Beyond the Headlines Event

Moderator:
Warren Hoge, Vice President of External Relations

Speakers:
David Rohde, Author of book *A Rope and a Prayer: A Kidnapping From Two Sides*
Kristen Mulvihill, co-Author of the book *A Rope and a Prayer: A Kidnapping from Two Sides*

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Warren Hoge: Good evening, I'm Warren Hoge, IPI's Vice President for External Relations, and I'm happy to welcome you to this Beyond the Headlines event featuring David Rohde and his wife Kristen Mulvihill, authors of *A Rope And A Prayer: A Kidnapping From Two Sides*.

If I were to count the accomplishments I'm proudest of during the three decades I spent as a writer and editor at *The New York Times*, one of them certainly would be being the guy who hired David Rohde in 1996.

It wasn't easy. David had just become a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize that year that he eventually would win for his reporting for *The Christian Science Monitor* in Bosnia, which involved his discovering near the UN-declared safe area of Srebrenica, a mass grave that held the remains of eight thousand Bosnian Muslims who had been massacred by Bosnian Serbs. As a result of his achievement, David was being courted with a big job offer from the Washington Post, our chief competitor, and because of a staff consolidation we were then conducting at *The Times*, all I could offer him was a trainee position at a virtual copyboy salary.

In addition, we had our own candidate that year for the Pulitzer Prize for our coverage of Bosnia, and since it will not surprise you to know that there's a certain feeling of entitlement at *The New York Times* when it comes to Pulitzer Prizes, there was some resentment of this kid in his twenties who was stealing our prize.

Anyway, I managed to persuade David that if he really wanted to be a world-beating foreign correspondent, there was only one newspaper he should be working for, so he said no to *The Post* and joined *The Times* in 1996. All he did for *The Times* after that was to go out and win a second

Pulitzer in 2009 as a member of a *New York Times* team reporting on Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Now, there is a more serious reason to revisit David's experience in Bosnia, and that is that he was also taken prisoner then. He was held hostage for ten days by Serb officials and only days of intense high-level pressure by the US Government succeeded in freeing him. He had, after that experience, vowed to his family and friends, and later in 2008, to the woman he had just married, that he would never put any of them in that position again.

So when in November 2008 he first realized to his horror that his effort to interview, in person, a Taliban commander in Afghanistan had led to his being taken captive again, the sense of horror was mixed with one of profound guilt.

Those feelings and many others are described in this highly readable book, chronicling his seven months and ten days in captivity in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Kristen's harrowing negotiations for his release, negotiations conducted from New York, where in some cases she had to deal directly with his captors. The book, by the way, is on sale at the door and Kristen and David will be happy, after we wind up here, to talk and to sign books.

David's story is one of being spirited by night from safe house to safe house in a tribal area of Pakistan that he knew was inhabited by the most die-hard Taliban; of being constantly lied to by his captors; of being forced to cry in videos while Kalashnikovs were aimed at his head; and of observing--think about this--observing his captors watching the same films over and over again, whooping with delight at their scenes of death and assassination and beheadings. Of little comfort also was the fondest wish of one of his captors, which was to become a suicide bomber.

Over the seven-month period, his hopes and fears career about from one extreme to the other. He has moments of expectation of being freed and moments of contemplating the certainty of death. He stages a hunger strike, a fake suicide, and repeatedly makes himself vomit in the hopes that he will appear to be sick. His greatest desire, of course, is to be reunited with the woman he had married only two months before.

For her part, Kristen is suddenly spending her days in consultation with intelligence experts and government officials; and private security contractors; and members of a specially-assembled team in Kabul; and maybe most bothersome of all, with *New York Times* editors; learning much more than she ever cared to about the business of kidnapping.

She also has to contemplate becoming a widow after only two months of marriage. And she's starting a new job as photography director at *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, and since the decision had been taken to keep news of David's capture secret, she can only tell the top editors, her new bosses, of her need to attend to daily noontime conference calls. She worries that her new peers will think she's a primadonna, taking so much time off in her initial weeks on the job.

In passages in the book that provide welcome moments of dark humor, Kristen tells of getting off the phone with Taliban killers and immediately

having to attend to model shoots, making sure hair is correct, and if there are enough push-up bras and cleavage enhancers. One moment, she's on the long distance line to Kabul, the next she is deciding how to illustrate stories, headlined "What A Guy's Butt Says About Him," and "How Yoga Can Change Your Sex Life."

I want to mention in this introduction that David and I were both longtime friends of Richard Holbrooke, the fabled American diplomat who died in December. Last week, David and I attended a commemoration service in the General Assembly hall for Richard led by the Secretary-General. It was Holbrooke who led the negotiations for David's release in 1995, at one point holding up the peace talks in Dayton for three days, until Slobodan Milosevic gave assurances that David would be freed. More recently, on hearing that David was going to be covering Afghanistan, Holbrooke warned him jokingly, "Don't get captured again."

Of course, as it happened, it was Holbrooke, as President Obama's special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, who once again had to pressure a foreign government to help get David Rohde out of captivity. So when David, after his daring escape from the Taliban, heard that Holbrooke was calling him urgently, he picked up the phone and his first words were, "I apologize."

Holbrooke, of course, said, "God, it's good to hear your voice" and then peppered him with questions about the Taliban: "Who are they? Why are they fighting? What do they want?" I told David, as we were planning this evening, that those are the same questions that all of us here have.

Now David has disavowed any more war reporting and he writes in the book that one of the first things he said to Kristen when he reached her by phone after gaining his freedom was, "Please let me spend the rest of my life making up for this to you." I thought of that last week when David answered the question I put to him about who should speak first tonight.

Kristen, the floor is yours

Kristen Mulvihill: Oh, thank you. Thanks for coming. And I have to say that we sometimes jest, you know, when does the rest of your life begin exactly? Because I think, you know, after he said that to me, to be honest, we both agreed that was a pretty tall order. I was just so thankful that he was home and wanted to spend the rest of our lives moving forward. So, thank you for the introduction, thanks for coming, thank you to the International Peace Institute.

I also want to mention Richard Holbrooke was tremendously helpful to me and to our family throughout. It's very intimidating to pick up the phone and call Ambassador Holbrooke. I did so because I had met him several months before the kidnapping at a friend's wedding, where he jested that, you know, "Don't get kidnapped again" or "Don't get captured again" to David. And yet when I called him, you know, he mentioned that he had helped in Bosnia, but he did promise me (this was Thanksgiving, so this was a few months before his posting), he promised me that the moment that he took office, he would work on our case; and he did more than any US official to try to help to reach out to Pakistani officials and

we didn't always agree, but I will say he honored our family's wishes; and I'm so sorry that I didn't get to know him more beyond the kidnapping.

And I want to mention one more person. Craig Whitney is here from *The New York Times* and he was assigned the task of updating the family very early on in our case, and he was very compassionate, and I thank you for coming. He's here with his wife tonight. *A Rope and a Prayer* is the story...

Hoge: Sorry to interrupt you, just for a second, while you're on this, thinking about thanking people and mentioning people in Washington, you have a very funny exchange in the book with Hillary Clinton. Do you remember it? And can you tell them? What she said and what you said?

Mulvihill: Yes, there was a video footage that came out, of David, a couple of months into the kidnapping, about three months into it, and it was actually a brief snippet of it aired on Al Jazeera. They later agreed not to run the full segment. Hillary Clinton called me to say, you know, that she was sorry that the footage had come out and to reassure me that our government was aware of David's case and would do everything they could.

And at that point, I had spent several months dealing with, I would say a very macho crowd. You know, I dealt with that at Cosmo, we sort of dealt with men as, to be honest, props and eye-candy and things like that. But in the course of the kidnapping--I'm the comic relief here, in case you haven't gotten the sense yet--but in the course of the kidnapping, I was dealing with former military officials, contractors, FBI agents, editors and what-not. And our sort of core group was very… it was kind of a very masculine group, very macho. I was the only woman.

And when she called me, I said I was so thankful she was, you know, going to try to help us. And then I said, "And, to be honest, I'm so glad there's another woman in the mix." And she burst out laughing, she thought that was really funny, and she said, "Oh dear, I know exactly what you mean!"

So…*A Rope and a Prayer* is a story of the seven and a half months we spent apart as newlyweds, as you mentioned, while David was a hostage of the Taliban, specifically the Haqqani faction of the Taliban, and I was in New York trying to figure out, along with our family and the newspaper, how to free him and figure out where he was.

It's also a story of the American effort in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and in many ways our experience is a microcosm of the broader dynamics that have plagued the efforts there. I'm not an expert on Afghanistan or Pakistan. Prior to the experience, most of what I knew was from David's reporting and from a brief trip we had taken to Lahore, actually we went to Pakistan together six months before the kidnapping and I was so thankful throughout the course of his captivity to have had that experience.

When we were in Lahore, we met with Pakistani journalists. We met with Ahmed Rashid, we went to universities and spoke to students there; so it really underscored for me that militancy was the exception and not the norm. Many of David's Pakistani colleagues helped me throughout the

course of his captivity so I just want to say, you know, he was held in the tribal areas of Pakistan. But I realized that, you know, that does not define Pakistan necessarily.

There are a few things I learned about the Taliban. They are somewhat tongue-in-cheek. When they're demanding millions of dollars in ransom, they call you collect, it's something they did. They were demanding 25 million dollars in prisoners, and they called me several times always with the caveat that I look at the number on the caller-ID and call them back because the phone was low on credits, their phone card was running out of credits.

They don't live in caves, they're very tech-savvy. They Google, they make videos and they play video games. They're very disciplined and selective when it comes to technology.

They think all Americans are millionaires or have access to large amounts of money; that was evidenced in their demands. And they do have a safe haven in the tribal areas of Pakistan.

While our story is extreme, we feel that people here may experience some aspect of what we've gone through. We have a happy ending, we're thrilled to be here tonight together; but we hope our story resonates just beyond the issue of kidnapping with anyone who's dealing with separation from a loved one. Anyone in a position to make life and death decisions for a spouse when they're unable to do so for themselves, or anyone simply dealing with a situation of uncertainty.

During his captivity, I kept a journal and it was purely for sanity's sake. I didn't think that it would ever become a book. I did keep notes and emails back and forth with editors, with government officials, because I knew David would want to know what the family had done when he returned.

In writing this book, we each learned a lot about what the other went through, and it was very cathartic to have time to process the experience because when you're going through it, you're just trying to survive each moment; and it helped us process a very demanding experience. We're going to read a few brief passages, David will do a brief introduction, and then we'll take questions.

David Rohde: Thank you all very much for coming tonight. I want to thank Warren for hiring me; and he was a real supporter, though, over the years, just a real example of that sort of a model of what a reporter and correspondent should be; Craig Whitney, as well, as a journalist, amazing, and as an editor was incredibly supportive of my family.

There is one person here tonight that I did not know was going to be here, and I'm honored that he's here. And his name is John Solecki. He was the UNHCR official who was kidnapped in Pakistan in 2009. We were both in captivity at the same time. We ended up meeting in New York in the fall of 2009, both of us incredibly lucky and happy to be home and to have survived.

But I think John in many ways was stronger than I was. His driver was killed by his kidnappers when they abducted him, and he was able to

hold himself together for months of being alone in captivity. I had two Afghan colleagues that I could talk to and that could sort of encourage me and we could encourage each other, and he just showed tremendous strength in being so strong and keeping himself focused and then simply surviving. So, if we could take a moment to just recognize John; he's a tremendous person. [APPLAUSE]

I will first read a… well, we'll do these passages briefly but we really want you to sort of control the conversation here and ask the questions that interest you. You might ask why after the first seven of the first nine months of our marriage I was in captivity and obviously our new wedding, our new marriage was under tremendous strain, why would you then possibly want to write a book together?

I don't know if any of you are married couples and you've tried to do anything like writing together, but it can be very stressful. We just found it very cathartic. It helped me learn, you know I'd spend every day with Kristen when we met, and then when we were married, and it was a strange, almost black hole in my life where I didn't know what she was doing and what she was feeling every day for seven months and ten days; and writing this book together helped me understand what she went through and, frankly, all she did to help us and she was just incredibly courageous. Every friend, when I came home, said to me, "You don't know how lucky you are." And they're absolutely right.

The kidnapping occurred while I was working on a book about Afghanistan since 2001. I had been in, I had gone to Afghanistan as my last reporting trip. I had been surprised at the sort of strength of popular support for the Taliban, particularly in southern Afghanistan, and felt that the book, for it to be sort of thorough and balanced as possible, I really needed an interview with a Taliban commander. Dozens of journalists had safely interviewed the Taliban face to face and, you know, I could talk about this more, but I sort of let competition get the best of me, and I, I took a risk, you know, I think too quickly in hindsight. This Taliban commander, who called himself Abu Tayyeb, had given interviews to two European journalists prior to my interview, he had not kidnapped them. I met a, one of these European journalists, she had interviewed him twice and he had not kidnapped her. She warned me, "It will be more dangerous for you as an American, but I don't think he'll kidnap you, I think he's trying to get his message across through the media."

The next morning--this was November 10th 2008--I set out for the interview with, as I mentioned, an Afghan journalist, Tahir Luddin, and an Afghan driver, Asad Mangal. We reached the meeting point and the Abu Tayyeb's soldiers or gunmen weren't there to meet us. They told us to drive farther down the road.

When we did that, we rounded a corner and a car was blocking the road in front of us. Two men with Kalashnikov assault rifles ran towards our vehicle, they shouted orders at Tahir and Asad, told both of them to get into the back seat of the car with me. One of the Taliban gunmen got in the front seat, the other one got in the front passenger seat, and they basically started driving us down the road.

A second car appeared with more Taliban gunmen in it, and that vehicle was following us, and literally in a matter of seconds that was it. We had

been kidnapped and that was the beginning of our seven months and ten days in captivity.

The book alternates chapters, sort of my experience and Kristen's experience, and this is just a passage that describes my first thoughts as these men drive us down the highway.

> The driver punches the accelerator and we cross into the open desert. The gunman in the front seat aims his Kalashnikov rifle at us. No one speaks. I glance at the bleak landscape outside; reddish soil and black boulders as far as the eye can see. I fear we'll be dead within minutes.
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> The longer I look at the gunman in the passenger seat, the more nervous I become. His face shows little emotion. His eyes are dark, flat and lifeless. I think of my wife and family, and I'm overcome with shame.
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> An interview that seemed crucial hours ago now seems absurd and reckless. I have needlessly risked the lives of Tahir, Asad, and me. We reach a dry riverbed and the station wagon we were following stops. Our car does the same. "They're going to kill us," Tahir whispers. "They're going to kill us." Tahir and Asad are ordered out of the car. Gunmen from the station wagon beat them with their rifle butts and lead them away. A gunman from our car for me to get out of the vehicle and take a few steps up a sand-covered hillside. While one guard points his Kalashnikov rifle at me, the other takes my glasses, notebook, pen and camera.
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> I am blindfolded, my hands tied behind my back. My heart races. Sweat pours from my skin. "Habarnigar," I say, using the word for journalists in Dari, a local language. "Salaam," I say, using an Arabic expression for peace. The few words I know in Pashto, which is spoken by most Taliban, escape me. I wait for the sound of gunfire. I know I might die but I remain oddly calm.

Mulvihill: And as Warren mentioned, our professional lives were in sharp contrast to one another, we were both in media, but David had gone back to report on his book and I had just started a job two weeks before, and finding about his kidnapping at *Cosmopolitan*. And so this section is my finding out about the kidnapping and this chapter is called "Fun Fearless Female."

> I'm sitting atop Times Square. From the 38th floor, I can see all the way to the mouth of the Hudson River. I've just assigned a photographer to shoot a first-person magazine account titled "My Bra Saved My Life." We will photograph the once-injured hiker who hung her bra out as a beacon to alert passers-by. Nothing attracts attention like a bright red sports bra, apparently. In a pinch, it's a real lifesaver.

> I smiled to myself; this is a far cry from my husband's line of work. The phone rings. It's my brother-in-law Lee. He tells me that David never returned from his last interview in Kabul, a meeting with a Taliban commander. This is news to me.
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> It's a crisp afternoon, the sky is clear, the river calm. Despite the tidiness of my new modern surroundings, I feel as if my life has plunged into disarray. I thought I was prepared for this kind of call. Before we married, David and I discussed the inherent risks in his work as a foreign correspondent. We talked about several worst-case scenarios, including injury and even death. These tragedies are concrete and would follow a prescribed protocol. But I never anticipated what to do in the uncertain face of David going missing. "Here it is," I think, "My worst fear come true."

Rohde: This next reading is from roughly ten days into the kidnapping.

We have been loaded in the back of cars and sort of driven around rural Afghanistan for several days. We really don't know where we are. My kidnappers are telling me that we're being taken to southern Afghanistan, but I really don't have any idea what direction we're moving in.

After sunset one day, we're ordered to get out of our car and told that we have to walk through the mountains because a large American base blocks the road ahead of us. We end up hiking through the mountains for nine hours, and the next day at dawn a new car comes to pick us up, and this passage just describes what happens next.

> A young Taliban driver with shoulder-length hair gets behind the wheel of the vehicle, glancing at me suspiciously in the rearview mirror. He starts the engine and begins driving down the left-hand side of the road. It is some sort of prank, I hope, some Jihadi version of chicken, the game where two drivers speed toward each other in the same lane until one loses his nerve.
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> If he's not playing a game, which lane he drives down shows what country we are in. If he continues driving on the left, we have crossed into Pakistan. If he drives on the right, we are still in Afghanistan. A mile down the road, a traffic sign appears in Urdu, the official language of Pakistan. "We're in Pakistan," I think to myself, "We're dead."
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> Instead of taking us to southern Afghanistan as promised, our kidnappers brought us to Pakistan's tribal areas, an infamous belt of Taliban-controlled territory. In the months ahead, I will learn that the fundamentalist Taliban State the United States reportedly toppled in 2001 is alive and thriving. The loss of thousands of Afghan, Pakistani, and American lives, and billions in American aid, has merely moved the Islamic Emirate a few miles east into Pakistan and not eliminated it.

Mulvihill: And as Warren mentioned, we did decide as a family that we wanted to keep David's case out of the media, and *The Times* backed us up on that. It was not a decision we made lightly, and we revisited it every week. I do think it was the right decision. I think he's here today in part because of that decision. *The Times*, I know it went against every instinct his colleagues had as journalists to report the news.

And yet, I'm so thankful that nobody broke the story, so many people knew about it. There were a few bloggers that mentioned it at one point and *The Times* was fantastic in backing us up, there was somewhat of a precedent for this. There was a gentleman by the name of Jerry Van Dyke who had been kidnapped before David, and I actually met with him while David was in captivity to just find out, you know, how he was treated by the Taliban and what not. And his case was kept out of the media as well. This section describes kind of what a typical day at work was like for me.

I continued to try to go to work for the first six months, for practical reasons and in sanity's sake it actually gave me some sense of normalcy, although my job was a little beyond normal in its own right, I would say.

And, you know, I would be producing shoots, photo shoots, sort of concentrating on those to, you know, avoid any mishaps and what not. Negotiating for location, locations for cover shoots, things like that; and then I would be taking a noon call every day from our security team and from *The New York Times* with updates on David.

Periodically, we had video communications from the captors, and this section describes one such communication. I will say that despite the fact that David was moved into Pakistan very early on, his captors tried to convince us that he was in Afghanistan and you'll see how that plays out.

> Around noon I receive a call at my office at *Cosmopolitan* from Jim, the joint-terrorism task force FBI agent assigned to our case. The kidnappers have made a video of David. Jim cannot say how the FBI obtained the video but offers to bring it to me for a private screening. The FBI is honoring our family's request to see the footage first before the newspaper and before the security team in a discreet setting. Everyone involved in the case has been jockeying for my trust of late; this is clearly a gesture on their part.
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> Jim and his fellow agents tell me to look for the blue car parked just outside Starbucks on West 57th Street, not far from the office. I meet Jim, Cathy, and another agent for a private screening in their four-door sedan. This gives new meaning to the phrase "drive-in movie," I think.
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> Jim produces a silver laptop. I assume the video's been intercepted somehow but do not know from where. The video is poor quality, black and white footage. David sits between two men Jim tells me are Tahir and Asad.

> Immediately I noticed David is wearing his glasses. This is a huge relief. I was worried they'd been confiscated; he's nearly blind without them and I've spent nights tossing and turning over this fact.
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> Two Taliban gunmen frame the image, each with a Kalashnikov. David speaks first. "I am David Rohde, a journalist for *The New York Times*," he says. "I was detained on November 10th and have been held captive for thirty-four days. It's very cold, very difficult. They are moving us around the mountains of Afghanistan. I ask my office, I ask President Bush and President-elect Barack Obama to meet their demands. If you do not meet their demands, they will kill all three of us. Please meet their demands."

This video is highly scripted obviously and I have to say that it was terrifying to hear that there was a communication, a video communication. I always asked the FBI if it was an execution, and they wouldn't assure me ahead of time that it was not. There was some levity in this situation I actually threw out. Humor was a way that I sort of survived, and there were moments of absurdity, like the calling collect and what not. And soon after we viewed this footage in the car, we were parked on 57th Street and another car bumped our fender, and the parking cop, ticket lady, actually, gave the FBI a parking ticket, so there's this brief moment of humor.

Rohde: Unfortunately, the negotiations really don't go anywhere. As Kristen mentioned, the initial demands for our release were for 25 million dollars in ransom and the release of 15 prisoners from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The passage I'm about to read now is basically three months later, this is now February 2009. We're increasingly desperate, we're living in this town of Miran Shah, North Waziristan. I said on the video that we were on the mountains of Afghanistan. I essentially said whatever they wanted me to say in the video.

In past cases, what the Taliban had done was they would kill the Afghan driver first. There had been an Italian journalist kidnapped in southern Afghanistan and they had beheaded his driver Sayed Agha and then produced that video tape as a way to increase pressure on that, and I hated to lie and make my family see those videos but, you know, I hoped it would potentially save Asad's life.

We requested, in mid-February, that our kidnapper, he'd essentially left us in the tribal areas and gone off to the city of Karachi. He lived in Karachi, Pakistan, he was an active Taliban commander who had lived in Karachi. He came back to Miran Shah at our request, and he agreed that I could make a call to Kristen and try to restart negotiations which had been stalled essentially for the last three months, and this is an account of what happens. This passage is literally the end of a chapter I'm writing and then Kristen will start immediately reading because her chapter begins.

> I dial my home number, and the answering machine picks up. I hear Kristen's joyful voice ask callers to leave us a message. "Kristen, it's David," I say into the machine.

"Kristen, are you there?" No one picks up. "Kristen can you hear me?" "Kristen, Kristen can you hear me?", I repeat, thinking that she might be asleep. "I'm calling, I'm with the Taliban. We're calling to try to negotiate. Kristen, are you there?", I say, increasingly worried we will miss this opportunity. "Kristen! Kristen!" Our kidnapper orders me to end the call. Fearing I won't be able to call again, I blurt out, "I love you" and hang up. We sit in the car for roughly fifteen minutes.

Our kidnapper is nervous that the calls are being traced. They fear our car will be targeted in an American drone strike. I ask him to let me try one more time. I dial our home number. Again, the answering machine picks up.

Mulvihill:

I hear a man's voice calling my name as I stand outside the front door. "Kristen, Kristen, are you there?" For a brief moment, I think some strange man has broken into our apartment and is now pleading to be let out, because he'd been gone a couple months at that point. Then I realize it's David. My mom has gone back to Maine for the week, and my brother and his wife are here for the long weekend and Valentine's Day. On Sunday we go out to dinner and a movie, something I haven't done in a long time. It's more apparent to me that I have become a captive as well. This experience is shifting from a crisis to a lifestyle.

I rush to get the key in the door, stumble over the answering machine and pick up just in time. "David, David," I say breathlessly, "Can you hear me?" "Yes," he replies. "I love you," I add. "Can you get a pen and paper," he says, "I'm going to give you a number to call me back on." Adding, "Do not trace the call. Do not let anyone trace the call. Do not let the government trace it."

Rohde: And this is the last reading. Unfortunately, the negotiations continue to go nowhere. I eventually escape from captivity with Tahir, my colleague. At that point, my captors had reduced their demands to eight million dollars in cash and the release of four prisoners, which was completely impossible for my family or newspaper to potentially fulfill.

This passage actually describes what life became like living in North Waziristan. You know, this, again, this is the tribal areas of Pakistan. This is the area where some people believe Osama Bin Laden is hiding, and there were Arab and Uzbek militants in the area. There were Uzbek militants who actually were teaching my guards how to make roadside bombs. But most of my time was spent inside houses with large mud brick walls around them with my guards who were all Afghan Taliban.

It was odd; while we were in this isolated area, we also saw evidence that globalization is even occurring in the tribal areas of Pakistan. My captors Googled me, they were able to discover my connection to Richard Holbrooke, and they actually found my brother Lee. He runs a small aviation consulting company which has four fulltime employees, but he's the president of the company. It's based up in New Hampshire.

My captors read that and they said, "Your brother is president of a company that manufactures jumbo jets and if they would just sell one jumbo jet, they could produce the ransom we want."

And the other odd thing was that in this house we lived in, Pakistan has a large textile industry and they export things to the United States and one of these exports is bedspreads, and so in the house where I lived at one point with my guards, each night before we would go to sleep, we would each curl up under a different bedspread that was made for export to the United States. I curled up under a pink, Barbie bedspread. The chief guard who is our kidnapper's younger brother had a Spiderman bedspread and another guard had a Hannah Montana bedspread.

My guards had no idea who any of them were and then to pass the time, they were increasingly bored as well, they would sing songs at night after dinner and this passage describes what happens. At first they have me sing in Pashto, the local language, and they teach me and I used the notebook I literally brought for that interview to write down the lyrics in Pashto just phonetically. Their favorite Taliban song they had me sing is called "You Have Atomic Bombs But We Have Suicide Bombers" and this describes what happens in other nights. At our guards' urging, I switched to American song tunes.

> In a halting off-key voice, I sing Frank Sinatra's version of New York, New York and describe it as a story of a villager who tries to succeed in the city and support his family. I'm trying to convince them that all American's aren't millionaires. I sing Bruce Springsteen's "Born To Run" and describe it as a portrayal of the struggle of average Americans. When I sing John Lennon's "Imagine," our guard showed little interest in the lyrics and asked for something livelier. I realized that my guards too need a break from our grim existence, but I feel like a performing monkey when they tell me to sing in Pashto for visiting Taliban commanders. I know they are simply laughing at me.
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> I intentionally avoid American love songs, trying to dispel their belief that all Americans are hedonists. Despite my efforts, romantic songs, whatever their language, are the guards' favorites by far. The Beatle's song "She Loves You" which popped into my head soon after I received a letter from my wife through the International Red Cross, is the most popular song. For reasons that baffle me, the guards relish singing it with me in English. I begin by singing its first verse. The guards, along with Tahir and Asad, then join me in the chorus. "She loves you, yeah yeah yeah," we sing with Kalashnikov assault rifles lying on the floor around us.

That's the end of the reading, I just want to say quickly that to sum up, professionally I see what's happened in Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2001 as a tragedy. I was in Kabul when it fell, when the Taliban fell in 2001, and I spent some time in Iraq but really spent most of my time in Afghanistan and Pakistan during that period. And in terms of this kidnapping, you know, I escaped from captivity 18 months ago and today

North Waziristan in the area where I was held captive remains essentially a Taliban mini state.

Faisal Shahzad, the young man that tried to set off the car bomb in Times Square, was trained in North Waziristan. So was the other young man from Colorado who was arrested when he entered New York and was trying to set up a bombing here, Mr. Zazi.

Despite repeated requests from the Clinton administration, the Pakistani military has refused to carry out operations in North Waziristan. The United States has, since 2001, provided at least 10 billion dollars in military aid to Pakistan. And in the hopes of getting better cooperation from the Pakistani military, the Obama Administration decided to increase military aid to Pakistan in the fall. The sum that now will be going to the Pakistani military is 2 billion dollars a year.

And I want to reiterate, though, what Kristen said, I'm not criticizing all Pakistanis for what happened. I've had many Pakistanis apologize, I was able to and I can talk about an escape with the help of a very brave, moderate Pakistani and Tahir, a very brave, moderate Afghan. And just lastly, on a personal note I just can't tell you how lucky and proud I am to be sitting here tonight with this amazing woman, and we thank you so much for listening to us and we're eager to hear your questions. [APPLAUSE]

Hoge: David and Kristen, I'm going to ask you a couple of questions myself. From the readings, I remembered and I wanted to ask you, particularly in this mode you are now of one who is sending a message; I want to know what the other one is receiving. When you did the videos, David, you write often in the book that you would do simple things, show your wedding ring, I forget a few others. Could you recall what those were, in other words the visual messages you were trying to send? And, Kristen, did you get them?

Rohde: I got a sunburn, that was one of the things, I intentionally sat out in the yard, I knew they were going to be filming a video, one time they were going to take us off to a snowy hillside so I sat outside the days before and tried to make my face as red as it could be so I would look healthier to her. I did try to flash my wedding ring. And I just sort of made it, you know, tried to make it sound sort of stilted but, you know, I knew it was difficult for her to see the videos and I wasn't sure what, you know, if she'd understand the messages I was trying to send.

Mulvihill: And I absolutely saw the wedding ring, the twisting of the wedding ring and actually the one video where he had sat out in the sun, you know, we watched it with our security team and what not, and these are pretty seasoned guys that are all former special something, you know. And they were, like, "Damn, he looks good!" like nobody could quite believe why he looked so healthy. And then he told me when he got out that he'd sat in the sun.

And then in terms of the language, you know, I was actually prepped by the FBI to expect these videos and phone calls and what not, and so we knew everything was highly scripted. And then I could tell by the intonation in his voice, there was one video in particular where David said, "Tell journalists around the world to write about us and to tell our

story." And, you know, I was talking to a government official about it, and he's like, "Don't you think it should be made public at this point?" This was 3 months into the captivity and I'm like, "You know, I don't think it's coming from David, I think, you know, it's scripted." And just the flat way in which he delivered it, I don't think it would…

Hoge: You, of course, did not know it had not been made public, yes?

Rohde: I found out about that because in terms of the press blackout, the key player in the press blackout was actually Al Jazeera. And Al Jazeera refused to air this video that they had shot of us on the snowy hillside and it did frustrate the Haqqanis.

Hoge: You were to deduce from that there might be a…

Rohde: Yes.

Hoge: David, you'd write about, and you just mentioned it, how the Taliban are smart enough to find out that you have a brother in New Hampshire who makes cars. They exaggerate what he makes, but still they can find that out. Presumably they could have found out that you won your first Pulitzer Prize for writing stories that were passionately in behalf of Muslims. Eight thousand Muslims, the remains of eight thousand Muslims, the expulsion of Muslims from Bosnia that was going on that you exposed; I know that that didn't make any difference to the Taliban but did they find that out? Did you try to persuade them of that? And why wouldn't it have made a difference?

Rohde: I told them. I told them in the first hours of the kidnapping and I think it was a mistake. I think it increased their sense of my value, and I thought it would help me. I always thought if I was kidnapped in Afghanistan, I could mention my reporting in Bosnia and it might lead them to see me as differently; but one of the sad things in terms of the two times I was detained, I think journalists were more respected, there was a sense that there could be neutral third parties in the war in Bosnia. Fourteen years later, that didn't really seem to exist in Afghanistan.

Aid workers like John, who was treated much worse than me, I'm almost embarrassed to be sitting here talking about sitting around and getting suntans. You know, I was treated very, very well by my captors, and I'm very lucky. But we don't have that neutrality that we used to have… again, whether you're a journalist, or an aid worker or a diplomat, you're a target. They told me, "We understand you're a journalist but you are guilty for all the crimes of the American government because you are an American citizen."

Hoge: I take the point you have made, both of you made, about all Pakistanis are not Haqqanis in North Waziristan. But I want to talk about that particular part of Pakistan and the fact that, you write about the fact, that you on one day were moved around in daylight by your captors in front of Pakistanis who must have guessed what was going on, and that nobody interceded, including the government and the military and the people that are up there. And then you write this: "As long as the Taliban continue to enjoy safe haven in Pakistan, there is no chance of defeating them in Pakistan." Is that still your belief?

Rohde: Absolutely. To be fair to the Pakistani government, more Pakistani soldiers have died fighting the Taliban since 2001 than American and NATO soldiers have died fighting in Afghanistan. The number is roughly three thousand Pakistanis and there's about fifteen hundred at least American casualties in Afghanistan. They have pushed them out of the Swat Valley, which was near Islamabad. They have mounted operations, but they continue to allow the Haqqanis to operate in North Waziristan, and I want to read from a WikiLeaks cable to explain why that is, and it's, you know, there's a strategic reason why the Pakistani military is doing this.

This is a cable that the former US Ambassador in Pakistan, Anne Patterson, wrote to Washington. Basically the issue was how do you break this bond? How do you get the Pakistani military to turn on the Haqqanis and the Afghan Taliban instead of giving them these safe havens? And she wrote: "Justified or not, increased Indian investment in, trade with, and development support to the Afghan government, which the United States Government has encouraged, causes Pakistan to embrace Taliban groups all the more closely as anti-India allies." And later in the cable near its conclusion, she says: "No amount of money will sever that link."

So what you have here is the sort of India-Pakistan rivalry playing out. The Pakistani military supporting the Taliban as proxies to stop what they see as Indian encroachment in Afghanistan and, you know, American troops in a sense are sort of caught in the middle.

Hoge: By the way, a lot of us in this room know Anne Patterson because she was the deputy American Ambassador here at the UN two or three years ago. David and Kristen, there's a book, a new book published by the Center on International Cooperation at NYU by Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn. That book argues that the Taliban could be persuaded to renounce Al Qaeda and the only way to end the war is to begin peace overtures to the Taliban. Do you agree with that?

Rohde: I do, and I think that what negotiations would do is sort of force the Taliban to say where they stand; are they going to stay close to Al Qaeda? Will they break with them? And it will also… you know, there's a theory that essentially the Pakistani government is holding the Haqqanis or the Taliban as a card that they can play in the region, and I think we need to sort of force Pakistan to play that card if, you know, they…I hope that the Pakistanis do control the Afghan Taliban and that they can bring them to the negotiating table.

An even more troubling scenario is that the Pakistani military doesn't control the Afghan Taliban, they don't have a very good track record. The Pakistani military supported militancy among Pakistanis and they've lost control of the Pakistani Taliban. You know, Baitullah Mehsud who killed Benazir Bhutto… I just think that the Pakistani military, similar to the ISI, may not realize that they don't control these militants as much as they think they do, and, you know, starting serious negotiations will, I think, force everyone to show their true allegiances.

Hoge: From your time with the Haqqanis, do you think they're Jihadist? Or do you think their real focus is Afghanistan?

Rohde: Alex and Felix are actually here in New York, and I met with them a few days ago and I promised them, and I mean this, and I say this in every talk. The Haqqanis are very different from the Taliban who are sort of fighting in southern Afghanistan for their valley or their village. To me, the Haqqanis are the most hard-line Taliban, they're young Afghans who have essentially grown up in the tribal areas of Pakistan and spent all this time around Arab members of Al Qaeda, Uzbek members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and they have been much more exposed to that sort of global ideology. There are other Taliban that simply care about local issues about their tribe, you know, are they getting a fair shake from the Karzai government. Those are the Taliban that, you know, you could negotiate with and potentially split off from Al Qaeda and the more hard-line elements like the Haqqanis.

Hoge: Let me just ask you one last thing and then we'll go to the floor. You mentioned in passing Captain Nadeem, you didn't mention him by name but you mentioned him as a person, and it's a wonderful story how you finally effected your escape and then your first impression of him, and then your growing impression of him, and finally the gift he gave you before you left. Just tell that story if you will, and then we'll all go to the floor.

Rohde: We decided to escape. I mean to be frank, I just absolutely despised my captors. I hated them for what they were doing to my family and that they--I said this in the book--they describe themselves as a sort of a pious religious movement that's defending their country from this, what they saw as a sort of a Christian-Hindu-Judeo conspiracy to obliterate Islam from the face of the Earth.

The fact that they continued with these insane demands, to me, you know, showed that they were more like a criminal organization and it was about, you know, this young Taliban commander that invited me to interview him and making himself famous among other Taliban.

We were moved to a house in Miran Shah that was the closest to the one Pakistani military base in the town. The Pakistani soldiers never came off that base. As I said, my guards took bomb-making classes, huge explosions would go off in the middle of Miran Shah, and the Pakistanis wouldn't come off the base to investigate. But we decided we should try to escape from that house because if we could get outside of the house over this wall at the edge of the house, we could maybe make our way to this Pakistani base.

The second thing that happened was that when we moved in the house, I had chores, I would clean the house and I found a car tow rope, and I thought we might be able to use that for our escape.

And the third thing that happened was that the electricity came back on and the house (and this is very luxurious, again, John, I'm embarrassed) had a, it had a cooler which is like a very crude sort of air conditioner that's very common in South Asia, it's like a giant evaporator. And we realized when the power came back on that afternoon that the noise from the cooler might disguise our movements and all that happened was I waited a couple of hours until, you know, everyone had gone to sleep and then I got up and I went to the bathroom. And I didn't wake the guards up and ask them for permission as I was supposed to do.

Tahir then followed me outside of the room. We took the car tow rope, walked up a flight of stairs to the roof of the house. We had been up there when the guards were praying and I'd seen where we could tie the rope to, there was like a drainage hole we could loop it through. We did that, and then we threw the rope over the roof and Tahir looked and said, "I think it's too short." I then looked and said, you know, I wasn't sure what to do and then I actually got down on all fours. Tahir is a sort of heavy set, chunky guy. I was a little thinner then, I lost about ten pounds, so it was sort of like Abbott and Costello escape from the Taliban.

I got down on all fours, he stepped on my back and then he went over the wall. And I stood up and he was gone and I realized he was so nervous that he had actually forgotten his sandals. I grabbed his sandals, tried to stuff them in the pocket of my shalwar kameez, the local clothes I was wearing. They wouldn't fit so I just jammed them down the front of my pants, climbed over the wall myself, slid down the wall with this rope and landed in a sewage ditch.

You know, I looked up and Tahir was striding down the road as fast as he could on his bare feet and it was just sort of a dirt path. We were in this kind of warren of houses and I just followed him. We walked into this riverbed and, you know, this is the truth. We couldn't talk very long because the guards would get suspicious that we were planning something so we hadn't actually agreed on what we were going to do once we got over the wall.

And we essentially were walking down this riverbed arguing, and there were these dogs barking in the distance and we were very afraid the Taliban would find us. Tahir didn't trust the Pakistani military, he knew about their relationship from the Haqqanis and he said, "I don't want to go to the Pakistani military base, they'll just hand us back to the Haqqanis." I kept saying, "We have to go to the base, it's at least 15 to 20 miles to the border." Tahir had hurt his ankle coming down the wall so he eventually agreed that we would go to the base.

We walked through another group of houses. I was very nervous, I didn't know where we were going. And then he brought us onto this asphalt road and we started walking down this asphalt road and there were streetlights, actually, I remember thinking to myself, "This is crazy." You know, we're walking down this brightly lit area and all of a sudden I heard someone shout to our left and I heard the sound of a Kalashnikov rifle being loaded and Tahir put his hands up and he said to me, "Don't move or they'll shoot us."

And I thought, you know, this is it, we've been recaptured. And then he said, "This is the base." And he had actually done an extraordinarily skilled job of guiding us to the base.

We spent about ten minutes standing in the road with our hands up. We were told that if we moved at all, we would be shot. The guards on the outside of the base thought that we were suicide bombers. I had a beard down to about here and, as I said, I was dressed in local clothes. They had us walk over an earthen berm, then they had us lie down on the

ground and then finally I suggested that we take our shirts off to show we didn't have suicide vests on, and we were allowed on the base.

I met this young officer, Captain Nadeem, who apologized to me immediately for what had happened to us, and he later on gave me this book called *The Glorious Islam* and it was much more of a kind of Sufi interpretation of Islam and he talked about how much he despised the Taliban and how they had distorted his faith. And then most importantly, he let me make a phone call to the United States and if he hadn't done that, other officers could have come along and decided to hand us back to the Taliban.

I remember spending, you know, sitting there for five minutes as he had sent a soldier to go find a prepaid-like Pakistani telephone card so that we could make this call and finally the soldier showed up and I dialed my home number and again the answering machine picked up. And I said, "It's David, you know, we've escaped, you know, pick up, pick up!" And my mother-in-law picked up the phone and she did a great job of…

Hoge: They always do…

Rohde: Yeah, I wasn't exactly a dreamboat son-in-law two months into the marriage. But anyway, she did a great job of writing down where I was, the name of the officer, the name of the base and, Kristen, I'm sorry for the long answer, Kristen can tell you what she then did.

Mulvihill: I was a couple of blocks away from the apartment. I'd gone out maybe twice during his captivity and, of course, those are the two times that he called. And my mom took notes on a post-it pad, you know, and so I got home and there were all these post-it notes all over the sofa and I was very worried about her, I'm like, "Oh my God, she's going to have a heart attack" because it was tremendous pressure to get those details and she got every one right.

And also David, David apologized to her on that call and said, "I'm so sorry what I put everybody through." And her response was, "Just come home safe," you know, like she was…we were all thrilled to hear from him but we were also really terrified that he would be handed over to another group, that the Haqqanis would recapture him, that the Pakistani officials might hold him for questioning, and I was very nervous something might happen to the helicopter flying him out, you name it; that night nobody slept.

David McCraw, who is a lawyer with *The New York Times*, came over to the apartment with a foreign editor. Between the four of us, we contacted Hillary Clinton again and Richard Holbrooke, and throughout the captivity, we were always sort of trying to weigh, "Was there a benefit to reaching out to government officials? Or would it raise David's value and keep him in captivity longer?"

But I think it really sort of helped in the end where we could, we had met everybody, we had met Pakistani officials as well, and Hillary Clinton and Richard Holbrooke called up members of the ISI and the Pakistani government and said, "We know where David Rohde is. Please make sure he's exited from the country safely." And he was, so we were reunited in Dubai about twenty four hours later or so. Yeah.

Hoge: Excellent. I'd love to get some questions. Ellie Hearne there in the third row.

Ellie Hearne: Thank you, I'm Ellie Hearne of IPI. Thank you both for coming here and telling your story. My question is about ransoms, I look forward to reading the book so it's probably in there. We hear so much about how they are used to finance terrorism and encourage more kidnappings and piracy and all that sort of thing. So, in theory, I'm obviously against them. But if someone in my family were kidnapped, I think that would change, and I just wondered what you both think about that. Thank you.

Mulvihill: I would agree with you, I'm against it in theory and then in reality if it's going to be the only way in actuality that you're going to see your loved one again, you entertain that idea. And our hope was, we were, you know, the US government does not negotiate, they would not release prisoners for David; they would not exchange funds, but the FBI sort of encouraged the family to continue a dialogue to go back and forth on amounts which we don't mention in the book. We don't want to encourage future kidnappings or anything like that.

But, you know, there were no good decisions to be made, that's how I felt throughout the course of this experience. You know, if we had wound up paying ransom, it was going to go to finance future kidnappings, you name it. So it was tremendously empowering that he escaped. But making that decision was not a pleasant one, but you know family was absolutely willing to do that if necessary, yeah.

Hoge: They also, did they not, have false information about money that had been paid in the past for other people and also for the number of prisoners exchanged. Wasn't that a lie, basically?

Rohde: Well, this is the problem that, yes, there was some false information, but it is true and, you know, frankly, the United States and Britain, and Canada don't pay for the release prisoners, but European governments do. And in the case that I mentioned of the Italian journalist, there were five prisoners released from the Afghan National Prison in exchange for the Italian journalist. And both the Afghan driver and the Afghan journalist were killed in that case.

But in terms of false information, I mean, John who's sitting here in the audience, he was released before, you know, we escaped and they were convinced that the American Government, they told me had paid $15 million for John's release, which is completely false. The US government doesn't pay. They also believe that, if you remember and I'm sorry, just in the last, you know, 48 hours, of death of the four Americans that were kidnapped by Somali pirates; if you remember the earlier case in the spring of 2009 where the three Somali pirates were shot by American snipers, you know, they constantly listen to the radio, they are very much in tune with the rest of the world, and they said that story of the three pirates being shot is not true. We know that the United States secretly paid a $25 million dollar ransom for the sea captain. And they really just live in this alternate universe where they have these astoundingly high expectations of what they can get for ransom.

Hoge: John Hirsch here in the front row.

John Hirsch: I'm John Hirsch. First of all, thank you both very much, and of course everybody here is just enormously gratified that you're here this evening and that you're okay. I just want to draw you out more on the United States relationship with Pakistan, because what you said as I inferred, and I think you actually said, is that anything out of all this money to Pakistan makes almost no difference. You quoted Anne Patterson anyway to that effect. And then you also sort of indicated one way or another, at least part of the ISI is in cahoots with the Taliban or in cooperation with the Taliban.

Then I remember Richard Holbrooke once on one of these PBS news hour sort of saying to the person who questioned him, "Well, what else can we do?" or some such remark. The United States had to deal with them, you know, there was nothing else to do in order to deal with the Taliban. So could you kind of just explain a little more your own analysis of what the Pakistani government and ISI is all about and whether you think the United States government has any other options other than to keep doling out more and more millions, if not billions of dollars?

Rohde: I think the Pakistanis don't trust us. They see, and they are correct that we basically abandoned the region after the Soviets withdrew in 1989, and they think we'll just repeat that so they want to keep the Taliban as proxies because then if the US will leave, then they'll be left sort of defenseless against India. In my mind, the only leverage the United States has is the amount of money they're giving the Pakistani military.

I asked a senior American official, you know, why are we increasing the money? Why aren't we…which should be private, publicly threatening the Pakistanis. Publicly browbeating the Pakistanis will completely backfire almost in any country, and that's how it will work. But why is the United States privately threatening to cut off military aid unless the Pakistani military goes into North Waziristan? And I was told by this senior US official that it is off the table.

And the real fear, in a sense, Pakistan has us over a barrel, they out-bluff us. I think the fear is that they will stop cooperation, you know, the US won't be able to carry out drone strikes in the tribal areas and we, in essence, are terrified of one bomb going off in Times Square, which would, I think, be politically devastating here in the United States. And so the Pakistanis, in essence, you know, they just, they're just waiting us out, they out-bluff us. They, you know, they dare us to kind of cut the aid and we won't call their bluff because we're afraid of our own domestic political cycle.

Hoge: Gentleman here in the second row.

Nico Douillet: Thank you. David, I think I remember reading in the…

Hoge: Could you introduce yourself, please?

Douillet: Oh, I'm Nico Douillet from the UN, across the road. I think I remember reading in the series that you wrote for *The New York Times* that what you observed in Waziristan was a fully functioning, almost like state within the state, with like electricity, schools, things like that. So, if you

could give a little bit more detail about that and what are your thoughts on maybe how it's funded and so forth?

Rohde: Yeah, they, my guards would get bored sometimes and they'd take me out for drives. We can talk about this separately, they also believe that there were American drones that were hunting for me, they thought that the United States wanted to kill me because I was such a valuable prisoner and they wanted to eliminate the leverage the Taliban had.

But when we would go on these drives, we would see road crews, you know, reconstructing roads. There were Taliban police units. At one point, we were moved from one house to another, the Taliban had captured an Afghan police truck, exactly a Ford Ranger, they're all over Afghanistan. They had captured one and brought it over the border into the tribal areas of Pakistan, and we drove down the main highway from North to South Waziristan for three hours. With this captured Afghan police truck carrying our blankets and pots and pans and all of our belongings, and we were in the car behind it, and, again, there are no Pakistani forces. They're on a handful of bases, there are resupply convoys for those bases, but they...the resupply convoys don't, you know, challenge the Taliban. The Pakistanis in their defense say they're spread too thin to sort of take on the Taliban in North Waziristan, so they controlled everything; schools, you know, they stroll, Arabs and Uzbeks kind of stroll through the main market in Miran Shah. They're not, you know, worried at all about their safety.

Hoge: William in the back.

William Verdone: Thank you. Would you give us some idea…William Verdone, by the way. Would you give us some idea about Bin Laden? Did you get any new information? And what could have happened with your captors? Do you have any idea?

Hoge: William, would you pass the microphone to the gentleman right in front of you who has a question as well? I'd like to hear that question and then we'll answer both. And please identify yourself.

Richard Barrett: Yeah, Richard Barrett from *The Post*, you see I'm actually in hiding**.**

Rohde: Oh, hi. You should be up here.

Barrett: I don't think so. I just wanted to ask you about the motives of your captors, because you mentioned they wanted money; you mentioned they wanted standing among their colleagues; and you mentioned also they wanted publicity for their cause. But I just wondered what your analysis was of their sort of fundamental motivation. Thanks.

Hoge: Just answer both of those if you can.

Rohde: Sure, on Bin Laden, I didn't hear any information about him. My guards respected him, they referred to him as Sheik Osama and they would essentially watch these videos that would show Muslims being attacked in Chechnya, and Kashmir, in Iraq. I'd lived, when I was a prisoner there during the Israeli attack on Gaza, and I was living with the Afghan Taliban they were absolutely furious as the Palestinian death toll went higher and higher and higher and, you know, there was a much smaller

Israeli death toll and they very much…so I didn't see Bin Laden but that whole view of the Ummah being under assault was believed by Afghans. I don't think that was always true, but that's what it was like in 2009.

In terms of the motivations of my captors, I mean, this might sound simplistic but I almost saw them as…it was almost like young organized crime capos, if you will. Badruddin Haqqani who is the younger brother of Sirajuddin Haqqani--Sirajuddin runs the Haqqani network--it was sort of an effort by his younger brother, he oversaw our kidnapping, I think to kind of use me to make his name. The Taliban commander that invited me to the interview was trying to do the same thing. And it was a prestige and they were very determined to get more prisoners than the Taliban had gotten in the Italian case.

You know, they were like young men everywhere, they kind of wanted to be famous and, you know, I thought in particular that my kidnapper was particularly greedy, and I had many arguments with him about it because his demands were so high. You know, to be fair to them, they would say that they believed that American troops were forcibly converting Afghan Muslims to Christianity. You know, many Taliban believe that schools teach young Afghan girls to become prostitutes, that's why they blow them up and burn them. So it was, you know, it was a variety of motivations but most of all this really distorted view of what was happening in Afghanistan.

Hoge: Here on the aisle.

Resul Şahınol: Thank you very much, I'm Resul Şahınol from Turkish permanent mission here. First of all, I would like to thank you very much, Kristen and David, for sharing this experience tonight with us. Also, it would be very interesting to read their books as well. And I think this story, this interesting story, has both good and bad sides. It's bad because I understand the difficulty that you had to go through during all the seven months of captivity. It's unimaginable for anyone who did not suffer from such a thing.

It's good because it seems like that you both understand each other better and it seems like you are loved ones to each other; so maybe that is the good side of the story. And at the end of the story you gave birth to a book rather than a baby, so I think that is the interesting part of the story.

But my question relates to a different issue, actually. From the global perspective, how can confidence between these countries, or Taliban, or Al Qaeda and the West can be restored? How can these kind of acts of terrorism be prevented from your own perspective? Thank you.

Rohde: I think it's vital that the United States find a way to kind of lower its…try to stop doing so much in Afghanistan and Pakistan at the same time. Focus on a smaller number of things, but most of all find a way, and this is sort of a platitude but, find a way to more quietly, consistently, and effectively help moderates like this guy Captain Nadeem.

You know, more training of the Afghan army. We've trained roughly three times as many soldiers in Iraq as we trained in Afghanistan. It really was a paltry effort in Afghanistan and, you know, Pakistan has

enormous economic problems. It's all those difficult social and economic and political problems that we have to work with and help the moderate political parties in the country deal with and moderate leaders.

And I do think that is the majority of Pakistan. Yes, there's a tremendous amount of anti-Americanism in Pakistan, but the Taliban are also…that doesn't make you pro-Taliban. They actually dislike the Taliban intensely at the same time and they're sort of eager for some sort of third way forward. Everyone is looking for steady jobs, you know, a good education for their children, and a government, and a police force that sort of protects them instead of preying on them.

The Taliban are saying that strict Sharia will deliver those three things. You know, we're saying democracy will. And, you know, we're not succeeding, the effort is not working and for a variety of reasons but it's how do we help those moderates more? How do we deliver those things more effectively? There's no military solution.

Hoge: I think I'm going to end this with just a small, personal comment. First of all, there are books out for sale there, we're going to stick around. I know Kristen and David would be happy to sign those books.

There's one last part of this story and David actually asked me not to mention it explicitly and I won't. But I have a rather nice implicit way to tell you about it. In the book, at one point, in a very feeling moment, particularly if you are a parent and I think a lot of us are, Kristen is thinking her opportunity to have a family, to start a family with David, the man she's married, is disappearing. And part of the enormous longing she has in the book is for the chance to start a family with David.

Last week I asked David if he and Kristen could have dinner with me and my wife tonight after this session. And he answered by saying no, they've got to leave because they have to get home by nine o'clock to relieve the babysitter. There's the happy result. Thank you so much for coming.