that in 2013, so probably it came out in 2015. But they showed us a military and an adversary that had transformed. And, you know, I joke about them at 2025 on their 10 year anniversary, I said you ought to go on tour on your 10-year anniversary because your technologies you predicted are all in play right now.

And so – and I also show this video – I shared it with two people. I shared it with Hank Crumpton, and some of you will recognize that name. And I think there's some General Atomics people in here. But Hank was certainly the beneficiary of early drone warfare, and did some amazing things with it, along with the Air Force, of course. And he just said, oh my God. He goes, that was 2014? And he says, we dominated in the drone space. Look where we are today. And so I do think a transformation. And not just drones. It's autonomy. It's AI coupled.

But I will just tell you, on a very personal level, if I go back and review every single fight I've been in, or forces that I commanded have been in, we fundamentally would have had to change how we operated – fundamentally in every case. I can't think of a single case if this technology that we're seeing playing out in Hormuz and, quite frankly, Iraq, around our diplomatic facilities, around our bases – I can't think of a single activity that wouldn't be quite different.

Mr. Jones: So one follow-up for you, General Miller, is what are the – what are the implications for the warfighter along these lines? And so I'd be interested in everybody else's comments along those lines, but sort of bringing it down to that level, how does that – what's the impact on it, including what people need to know or do?

Gen. Miller: Yeah. So we've actually had some very good panel discussions, I took some notes on it, on the – you know, we talked about capital, we've talked about scalability, and the rest of it. And, please, nobody get offended, but if you're looking to really affect a big change, yes, you need the Pentagon, and you certainly need Congress, because there's got to be authorizations, there's got to be capital that can flow, there needs to be agility and the rest of it. But it's – you need a connection with the warfighter.

And the warfighter is not at SOCOM headquarters. The warfighter – and I've been in the Pentagon – the warfighter is not in the Pentagon. The war – and we kind of – we talked about it a little bit, and Secretary Duffey said it. He says, it's bringing the lessons back from the front. It's the people who are out there. But for those that are out there with these companies that you're just trying to find that customer, you have to find the discerning user. And it may be a little bit different every service, but the discerning user is somebody you probably won't make a lot of money off of but if you put it in their hands they'll break your – they'll break your prototypes. They'll bend them. They'll go back to your engineers and say, OK, it's OK, but I want to bend it this way, or I want it to do this. And if you can find that discerning user, it actually really matters.

And it's – you know, I think we'll talk a little bit about what we've learned as – and by the way, I made a lot of mistakes not doing all the things I now advise people that they ought to be thinking about as a warfighter. But the discerning user is out there and the discerning user will make any capability better. And again, if they make it better, in my view that's generally where I've seen it scale through the services. And – but the discerning user, you have to find him. And it's not going to be: Army, here you go; or, Air Force, here you go. There's a – there's a – the user is out there. And like I said, they'll break your equipment, too, many times over, but it'll turn out all right.

Can I tell one story before –

Mr. Jones: You can tell a story.

Gen. Miller: I've gone a little long here, so I apologize.

When I talk to people, they'll bring – everyone'll bring us gadgets and go, hey, I've got – and you look at it and you go: It's pretty good tech, OK. You've

prototyped it. It's worked out in test and the rest of it. But will it work when it – when it matters? And I always go back to the – I'm looking at the crowd because I'm saying most of you are of the generation you've seen the movie "Braveheart." I have this scene in my mind where William Wallace comes back from spending years learning about the ways of the world from his uncle, and he comes back and he shows back up in his village in Scotland, and he runs into his old friend Hamish, who he had left since childhood, and Hamish wants to do a rock-throwing contest. And Hamish throws the rock – it's like a big shotput – throws it, you know, 30 feet. William Wallace can throw it, like, 10 feet. But he looks at him and he goes: Can you do that when it matters? And he goes: What do you mean, when it matters? He goes: In battle, and can you do it?

And so the tech has got to be reliable as a first-order principle, because anybody out forward absolutely doesn't want a piece of equipment that all of a sudden doesn't do anything. If I've got Shaheds coming at me, I need the piece of equipment that's going to go ahead and knock some Shaheds down. Not going to knock it down 20 percent of the time; I need something that's going to go ahead and protect the force. So it's – that is always in my mind when I think about connecting to the warfighter.

Mr. Jones: You want to connect to the Air Force warfighter?

Gen. Goldfein: Yeah. I'll just say that one of the things that has not changed is the ability to have better situational awareness that makes faster and better decisions than the adversary. That's always been a key feature in this digital age where we have access to data that can put together a common operational picture and deny the adversary the same. That's something that, to your question, what do the warfighters need to understand, they need to understand, right, having that available to them, and how they make decisions faster and better.

But equally important, they need to understand how to do that when that access is denied or manipulated. And what I used to tell airmen and look at training was if the screens go blank we actually know how to operate. We train for that. How well are we capable of operating if the screens are still operating but we no longer trust what's there? That is a – significantly challenging. So you have to be prepared for the increased capability; and you have to be capable of handling not only just the denial, but the manipulation of that capability.

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Mr. Jones: You want to add onto that?

Adm. Grady: Absolutely.

Mr. Jones: And then – and then I've got a follow-on question for you at a – at a(n) even more strategic level.

Adm Grady: In terms of the warfight, I think what both of my colleagues were describing is central to the changing character of warfare that we're going through now, whether it's transitional, transformational. We continue to have that, you know, vibrant discussion. But the two defining characteristics for me are battlespace transparency, and then the coupling of that with autonomy, how you bring those two together.

So to your point of that, that's both, because what you end up with then is if you're on the surface of the Earth we're going to find you. And so who at speed and at tempo can win that hiders-finders battle? That's one. So space then, for me, becomes, like, the most important domain, coupled with the autonomy here. The other is the undersea, right, because in that respect that's one area where physics will not get below 500 feet yet. So we as a nation must continue to dominate in both of those.

Now, whether this – what I'm about to say is transitional or transformational – this gets back to your earlier point – and that is we must think in terms of parallel and not sequential, right? So in the past we would develop systems, and bring them to the warfighter, and put them in the hands of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Guardians, Coast Guardsmen, in a sequential way. We would design it, then we would build it, then we would test it, then we'd go back and redesign it, and that's why it took so long.

Now we have to do it in parallel. Put it in the hands of the warfighter at the same time as the designer is working on it, at the same time as the engineer is – get the warfighter there. Think parallel, don't think sequential. Because

if we do, it's going to take too long, and it's already obsolete before we get it out there. Is that transitional or transformational thinking? You could probably go either way. But I'm here to tell you that that's what's happening in the defense acquisition world that we're in now, where people are thinking and operating differently. And that's the zeitgeist of the times. And we need to be able to adapt and move quickly.

Mr. Jones: So I wonder if you could talk a little bit about, Admiral Grady, the what is at stake right now. And part of this goes to – you know, the U.S. dealt with a major adversary, a superpower, during the Cold War with the Soviets. We then had this peace dividend. We've talked over the course of today even about the era of the Last Supper. We saw defense budgets decline pretty dramatically. We saw consolidation of defense companies, probably starting about 2018 with the National Defense Strategy and the National Security Strategy, but then continuing today.

You know, there is a much more significant focus on states. We're past the 9/11 period. And in particular, the Chinese. And what's been interesting to watch with the Chinese is they are building at mass and scale in all of the major domains. But you've just come from the top of the Pentagon. What is your perspective on the nature of the threat right now and the competition landscape? Because what it does is it starts to provide us with this is – we're not doing this in a vacuum right now. There's somebody else, or there are others out there that are building fast too.

Adm. Grady: Yeah. I think to start off, I would take us all the way up to the very high geostrategic level, and just say that we have had our unipolar moment and we are now even beyond a multipolar moment into a multi-nodal moment. The multi-nodal aspect of that is, yes, nation-states, great-power competition, as you describe it. Certainly, nongovernmental entities – think terrorist groups and the rest – who are shaping the international space. And then hyper-empowered individuals, who have a big say in what we're doing. Mr. Musk comes to your mind, or the chairman of NVIDIA, as an example. These people have very strong influence on the way we think about it. So, the unipolar moment is gone. We're now through a multipolar moment into a multi-nodal moment. So how do we then respond to that?

If you think about it in terms of just great-power competition though, this is a reversion to the norm. The unipolar moment was one in which – that's not historically relevant really, when you think about it. And now we're back to – now we're back to what is historically something that defines, you know, the human condition. And now we have two peer adversaries, if you want to think about it that way, right? And you have one in China, that has not just the military and the scaling, but the staying power and the long-term thinking that makes them incredibly, incredibly challenging.

And this reflects the multicycle world we live in, right? So all of us here can recognize that, you know, we have an election cycle, two, four, six. We have a budget cycle. Hopefully it's every five years, depending whether you get a budget. You have a media cycle. What's that? Twenty-four hours, 24 minutes? You have the attention span of the American public, perhaps 24 seconds in some cases. (Laughter.) But our adversaries have a long view, a 50-year long view. Which then, I think, makes that threat and that challenge even stronger.

Now, have they been in a fight in a long time? No. Do they build good stuff? We'll see. Do they build a lot of it? Yes. Do they have structural disadvantages and weaknesses? Sure. But I think that China is the defining threat. It's the one that we need to base everything on. Which is why I go back to my comment on, we can learn things from Ukraine, or the Red Sea, or Epic Fury. But we better make sure they're the right lessons when you're facing someone with that strength, that power, and it's a home game for them.

Mr. Jones: China. I mean, when you look at their bombers, look at their aircraft, they've got – they're working on not just fifth, but sixth generation aircraft. PLA rocket force just got reach throughout the first and second island chain. How do you see the Chinese threat?

Gen. Goldfein: So as a – you know, I felt always felt like the job that I had had three hats – service chief, joint chief, and international air chief. And I felt like my job was to do two things. Number one, it was to arm the secretary of state to be able to negotiate to a better place with credible military options. And, number two, it was, as was previously mentioned, to cause potential adversaries to wake up that day and say, not today. But let me give you a little different perspective on China, because I agree that militarily we need to arm the secretary of state and cause – have credible military options so our adversaries say not today.

But in complex world of international relations it's actually historically significant to be able to agree on certain areas and actually – while we disagree on many others. And the example I always think about is in 2014, Russia invades Ukraine – Crimea. And then later on they invade Ukraine. And we have not had significant diplomatic relations ever since. But for every day we have not had a single day where we have not lived together in the International Space Station. They're up there right now. When a Russian cosmonaut has a spacewalk, guess who takes care of that individual? An American astronaut. And vice versa.

So somehow, we found in this complex international relationship to find common interest above the atmosphere, even though we disagree with everything below. Such is the nature of these relationships. So the question

with China is, what is our International Space Station equivalent? While we counter them militarily, while we arm our secretary of state, what are the areas where we can actually find common interest? And I think there are a few. Is it in our best interest, both nationally and globally, to work together to set appropriate guardrails on AI? Is it in our common interest, both nationally and globally, to talk about and set guardrails on autonomy and strategic nuclear deterrence? I think there are International Space Station equivalents where we can find, with a strategic competitor that's serious, ways to find common interest and advance on behalf of the world.

Gen. Miller: I think both Dave and Chris have answered that one there.

Gen. Grady: Just one comment on deterrence, though. I still think it's a very important question, right? How do we, to use your term and the term that I've heard quite a lot lately – I've used it myself – and that is, today's not the day, right? What are those things that cognitively create that, eh, today's not today, right? So military performance in Epic Fury, perhaps, as an example. One might be the defense industrial base. How strong is the defense industrial base, right? And so as adversaries look, because – and I bring this up because you mentioned scale and speed of what a country like China can do. If we're able to achieve that, if we're able to show, well, wait a minute, arsenal of democracy and all of that is woken up, today may not be the day, from a deterrents perspective. So there's many aspects of deterrence that apply here. And we should always, always – I worry a little bit about deterrence thinking and deterrence theory. Where are those young people who are the next Thomas Schellings and folks that are going to do that kind of work? Maybe they're all here in this audience.

Mr. Jones: Yeah, I think there are a couple of them in the room here.

Gen. Grady: Yeah, well, more of that, please, right? So how do we think about that, because it's absolutely critical. We don't want to get into that fight if we don't have to.

Mr. Jones: Yeah. I do want to go – shift gears a little bit and go to General Miller first, because part of what we've been talking about, assuming we are – and maybe it is an "and" not an "or" – we're at least in part in a transformational period, does the U.S. military have the right people, or enough of them, with the right skill sets for this future transformational period?

Gen. Miller: Well, you know, I can only say yes. (Laughter.) As part of my retirement, I'm an avowed cheerleader not a detractor of anything all the guys are doing here. It's a – they're going to have to learn fast, though. And I talk about it as I look at the people who we know, many of them.

I mean they worked with us and for us over the years. But it's with the realization that they have to do things differently at least than I did, you know, where we are today and where we're trying to move, and I'll give you my example.

I was told pretty early on by my lawyers that you can think about it but if you get involved directly with any company, you're going to quickly elevate to conflict of interest, and if they get a contract down the road someone's going to protest it and you're going to be investigated.

So what we did essentially was we scared off the most experienced person in the formation and said you're not allowed to touch this. You'd just – you'd subcontract it down below and I think that's – one, it wasn't right then and it was more probably a recognition of my inadequacies than actually what your lawyer was telling you.

But today I almost look at it, if you think of – let's use power law. Most of you have probably read power law, and I think we heard a lot of that earlier in the day here. Power law was based on people that were willing to invest funds, de-risk, take the technical risk out of something and then help find markets – they could probably see a market but help find a market.

But if you think about a – maybe what does the military, the leaders of the military – I'm talking uniforms now – they're a part of that. Just because a company out here has a great idea, I believe the military has some role in helping shape that idea so that it's – by the time it hits the force in a scalable way it's actually what we want, and sometimes we do that well.

I had the ability – I had the opportunity to serve with an organization that always wanted service equipment because service equipment didn't come with a bill. But if the service equipment wasn't right and didn't work for the job that we had to perform, we'd go invent it ourselves. Not invent it ourselves, but find it and do the combat developments with it, and maybe the service would gravitate towards that – towards that or not.

But I do believe – like, let's just look at 401 right now with the incredible budget they have. I think most people saw there was an IDQ, I think, of 500 million (dollars) to perennial autonomy. That's a lot of money for – I guess, I don't know that I'd call anything Eric Schmidt's doing a startup but, you know, that's a lot of money from the defense side.

And my guess is that's more partnership than buying a piece of equipment, and that you're through – as through a partnership now we're going to develop capabilities that we know need to go to the – go to the force and I think there's – going back to the discerning user, I think there's some opportunity.

And, you know, commanders and founders meeting doesn't have to be a – you know, a legalistic event as you're going forward. I think there's a lot of back and forth there that could get us to capabilities a little sooner.

Mr. Jones: And it does seem to be that there is more willingness and ability, less lawyers involved, in being able to educate.

Gen Miller: Yeah, and anybody who's a lawyer here, I'm not attacking you by any means. You know, I really respect my lawyers. But it's – I think it's now people are understanding you can do this without creating a conflict.

Mr. Jones: General Goldfein, you get the first question from the audience.

Gen. Goldfein: Did you want to comment on that? Because I do, too.

Mr. Jones: Yeah. Well, OK. OK.

You guys can both do that, and then I'll come back to you. It's on this topic, actually, so –

Gen. Goldfein: OK, great.

Well, as a father of a daughter that's serving, I'm pretty bullish on the next generation of leaders and I think we're incredibly blessed by them.

My advice to the current leadership, and I've been talking to several about this, is one of the things that I think we need to do better to prepare the next generation is to educate them in a way that they can see the world through an adversary's lens.

We talked in an earlier panel – it was talked about mirror imaging, right? If you don't understand how that culture actually sees the world, then the end result is you'll mirror image, and I think we can go back in our history and look at some strategic military operations that didn't end well – Vietnam, Afghanistan, you could talk Iraq to a certain extent – where we mirror imaged and we assumed that what would motivate us would motivate them, what would deter us would deter them.

Four times in a row as chief I was scheduled and denied then canceled to go to China to meet with my Chinese counterpart. And so as a Joint Chief who was working with Chairman Dunford to offer best military advice, I had as good a knowledge as I could about China but I never truly understood how to look at the world through a Chinese lens until I traveled to China as a retiree for a track two discussion.

And I had this a-ha moment when I finally understood that our systems of government and our social contracts could not be more opposite, and through that lens of understanding that the Chinese Communist Party was designed to provide security, stability, and order as opposed to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, my a-ha moment was their behavior became consistent. Not right, but understandable.

And so today, after having now traveled twice into China and met my counterparts – the retired counterparts – if I was to ask advice, my advice would be far – it would be better than my best was previously because I never knew my Chinese counterpart.

I went to National Defense University and I asked for a show of hands just this year. I said, how many of you – this is where we send our best from every service – how many of you have traveled to China in the last five years or had a conversation with a Chinese counterpart.

Without exception, every hand that went up was international with a few exceptions, and every one of those Americans were foreign area officers, defense attachés. I love our foreign area officers and defense attachés, but historically they don't generally become service chiefs and combatant commanders and chairmen.

So think about the nature of the challenge. We are raising – we, our generation, was raised to not have access to understanding our adversaries through their lens when we were being asked to offer advice, and the question is how can we do better for the next generation.

Mr. Jones: It sounds like a big leadership lesson.

Gen. Goldfein: Big time.

Adm. Grady: OK. Here's my thought.

Mr. Jones: How do you top that, by the way?

Adm. Grady: I, too, am bullish. I mean, you only have to go to the fleet – the field or the flight line – once just to come away with great confidence in the joint force. Every soldier, sailor, airman, Marine, Guardian, Coast Guardsman that you meet you're super impressed with and you know that we're in good hands.

I, too, have a son who served. He's a Wounded Warrior. I know the quality of that young man, and I sleep well at night knowing who's in the joint force right now.

My answer, though, is tangential because it goes into another area of human capital that we don't focus on enough and we should, and that is, back to the defense industrial base, the artisans that we need in this country to build the joint force that we need, right.

You know, for all the right reasons 40, 50 years ago, I think the nation put a huge premium on an undergraduate education. Sure, that's great. We still need all those folks.

But if you want to go out and you want to bend metal for this nation or you want to cyber hack for us or you want to be a ship fitter or – we don't – we cannot undervalue that.

So this is my – here's a – if the glow point is the joint force, the grow point is we need more artisans to build what we need.

And notice I say artisans because they are the best in the world and we need more of them, and we need to encourage those young men and women where that's their thing to come do it for their nation and pay them to do it.

Mr. Jones: By the way, if you go back to the – Roosevelt's "Arsenal of Democracy" speech back in 1940 – U.S. is not at war at that point, although war has come to Europe – a big chunk of that speech is focused on the workforce. I mean, I've got it right in front of me. It's the workers at the plants. It's the managers. It's the people building stuff.

That's where the focus of his transformational speech is focused on. It's the workforce that's doing that. So here's the question that is along these lines from Cody in the question here, which is: How can professional military education then be improved through – throughout the joint force – and I'm going to add on to that at the end – to help prepare people for the environment that – the transformational environment we're in?

Gen. Goldfein: Well, there's certain elements of education that I don't think do change because they're enduring, and that is the – I believe the American people absolutely deserve an equal-shares character and competence in equal measure from military leaders. And so there's an element of professional military education that ought to always, always focus on that.

And then there's another element of professional military education that I think talks to, you know, as, you know, Chris and Jim have both talked about, right, this transformation that's going forward, and how do we think beyond that, right? How do we think in this digital age of what technologies – as the guy sitting here who made the decision to keep the B-52 until it's a hundred years old, when I – when I looked at that, right, the question was not how am I going to keep this airplane airborne. The question is: What does – a

hundred-year-old B-52; plus a new unmanned vessel, undersea vessel, surface vessel; plus a new special ops team; plus interagency; what does that actually equal? And the answer is, I have no idea. But I do know this: The young people in this room are going to figure it out. Our job is to give them the tools that they need to do that.

So transforming the force to be able to, in this constant evolution of digital transformation going forward that stays one step ahead of the – of the enemy, is going to be central to professional military education, while at the same time we never lose our focus on character and competence.

Mr. Jones: General Miller, I wondered if I could get you to talk a little bit about – actually, everybody here is in a position now where you've not just served, but now you've been on the private-sector side. So you – I know you talked a little bit about this, but this panel is in a particularly unique position for today to be able to sort of ask this question about what's something that you have learned since retiring you wished you had known/appreciated while you were serving.

Gen Miller: Yeah.

Mr. Jones: And how do we get the solutions, along those lines?

Gen. Miller: Yeah. So I did go a little bit in that direction, and really on the things I didn't do when I, quite frankly, had some authority to make changes, or to drive a budget, or a budget line. I mean, in some cases I did, but maybe even a little bit more aggressively because I'm armed with more knowledge.

Some things are happening out there right now. Just an example – and again, for those of you who have met Matt Ross over at 401, I know him well, and he was explaining Det201 to me, and the type of people that he's now interacting with on a Det201 is that bring people from industry, bring them in at a certain grade. I think all the services are doing it. And he's – and he's getting a chance to talk to somebody that has – is not only an entrepreneur, incredibly smart, but can now start explaining use cases. So those types of – those types of things are happening in the – in the workplace.

As a retiree and somebody who cares about national security, and certainly cares about the men and women in – you know, in uniform, I look at it as I'll bring tech back to them, but Dave and I were having a conversation earlier today: As long as none of us feel like we need to go take a shower after we have that conversation. So I'm bringing tech back to them because I believe in the mission, and it's – I believe in the mission. I said: Guys, you want to meet these people not because I'm going to get a finder's fee for an introduction, but I want you to look at this tech because I think it might be

interesting. I'm not going to bring you to the salesperson, but I'm going to bring you to somebody to talk about it.

And I don't actually recall a lot of that tech coming to me from people that way. And really, what it is, you almost want to pass off the relationship to the guy in the uniform, and then the person in uniform – or woman in uniform – and then they can develop that relationship with the needs of the service for today and for the future. And those are – they don't understand money. If you're in uniform, you don't understand money. You don't understand scales of money. You know what you make; you just don't have a concept of where are we going to come up – you know, where's somebody going to come up with $50 million. And from a – that standpoint, I try to tell them you don't need to worry about that; that's somebody else's job. But you're building the relationship and nurturing that relationship into a real capability that protects or enables us to attack and all those things.

That's what I wish I knew. I wish I understood that a little bit more, Seth.

Gen. Goldfein: By the way, new call sign, "Jim." You can call me Bill.

Gen. Miller: Yeah, all right. (Laughter.) Only a few caught us. Sorry about that.

Mr. Jones: Question for you, General Goldfein, from Paul at HII, who asks: As tech transforms conflict – so think speed, acceleration, visibility, complexity, even uncertainty – how should we adapt and train command-and-control principles to maintain that tempo?

Gen Goldfein: Yeah. You know, it was interesting, I was in a helo with General Shalikashvili in the early '90s over in Bosnia, and I'll never forget a reporter asked him: So, we're doing so many – so much peacekeeping; why don't you just carve out a big part of the force and make it peacekeeping, and then you can focus, you know, just a portion of the force on high end? And I'll never forget his answer. He said, you know, he goes: Here's the – here's the challenge. He goes: I can make warfighters into peacekeepers; I can't make peacekeepers into warfighters. And I've never forgotten that lesson in terms of, you know, training.

Chairman Dunford and in the Joint Chiefs at the time, you know, we started on a journey that became known as JADC2. This came from a conversation and one of the things I went out to Silicon Valley – joint all-domain command and control.

Mr. Jones: That added a C at the beginning of it, then.

Gen. Goldfein: That's correct.

Mr. Jones: (Laughs.)

Gen. Goldfein: And this came sort of from a conversation, two experiences I had.

Number one was as the – as the air and space forces commander for Central Command I had the responsibility for defense of the Arabian Gulf. And I remember having then-General Mattis, who then became Secretary Mattis, in the headquarters. And I'm showing him the headquarters and I said: Hey, sir, here's what I've learned. There's no "I" in IAMD. There's no "integrated" in integrated air and missile defense. None of this is connected. That space cell you see right here has got, you know, technology that is not connected to the command and – the combat search and rescue, that is not connected to the Navy cell, that is not connected. What I've learned is that we have allowed data to be proprietary and industry is not going to allow this data to be shared. So the only universal translator I have is that telephone right there. So we have got to figure out how to make common open mission systems and access to data.

And the second story was a trip out to Silicon Valley after the – remember the Maven meltdown that happened out there, and I was out there to sort of reconnect the Defense Department with Silicon Valley. And they asked me: So, what do you want out of this conversation, Chief? And I said: Well, I'm the only service chief of a garage startup. And they said, what are you talking about? I said, well, you know, you got Larry and Sergey; I got Orville and Wilbur, right? The rest is history, right? But the reality is I'm also in charge of a service that is culturally and organizationally a hardware company that is focused on platforms, sensors, and weapons. But our future is in software, and I can't take this force where it needs to go without your help.

And so the – trying to connect capabilities in order that command and control allows what I had talked about earlier, right, which is better situational awareness and faster and better decision-making, while denying that to the adversary, is the – is the unending journey that I think this department is on. And it will never end, because technology changes, adversaries change, situations change, and you always got to stay one step ahead.

Mr. Jones: So question for you, Admiral Grady. This panel is on issues related to command, leadership through crisis and change. There have been questions about the future of the all-volunteer force. Is it sustainable, for example? Where do you stand on the all-volunteer force?

Adm. Grady: Yeah. Panelist's prerogative, I'm going to comment on what they said –

Mr. Jones Absolutely. Yes.

Adm. Grady: – and then I'll get to your question. Because I think that if I were answering the question that you asked Scott, my answer would have been I wish I understood systems thinking earlier. And this gets to Dave's point about connecting things, right? And it's both on – I think of everything through the foundry and the force, right? So the force is going out and fighting and winning. So if I want to be more lethal as a warfighter, I have to learn how to connect things better, innovatively. And certainly if I want the foundry to work better, they have to operate together as well. So system thinking and how things come together and combine, whether you're providing for the force or you're fighting in the force, I wish I had learned that earlier. It's a function of a transition from thinking about steel to thinking about systems. I wish I knew that earlier. And if I were running PME, I would say, kids, this is what you need to understand, foundationally.

Now, to the all-volunteer force, I am of the opinion that questions about, hey, bring back the draft, and all of that, I'm not in that camp. We are – to the very cogent points that were raised here – we are such a technical force that I just don't see that as applicable in the way we fight going into the – going into the – into the future. I can't do what the Russians are doing, which is take a warfighter, an infantryman, and give them 10 days of training, throw them into the fight in Ukraine, and expect them to survive. That's just not how we fight. And that persists across all of the – all of the – all of the services.

Mr. Jones: By the way, if I can interrupt for a second, there is a cost for doing it that way. The Russians have hit, according to GCHQ, British intelligence, 500,000, or something close to that, fatalities. Which is the cost for doing it the way you're talking about.

Adm. Grady: That's right. So I just don't – that's not how we fight. And I just don't see it. I worry a little bit about the 1 percent factor, the fact that, you know, you take of 100 kids who are standing in front of you, and 75 go away because they have some disqualifying factor, and you work your way down through propensity to serve, and now you're down to 1 percent. And then how do we – how do we get those kids? Fortunately, we continue to do – we continue to do that.

One thing I might think about really hard with the all-volunteer force, though, is how do we change the tooth to tail ratio? Can I put more into the tooth and less into the tail? And I think the answer to that is automation, right? So if we're going to have this constrained 1 percent of highly technical, highly skilled warfighters who can go out and fight and win, I don't want them doing logistic – small logistics stuff, or admin and back office stuff. How much of that can I automate so I can get more trigger-pullers forward? That's, I think, a seminal – and it's actually an education and training question too. But how do I bring autonomy to the all-volunteer force, so that

I can put more in the trigger-pulling end and less in the back-office end? How do I do that?

Mr. Jones: There's an audience question – unless you two want to jump in on this? I got an audience question for both of you. It's actually on the Chinese. Which is from Clayton at CSIS.

General Goldfein – actually, sorry. It's for General Miller and Admiral Grady. General Goldfein talked about looking for areas of overlapping interest with China, referencing the International Space Station. And thoughts on whether there are areas of U.S. national interests that overlap with China's interests.

Adm. Miller: Well, I think both countries care about their economic wellbeing. And when you talk about, A, deterrence, one of the things we can see – and Afghanistan and Iraq were small wars. I mean, if we look back in history. I mean, they were long, they were hard, they were a lot of things. They were small wars. You're seeing something in Ukraine that is not a small war. You're seeing – you know, maybe it's not a big war, but you're seeing Epic Fury as something. And you're seeing a lot of rapid destruction of infrastructure that has economic realities for everybody, for the globe in this case, just because of the energy flows, and some other factors that have happened with Epic Fury.

So when you – if you talk about an overlapping interest, my sense is one of the things that deters the Chinese is, you know, fighting quickly changes economic outlooks. And it's – generally speaking, fighting is not one-sided. Not today's, not with the weapons that we're seeing out here today. And I'm not even talking about, you know, capital weapons. I'm talking about just exchange of fire. So there's a potential overlapping interest.

Mr. Jones: That sort of gets back to deterrence in some ways, right?

Adm. Grady: Yeah, a little bit. Yeah. Frankly a lot, I think it does. I guess the only thing I would say is the motivations are so radically different that I am very concerned. And Dave hit on it, right? So we want the best thing for our people. And we want a good economy. And we want to take care of the nation. They want the best thing for their people so the regime stays in charge. And so the motivations then, and how they do that, we both want the same thing. It's the how that is of concern. Which is why I think cooperation and hedging is going to be really important.

Mr. Jones: Yeah. So question from Kamran, New Lines.

Can the panelists go into a bit of detail as to how Epic Fury underscores transformation?

Gen. Miller: I'll just take first shot, since I brought it up there. When we talk about transformation, we have an adversary that's reaching out and touching us in a way that we haven't seen for many years. I mean, we've seen small pieces of this, because if you go back and you watch the rounds exchanged in northern Syria and Iraq, I mean, we've seen the Shahed before. And Shahed has actually killed U.S. servicemembers before Epic Fury. But when you're seeing the combination of reach and lethality against people, also infrastructure, that is – that's a lot different. If you go back to – you know, we'd wander around Bagram or Kandahar, and any other airfield out there, particularly in the early days, you didn't look up for a threat. You might have had a rocket attack, fairly inaccurate.

But now you have some very accurate weapon systems that can reach out quite some distance. And we've only seen a part of it. The FPV has been in play – that's a first-person view drone with fiber – has been in play around our facilities in Iraq. And it makes – one, it makes for a great propaganda video. Put so you can start seeing this in play. And it's different. It's very different. Talk to the young people, they're younger than me, anyway, but they're serving, and they're defending the United States of America, that are at some of these locations that were struck. That's a different experience than I ever had.

Mr. Jones: Yeah. It really highlights the base defense issue, and certainly with huge implications for the Pacific now. Yeah.

Gen. Goldfein: And I would offer that I think every administration always has to make a decision between diplomacy and surprise. You go back to Desert Shield/Desert Storm. In the six months of build-up we did, all of the work in the U.N. that was done, all of the diplomatic effort, where there was probably not much surprise associated for our launch of Desert Storm, right? Now you take a look at the successful operations, and to the point where you made before, which is anything on the surface can be seen. So the idea that you can actually build up something over time and keep that secret is no longer an option, right?

So let's take a look at Venezuela, right? There was very little outward diplomacy or engagement with Congress, and what have you, before that. But the element of surprise made that an incredibly successful interagency military operation. You know, and one of the things I give a lot of credit to not only General Caine, but General Dunford, having worked with him as a joint chief, is, you know, it's understated that one of the roles of the chairman is team builder, as you did as vice chairman, right? It's getting all the interagency – it's building trust, so when it comes time for an operation all the entities can come together to execute at the moment, where you're not trying to build trust. You've already established it, right? So Venezuela, surprise, probably not so much diplomacy.

Midnight Hammer. I mean, having been responsible for that mission for a couple years and helped build it, you know, one of the strategic risks was losing a B-2 over Iran, because once something is seen it's no longer stealthy. And so how do you set the conditions where the risk is manageable and reasonable? You do it with the element of surprise, right? So you're not going to do a lot of diplomacy for that. I think one of the things we're looking at Epic Fury that is still – you know, you can't determine what the outcome is going to be – but also we went in there with an element of surprise, with not as much diplomacy.

And the question I think for all of us now is, how is that going to play out, right? Because when you take on Iran for a more extended period of time, it's not a single mission. It's a series of missions over a series of days, right, that involves international teammates and partners, that involves the Congress. And so, again, every administration has to make that choice. And so I think one of the lessons coming out of this is how do you balance that? The next time we choose and go into military operations, how much do we value diplomacy in terms of potential outcomes versus surprise? It's tough.

Mr. Jones: Last comment, if you have one on this, and then last question for you, just because we're out of time. Which is, Admiral Grady, on the anniversary of the U.S. – the U.S.' 250th anniversary, what gives you the most hope about the future of military command and U.S. leadership? I mean, you served at the top of the Pentagon. What gives you the most hope?

Adm. Grady: You should ask all of us this question. I will riff a little on this previous question. You know, you mentioned talking to those youngsters who are under attack. Yeah, it's a different world, right? And all you have to do is talk to any guided missile destroyer crew who's been in the envelope, fighting off in the Red Sea for eight months at a stretch. What is that like, right? And that is transforming our force. I submit to you, and this kind of pivots to your question about, you know, what's confident – what we're optimistic about. We're building a confident warfighting culture because we're in that.

The second thing on the question that you asked before about transformational, I think that's what our colleague asked. Certainly, the cost exchange ratio is one that I think jumps to head, the whole affordable mass thing. But if you go up a notch, if you go up to the strategic, and you get to the chairman's question last night of now what, the "now what" opportunity for us that is transformational is how will we help shape that area such that I don't give a shit about the Strait of Hormuz anymore, right? How do I help Bahrain, or UAE, or Qatar, or others, to obviate the need to even go through there, and to take that chess piece away? That may be the ultimate answer to the Strait of Hormuz moves. That's truly transformational, right? Who would have thought that we'd have a country dropping out of OPEC? There's

a system piece changing right in front of us. So, you know, that's at the – at the strategic level.

And I would say, to your to your last question, three things. One, about why am I optimistic going in, we've talked about the soldier, and the sailor, and the airman, the Marine, the Guardian, the Coast Guardsman. You cannot meet them and not go, we are in good hands. That's one. The second is, no one can top us – and many of you are in this ecosystem – for creativity, innovation, bringing new eyes ideas together, with capitalism, and all of the things that make our industrial base great. No one will be able to top that. And for me, the last one is the Constitution. It's still there. We still carry it around. The chairman carries his around. I carry mine around. It means the world to all of us in uniform. I don't want to speak for you, but I think you're nodding your head. As long as we've got that –

Mr. Jones: If they were shaking their head, that'd be – that's be –

Adm. Grady: Yeah. I think as long as we have those three things, we will win.

Mr. Jones: We're a little bit over, but if you guys want to briefly weigh in?

Gen. Goldfein: Quick. Jeff Bezos one time told me, he said, Dave, he goes, the reason American people have confidence in the military is that you have become known as the institution that does the hardest things really well. And what gives me great confidence is Venezuela was unbelievably hard and done extremely well. Midnight Hammer, same. This military, and the folks in the military, are incredible. Gives me great confidence.

Mr. Jones: So do you get the last word, apparently, now, General Miller.

Gen. Miller: Yeah. People talk about what you took away from your military career. Sometimes it's hard. Sometimes it's a lot of fun. The hard parts were made great by the people you had to serve with. And so if you need a good shot in the arm, go down to one of our commissioning sources across the country. Go down to – you know, I'm a little partial – Fort Benning, and wherever we train airmen and our sailors and our Marines. And just go sit down and look at them. And, you know, they could be somewhere between 18 and 22 years old. And you'll be OK with our future. And I think our future is in good hands.

Mr. Jones: All right. Well, on that note, if you could all join me in thanking these great panelists. (Applause.)

(END.)