Rethinking U.S. Security:
Navigating a World in Transition

Reintegrating Veterans into Their Communities

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MR. FICK: Okay. Good morning. I know we're rolling from one thing to the next here, but we do pledge lunch in an hour. So thank you all for remaining for this panel.

This is a little bit of a diversion from history at CNAS. We have never done a panel specifically on veterans' issues. And I would open just with the argument that this is very much a part of our core mission to discuss and devise pragmatic national security policy. Not only is there an element of moral obligation on the part of commanders, I think more generally perhaps the country – that's something we can talk about – but there's a colder calculation as well. In the year of the all-volunteer force, I think you can make a very strong case that how we treat our veterans directly influences the pool of people from which we can pick to fight our next war.

And so I'm really pleased to be joined today on stage by three people who've given an awful lot of thought to this field – just to my left, retired Army Lieutenant General James Terry Scott, the chairman of the VA's Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation. General Scott retired from the Army after 32 years of service, ranging from platoon and company command in Vietnam through service as the commanding general of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg. He was the director of the national security program at Harvard's Kennedy School. And, Terry, thank you for being here.

Phillip Carter is the chief operating officer and general counsel for CAERUS Associates. Before joining CAERUS, Phil practiced national security law with McKenna Long & Aldridge. He worked on the Obama campaign as its national veterans' director and served in the Pentagon as the deputy assistant secretary of defense for detainee policy. Previously, Phil served nine years as an Army military police and civil affairs officer, including a year in Iraq's Diyala province. Phil, welcome.

PHILLIP CARTER: Thanks, Nate.

MR. FICK: And Dr. Margaret Harrell is a senior fellow at CNAS and director of our program on the Military, Veterans and Society. Prior to joining us, Meg was a senior social scientist at RAND, where her work addressed military manpower and personnel, military families, and quality of life. She's also a military brat and spouse. Meg, thanks.

And I want to begin the conversation with you. Could you tell us a little bit in general terms about your research and what it is you're trying to accomplish?

MARGARET HARRELL: My pleasure. Since I had the honor of joining CNAS last summer, it's been my real pleasure and joy to lead the veteran research.

And our research follows on three main areas of focus. We're interested in veteran wellness, in veteran employment, and in veteran education. But I say that acknowledging

that those aren't really three separate, separable areas. In fact, when we published our wellness report in April, we tried to state very clearly that wellness really encompasses these other aspects as well.

For example, we know that to be well, most veterans need employment, both for the financial stability and also because all of us need a reason to wake up every day and get out of bed. And for many veterans, it's civilian employment that provides that purpose for them as they continue life after the military.

The underlying premise throughout all of our work is the presumption that most veterans are well, that most veterans are successful, capable, valuable members of civilian society. There are some that have problems and we need to understand those problems and address them as a nation, but most are well.

And, in fact, the veteran employment report that we released this week underscored quite nicely that veterans are not only well, but most of them are very good employees, because we found that companies hire veterans not because they're a charity case, but because it's good business to hire veterans. Companies cited 10 solid reasons that they hire veterans, and nine of those were all about the business case, why it's good business for them to hire veterans.

And that's a nice theme. It's a good theme. It's a sustainable theme, because as public attention and public focus on veterans and helping veterans wanes, hiring veterans because it's the right thing to do or the nice thing to do is probably not a sustainable model going forward as hiring veterans because it's good business to do so.

So that's a very encouraging finding for us to have, and because really, if I go back to the goal of our research, what we're trying to do is identify policies from our research that will improve the reintegration of veterans into society.

MR. FICK: So, Phil, you led veterans' policy on a presidential campaign. And how does this narrative strike you? It seems as if we fall into this kind of bipolar, bimodal distribution where there are the hyperbolic warnings about veterans and clock towers picking us off, or you have a lot of flag waving, this is the greatest generation and they're going to rebuild America and change our way of life. Surely the truth is more nuanced. Can you talk to us about the narrative?

MR. CARTER: Sure. And I think it's useful to start by setting the stage and looking at what's the terrain we're looking at.

If you look at today's population of veterans, the Iraq and Afghanistan generation that we belong to, you're talking about, about 2.4 million individual people who have

deployed to one of those countries. For perspective, we had 2.59 million serve in country in Vietnam. So we're already talking about a veterans population that's almost as large, and by 2014, it will be larger in absolute terms than the Vietnam cohort.

You're talking about a population that's a lot more diffuse, that's also an all-volunteer force, it's come of age in a different way, it's been selected in different ways than the Vietnam force.

And so this is something that we're going to have to wrestle with in some ways for the first time this time, but with the echoes of Vietnam, and Korea, and the Cold War, and World War II behind us.

I think the narrative is going to be one that divides up partly in the way you say, the sort of heroes versus victims, Rambo versus Nate Fick. It's going to –

MR. FICK: I don't see them as that separable. (Laughter.)

MR. CARTER: That's going to be there. And I think that the way that narrative gets constructed about the war writ large and how we feel about the wars, whether Iraq was the good war or the bad war, whether Afghanistan was the good war or the bad war, and then how do we feel about its veterans? Are they all powder kegs waiting to blow like Staff Sergeant Bales who allegedly killed 17 people in Panjwayi or they're all like us, people that are just trying to move on with their lives? It's going to matter.

And it's not just going to play out here but it's going to play out in Hollywood. It's when a script writer chooses to portray a veteran in their show – is the veteran the perpetrator on "Law and Order" or the judge or the member of the jury?

And I think decisions like that and how we talk about veterans going forward are going to play a huge role in setting the stage for employment and wellness and health down the road, because it's going to be how society views this very small but consequential population.

MR. FICK: You talk about the echoes of Vietnam. Only one of us on this stage lived through the post-Vietnam drawdown and then the post-Cold War and Gulf War drawdown as an active duty officer.

So, General Scott, could I ask you to tease out for us any lessons from past drawdowns and how should we think this time about avoiding some of our past mistakes?

LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES TERRY SCOTT: Sure. I need to start out by saying that my views don't necessarily reflect those of the secretary of Veterans' Affairs

or the Department of Veteran Affairs or the Department of Defense. The committee that I head the commission that I headed, both report generally to the Congress. So having made that disclaimer, I'd be glad to launch into just a bit of a comparison or differentiation.

I think you have to be really careful about how you draw the parallels between Vietnam, and the post-Vietnam, and OIF/OEF and post-OIF/OEF, but there are some. Both were very long wars by the American standard. Certain things have occurred during the Vietnam conflict and during the more recent conflicts that are still ongoing. There were manning issues, recruiting and retention issues in both conflicts. There, over time small unit efficiency and discipline in some cases did not work out the way we wanted it. Then you might want to check some of the recent comments of General Amos, the commandant of the Marine Corps, who has basically said, we've got to go back and police the corps. And I think all the services would tell you the same thing.

So those are some of the parallels. The other thing I think you can expect, based on the comment that Phil made, that the size of the cohort from the Vietnam War and then the OIF/OEF is about the same. So I think you can expect a significant number of disabilities to manifest themselves early on and we're seeing that with the wounded and injured, and I think we can expect a significant amount of disabilities to manifest themselves much later, as occurred in the Vietnam cohort. So the VA needs to get ready for that, for both of those.

A significant difference is the way that the society has viewed the returning veteran. And I think that's tremendously important. I think in the long run, that's going to help with the reintegration of the people from OIF/OEF. So I think those are some – the points I'd care to make in that regard.

MR. FICK: So it strikes me that another difference between the Vietnam era and today is that the all-volunteer force is older. Consequently, it is more married; consequently, it has more children. And so we know a lot about service members and their families. We know quite a bit about veterans, but we don't know a whole lot about veterans' families. And one aspect of Meg's work that makes it different is her focus on veterans' families. So, Meg, what do you know about them?

DR. HARRELL: Well, I wish we knew more about veterans' families. We simply don't. We can extract some of our knowledge from our past few generations of military affiliated kids, and thus veterans' families, but the reality is that today we have a generation of kids who have grown up with one, sometimes two of their parents deploying one, two, three, seven times. We just don't know what the experiences of these kids have been like and we don't know how it's going to bear out as they grow into adulthood.

We can surmise that, like military families, probably most veterans' families are probably quite strong and capable. But there's going to be those families where children

have problems. And as a nation, we just need to have a better handle on what those issues are. And it's less useful to extract our knowledge from past generations.

As Nate mentioned, I grew up as an Army brat on military installations, but I really grew up during a time that I would call the golden age of military brats. I was too young to recall my father deploying to Vietnam. And my dad was retired by the time the first Gulf War came around. So my peer group that grew up as military kids don't have the same perspective. We don't have the same experience. We can't look at today's military kids and have the empathy of understanding what their situation is like.

And, again, most veterans' kids are probably doing fine, but we've got veterans kids whose mom or dad came home different and we have children whose parents didn't come home. And we need to understand what the issues are for these kids.

I heard recently Secretary Shinseki says that the VA is still paying benefits to two children of Civil War soldiers. So you can surmise that those two soldiers were relatively young at the end of the war. They waited to have children, and their children now have quite a few years on them. The VA is not currently paying benefits to today's veterans' children, but my point is that if we have vets' kids with issues today, those issues are going to persist for a very long time into our future. And I think it's something that we need to get a handle around.

MR. FICK: So I think it's going to be hard for us to replicate the scrum of the grand strategy panel on this topic, but I'll try. (Laughter.) And just ask a provocative question.

I was on an airplane yesterday from California back to Washington, you know, crowded, week-day departure lounge with hairy business travelers with a lot of carry-on luggage, and families with squirming kids, and a couple of older people in wheelchairs. And who were the first people on the airplane? The first people on the airplane were two service members in uniform. Something's wrong with that. Have we gone too far? Do we as a society do too much? And if so, what does that mean?

MR. CARTER: Yes. I mean, there's a great article that Greg Jaffe wrote in the Washington Post probably about seven or eight months ago about the handouts around Washington for veterans and how Washington shows its gratitude – Nationals' tickets, steak dinners and so forth.

And, you know, it's great. I love going to a baseball game. I love a good steak dinner. But that's not what our veterans need and that sends the wrong message. It sends a message of patronization. It sends a message of stigma. It also I think puts veterans on a

pedestal that's not appropriate for a society like ours that ought to venerate a lot of things but not necessarily veterans for veterans' sake.

That is a very politically loaded statement to make. It's probably one that only a veteran can say because of the way that identity politics works in today's society, but it is a bad road to go down.

And I think that it's happening because it's just a small part of the population, that the mere act of volunteering today is seen as heroic in a way that it wasn't for a generation or two ago that it's such a small number, the society doesn't know how to show its gratitude. It doesn't know how to act towards these people, especially when American society continues to only be asked to go shopping and not to contribute in some meaningful way to society.

LTG SCOTT: Well, I'm sure that to some extent it is patronizing. I'm sure that to some extent, it could even be described as demeaning to some.

But the flipside of that is that for most of the people who are deferring to veterans, to allow them to get on the airplane first and et cetera, et cetera, I think it is a validation of their commitment and of their participation. And I really believe that's a whole lot better than what we saw after the Vietnam War in terms of how veterans passing through airports may have been treated. And, to some extent, even after the First Gulf War there were people – there was a lot of pride and all of that, but – so I'm not as concerned about the negative effects of this sort of deference to today's returning soldiers who eventually will be veterans.

So I understand your point and I think it can be overdone. And certainly some of the things that you hear and see on TV would cause you to kind of wonder, well, is this – how patronizing is this? They say, the poor little veterans. They've suffered so much and none of the rest of us has had to do anything so we'll figure out some way that our company can show that we appreciate them. But I think basically it's an honest effort on the part of the public and the enterprises to support them.

If I might, we talk about reintegration, and it's a lot more complex than the general public understands. What we read and hear is basically the focus on the more newsworthy cases that come along, usually the bad news cases rather than the good news.

But there are a few groups of veterans, and I'm going to mention three of them, and then I'll be glad to address any of the others here that somebody wants to later on that probably are having a more difficult time with reintegration than others.

The first would be those who joined the services at age 17 or 18, maybe with a high school diploma, maybe not. Now they're 21 or 22, and they're getting out, and they're very short of marketable skills. And it's extremely difficult for them to reintegrate because they have no work history. And as a former infantryman and Special Operations officer, I can say this: you don't get a whole lot of transferable skill training in some parts of the services. So those people have a set of problems that require a great deal of thought and work. And I also have some proposed solutions for later on.

The second group is the Guard and Reserve members who have been repeatedly called away from their civilian jobs to the point where many civilian businesses are gun-shy, and I'll defer to Meg to elaborate on that based on her research. But it's a problem and it is a problem that is unique to those members of Guard and Reserve.

And the third group is a group that – I know that all of you can identify with – and that is those that are leaving the service with significant physical or mental disabilities. The numbers so far are pretty small, but the injuries are pretty severe. And that's a group of people that are going to require a lot of help and work by the VA and by the society in order to reintegrate them to the maximum extent possible.

MR. FICK: So Meg's most recent report is sitting on the tables out there, "Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Business." And it's the result of interviews with 69 different companies, and a lot of it validated what many of us sort of intuitively know that veterans make good employees because they're disciplined and they show up on time and they polish their shoes. But it also identified some skepticism on the part of employers on a couple of fronts. One of them is exactly that skills mismatch. So to what extent is that intrinsic? I don't know (many ambush ?) patrols anymore, but how do you see and hear employers talking about the skills mismatch and, more importantly perhaps, what can we do about it?

DR. HARRELL: Clearly there's this perception that if a young soldier comes back, and he goes to an interview, and they ask him what he did, and he says, well, you know, I rode on top of the vehicle and shot the 50-cal at bad guys that they don't have a place for him.

The problem is – and I would challenge the notion that young service members come back without marketable skills. I think young service members leave the service without being able to articulate how their skills have merit to a potential employer.

So maybe being an expert on the 50-cal isn't what they're looking for, but the fact that he worked in a team environment, he kept people safe, he was responsible for expensive equipment, either maintaining it or securing it, there are a lot of things that a young veteran brings to the workplace.

Now, granted, a 22-year-old veteran is not going to compete well with a 30-year-old veteran or with a 30-year-old civilian. But a 22-year-old veteran should compete fairly well with a civilian of the same age as long as he's able to articulate what he brings to the marketplace. And right now, there's simply not able to articulate that well.

And we see that problem through veterans of all ages being unable to explain well what they bring to the marketplace. They bring a lot more often than they know how to describe or how to say.

And they also come from a culture, the military culture that does not speak highly of the individual. The military culture is all about the team. It's a real cultural shift for a young soldier or Marine to sit in an interview and say what's special about him and why that employer should hire him. So that's one thing.

The other thing – point that you raised, Terry, is concerns about Guard and Reserve repeatedly being called away. What we see and what we hear is indeed companies being concerned about those deployments of Guardsmen and Reservists and being gun-shy of those. Even though it's against the law to discriminate against a candidate because he's Guard or Reserve, we still see these concerns, but some of this is not because people are repeatedly being called away.

It's because they're repeatedly volunteering and it's very hard to discern what's happening out there in the marketplace if there are some employees that go again and again and again, and the reality is they're raising their hand and they're volunteering to go. So employers don't really understand and don't have a good grasp of, if I hire someone, what is the likelihood that he's going to be involuntarily called up? They're definitely concerned about their employees going and we hear this concern from small companies all the way up to very large companies.

Many companies are making an active push to hire veterans regardless. They feel that they can handle this. They get more notice if somebody's deploying than if somebody leaves on Medical Leave Act. They can handle this. But, nonetheless, we do hear this concern amongst companies.

MR. CARTER: I mean, I want to push you on that and also look at the other reasons why employers say they discriminate in that report that you just published as well, because it's not just concern about Guard and Reserve. It's about this issue that Nate raised earlier. It's the larger stigma about military service and concerns about potentials for combat stress, concerns about whether someone will fit in.

I was just having coffee with a friend of mine from law school and he's recalling a job interview he had with this law partner, he said, well, I understand you've been a Marine officer for seven years. I don't know that you can fit into our law firm because you're just clearly used to a very regimented structure. You can't handle ambiguity. You're used to always getting very clear orders. And he wanted to like reach across the table and throttle the guy. He's like, do you know what it's like to be a Marine officer?

MR. FICK: That's part of the problem. (Laughter.)

MR. CARTER: So there may be a point there. But there's also very real stigma and a very real sense of discrimination. And we see this in the cases that come up in the courts for the enforcement of USERRA and the statute for protecting Reservists.

It's not just small business concerns. It's big business, people like Prudential and Wachovia, that forced a broker who came from Reserve duty to rebuild his book of business from scratch and sort of fight his way back up to the top, even though that was not really what the law required. The law required him to go back to exactly the same place where he had been before.

People like the Montebello Police Department that had officers step out for a year and a half to go serve in Iraq, and then, when they came back, they lost all their seniority. They had to work night shifts. They lost all their benefits that they would accrued, even though the law is very clear that there's sort of an escalator principle and they should be treated as if they'd never left.

And then there's this more subtle, amorphous discrimination that happens and it' something that I know I've struggled with. It's something that all of my peers report struggling with. And it's something that we know that enlisted personnel and others really struggle with.

And I think we have to do that. We have to take charge of the narrative and frame it exactly as you have that there is a business case for hiring veterans. They will contribute to your company just as they have contributed to this country.

DR. HARRELL: Is there a question there?

MR. CARTER: No. No.

MR. FICK: I do want to make sure we have plenty of time for interaction with the audience. So maybe I can pose one final question to the group. And that is that one of the benefits of talking about veterans' policy in the context of other national security policy is we can try to integrate the two. And many of us in this room are thinking about what the

future of conflict is likely to entail? What are American deployments likely to look like over the next decade? People still talk with some seriousness about things like persistent irregular conflict.

So how do we define what it means to be a veteran in the wake of these wars? How is the demography of our veterans' community going to change? How will it be shaped by what is likely over the coming decade or two and what does that mean?

LTG SCOTT: Well, I think that the demography of the veterans' population will obviously be based on the demography of the services. And so as the services change in terms of greater technical skills required, less on-the-ground presence as we've heard this morning and the like, that we will probably see smaller services and more focused services.

I know that there's a lot of discussion about increasing the number and capabilities of the Special Operation Forces, because they are force multipliers and don't require the commitment of large numbers of people. We've discussed at length the drone program and how it may be replacing certain aspects of not only intelligence gathering, but also of strikes, fires, and the like.

For instance, it's going to be increasingly difficult to justify putting a long-range reconnaissance patrol on the ground somewhere in an era where there are other ways of getting the same information, in fact probably getting more information more quickly. So I think there's going to be a lot of changes in the services and that's going to drive the changes in veterans' population.

I think one of the things that was mentioned earlier, the services are up to become older in numbers of years, more experienced in years of services, and so we'll probably see more people entering the veterans' population from a long career in the service based on that.

I think it's very, very difficult to conjure up what the next conflict will look like. I think we have to very wary of that. I think there are lessons learned from each conflict as we go along that we can put into the mix for the developing of the forces which will impact on who the veterans are, but I think it's very risky to say, well, we're not going to do this anymore. We're going to do that, or here's our plan, and whatever, because who could have imagined some years ago that we would be fighting two wars, one in Iraq and one in Afghanistan? Who could have imagined that we would be looking at ways of influencing action in North Africa today that doesn't involve troop involvement but involves a lot of logistical support? So that's kind of the way I see it, Nate.

MR. CARTER: I think the challenge is that we now go to war with a whole of government, but when we look at veterans, we only look at the military component of that.

So in Iraq, at one point, we had a one-to-one ratio of contractor personnel to military personnel. If you were to count diplomats, intelligence officers, development specialists, et cetera, we had fewer military personnel than the rest of the force combined. We don't define those people as veterans. They are not entitled to VA care. They're not entitled to long-term benefits.

And I think that as a result, we have a shadow population of intelligence officers, contractors and so forth, who over the next 30, 60, how many years, are going to serve alongside our military forces but not get the same care from our government that they need for going into harm's way. And we need to address that. We need to probably enlarge the definition of veteran to include all the folks that we send into harm's way and not just our soldiers.

DR. HARRELL: Can our country afford it?

MR. CARTER: I think so.

DR. HARRELL: Can our system accommodate them?

MR. CARTER: Well, if you look at the veterans' population right now, we are right now watching the population decline from 22 million to probably 13 to 15 million in another 20 years as the cohort of World War II, and the Cold War, and Vietnam fade away. We will probably spend no more in the future on this large population than we do today, even accounting for higher levels of demand in the current population.

But I think it's probably a question that deserves a lot of study. I mean, what's the core obligation that we owe to all-volunteer force? What do we owe in terms of long-term care? There are better systems than this VA system that we should look at, whether it's something like what we have in the contractor space with the Defense Base Act or is it something more like a long-term HMO. I think we need to look at those models because we may not be able to afford the current system for this large a population.

LTG SCOTT: Well, historically, the disabled veterans' population, as a percentage of the total veterans' population, has been about 10 percent. It's very difficult to see – at least for me – to see right now what that percentage is going to look like in five or more years.

I read from time to time that 50 percent of the service members leaving the service now are applying for some sort of disability benefits. It sounds a bit high – not sure whether that's accurate or not. Historically, over time, 10 percent of the veteran population has been determined to be disabled by the Veterans Administration.

And I'm thinking that's going to go up so just the decrease in the total number of veterans is probably not going to offer a commensurate decrease in the total number of disabled veterans for a whole bunch of reasons.

One of them is – and we all talk about this – is that lives were being saved on the battlefield that would have been lost even as recently as the First Gulf War. While the numbers of the seriously disabled are small, they're going to require a lot of care.

We also are going to see I think a significant increase in the number of veterans applying for mental disabilities, either through TBI, the traumatic brain injury, which seems to be pretty prevalent based on the explosions, et cetera, et cetera, and in the post-traumatic stress disorder.

So I think it's really difficult for the secretary to see what his population of the disabled veterans is going to look like in 10 years. I think it will be more than the historical 10 percent, probably on the order of 20 to 25 percent, but that's a guess on my part.

So when we start talking about what are the capabilities of the VA, the VA has – one of the limiting capabilities is the medical care. And another is the system that admits people, you could say, into a disability status.

So it's very difficult to see how it's going to turn out, but the VA I don't believe in its current configuration would be able to support non-military veterans, in other words, the contractors, the civilians and the like.

It is I think an accurate statement to say that a significant number of those contract employees and civilians serving in the theaters also were at one time in the military. And for those that were, they may very likely be able to get into the VA system somehow based on honorable service before they became contractors or civilians. And I'm not real sure what the numbers of those are, but they would be in the number of veterans that are in the population.

DR. HARRELL: I think another important factor as we look at the demographics of veterans, as we look at the portion of veterans that are going to need care, that have disabilities is that we've deployed very differently for these wars. And we've sent people again, and again, and again. And if you look back at Vietnam veterans, there were very many Vietnam veterans that only went once.

I looked at the data – my dad's a retired Army officer, was West Point class of '64. So they had 10 years of Vietnam essentially ahead of them. More of his classmates made

general officer that went to Vietnam three times. Three deployments today is pretty common for our troops. I think that's a big difference.

And if you keep going again and again and again, you know, it's hard to tell how many injuries compound. It's hard to tell how much the odds are against you if you're just going time and time again.

MR. FICK: So we have a lot on the table. I want to hear from you, whether you're in the room or watching or listening remotely. Yes, sir. And we have I think four mikes around the room.

Q: I'm Major Matthew Keller (sp) with the United States Army. And my question has to deal with what you kind of hit on it in there, ma'am, with the suicide rate amongst active duty service members and also amongst our veterans. What do you believe is the solution to that, neither response or mitigation, and I'd like to hear from anybody on that. Thank you.

DR. HARRELL: I wish I had an easy solution to that. You may be aware that one of the first things that we did in program at CNAS is address the military suicide challenge. The services are working really hard on this. It's a tough problem to understand because it was only very recently that we started to see any data that said deployments were tied to likelihood of dying by suicide. So it's a whole host of issues that are leading to these tragic outcomes for individual service members. And I don't have an answer. I wish I did.

MR. FICK: Anyone else? Yes.

Q: Hi. I'm Raven Bukowski. I'm a U.S. Army major and I'm also a mid-level leader in a nonprofit called Team Red, White and Blue. Our mission is to support wounded veterans by connecting them with civilian volunteers from their community to provide social support during their transition.

My question is: what is being done – or is anything being done to fill the critical gap in what the government or what the VA can provide in an era of decreased funding by leaning on nonprofit organizations like Team Red, White and Blue. Thanks.

MR. CARTER: Yes. There is, as Admiral Mullen liked to say, a sea of good will out there of nonprofits and particularly community-based organizations that are really picking up the slack for the VA in dealing with reintegration and assistance.

The primary areas I'm familiar with work on ending veteran homelessness that most of the shelters and the organizations geared towards getting veterans off the streets are nonprofits. And they're actually doing a great job utilizing a mix of public funding through

programs like the HUD-VASH vouchers and private funding raised from philanthropy to build support of housing, run support of housing, and then assist with job placement and treatment and counseling.

The challenge for these entities is not just the decrease in government funding though, but it's decreasing philanthropic funding and an overall shift that they see happening in two years or so away from veterans as a cause (celeb ?) to the next big thing. A lot of people feel that when the wars go away, this issue will go away and so they can only do as much as they can raise money for now and they're trying to lay as much of a foundation now, but everyone I talk to in this community is very worried about what's going to come in 2014 or 2015 when the wars go away.

So I applaud what you're doing and I hope that we're able to generate enough of a sea of good will or a tsunami of good will that we can have it continue beyond when the wars end.

LTG SCOTT: If you start back on from what Phil just said to what's the genesis of a lot of these problems, in my judgment, there's very inadequate counseling done for departing service members as they leave the service. I think that that is the responsibility of the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration.

What we're seeing as people leaving the services – and no one has sat them down and talked to them as individuals, helped them set their expectations and offered recommendations for their individual education, training, et cetera, et cetera. And so you get some terrible mismatches. You get people leaving the service with them maybe perhaps want to be an engineer or something but don't understand what that means and what details and how long it takes to do that, and what your background has to be, et cetera, et cetera.

One of the problems that I believe that the VA has is that there are a number of people enrolled in advanced education programs that have probably been landed in the wrong landing zone. And there are some – it seems very important to me that both the services and the VA do a significantly better job counseling departing service members so that they don't wind up in the wrong place and then they wind up – they go through a program and there's no job, or they go through – start through a program and they don't make it through and they come out with significant indebtedness or something like that.

And so I really think that to address some of the issues that this young lady brought up, I think you have to step back – okay, we need to do a much better job in counseling our service members as they separate.

MR. FICK: I think that's right. And I would just add one anecdote from our experience in this work. When we first announced our intention to do work in the veteran

space, I got a visit one day from John Strangfeld, the CEO of Prudential, who also sits on the board of Darden, the business school down at UVA. And in his capacity as a Darden trustee, he met with the veteran students who are going through the MBA program down there and asked them what they thought about their transition and what they needed. And their message to him was basically, we don't need anything. We're fine. We're going to business school at UVA. It's all going to be okay, but what can you do for the men and women who served under us? What can you do for primarily the junior enlisted men and women who served in our units, who may have a more accentuated skills mismatch, perhaps, or may not have as ready access to the sorts of resources that have enabled us to make this transition.

So I've called on two Army majors in a row. We're going to go for diversity here. Sir, I'm willing to bet you're not an active duty Army major. (Laughter.)

Q: Very good. Very insightful. (Laughter.) My name is John Gadeneer (ph). I'm a retired naval commander, intelligence officer. And what's helped in my transition – because back in my day, when I got out of the service there were no civilian jobs in intelligence to speak of, unlike today. But I had the VA bill and was able to get a good education, have a fine career.

What worries me is a little bit about – ambiguity about the word "volunteer." When we say an all-volunteer force, that certainly includes people with military heritage and very patriotic people and people who really believe in the cause at hand or whatever. It also involves people who can't get work for various reasons, because of the ethnicity, because of language problems, because of poor schooling and people who have substandard, sometimes severely substandard opportunities in the civilian workplace initially see the service as an attractive place because it will take people with essentially no skills and give them some. But then, when those people go to get out of the service, to what extent has their situation improved or failed to improve?

DR. HARRELL: I'd like to challenge that. You know, today's youth – of today's youth, only one in six or seven is eligible for the military. The standards for military service are actually quite high. And so I could agree that a young kid who lives in the middle of Montana doesn't have a lot of employment opportunities there, sees more employment opportunities in the military.

But I don't agree that the military is taking people who are sufficiently substandard that they wouldn't have opportunity in the civilian world. That's just not the case reflected in the data that I see or the experiences I've had talking to those folks that run the accession programs in the military.

MR. FICK: Yes, sir.

Q: My name is Herb Fenster and I'm a lawyer with McKenna Long & Aldrige, and a former coworker with Phil. Is the model all wrong? The United States is not titled to have a standing Army. Our constitution prohibits it. We marginalize the military in times of peace. Do we really need now – because we are going to have to have a permanent military – do we really need now to have a draft? Should we restore the draft and increase the distribution of people who function in the military? Should we get rid of the Veterans Administration and give the Department of Defense what it really owes, and that is a lifelong obligation to its veterans. In other words, should the basic model change?

LTG SCOTT: Well, regarding the relationship between the VA and the DOD, an argument can be made that the DOD should assume most or all the responsibilities of VA. I don't think the DOD wants to do that. (Laughter.) But, you know, the argument could be made, as long as someone was doing it.

I had the privilege of serving as a junior officer in a draftee army, which it doesn't look like there's too many people out there that had that privilege. But I can tell you that it was a totally different environment to serve as an officer or NCO in a draftee Army than it was in a – even the transition to the voluntary force and certainly in the voluntary force now.

So I used to tell people I served in three armies. I served in the draftee Army of the '60s; I served in the transition Army when the draft was disestablished and we went through some pretty rough patches in the '70s transitioning to a full volunteer force; and then I had the great privilege of serving as a senior officer in the volunteer force through the '90s. And there's three very different forces.

And so, while on the one hand you can say, well, because of the quality and fairness and all of that, that the draft should be brought back sharing the burden, et cetera, et cetera. The required numbers are so small that it could never be made fair. And so I am basically a proponent of the volunteer service so long as the government fulfills its obligation to take care of the individual who has volunteered for service for as long as it is necessary. And that's kind of what the VA commitment is.

MR. CARTER: I think that last question of who serves when not all serve is the central problem with any conscription service system, and whether we had a Reserve draft or we had a national service draft or a pure military draft, we'd have that problem.

But I think there's a bigger structural issue, and that's the disconnect between the benefits programs we have, which were largely conceived of during the conscription era, as the Bradley Commission in '56 and the other presidential commissions that envisioned the current VA system we have today, and the all-volunteer force model that was developed in

the '70s and decided that we offer benefits to recruit and retain the force. Well, which one is the GI Bill, because it's been both over time? And what principles you adopt should drive the programs you design? And we have this sort of schizophrenia throughout the system that it's not clear whether some thing is an enlistment benefit or retention benefit or a service benefit, and I think that drives a great deal of incoherence in the system.

The other piece I want to quickly is that we have a patchwork of agencies that are solving these problems so it's not just VA and DOD, but you get support from Health and Human Services, and the HUD that manages some homelessness programs, and labor that does veterans' employment. It's a total Rube Goldberg complex that rarely works, and when it does, it's usually by accident. I think that's something that you guys highlighted in your last report and I think it's something that we need to pay more attention to because it's flawed by design.

DR. HARRELL: One other argument against the draft – if I could just go back to that point that it's one in six or seven that's eligible, I don't know any young platoon leaders, squad leader, company commander that says, oh, give me those other six because those are the ones I really want.

You know, their job is hard enough without us lowering the quality measure of who enters the force. And as far as I know, during the draft service time, the only service that really benefited was the Navy, because the people would volunteer for the Navy out of concern that they be drafted into a ground force.

MR. FICK: Yes, ma'am. Thanks for your patience.

Q: Rachel Oswald (sp). I'm a journalist. Can the panel at broad please talk about abuses of the GI Bill by the for-profit colleges, what do you know about that? Is the issue being addressed adequately? And just how much trouble are veterans getting into when the GI Bill doesn't adequately cover all of their tuition and they've enrolled in classes that ultimately aren't fruitful for them in terms of getting a job?

LTG SCOTT: Well, I go back to my point about the adequate and proper counseling for departing service members as a start point. I know that the Veterans Administration is tremendously concerned with a few of the pro-profit institutions and the perception, which I believe to be accurate, that it's a rip-off, just to make it short.

I do know that the Veterans Administration has very little legal recourse. The Congress pretty much sets the tone for what institutions are eligible to participate in the program. And there's been a real reluctance, and the VA has requested some legislation that makes it easier for the VA to kick somebody out of the program who is doing what you were talking about. But it's tough.

And, again, so much of it is a result of the individual being in the wrong place, taking the wrong course. It's not always just the institution, but there are a few that have distinguished themselves by their treatment of the veterans, and it's an ongoing battle of trying to deal with them.

Publicity is probably the best things that can happen on things like that. And, again, that's the way you get to that is you have your counselors tell them, be careful. Some of these schools will promise you a degree and a job and you're probably not going to get either one, and there's their track record.

MR. FICK: Phil or Meg?

MR. CARTER: I think it's true that money distorts economies. A large influx of cash came into the education sector. You have for-profit actors chasing that cash in much the same as we've seen in Afghanistan and elsewhere where we put a lot of government money into a program. It distorts the economy of that program.

Case management is the solution. I think the VA template with its vocational rehab program is probably one that we should look at closely, where there's a very – there's at least one more step which was that the VA has to approve the program, but there's oftentimes a lot more case management put in place to make sure that the veteran progresses through that program and chooses something that's appropriate. And something like that should probably exist on the GI Bill side, but because it's an entitlement, the government, as you say, really has very little control over how that entitlement gets spent.

DR. HARRELL: It's the right question. When we look at veterans under the age of 30, we see they're less likely than their non-veteran peers to have college degrees. We know that education is going to be a key aspect of their reintegration. It's why our program is turning now to research on GI Bill and the outcomes and the metrics from the money that we've invested. But we don't have all the answers yet.

MR. FICK: I saw Jason Forrester back there with a hand in the air.

Q: Thank you, Nate. And thanks for a great panel. This has been a wonderful discussion. I'm Jason Forrester. I work – I'm one of President Obama's appointees in the Army and have the pleasure of working on the improvements in the transition process. So, again, thanks for all the work that all the panelists have done.

If I could, especially regarding the patchwork, the transition assistance required, I would commend to the group and those listening in, a speech that President Obama gave on

the 5th of August last year at the Navy Yard here in Washington where he laid out the goals of creating a career ready military.

So coming out of that work – which that speech can easily be found online, as I said, 5th August of last year – the president talked to that point about the possibility of a reversed boot camp, a so-called reverse boot camp, but basically the idea being general that earlier in the process of a soldier – in the case of the Army – of a soldier's transition that counseling would begin. In the case of the Army, the commitment is no later than 12 months before separation the process of counseling will begin so that we can address some of the kind of challenges that you've mentioned.

And on top of that, commanders, such as the majors and others in this room, will be on the hook to make sure that that process works well. So that's in place and it's been going on for the last few months.

There's an interagency task force that's already delivered an interim report and a subsequent report will be coming out rather soon that will set standards that work toward – for instance, November of this year, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act which, again is mentioned in Dr. Harrell's report, mandates that every service member, with very few exceptions, will go through a robust transition program.

So any comments that the panel might have on that work that's already happened would be appreciated, but if it could stand more as a comment, I'm happy with that too.

DR. HARRELL: I would have loved to have been able to talk more about the revised TAP in the work we just published. As you know, we were working in parallel. I think we're all eager to see the advances that the revisions will make.

MR. CARTER: I think one of the challenges here is that no matter what the approach is, there will be gaps. And so one of the transition challenges that is most acute is the transition that Guardsmen and Reservists make when they come back from a deployment.

That doesn't always count as a discharge for turning all of the transition requirements, but you may be patrolling the streets of Kandahar one day, and then two weeks later be back in Los Angeles. You don't go through all the formal discharge processes because it's just – the military does a demobilization, and yet you have the same transition problems. You have the same transition needs, but you don't fall into that bucket.

So I think that there may be gaps like that and I would love to see you try to address things like that.

Q: I think you make a great point, Phil. And the short story is that – (off mike).

MR. FICK: Over here.

Q: Thanks.

MR. FICK: Shout it.

Q: (Off mike.) I'd like to go back – thank you. I'd like to go back to a question that was raised about the draft. And considering the experience that we've had with our veterans in the Second World War and Korea and Vietnam, what we have now. I fear – and I want to ask your opinions if this is accurate – that we have a mindset at one point of veterans are us, in other words, this is part of the society writ large. And have we moved in some way to people feeling now that veterans are them, that they're not quite the same – it's not the same mix of society. It's more of an elite group, of a separate group and somehow we're not all in this altogether as we used to be. Am I overreacting to that fear?

DR. HARRELL: I think the data upholds that, that most Americans don't understand veterans. You know, veterans are them is what we see in Pew data and other places.

MR. CARTER: Yes. I agree, but I think that World War II is the anomaly. And I'm not sure that absent some other cataclysmic crisis that triggers a national mobilization we're likely to see that again anytime soon. And so we think we have to look for ways to replicate the connective tissue and the bonds we have with those who serve us without the fact that 10 percent of our society is actually serving in uniform, and that's going to be a very hard thing for us to do.

MR. FICK: Sir, standing in the back, in the aisle.

Q: Thank you so much. Mark Viel (ph), author on veterans' issues. I have to thank Dr. Harrell for using a very important word. She used the word "culture." I wish that the major was in the room, who just came back from Afghanistan, because I think he would be a terrific source of perspective. What they're doing with the Afghans is basically what we have to do with our veterans.

And I'd like a comment from the panel that there is a cultural difference between Americans and veterans. They represent a small population of America and they also have a totally different perspective on how life works. When they come back, they're effectively a different culture. So how do we re-enculturate them back into the United States?

LTG SCOTT: Well, I differ with you on that. An argument could be made, let's say that a career service person might develop perhaps some sort of a different cultural bent. But the people that we're really talking about, the large numbers of people who enter the military or a one enlistment, maybe two, and then rejoin. I don't think that they lose their cultural underpinnings by going into the service. That's not been my experience, nor what I've observed. But I'd defer to the other panel members here.

DR. HARRELL: I'm a cultural anthropologist by training so I try to use the word "culture" as much as I can. But I don't think that people operate in a single culture. I know that my teen operates in a teen culture, but he and I also share a culture. And I think military people have a set of shared values, beliefs, attributes and symbols that is military. But I don't think it pulls them apart or separates them or makes them less astute or less capable in the broader societal culture of our country.

MR. FICK: I think we have time for one more question. Yes.

Q: Hi. I'm Joyce Raezer with the National Military Family Association. Thanks for the comments on veterans' families. We do have a lot more work that we need to do on that. But I'd like to talk about a lot of the nuances that you brought out.

Very different discussion on helping veterans than we usually have. Usually we have the let's help veterans without getting into the age, the experience, the education, generation, women versus men, some of those issues that you brought up today.

And so, as we go forward in a time where resources both for government and those of us who support from the private sector can make the biggest difference. How do we get some of the more of that granularity in the discussion, both in research and in policy? And where would you start to kind of drive that discussion to both the people who need it most and where there might be examples of how help can be provided?

MR. FICK: I will abuse the moderator's chair to offer just a very quick perspective on that. And that gets back to why we wanted to start doing some of this work. It's because the veteran space is one that is – and this is not a judgment but just an expression I think of reality – it's a space that's largely dominated by advocates for one or another part of the broader community. It's fundamentally different from the defense or the intelligence world, the economic community, all these places that have deep reservoirs of human analytical capital. And the veteran space, for whatever reason, doesn't have that to the same degree.

So I think one starting point is for organizations like this one, for universities, for other independent analytical organizations to do more work in the veteran space and do data driven methodologically rigorous work of the kind that Meg and her team are doing.

MR. CARTER: I think in an age of fiscal austerity, one of the things that we're going to have to get better at is building the business case for early intervention and for proactive programming. So Meg asked earlier, could we afford to take care of all of these non-military veterans, can we afford to take care of this new generation with higher utilization rates, as General Scott points out.

And I think the answer has to be yes because we know from the Vietnam generation that the back end cost will be higher, that if we don't take care of them and provide better case management now and better support to their educational endeavors and their health needs now, we will take care of them as homeless veterans, and as criminal veterans, and as other veterans in the future.

And so we have to build an evidence-based, rigorous, solid policy and business case for why we need to act now. And that is I think the key, and I think that's hopefully the foundation of what we're going to be doing in the future.

DR. HARRELL: And if I could just – I know you didn't mean this, Phil, but I just want to clarify. Again, most veterans are well. To say that we're going to be taking care of veterans as sick and prisoners – I mean, those are the small numbers of veterans that have problems that we do need to address.

MR. FICK: Thank you all for this conversation. I want to encourage all of you on your way out the door to pick up a copy of Meg and Nancy's latest report on employing America's veterans.

Lunch is served out in the foyer. And we will reconvene here in one hour. Thank you. (Applause.)

(END)