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**Ricardo Sanchez**

*Military Reporters and Editors Forum Luncheon Address*

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[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

**Moderator:** Good luck.

**Gen. Sanchez:** Thank you. Did you hear that? He said, "Good luck." What does -- What does that mean? You mean -- Is this a hostile audience or what, Jim?

**Moderator:** There's landmines everywhere [unintelligible].

**Gen. Sanchez:** Yeah, there's landmines -- landmines and Claymores, and all that kind of stuff. You know, I, at one point didn't, know where the enemy was -- whether it was here or there.

But, normally, I start out when I'm speaking to people by asking the question, "Is there any Press in the room?" I guess the right question here, "Is there anyone here that is not in the Press?" And I see at least -- I know of at least two people, but beyond that I think most of you are with the Press Corps.

But some of you may not believe this but I'm definitely glad to be here. When Sig asked me if I would consider addressing this group, there was absolutely no doubt in my mind that I should come into the lion's den. Okay? (So, I am...aware of where I am, Jim.)



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Now, this was important because I have firmly believed since Desert Shield that it is necessary for the strength of our democracy that the Military and the Press Corps maintain a strong, mutually respectful and enabling relationship. This continues to be problematic for our country, especially during times of war. Now one of the greatest military correspondents of our time -- the award that was just presented is named after him -- Joe Galloway, made me an absolute believer when he joined the 24th infantry division during Desert Storm. That was the first time I met Joe, and he and I have a friendship that dates back to winter in -- of 1990.

Now today -- today I will attempt to do two things. First I will give you my assessment of the Military and Press relationship as I see it -- and I hope that you take it for what it is; it is the observation of a military commander that has had extensive Press engagements, both good and bad -- and then I will provide you some of my thoughts on the current state of the war effort.

Now as I stated, as you -- as you all know I have had a wide range of relationships and experiences with our nation's military reporters and editors. There are some in your ranks who I consider to be the epitome of journalistic professionalism: Joe Galloway, Thom Shanker, Sig [Christensen], and John Burns immediately come to mind. They exemplify what America should demand of our journalists: tough reporting that relies upon integrity, objectivity, and fairness to give accurate and thorough accounts that strengthen our freedom of the press and in turn our great democracy.

On the other hand, unfortunately, I have had to issue ultimatums to some of you for unscrupulous reporting that was solely focused on supporting your agenda and preconceived notions of what our military had done or not done. I also refused to talk to the *European Stars and Stripes* for the last two years of my command in Germany for their extreme bias and single-minded focus on Abu Ghraib.

Now let me review some of the descriptive phrases that have been used by some of you that have made my own personal interfaces with the Press Corps difficult: "dictatorial and somewhat dense," "a liar," "a torturer" "does not get it." In -- In some cases I have never even met those that use those comments. Yet they felt qualified to make character judgments that are communicated to the world.



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My experience is not unique and we can find other such examples as the treatment of Secretary Brown during Katrina. In my opinion, this is the worst display of journalism imaginable by those of us that are bound by a strict value system of selfless service, honor, and integrity.

Almost invariably, my perception is that the sensationalistic value of these assessments is what provided the edge that they sought for self-aggrandizement or to advance their individual quests for getting on the front page with their stories. As I understand it, your measure of worth is how many front page stories you have written, and unfortunately some within your ranks will compromise their integrity and display questionable ethics as they seek to keep America informed. This is much like the intel analysts whose effectiveness is measured by the number of intelligence reports he provides and not by the value that it is to the commander. For some, it seems that as long as you get a front page story there is little or no regard for the "collateral damage" that will be caused. Personal reputations sometimes have no value; they report with total impunity and are rarely held accountable for unethical conduct.

Given the near instantaneous ability to report actions on the ground, the responsibility to accurately and truthfully report takes on an unprecedented importance. The speculative and often uninformed initial reporting that characterizes our media appears to be rapidly becoming the standard of the industry. An Arab proverb states: "Four things come not back: the spoken word, the spent arrow, the past, the neglected opportunity." Once reported, your assessments become conventional wisdom and nearly impossible to change. Other major challenges are your willingness sometimes to allow manipulation by "high level authorities" who leak stories and by lawyers who seek to strengthen their arguments through the use of hyperbole. Your unwillingness to accurately and prominently correct your mistakes and your agenda driven biases sometimes contribute to this corrosive environment.

All of these challenges combined create a media environment that does a tremendous disservice to America -- in some instances. Over the course of this war tactically insignificant events have become strategic defeats for our country because of the tremendous power and impact of the media and by extension you, individually, the journalist. We realize that because of the near real time reporting environment that you face it is difficult to report accurately in some cases.



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In my business one of our fundamental truths is that "the first report is always wrong." Unfortunately, in your business "the first report" gives Americans who rely on the snippets of CNN, if you will, their "truths" and perspectives on an issue.

As a corollary to this deadline driven need to publish initial impressions or observations versus objective facts, there is an additional challenge for us who are the subject of your reporting. When you assume that you're correct and on the moral high ground on a story because we have not responded to questions you provided, I think this is the ultimate in arrogance and distortion of ethics. One of your highly respected fellow journalists once told me that there are some amongst you who "feed from a pig's trough." If that is who I am dealing with then I will never respond, otherwise we will both get dirty and the pigs then will love it and I can't control it. Now this does not mean that your story is accurate or inaccurate. It just means that your subject chooses not to respond.

Now I do not believe that all of these challenges is what our forefathers intended of this great profession.

The code of ethics for the Society of Professional Journalists states -- and I don't mean to preach to you, but I'll quote:

...public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty.

And,

*Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility.*

End quote.

The basic ethics of a journalist is laid out here -- of seeing truth, fair and comprehensive accounting of events and issues, thoroughness and honesty -- all are sometimes victims of a massive agenda-driven competition for economic or political supremacy. The death knell of your ethics has been enabled by your -- some parent organizations who have chosen to align themselves with political agendas.



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Now what is clear to me is that you are perpetuating the corrosive partisan politics that is destroying our country and killing our service members who are at war -- in some cases.

My assessment is that your profession, to some extent, has strayed from these worthy ethical standards and have allowed external agendas to -- to manipulate what the American public sees on TV, what they read in our newspapers, and what they see and read on the web. For some of you, just like some of our politicians, the truth is of little-to-no-value if it does not fit your own preconceived notions, biases, or agendas.

It is astounding to me when I hear the vehement disagreements with the military's foray into information operations that seek to disseminate the truth and inform the Iraqi people in order to counter our enemy's blatant propaganda. As I assess various media entities, some are unquestionably engaged in political propaganda within our own country that is uncontrolled. There is no question in my mind that the strength of our democracy and our freedom remains linked to your ability to exercise this freedom that we fight for.

Freedom of the Press, I adamantly support and because this is the basic foundation of our democracy and I -- and I have completely supported the embedding of media into our formations up until my very last day in uniform. And I will continue to do so. The issue is -- is one of maintaining professional ethics and standards from within your institution. Military leaders must unquestionably accept that these injustices will happen and whether they like what you print or not they must deal with you and they must enable you in order for you to enlighten the American people. But you must be ethical.

Finally, I will leave this subject with a question that we must ask ourselves: Who is responsible for maintaining the ethical standards of the profession in order to ensure that our democracy does not continue to be threatened by this -- what I consider -- a dangerous shift away from your sacred duty of public enlightenment?

Let me now transition to our current national security condition.

As we all know war is an extension of politics<sup>1</sup> and when a nation goes to war it must bring to bear all elements of power in order to win.



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War fighting is not solely the responsibility of the military commander unless he has been given the responsibility and the resources to synchronize the political, economic, and informational power of the nation during the conduct of that war; and that has not been the case in this war in Iraq.

So who is responsible for developing the grand strategy that will allow America to emerge victorious from this generational struggle against extremism?

After more than four years of fighting, America continues its desperate struggle in Iraq without any concerted effort to devise a strategy that will achieve victory in that war torn country or in the greater conflict against extremism. From a catastrophically flawed, unrealistically optimistic war plan to the Administration's latest surge strategy, this Administration has failed to employ and -- and synchronize its political, economic, and military power. The latest revised strategy is a desperate attempt by the Administration that has not accepted the political and economic realities of this war and they have definitely not been able to communicate effectively that reality to the American people. An even worse and probably more disturbing assessment would be that America can not achieve the political consensus that is necessary to devise a grand strategy that will in fact synchronize and commit our national power to achieve victory. Some of you have heard me talk about our nation's crisis in leadership.

Let me elaborate.

While the politicians espouse their rhetoric designed to preserve their reputations and their political power, our soldiers die. Our national leadership ignored the lessons of World War II as we entered into this war and to this day continue to believe that victory can be achieved through the application of military power alone. Our forefathers understood that tremendous economic and political capacity had to be mobilized, synchronized, and applied if we were to achieve victory in the global wars of last century. That has been and continues to be the key to victory in Iraq. Continued manipulations and adjustments to our military strategy will not achieve victory. The best we can do with this flawed approach is stave off defeat. The Administration, Congress, and the entire interagency, especially the State Department, must shoulder the responsibility for this catastrophic failure and the American people must hold them accountable.



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There has been a glaring, unfortunate, display of incompetent strategic leadership within our national leaders. As a Japanese proverb says, "Action without vision is a nightmare." There is no question that America is living a nightmare with no end in sight.

Since 2003, the politics of war have been characterized by partisanship as the Republican and Democratic parties struggled for power in Washington. National efforts to date have been corrupted by partisan politics that have prevented us from devising as effective, executable, and supportable strategies. At times, these partisan struggles have led us to political decisions that endangered the lives of our sons and daughters on the battlefield. The unmistakable message was that political power had greater priority than our national security objectives. Overcoming this strategic failure is the first step towards achieving victory in Iraq. Without bipartisan cooperation we are doomed to fail. There is nothing going on today in Washington that would give us hope.

If we succeed in crafting a bipartisan strategy for victory, then America must hold all national agencies accountable for developing and executing the political and economic initiatives that will bring about stability, security, political, and economic hope for all Iraqis. That has not been successful to date.

Congress must shoulder a significant responsibility for this failure since there has been no focused oversight of the nation's political and economic initiatives in this war. Exhortations, encouragements, investigations, studies, and discussions will not produce success; this appears to be the nation's only alternative since the transfer of sovereignty. Our continued neglect will only extend the conflict. And America's dilemma is that we no longer control the ability to directly influence the Iraqi institutions. The sovereign Iraqi government must be cooperative in these long term efforts. That is not likely at the levels necessary in the near term.

Our commanders on the ground will continue to make progress and provide time for the development of a grand strategy. That will be wasted effort, as we have seen repeatedly since 2003. In the meantime our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines will continue to die.



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Starting in July of 2003, the message that was repeatedly communicated to Washington by military commanders on the ground was that the military alone could never achieve victory. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines were destined to endure decades of fighting and killing people without the focused, synchronized application of all elements of national power. This was a necessary condition to stabilize Iraq. And any sequential solutions would lead to a prolonged conflict and increased resistance.

By neglect and incompetence at the National Security Council level, that is the path our political leaders chose and now America, more precisely the American military, finds itself in an intractable situation. Clearly, mistakes have been made by the American military in its application of power, but even its greatest failures in this war can be linked to America's lack of commitment, priority, and moral courage in this war effort. Without the sacrifices of our magnificent young men and women in uniform, Iraq would be chaotic well beyond anything that has been experienced to date.

What America must accept as a reality at this point in the war is that our Army and Marine Corps are struggling with the deployment schedules. What is clear is the deployment cycles of our formations have been totally disrupted, the resourcing and training challenges are significant, and America's ability to sustain a force level of 150,000 plus is nonexistent without drastic measures; and these drastic measures have been politically unacceptable to date. The drawdown of the surge to pre-surge levels was never a question. America must understand also that it will take the Army at least a decade to fix the damage that has been done to its full spectrum readiness.

Our Army and Marine Corps will execute as directed, perform magnificently, and never complain. That is the ethic of our warriors and that is what America expects of them. They will not disappoint us.

But America must know the pressures that are being placed on our military institutions as we fight this war. All Americans must demand that these deploying formations are properly resourced, properly trained, and we must never -- and this is the responsibility of every leader in this country -- we must never allow America's support for the soldier to falter. A critical, objective assessment of our nation's ability to execute our national security strategy must be conducted. If we are objective and honest, the results will be surprising to all Americans. There is unacceptable strategic risk.





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America has no choice but to continue our efforts in Iraq. A precipitous withdrawal will unquestionably lead to chaos, in my opinion, that would endanger the stability of the greater Middle East. If this occurs it would have significant adverse effects on the international community. Coalition and American force presence will be required at some level for the foreseeable future. Given the lack of a grand strategy we must move rapidly to minimize that force presence and allow the Iraqis maximum ability to exercise their sovereignty.

At no time in America's history has there been a greater need for bipartisan cooperation. The threat of extremism is real and demands unified action at the same levels demonstrated by our forefathers during World War I and World War II. America has failed to date.

This endeavor also has been further hampered by a coalition effort that can be characterized as hasty, un-resourced, often uncoordinated, and unmanaged. Desperately needed, but essentially ignored, were the political and economic coalitions that were the key to victory and stability in the immediate aftermath of the conventional war. The military coalition was probably the most effective, productive, and effective deployment of forces in decades.

And today, we continue our inept coalition management efforts and, in fact, we are facing ever decreasing troop commitments by our military coalition partners. America's "revised" strategy does not address coalition initiatives and challenges. And we cannot afford to continue this struggle without the support of our coalition partners across all elements of national power. Now, without the political and economic elements of power complementing the tremendous efforts of our -- of our military, we are assured of failure. We continue on that path. America's political leadership must come together and develop this bipartisan grand strategy to achieve victory in this conflict.

Achieving unity of effort in Iraq has been elusive to date primarily because there is no entity that has the authority to direct the actions of our interagency. As I stated before, our National Security Council has been a failure. Furthermore, America's ability to hold the -- the interagency accountable for their failures in this war is non-existent. This must change. We probably need to implement a Goldwater's-like, Nichols Act for the interagency.



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As a nation we must recognize that the enemy we face is committed to destroying our way of life. This enemy is arguably more dangerous than any threat we faced in the twentieth century. Our political leaders must place national security objectives above partisan politics, demand interagency unity of effort, and never again commit America to war without a grand strategy that embraces the basic tenets of the Powell Doctrine.

It seems that Congress recognizes the military cannot achieve victory alone in this war. Yet they continue to demand victory from our military. Who will demand accountability for the failure of our national political leadership involved in the management this war? They have unquestionably been derelict in the performance of their duty. In my profession, these types of leaders would immediately be relieved or court-martialed.

America has sent her soldiers off to war and they must be supported at all costs until we achieve victory or until our political leaders decide to bring them home. Our political and military, leaders, at the strategic level, owe the soldier on the battlefield the strategy, the policies, and the resources to win once they're committed to war. America has not been fully committed to win this war, and they have not provided those policies and the adequate resources to win.

Our nation has not focused on the greatest challenge of our lifetimes. America must demand this unified strategy that goes well beyond partisan politics and places the common good above all else. Too often our politicians have been distracted and they have chosen loyalty to their political parties above loyalty to the Constitution because of their lust for power. Our politicians must remember their oath of office and recommit themselves to serving our nation -- just like our soldiers. And they must not serve in their own self-interests or in -- or in the interests of their political Party. The security of America is at stake and we can accept nothing less. Anything short of this is unquestionably, in my opinion, "dereliction of duty."

Now these are fairly harsh assessments of the Military and Press relationship and the status of our war effort. But I remain optimistic and committed to the willing to -- correction -- to the enabling of media operations under the toughest of conditions in order to keep the world and the American people informed. I have never wavered from that position, in spite of the challenges that I have faced.



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I think you for your time. May God bless you and may God bless America.

And, "Praise be to the Lord my Rock, who trains my fingers for battle and my hands for war."<sup>2</sup>

Thank you very much.



## Q & A

**Moderator:** First question? Anyone? No one has any questions? Okay. Identify yourself and --

**Question:** Jeff Schogol, Stars and Stripes. From what I understand, you say there is not yet a strategy to win the war in Iraq. What strategy do you propose and what are the concrete goals you suggest must be met?

**Gen. Sanchez:** I -- I think, as has been advocated since 2003, the political initiatives that must be addressed are reconciliation within the country of Iraq. It was an effort that needed to -- to have been started since the 2003 timeframe, that would allow all of the elements of that society to have hope both in the economic and political future of the country; the need to properly resource and build a capacity of all institutions within the country; and the need for us to embrace the regional engagement requirements that will allow for a regional solution versus just an Iraq isolated solution; and the need for us to continue to build and strengthen the Iraqi security forces in their entirety, both police and military, in order for them to be credible and capable. That does not mean that they are U.S. equivalent, but credible and capable in terms of a Middle Eastern Iraqi standard.

Yes, sir. Or some place since somebody has got to --

**Moderator:** No, I'm right behind you....And please stand up, too.



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**Question:** Thanks, General David [unintelligible], The New York Times. What you just laid out, though, is the strategy in Iraq -- to build up the Iraqi security forces, to promote reconciliation; so I am not quite following.

**Gen. Sanchez:** It's not resourced.

**Question:** So you're simply saying that there is a strategy but it hasn't been resourced adequately by the nonmilitary components of the government? Is that -- Is that the critique that you're presenting?

**Gen. Sanchez:** Absolutely. And it is not synchronized and there is no enforcement of the strategy. And you also have to question, "How is the political and the economic aspect of this strategy being executed?" We control the military aspect and that's it.

**Moderator:** David, I guess, and then back to Carol after that.

**Question:** General, Stephen Wood from the Baltimore Sun. Sir, are you happy with the outcome of the various Abu Ghraib investigations and the accountability that was held for what took place there?

**Gen. Sanchez:** Am I happy? Am...Is America happy with destroying the careers and the reputations of everyone in the military chain of command involved in Abu Ghraib up to the level of a commander -- the highest level commander on the ground? Is America happy with -  
- I've got to be careful here. I think some of you know that I'm still -- I'm still being sued by the ACLU, so I've got to be careful. Is America happy with the policies that the Administration implemented in 2002 and the aftermath of those policies? Is America happy with the -- with the implementation of those policies in terms of the standards and training and requirements that are the responsibility of the highest levels of our government? I'll leave that for you to answer.

**Moderator:** Back to Carol in the back and then we will work our way up.

**Question:** General, I'm Carol Rosenberg with the Miami Herald. For you, sir, at what point did you realize that this effort went off the skids?

**Moderator:** I hate to ask a tough question.



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**Gen. Sanchez:** Sure. No, that is not a tough question. That was about 14 June of 2003. Okay? That -- What happened on the 14th of -- well no, let me rephrase that, the 15th of June 2003, because that's when I assumed command of Combined Joint Task Force 7 in Iraq, and the conditions that existed at that time and the discussions that [General John] Abizaid and I had at that time clearly indicated that there was some major challenges, strategic challenges for the national effort.

**Moderator:** Up here....

**Question:** Bob Riley, National Defense University. General, you've spoken of the lack of a grand strategy. Part of President Bush's vision for the invasion of Iraq was that the democratization of that country would transform the Middle East. Success in those terms is inimical to the long-term survival of Syria and Iran and it would seem any military planner would have had to prepare from the beginning to stop their interference and to prevent them from being safe havens. Why wasn't that done?

Number two, I was part of General [Jay] Garner's team in 2003, and the senior adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of Information, and while I was there, I saw the entire mission of what was then ORHA change. Whom do you hold responsible for the decision to change from a liberation to an occupation, the latter mission being one for which no one there was prepared? Do you think that was the wrong decision and if so, whom do you hold responsible for it?

**Gen. Sanchez:** In -- In terms of planning, I wasn't involved. I was a division commander during the initial planning for the run up to the war. So I have to reserve judgment at this point on who is responsible. But what I will tell you is that there was a significant disregard, which is absolutely against all training for a military commander, in addressing the follow-on phase of this war, because as history has shown us, that in the aftermath of a major conflict, regardless of what the plans are in the immediate aftermath, after you have achieved military victory, the only ones that are available and capable of handling the -- the aftermath and the situations on the ground is the military. So, it is just beyond me that we would not have accepted that responsibility as military and embraced it in its entirety. Now in terms of the decision to go from liberation to occupation, there was no decision. Liberation to occupation -- how can you be when you go in and totally dismantle a country? You automatically, under the -- under the rules of war become the occupier. There's no decision required.



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**Moderator:** Okay. Next?

**Gen. Sanchez:** Yes, sir.

**Question:** I am Al Pessin from Voice of America. Just to go back to the first part of your speech talking about the individuals and aspects of our profession that you don't like -- and one of the things that you mentioned was you don't feel that there is any accountability for inaccurate information or -- or inaccurately portrayed situations. What sort of accountability do you think there should be or could be in our system?

**Gen. Sanchez:** Well, I...think probably one of the key things is the prominent correction when there are blatant errors that are made by the profession. On the one hand, what you have is front page stories that are inaccurate at times and then corrections that are embedded inside of a, let's say a print in three, four, five pages deep. The media, the web, TV media, that's never done. It's just accepted and you move on. I...believe that -- that accountability, there must be some actual -- I'm -- I'm trying to equate it to what I do or -- or what I used to do in my profession but I'm not sure how your profession works in terms of handling an unethical reporter and how does that get communicated and how does that wind up being implemented and what are the aftereffects of that. I don't know. And, you know, it's not for me as a soldier to dictate in that kind of an environment, but I do know that there is a need for your profession to take a look at it in order to maintain the credibility in the broader state because you perform an absolutely vital function for us, the military, and of course for the American people. And...we expect it. We -- We come at this problem from a perspective of ethical people; and you have to prove yourself as unethical, and at that point in time is when we impose a constraint internal to our own organizations by disallowing access.

**Moderator:** Don, and then Otto.

**Question:** Don North, Northstar Productions. General, one of the first decisions that Ambassador Bremer made upon arrival in Baghdad was to disband the Iraqi army. Were you consulted in that decision, and at the time what did you see was the effect of this decision. And now four years later, in retrospect, how do you feel that decision had an impact?



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**Gen. Sanchez:** I was a Division Commander at the time that that decision was made but I was observing what was happening. I did not become the CJTF-7 Commander, as I said earlier, until the 15th of June 2003. I -- I think the effect is -- is very well documented and known. [It's] that it -- it completely disenfranchised and put, you know, 3[000,000]-400,000 Iraqi warriors out in the street with no pay. And we experienced immediately the aftereffects of that in their protesting. The longer term effect was that, I believe, it fueled the insurgency.

**Moderator:** Otto.

**Question:** General, Otto [unintelligible] for freelancer [unintelligible]. You mentioned it would take the army a decade to recover its full spectrum capability. General Casey this week said that the army is out of balance because it's not -- not --

**Gen. Sanchez:** It's what? It's --?

**Question:** General Casey said that the army is out of balance because it's not able to train for its -- for the full spectrum. But Secretary Gates said again this -- this week that he thinks the army should focus on the counter insurgency type mission because that's what he sees doing for the foreseeable future. You -- You apparently feel, lean more towards the Casey view. What happens to the army if -- if it's trained solely for the [unintelligible] included rather than the [unintelligible]?

**Gen. Sanchez:** Well, you -- you're exactly right. I -- I happen to fall under the Casey camp because I saw the tremendous degradation in capability of this great army that we -- that we were leading in the 2003 to 2005 timeframe that has been totally consumed by this counter insurgency mission. And there are some very significant challenges in the training that exists today for full spectrum operations and, you know, I believe that our focus in the past, in the aftermath of the Cold War on the very high end of the spectrum, was probably also a little bit out of balance and we had to rebalance that more towards a much broader capability that encompassed the middle of the spectrum and possibly even the lower end of the spectrum. So we've, you know, we have a challenge ahead of us. We can't allow ourselves to go completely to the other end of the pendulum and -- which is what we are doing currently because of the tremendous personnel tempo and operational tempo, and that's what will have to be corrected when we come out of this -- this war. In the interim, that equates to strategic risk because if there is a conventional requirement for our institution then we will be at risk.



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**Moderator:** Carl.

**Question:** General, I'm Carl Prine from the Pittsburg Tribune Review. We've accepted your homily about the ethics of journalists as a class. Having served as a trooper and an infantry man in Iraq in the wake of your command, I was wondering what ethical obligations did officers have at the highest level during the baseboard planning and afterwards to mitigate what obviously in your words was a disastrous plan? What in your words, sir, would you say to your class of officers who did not come forward and did not do anything to stop what became a debacle in Iraq?

**Gen. Sanchez:** Yeah. It was a -- an absolute lack of moral courage to stand up and do what was right in terms of planning; and we allowed ourselves to believe that we, in fact, would be liberators. That was unacceptable in my view as a general officer.

**Moderator:** Okay. Back over to Chad. We got about five more minutes.

**Gen. Sanchez:** Now let me -- let me just elaborate a little bit on this. There -- There was a lot of Phase 4 planning that was ongoing at the lower levels because we understood at the -- at the combined forces line component command and inside of the corps there was a lot of planning that was going on; but in the transition from ORHA to CPA, a lot of that was sundered aside and not allowed to be implemented.

**Moderator:** If people will kind of raise their hand for the next couple -- because we got -- we got two more and now....Chas.

**Question:** General, Chas Henry, ABC7 News Channel 8. What were the particular symptoms that you saw when you assumed command of the coalition that showed this absence of a unified effort?

**Gen. Sanchez:** Absence of a unified effort, there -- there was, primarily there was no -- no focus on resourcing the effort within any elements of the interagency during the entire first year and there was -- the only -- the only real concerted effort was being done by the extremely undermanned Coalition Provisional Authority and the military with the forces that were on the ground already. There was no focus back in Washington and there is a lot of horror stories inside of that statement, but I'll leave it at that.





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**Moderator:** Okay, Becky, here and then we'll come up here.

**Question:** General, thanks. I want to take another crack at this, maybe following up on my colleague's question over here. You've laid out a very harsh critique of the effort in Iraq and you were CJTF-7 Commander during a significant portion of that effort. So I guess my question is did...you have a responsibility as the commander --

**Gen. Sanchez:** Of course.

**Question:** -- to -- to say publicly --

**Gen. Sanchez:** No --

**Question:** -- why you were on active duty and did other, do -- do other active duty commanders who feel the way you do have a responsibility to speak out if they believe the strategy is incapable of being accomplished?

**Gen. Sanchez:** Yeah. Look -- Look I get asked that question quite often. The -- The last thing that America wants, the last thing that you want is for currently serving general officers to stand up against our political leadership. That's absolutely the last thing that we want. We swear an oath to support and defend the Constitution and to obey the orders of the President of the United States when we are in uniform. Do you want to undermine that fundamental bedrock principle of our democracy? I don't believe so. I don't believe the American people would tolerate it. I don't think we ought to even consider that as an option for our country. Is that a good enough answer?

**Question:** [unintelligible]

**Gen. Sanchez:** They must -- I'm sorry?

**Question:** What should they do?

**Gen. Sanchez:** They must continue to work as they -- as they always do, providing their best military judgment to the leadership and I guarantee you that that is being done.

**Question:** Just a follow up on that.



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**Moderator:** Rebecca, wait for the mic.

**Question:** Oh, thank you. Rebecca Christie, freelance writer in Washington. To follow up on that, what can serving military officers do? And is there is a situation when an extremist may need to effectively become whistle blowers? And do you think we got near that extreme in this case? Or should we have?

**Gen. Sanchez:** That's an independent decision that has to be made by the General. Basically, if the orders are -- are ethical and lawful, the military commanders, the military is going to execute those orders. And --

**Moderator:** Here -- I'm sorry, did you [have more to say in response]?

**Gen. Sanchez:** Yeah. And I don't think -- I don't think you want them, as I stated earlier, I don't think you want them becoming whistle blowers while they're in uniform. I think at the -- at the point in time where an officer, a general officer or any officer, disagrees then he has a choice of resigning and taking -- taking that on, resigning or retiring. And I think once you are retired, you have a responsibility to the nation, to your oath, to the country, to state your opinion. And there is tremendous debate within the retired general officer corps about what those responsibilities are and whether you ought to speak out or not.

**Moderator:** Okay, here and then Carol in the back and that will be the last question. I'm sorry, Courtney, here, and then

**Question:** Bob Perry, ConsortiumNews.com. Given all you've said today, do you think, looking back, that the invasion of Iraq was a mistake?

**Gen. Sanchez:** I -- I don't normally dabble into -- second guess the decisions of our leadership and the decisions that got us into Iraq. I'm not -- I was not intimately involved in that decision process. The entire leadership of the country believed that it was the right thing to do. The interagency believed. The United Nations, the international community believed that what we were doing was right. And for us to now look...and seeking retrospective certainty and judgments on that decision, I think is useless. It's irrelevant.



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**Question:** It's very brief. Courtney Kube for NBC News. You said there was a failure in political leadership, national political leadership. I mean, how about some names? Who, specifically, are you blaming for this failure?

**Gen. Sanchez:** More to follow later. I think you -- I think you can read -- you can read into it.

**Question:** Okay.

**Gen. Sanchez:** More to follow later.

**Moderator:** I got -- I got to just ask the follow up question, then. When you say, we...don't like to read lines and we -- it's hard for us to read between the lines because we can get it wrong. So, and -- and you've just blasted us for getting names wrong. So, I'd kind of like to know, I mean are we talking --

**Gen. Sanchez:** I'm sure you would, Jim.

**Moderator:** Yeah -- the National Security Council? Are we talking --

**Gen. Sanchez:** I -- I said that right upfront in my comments.

**Moderator:** Okay, but I mean some of those folks are still around.

**Gen. Sanchez:** Does that change what happened? Absolutely not.

**Moderator:** Well, I -- I guess, I'd like to -- we'd like to have more names.

**Gen. Sanchez:** More to follow. Sig where are you? You've heard that before, right?

**Question:** I have heard that before...[unintelligible]. You said in your commentary that -- that you -- you blame Congress -- both parties -- and the Administration. [unintelligible] like identifying someone within the Administration, but tell us outside, of the fact that they...did not do their homework, what is it that they really -- what is it that they really did that has got you fired up about this, because you've been angry for quite a while over it?



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**Gen. Sanchez:** Now, look I'm -- my purpose is not about -- it's not about politics. It -- It's not about Rick Sanchez. It's about that young man back there that you saw up here earlier in your panel. It's about the over 800 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines that I lost in battle. When I came back out of -- out of that theater, I went back a[nd] looked at the pictures and read the bios and the background information of every single one of my subordinates that died in combat. That's what this is about. And our nation has to fix it -- because otherwise, as I stated in my comments, if we continue with the political rhetoric and the partisanship, our soldiers will continue to die and that's unacceptable to me as a warrior that's led them in combat. That's what this is about. And at the right time, you know, history will show the specific names of people that made decisions that put them at risk.

Appreciate your time. I'm glad to be here.

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<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz: "War is a continuation of politics by other means."

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 144:1