MARVIN KALB: Hello, and welcome to the National Press Club and to another edition of The Kalb Report. I'm Marvin Kalb, and our subject tonight is War Reporting: The New Rules of Engagement. We read and see and hear so much about war these days, for the obvious reason: there's so much war these days, it's the big story. But of the reporters who cover the war, or wars, we know very little. That's because for most of them, they are not the story. They're there to cover the story, to get as close to the action as they can, to talk to the troops, to get briefed by their commanders. It is very dangerous work. In 2009, more than 70 reporters were killed covering different conflicts around the world. We honor them all, and we're privileged to have four excellent war reporters with us tonight. We look forward to hearing their stories.

To my left is Martha Raddatz, the Senior Foreign Affairs Correspondent for ABC News, where she has worked since 1999. Earlier, she worked for NPR. She has spent a good bit of time covering the wars in Iraq and in Afghanistan. She's the author of The Long Road Home, and she's won many awards.

To my right, Rajiv Chandrasekaran, an Associate Editor of the Washington Post, where he has worked since 1994. He is just back from another of his many reporting trips to Afghanistan. He has also covered the war in Iraq. Earlier, he was the post bureau chief in Cairo and in Jakarta. He is the author of Imperial Life in the Emerald City.

To my immediate left is Laura King, who has covered the Afghan war for the Los Angeles Times, where she has worked since 2002. Before that, she rose to the rank of special correspondent for the Associated Press, and as such covered conflicts in the Balkans and in the Middle East. She's just back from Kabul and was recently named Welling Presidential Fellow at George Washington’s Global Media Institute.

And to my immediate right, Cami McCormick, who has covered the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and many others around the world, for CBS News where she has worked
since 1998. Before that, she worked for CNN covering, among other things, the breakup of the old Soviet Union. She, too, has won many, many awards.

My opening question, I think, is the obvious opening question. War reporters love to tell war stories, and so tell us. And we’ll start with Martha Raddatz, tell us the most compelling, the most meaningful story that you have covered that you think best explains the Afghan war?

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** In the Afghan war, I am, as I think my colleagues here are, largely embedded with U.S. troops. And that is compelling time after time after time. I'm going to talk about one day. And in that one day, I was with the troops, and I was also with civilians outside of the military. And my day started with troops, and they seemed so young to me. And I said to them, “You know, it made me think of 9/11.” And we've all been covering these wars since the beginning, and we've all grown older. But looking at these very young soldiers. And I said to a couple of them, “So how old were you on 9/11?” And the soldier said, “I was ten, ma’am.” And to me, that really brought it home. So that's not really a story of something I actually did, but to me that was one of the most meaningful, just grip the sides of my seat saying, “Boy, I've been at this a long time. The country’s been at war for so long.” And to imagine this young man in front of me as just a little kind, then.

But that same day, I went out with a doctor. He's an M.D. and Ph.D., and I don't think he would mind me saying he’s kind of wacky. And he is one of those people, as a friend described, that if he’d just follow one rule, he could actually rule the world. But Dave Warner, is his name, refuses to follow any rules. And Dave has been going back and forth to Afghanistan for a long time, and we were in Jalalabad. And we were outside the wire, we were away from the military. And Dave and this group of others who were trying to help people there, and bring medical care, open schools, do whatever they can for people there, took me around and we stayed overnight in a little guest house out in the middle of
nowhere in Jalalabad. We spent the afternoon on a raft made of an inner tube, and I had, speaking of young men, an eight year old boy take me across this river and kept saying, “Sit down, sit down.” Not in English, but I knew what he meant.

And we went over to a little village where they were trying to bring supplies to this little village of the Kuchi that go-- nomads, basically, over there. And for me to go from the military at one hour and trying to help in fighting, to this village where things have actually happened with the help of civilians as well, and the military. I know that doesn’t sound extremely exciting and great war story, but I think I've seen that so much that to me it just set it apart. And I've been doing this a long time, and I've been embedded so many times, and I have so many stories that I could tell you about soldiers and marines and the people fighting that are magnificent stories. But to see the juxtaposition of the soldiers and the civilians doing work is really, to me, what's happening in Afghanistan and how far they have to go because what they were delivering to those villages were pretty basic things.

MARVIN KALB: Thank you, Martha, very much. Rajiv, you're next.

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: Well, I've just returned from a multi-week trip to southern Afghanistan, including about ten days in the district of Marja where there's a large U.S. marine offensive under way. And it’s hard to distill down my many Afghan trips into one defining moment, but maybe I'll just talk about this most recent trip, which I have to say as somebody who’s done a number of embeds in Afghanistan and in Iraq and spent many weeks with U.S. forces in both countries, this was perhaps the most arduous trip I have taken, and taught me, reminded me, that the infantry really is a young man’s business.

The marines that went into Marja went in the old-fashioned way. In this age of predator drones and laser-guided bombs, many of the marines came in by helicopter, others came
in by land. But, instead of driving through the mine-infested roads, they literally walked through the fields of Marja, carrying everything on their backs. Trudging through mud up to our knees, crossing canals with water up to our waists, sleeping half wet in near-freezing temperatures, getting shot at more times than we could count. And just the sort of-- the first full day I spent in Marja, I was with a unit of marines, and were just trying to move literally one mile, trying to go from the outskirts of Marja to the first objective. And we were shot at so many times we were sort of forced to just lie in this muck. Took nine hours to move one mile.

And just sort of thought to myself, “Boy, with all of the modern armaments that we have, with all of the technology, there isn't much difference between what the marines I was with were doing and what was going on in World War II.” Rifles in hand, walking through fields, trying to dodge enemy fire, taking cover in ditches. There's a lot of Afghanistan that is-- that conflict feels a lot like that. Unlike Iraq where you could just at times kind of commute from a forward operating base to go and see some conflict. Afghanistan is really roughing it.

MARVIN KALB: Thank you very much, Rajiv. Laura King?

LAURA KING: I think my war story is not really a war story, although it’s a story about the war. Last summer, I had an opportunity to work on a series of profiles of Afghan women. And every one of them, from little girls forced into marriage at a very young age, to old women who had seen years and years and years of conflict, all of them had been touched by the reverberations of the fighting and the conflict. And just seeing how all of them had tried to find ways around the violence and to find ways to live their lives. It was very inspiration to me.
MARVIN KALB: Very interesting. What is the big story yet to be covered in the Afghan war, the story that when you go back the next time, you really would like to do? Cami?

CAMI MCCORMICK: I'd like to just go back.

MARVIN KALB: You'd like to go back?

CAMI MCCORMICK: I guess I would like to go back to a country that's no longer at war. I would like to go back to an Afghanistan that looks a little bit more like Iraq does now than it did a few years back. Because when you do go there, I mean I'm often landing in Kabul and driving off, again, on an embed, but often running into a lot of situations that I didn't expect and meeting a lot of people I didn't know I would meet, and very fascinating people. And you grow to care very deeply about them.

You were asking them a story they remember the most, I remember this one governor who was targeted over and over and over again in eastern Afghanistan, and he stayed in office. And I asked him, I went and interviewed him and asked him, “Why would you do this?” I mean, the U.S. soldiers laughed about this guy, they called him a marked man. He’s had like three Assassination attempts in as many months. “But,” he said, “you know, the teachers are targeted and they go to work. And the army, the soldiers are targeted, and they go to work. And if I don't go to work, we hand this place over to them.” So I would like to go back and see, I guess in Afghanistan, that a lot more afghans feel that way. It would be a very interesting story to cover, to go back and see it in that light.

MARVIN KALB: But Cami, you have paid a pretty heavy price for covering that war in Afghanistan. And I'm wondering, picking up the story that you asked the provincial governor why he continues to go back, why do you want to go back? Why?
CAMI MCCORMICK: I don’t really know. I don't know what drew me to this type of reporting. I've been reporting on war since Bosnia, and Northern Ireland, I guess, was my first conflict. And then, of course, the Middle East a lot, and Afghanistan and Iraq. I don't know what draws me to it except for I also do a lot of disaster reporting. I did Hurricane Katrina and a lot of natural disasters. And in situations like that that are so intense, you often see the very, very best of humanity, in a situation that is just hell on earth, often. In the midst of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I saw some of the greatest acts of humanity, ever. And I guess that's kind of-- as a journalist, that's really what draws you to a story like this, is you see, you see acts like that. You see human beings treating each other very, very horribly, and at the same time, you see these acts of goodness.

MARTHA RADDATZ: Marvin, I would say also, it’s hard to want to cover anything else once you've done it, and I think--

MARVIN KALB: Why is that?

MARTHA RADDATZ: People probably don’t understand that.

MARVIN KALB: Pretty dangerous stuff.

MARTHA RADDATZ: And it’s not the danger. It’s what Cami’s talking about, too. You see every part of humanity. You see everything a human being has inside of them. And bringing all the courage, all the fear, all of that together and doing the best job you possibly can do. And I think once you see that, and once you've been part of it, and once you've seen a story that's that intense, it’s really, when you come back, it’s a little hard to cover a hearing on Capitol Hill. Sorry. [laughter] And you do. I mean, I think we can probably all relate to The Hurt Locker in some ways, that you do come back sometimes and you stand in the grocery aisle, or you do go and you hear people arguing about a better table at a restaurant. And you think, “Ah, I shouldn’t be here.”
I mean, there is-- it’s hard to come back, there's no question it is. And you feel like you're doing something-- I mean, I can't say, “Oh, I'm doing something for someone else,” but at least we're telling a story of what these people are doing. And the sad thing to me is-- you know, you talked about it being the big story, it’s really not the big story right now. It really isn't. And I wish it was. I mean, people, I don't think, are paying as much attention to it as we should. I mean, count up how many troops we have in all these places, it’s extraordinary.

MARVIN KALB: Laura King, you lived in Kabul, and have for a while now. Why do you do that? I mean, why do you-- We've heard now from Cami and Martha. Why do you go back? Why is this story, which is so dangerous, so compelling to you to cover?

LAURA KING: I feel that living there and experiencing daily life is just such a-- It’s a privilege. Being able to get to know the people who live in my neighborhood, just seeing them trying to go about their lives in the midst of all of this, it’s extraordinary. If somebody’s shop has all the windows shattered by a suicide bomb, the next day they've swept up the glass, or that afternoon, they've swept up the glass and they're back in business. Just seeing how resilient people are is-- as Cami was mentioning-- you just feel that you're seeing people at their best, at their worst often, but also at their best.

MARVIN KALB: Rajiv, you as an associate editor surely do not have to go back?

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: No.

MARVIN KALB: But you do, and you keep going back?

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: I could just stay in my little glass office at The Washington Post. But you can’t write credibly about what the United States is doing in
Afghanistan without going there, without seeing it. You can't write about the impact of the president’s decision to commit 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan unless you actually go and walk shoulder-to-shoulder with them a little bit.

Just following up on what Martha was saying, you know, there are probably upwards of a quarter million U.S. forces out there deployed between Iraq and Afghanistan today, plus DOD, civilians and that's not even counting the full extent of American contractors. In some parts of this country, it is a phenomenon that people are reminded of every day, in military communities in some small towns.

But I walk up and down the streets of Washington, D.C., and my sense is everybody I'm walking by is thinking about something else other than that. And it is fundamentally important to help represent what is occurring there back here. I'm grateful that I work for an organization that has the resources to send me there. And so, you know, I feel like I have the chance to do this. I'd be a fool not to. And one day on the ground in Afghanistan, I learned more about what's happening there than 30 days worth of interviewing people back here in Washington, D.C.

**CAMI MCCORMICK:** Marvin, I covered the last three years of the Bush White House while-- but I insisted on going back to Iraq as many times as I could for exactly what he’s saying. I mean, and I felt that gave me an advantage in covering the White House. In fact, my favorite question I ever had answered at a press conference with President Bush was-- there was a report out saying that Iraq had become a civil war. And I said, at a press conference, “Mr. President, do you believe that it’s become a civil war?” And he looked at me and he said, “You know, it’s hard for me to say, sitting in this big, beautiful house. You've been there, I haven’t.” And I thought, “Wait, you're the decider. Come on.”

**MARVIN KALB:** Let me ask you, because you've all raised it in one way or another, that to a degree, you are all dependent upon the U.S. military, in a sense, to a degree,
dependent upon them to take you to a battle scene, to protect you once you are in the battle scene. And a number of questions come up, and sort of obvious again. To what degree are you so dependent on the U.S. military that you can’t see beyond it, and that you're merely reflecting what it is that they want you to reflect? Cami?

**CAMI MCCORMICK:** I don't think that's ever been an issue, at least for me personally. It is something you know could be a problem. And so I guess you guard against it and you think about it constantly when you're reporting. But, especially with the commanders that I've been out, I was in Iraq nine different tours, and always embedded, and I never had a commander insinuate that he wanted me to report a story a certain way or put any pressure on me certainly.

**MARVIN KALB:** No, I don't mean it quite that way. I mean that you are, by virtue of the fact that you're so dependent on them?

**CAMI MCCORMICK:** Because you're traveling in their vehicles and they're protecting you?

**MARVIN KALB:** You're traveling with them, they're protecting you and all of that?

**CAMI MCCORMICK:** As you can see when you go out into the war zone, they can only protect you so much. It’s still your choice to go out there. You're still in the same sort of dangerous situation that the soldiers are in, you still take those risks. I mean, you could say that they're protecting you and say, “Well, I'll only do positive stories about them.” But as you can see, that's not the case.

**MARVIN KALB:** Laura, tell me in your case, from your own experience, do you feel that you are perfectly capable of writing good, clean, objective copy?
LAURA KING: Well, objective, I think one can’t help but feel moved and disturbed by many of the images that you see in a day. It’s impossible to claim total objectivity, but I think you just have to take into account all of the different factors at play, all of the moving parts and try at the end of the day to sit down and make sense of it.

MARVIN KALB: Martha, what are, if there are, what are the new rules for journalists working in an embed situation? Has anything changed from the war in Iraq to the war in Afghanistan?

MARTHA RADDATZ: Not that I know of, not that I've really seen. I think the military’s probably better at it. They're more used to us. I mean, all the embeds in Iraq, it sort of depended on who you were with. In fact, a very early one I was on in Afghanistan many years ago, I mean, they clearly couldn’t stand us and didn't want us there, which is dangerous. I mean, I think. I mean, then you really aren’t part of that bubble of them even realizing where you are. So, I actually think the military’s gotten better at it, and I don't mean by that manipulating. I just think they're more used to us, they know we're out there doing our jobs. I think there's more respect. I mean, you know, just as Cami said, you're out there taking the same risks, and they know a lot of people have been injured and killed.

MARVIN KALB: Rajiv, you said that you would like to spend more time in an unembedded capacity when you're covering the war in Afghanistan, to be on your own. But essentially from what I gather from what you're saying, you really can’t do that all that easily?

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: You can and you can't. Let me be clear about this. You can operate pretty freely in Kabul, as Laura lives among the people in the city, drives around, shops in the markets and stuff. You have a great degree of freedom of movement in the northern and far western parts of the country. The problem with
reporting in Afghanistan, a principal problem as I see it, is that in the parts of the country where the insurgency is the strongest, where U.S. troops are largely concentrated, those places are so dangerous that it is almost impossible to really go out and report on your own.

For instance, Helmand Province, where we now have 15,000 U.S. marines. You can’t really go as a westerner and drive around the villages of Helmand Province and try to get some eyes on this story in an unembedded capacity. And that's something I really wish I could do. In contrast to Iraq, Marvin, where while certainly during the height of the insurgency, several parts of the country were way too dangerous to go. Baghdad still served as something of a representation of some of the broader dynamics of that story. You could get out, and with the appropriate precautions, talk to Iraqis even during the height of the sectarian fighting over here. Whereas Kabul, though it is the capital, it’s something of a bubble. Kabul is pretty well cut off from the real sort of factors and dynamics that define the insurgency in the eastern and southern parts of Afghanistan. And so that's a principal challenge that we face.

One what we got around it in Iraq was we relied on a number of very brave Iraqi journalists, colleagues, who were in other parts of the country to help give us some perspective on this. And that was because we, early on, invested very heavily in building up that infrastructure, all of our news organizations did. With Afghanistan, much in the same way the U.S. military story did Afghanistan on the cheap, so did news organizations. And we never really invested in those networks of Afghan stringers all around the country.

And so today, when we're trying to get some eyes on the ground in other parts of the country, we don’t have that same sort of network of afghans to draw upon like we did in Iraq.
**MARVIN KALB:** Cami, Rajiv has, in a way, answered part of this question, but I'm still kind of curious about it. Maybe we could take it to another level. If there is criticism of American coverage in Afghanistan, it is that we're only seeing half of the war. We're seeing the American-led part of the war. But we're not seeing that whole other part where the Taliban are in control. And I'm wondering from your perspective, when you were covering the war, what was the reason? Were you able, ever, to strike up a relationship with a Taliban official so that you could actually visit a camp where they were in charge?

**CAMI MCCORMICK:** No. Being on the trips that I've made to Afghanistan have usually been on embeds with U.S. military troops. So that is an issue. You don't get that side. You don't have reporters in Marja as the U.S. marines come in. there's no one shooting from the other side. Well, there are some news agencies, but not a lot of western ones. So, that is an issue and I think it’s one that all journalists are aware of. We wish, I wish, I could go as a civilian into any area of Afghanistan that I wanted to. And I think Iraq really was the first war, wasn't it, where you couldn't do that. We couldn't go anywhere at one point.

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** And that's actually what was-- I mean, when you're talking about embeds, Marvin, and you go back and you look at what that means. You saw the war from that side. And I think being an embedded reporter is an amazing story. But to get a bigger view, you've got to have more people out there. I mean, just as everybody started to do in Iraq and get freelance journalists. I mean, I feel like it’s really difficult to see a big picture of Afghanistan. We really don’t know what's going on in certain parts of the country.

**MARVIN KALB:** But let me ask Laura, who sees it, I think, from a somewhat different perspective because you live in Kabul. So, as a resident of Kabul, are you in touch at any time in your reporting with Taliban representatives, officials?
LAURA KING: Well, the danger of abduction is so extreme that face to face meetings, they're not that difficult to arrange. The difficult part is coming back from that meeting.

MARVIN KALB: They're not that difficult to arrange?

LAURA KING: No. If you want to go, it's not that hard to make contacts with them and say you would like to meet them face to face.

MARVIN KALB: So what would then happen? Let's say you did that?

LAURA KING: Well, it's tremendously risky.

MARTHA RADDATZ: Think David Rohde.

LAURA KING: Yes, exactly.

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: He interviewed the mosque for seven months.

LAURA KING: Yes.

MARVIN KALB: The New York Times correspondent who was kidnapped.

MARTHA RADDATZ: The New York Times correspondent who was kidnapped and thankfully escaped after seven months.

MARVIN KALB: Right. And so when you talk about abduction, is it just the David Rohde example, or has this happened frequently?
LAURA KING: Many other examples. There are two French journalists who were in captivity now. It is possible to have contacts with the Taliban in other forums. I mean, you can talk to them on the phone, you can--

MARTHA RADDATZ: I think we should do Skype with the Taliban.

LAURA KING: Skyping with the Taliban. [laughter]

MARTHA RADDATZ: That's really the way I'd like to go meet some of those guys.

MARVIN KALB: What I'm getting at here, or at least what I'm trying to get at, is is it possible, then, to cover the other half of the story?

LAURA KING: Well, sometimes you're able to just get a glimpse of something, if not from the Taliban side versus the military side, at least the Afghan civilian side versus the military side. Not too long ago, I was in Kandahar where the insurgency is quite strong. And for a few days, I was embedded with Canadian troops and drive with some of them in their armored vehicle in the center of town. And, of course, they were in hyper vigilant mode, talking with each other on the radio. Is that car a threat? Is this person a threat? And seeing it from that side.

And then a few days later, I was able to drive on that same road with an Afghan translator and a beat up Afghan car. And a military convoy approached us and you could see all the motorists all around us were frightened because people are afraid that if they are driving too quickly or stopping too quickly or doing something, that there's a very real possibility that they could be mistaken for would-be suicide bombers and be shot. So seeing it from inside the armored vehicle, and then from inside the Afghan car. It’s very striking, the diffs in the perception.
MARVIN KALB: Wonderful stories. Let’s just take a moment now to remind our radio and television audiences that this is the Kalb Report. I'm Marvin Kalb, and I'm talking about war reporting with Martha Raddatz, Lori King, Cami McCormick and Rajiv Chandrasekaran. I remember years ago, a war correspondent could disappear for a week or two and then sort of emerge with a great story. Or, perhaps, with no story at all. David Huffman was the foreign editor at the Washington Post, was quoted as saying, “We now live in a nano second news cycle.” You're all hooked into your home office all the time. There is an interconnectedness, which perhaps is a bit incestuous. What effect does that interconnectedness have upon the quality or capacity to cover the story as you would like to cover it? Cami?

CAMI MCCORMICK: It works both ways.

MARVIN KALB: Tell me both ways, what are they?

CAMI MCCORMICK: Well, there are times when I wish I had more days to go out and work on a story. When I actually was hit by the bomb that we hit in Afghanistan, I was going out on a mission. And I had timed it because it was going to happen over a weekend, so I thought I could slip away from the mission for a few days because the news cycle isn’t such as it is during the week. So there are times when you try your best to find a way where you can spend more time on a story. But it is difficult, because the news cycle is what it is.

Having said that, it’s also very nice to work for a radio network where if I'm out covering a story, and I feel like it’s important, I can get it on every hour. And so you have that frequency where you can get that story out. And so that, in a way, is a blessing.

MARVIN KALB: Martha, you're at another network, at ABC. Do you find the interconnectedness a bit bothersome?
MARTHA RADDATZ: And by the interconnectedness, do you mean they can rope me into like filing every half an hour?

MARVIN KALB: No, I mean that you are connected at all times with your home office.

MARTHA RADDATZ: You know, it doesn’t work anymore. “Sorry, I can’t hear you.” [laughter] It was so great at the beginning of the Iraq war. In Haiti, I'll just tell you. Haiti, we were pretty much out of communications a lot, and it was fantastic because you could-- I mean, everybody who went on the Haiti trip, I think-- and I went in in the first days of the earthquake, and I had just gotten back from Yemen and went into Haiti. And I think our whole crew from ABC who were down there, we all talked about the fact that we felt like we could just go find stories and go find what was happening there and not worry about checking in every minute because, gosh, we couldn’t. You know, as hard as we tried--

MARVIN KALB: Rajiv, is there--?

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: I remember Thanksgiving Day in 2003 in Baghdad. I was actually having dinner at the Los Angeles Times House. And in the early days of the Iraq war, we all had these Thuraya hand-held satellite phones, a little antenna. You had to be outside to make them work.

MARTHA RADDATZ: You had to hold still.

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: Pardon me? And to hold still. You had to point at the right angle to get the satellite and hope the gods were shining down on you. And so we all sort of put our satellite phones out in the courtyard and walked in to have Thanksgiving dinner. And I remember remarking, as we were sitting down, boy, this is so
nice. We don't have cell phones here. It’ll come soon enough, but it’s like the old days of foreign correspondency. And then no sooner I said that, somebody’s phone started tweeting off in the distance. And then another one, and another one. That's what we all heard, because everybody’s phone’s sitting out there. And it was, of course, all of our home offices ringing saying that the first wire service reports had crossed that George Bush was at the Baghdad international airport. And five minutes later, we’re all in our cars screeching away back to our bureaus. [laughter]

But, you know, back in March, sitting there in the middle of nowhere, I have a satellite phone, I've got a satellite little dish that hooks up to my computer to send stuff. The only saving grace from all of it was we didn't have any good electrical connections. So I only had limited battery power. So, I literally on this trip, would file a story. Turn on the satellite--

MARTHA RADDATZ: No one can hear you, they're not watching. [laughter]

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: And send it, and that was it. No discussion. It was the first time in years that I would send a story back to the home office and not be there to entertain the little, “Oh, do we spell this with an H or not?” None of that.

MARVIN KALB: Well, I'm glad you have an editor back there who does that. [laughter] Laura, isn’t there, then, the danger that you're all covering the war in Afghanistan from the perspective of the home office rather than your perspective as an on the ground, right there journalist?

LAURA KING: Well, I feel that most of our editors do understand that occasionally you just need to get away and devote a chunk of time to it, to a particularly challenging story. And last spring, I had a story that I went to in a remote part of western Afghanistan. And I went and I thought I would be back the next day. It stretched into a
week for various travel reasons. And my editors were actually very patient about it, because the story--

**MARVIN KALB:** Is that the norm?

**LAURA KING:** No, it’s not the norm. That's why it’s standing out in my mind. But it was a story reconstructing in some detail an air strike on a village that had killed many civilians. And I was trying to get at it from the point of view of the civilians in the village, from the military people who were present, from the Afghan commanders. And even though I spent so long on this story, in part because I was stranded in this place because the road was too unsafe, it was really wonderful to have that block of time to devote to something.

**MARVIN KALB:** Martha, tell me, your editors, your producers. When you go off-- we talked about technology, Rajiv was just mentioning. Not too many years ago, to cover a war, a network correspondent would arrive with a small army of cameramen and light men and sound men and producers, and all that. That is over, right? Do you need any of those people now? What do you arrive with? What kind of technology do you absolutely need?

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** Now? A camera. But, I mean, it has really evolved over the years. I don't think I ever arrived with a whole crew of lights. There were some people who would arrive and they’d have like an entire helicopter full of equipment. But my former producer, a woman named Ely Brown, and I and a cameraman, Bartley Price, could go anywhere. And now that's down. Sometimes, it’s just me and a producer, my producer now is Richard Coolidge.

**MARVIN KALB:** But what do you take a picture with?
MARTHA RADDATZ: We take pictures with a small digital camera. And I, frankly, carry a little flip video with me as backup. And I joke sometimes with Bartley because he’ll say, “You don't need that. I'm here,” and I'll joke, like, “Oh, did you get a shot of General So-and-so in my helicopter, because you were in the other one. I don't know how you shot that, because I shot it, okay?” [laughter] But I mean, Richard and I, Coolidge and I, when we were in Yemen where we didn't want to go to state television, we didn't want to go anywhere, we just would set up, like you do, but we can push video through there, the computer, and do our stories the two of us. He shoots them. I augment. That's all I do, is augment. But you can shoot stand-ups like this. You look a little bit like a gold fish, but it’s okay.

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: In Marja, Cami’s very brave colleague, Mandy Clark from CBS News--

MARTHA RADDATZ: Does everything.

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: --was a one-woman show. She's, I guess, in her mid-20s, as a video journalist for CBS News out of Kabul.

MARVIN KALB: She would shoot all of the pictures?

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: She had a big pack. She shot, she did the sound, she edited, she transmitted and she was in front of the camera.

MARTHA RADDATZ: She puts it on a truck and shoots her. She's amazing.

CAMI MCCORMICK: And that's a lot of work, because you could go out for 15 hours on a mission with the U.S. military and they'll say, “You got four hours to sleep.” Well,
you've then got to edit and transmit and write and produce, and that takes sometimes more than four hours.

MARVIN KALB: So when you go off to do a war assignment, what do you take with you?

CAMI MCCORMICK: I travel very light because I have to because it’s just me. I don't have anyone to help me with any sort of equipment. I learned long ago, never travel with more than you could carry. The great thing--

MARVIN KALB: But what do you need to do your story?

CAMI MCCORMICK: I need a tape recorder and microphone. I like to have a camera because I like the visuals for the internet. And a computer and a satellite modem.

MARVIN KALB: And Laura, when you operate for a newspaper, which is obviously different from radio and television, what is it that you need that you feel you must have to do the story right?

LAURA KING: A notebook.

MARVIN KALB: A notebook?

LAURA KING: No, we are encouraged these days to carry the flip video cameras as well, and to take pictures and whatever we can do, contribute audio. It is all multi media.

MARVIN KALB: It is multi media, and that always raises the same question I think I've asked at every one of these forums. In the new world and the new technology, do you feel
that you have the time, given all of your responsibilities, the time to sit back and say, “What do I really know? What am I totally confident that I could report?” Cami?

**CAMI MCCORMICK:** There's no question, it’s very difficult to be a journalist these days, especially to be a journalist out in the field in those sorts of conditions because you do-- you are expected to do so much and there are only so many hours in the day. But, I think as long as you've got journalists, qualified journalists, out in the field doing this, I don't think there's a problem. I think the problem comes in in that you get people who are better transmitters, perhaps, than journalists. That's just my opinion.

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** And I think probably all of us and all our news organizations-- I mean, I try very hard to mentor. It is a very big deal to me to talk to young reporters who want to do what I do about it’s not just going over there and seeing people shooting. It’s understanding fundamentally what you do as a journalist, what you look for. That you at some point of the day, you have to say, “You know what? I am not filing for the web right now, okay? I'm making phone calls or I'm doing this, or I'm doing what I should do.”

**MARVIN KALB:** And when you say that to your home office in New York or in Washington, what do they say to you? Are they always so understanding?

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** Well, I've worked there a long time and I think I get respect from my organization for the fact that I value reporting. ABC values reporting. I think a lot of different people bring a lot of different things to our broadcasts. And what I try to bring to our broadcast is experience and reporting. I also understand and adapt. It’s great filing for all these other platforms. As Cami said, if you have a great story and you want to talk about it every hour, I'll talk about it every hour. But at some point, you do have to say, “Wait a minute, I need a little time to do exactly what you're talking about.” Because I do not want the next generation of reporters to just be Tweeting all day because they
won't really-- You have to have context. I mean, it’s often when I talk to journalism students, even I say, “You know, you shouldn’t just study journalism. You should study history, you should study political science, you should study all these things to become a journalist because you've got to have something to talk about. You got to know something before you tell others.”

MARVIN KALB: We're going to hire you. We're going to hire you, you're going to be the next professor. My next question takes you all-- it is the world of opinion, and I acknowledge that up front. But I hope it’s a valid question. And it’s based, for the most part, on the fairly widespread feeling and the buildup to the Iraq war, that the journalists, many journalists, were being perhaps more patriotic than they were being skeptical and somewhat detached from the story itself. And in a way, therefore ended up missing the story. So my question is are you comfortable that in the reporting of the Afghan war that you're doing right now, and I'll start with Laura, that if you were to look back upon that ten years from now, you can say, “Okay, I did it right. I didn't get sucked in. I didn't get taken by any government or any surprise. I did it right.” Are you comfortable with that?

LAURA KING: I think there is an appropriate degree of skepticism in most aspects of the coverage, and I think some of that is due to what people learned in Iraq. So, yes I think a lot of it would stand up.

MARVIN KALB: Rajiv, do you have any feeling of-- I don't mean discomfort, really, but a sense in the pit of your professional stomach that, “Whoops, am I missing something here? Something very important?”

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: Like Laura, I feel like the coverage, broadly speaking, has a lot of the requisite skepticism. But I will go back to something I said earlier. I do wish that we had more eyes on the Afghan side of the story, particularly in the areas where the insurgency is the strongest. And I'm not talking about necessarily needing to
embed with the Taliban, but getting a sense of what are the real social, political, cultural, tribal, religious dynamics that occur in these villages when U.S. forces aren’t there?

**MARVIN KALB:** But you're not really-- I think what you said before also is that you're not really in a position to cover that aspect of the story?

**RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN:** Unfortunately not.

**MARVIN KALB:** So that we're really not getting that aspect of the story?

**RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN:** Indeed. I think that the American public is deprived, to a degree. It’s not from any lack of trying on our part. We’d all, given the opportunity--

**MARVIN KALB:** I don’t mean to imply that. I was just trying to understand the lay of the land that produces that result.

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** And there are different kinds of wars. I think people have to understand fundamentally that Iraq and Afghanistan are different wars. You don't call up the other side of the front line and say, “We're going to come over and see what your plan is for attacking the American troops.”

**MARVIN KALB:** You were able to do that in Iraq?

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** No, no. I'm saying in this war, they're insurgencies. It’s just different. I mean, they would attack us just as easily as they would-- We're the west, we're America. It doesn’t matter what we do for our jobs. Back in the old days, you could press on that-- I mean, I never put that on my thing anymore, it doesn’t do any good. They're not going, “Oh wait, that's the press. We don't want to hurt them.” It's just different. And you know what? You feel a responsibility to-- I mean, there have been
times when I have been very tempted to do something that I think is dumb, and that's kind of what you're talking about. Whether you go and try to get an interview with somebody. I went to the Swat Valley in Pakistan when it was very dangerous, when the Taliban had begun taking over that. In retrospect, that was probably not the smartest thing I've ever done.

But you also got to go through your head, is do I want to do this and have me be a kidnap victim and have my country have to figure out what they're going to do with me and talk about me? And frankly, particularly when you're high profile, you really got to weigh that. But I would love to know what the Taliban is doing every day. I would love to find out what they're-- I mean, frankly, we probably-- I mean, they have a pretty good media operation, too, but you got to look through that. But it is just a different kind of conflict. It is far more dangerous than people understand. That you can’t go out there and say, “Look, I'll meet you at 5:00,” because you might be dead by six.

MARVIN KALB: Cami, is there anything in your experience, as you look back upon it now, that you feel you could have done then that would have given you an insight, a contact, a perspective on the other side of the war that we're simply not getting now?

CAMI MCCORMICK: It is, like Martha said, it’s just so difficult. And I wish, like every journalist out there, that we could provide more of a picture of the other side. It is just very difficult. The only thing that I can do, and that I learned to do in Iraq and continue to do in Afghanistan, is just when you drive through those villages, you may be embedded, you may be with a U.S. convoy, but to pay very close attention to the faces you see and the people in the villages and how they're reacting and just try as best you can to understand their position and who they are and sort of frame everything in that context while you're still in the back of an MRAP. There's not a whole lot else we can do at this point.
MARVIN KALB: Are there reporters, Laura because you're there all the time, are there American or western reporters, or Japanese reporters, who come into Afghanistan and know the history, speak a language, have some form of connection with the other side of the story?

LAURA KING: I think you see a whole spectrum. You do find some people who have had long and deep experience in the region, and some people who do have the language. But, for many people it’s also a drop-in assignment. It's a parachute in and leave.

MARVIN KALB: What about the Pakistani journalists? Are they providing any special insights that American reporters cannot?

LAURA KING: In the Afghan conflict, well I'd say they're regarded with a lot of suspicion. It’s a difficult place for them to work, yes.

MARVIN KALB: Another question on this whole subject, do you feel that there are enough questions that are being raised about the wisdom of the policy that the United States is now pursuing in Afghanistan? I'm not challenging in any way what is happening, I'm asking. Are enough questions being raised about the wisdom of sending 100,000 American soldiers to Afghanistan? What do you think, Martha?

MARTHA RADDATZ: I'd say no. I think, again, it’s that big picture question. I mean, we had all this debate going up to the McChrystal Report and sending in the additional troops. And then there hasn't been-- I mean, there's certainly been embed reporting, but I don't think there's been enough reporting about the policy. I mean, for instance, instead of sending 40,000 troops that McChrystal had wanted, President Obama sent 30,000. So, he sort of said, “You get this many troops and do with them--“

MARVIN KALB: “Do what you can with them.”
MARTHA RADDATZ: “Do what you can with them.” And I think that is really kind of an odd way to do this. I mean, it’s not usually done that way. It’s usually the commander says, “I need this many, and this is how I'll work with them.” I know General McChrystal has said again and again, “That's fine, we can work with that.” But, I'd like to know what's going on with those troops and how they're reconfiguring those troops, and are there people who they're sending home? I don't know how they configure units. That may be way too inside baseball, but it’s still a question of exactly how that's being done. And again, it’s that big picture of how the policy is working and the areas we just don’t know about.

MARVIN KALB: Rajiv, from the point of view of the Post or perhaps just your own point of view, how do you see this question about are we fighting the right war at the right time in the right way?

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: I think there continues to be discussion about it. Admittedly, Washington is something of a one-issue town. And while Afghanistan was the issue in the late fall as the White House was engaged in a strategy review--

MARVIN KALB: Late fall of ’09?

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: The fall of ’09, now it’s healthcare, it’s jobs. And I don’t mean to take anything away from pressing domestic issues, but Afghanistan has pretty well fallen off the radar screen here in town, and it may well be that way until the end of the year when the President and the Secretary of Defense start to reassess the strategy. They've given McChrystal troops, and they've sort of given him a degree of time. He has a bit of a leash now, and he’s out there sort of implementing. That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be asking a lot of hard questions here in town, and that's what I try to do, and a number of other reporters do. But it also means that some of the locus of the
story really has shifted over to Afghanistan. And now, the real challenge for all of us is that sort of accountability work; looking at how the strategy’s being implemented and are the early results meeting up with the hoped for results as outlined by General McChrystal? And that becomes tough work.

But in getting at some of the questions, some of the skepticism, even though we cannot go and perhaps live in villages in Helmand Province for, you know, a couple of nights, after nine years of conflict in Afghanistan and after the Iraq war, you do have a lot of people within the ranks of the U.S. military, and particularly in the State Department, who are somewhat skeptical of the policy, who raise questions. It’s not like if you are in an embedded capacity talking to officers, talking to State Department personnel, that all you're hearing is a rah-rah, jingoistic storyline. There are a lot of very smart Americans and smart Europeans as part of the NATO mission there who are appropriately, in my view, skeptical and willing to engage on that.

And so I feel like when I'm out there, even if I can’t always get outside the wire like I want to, I am able to engage with people and take in a diversity of opinions about what is occurring there.

MARVIN KALB: Cami, I want to ask you this question. You have covered many wars in many parts of the world, so you have seen a great deal of killing. And wars end. And during the war, you witness, you report on a great deal of killing. The war ends, and then the question is was it all worthwhile? And I think it’s a sort of philosophical kind of question. But has your attitude as a human being, as a reporter, changed toward killing and toward the whole purpose of war?

CAMI MCCORMICK: I think the more I've seen-- I mean, it certainly never gets any easier. I think actually the more I've seen, the harder it gets. In watching Gaza, what happened in Gaza, it seemed all of the violence in the Middle East and in Iraq and now
Afghanistan, it never, ever gets any easier to see someone killed and to witness the violence. But it’s something that as a reporter you have to learn to separate from, to some degree, for your own-- otherwise, you couldn't do it. So, no.

MARVIN KALB: Laura, what's your take on that, this?

LAURA KING: Well, I certainly agree with Cami that it doesn’t get easier to witness the kinds of things that you witness. And if anything, there's a cumulative effect and things do hit you harder after a while.

MARVIN KALB: Do they hit you harder, or do you get tougher so you don't see it anymore?

LAURA KING: Well, I think you learn to moderate your own reactions and concentrate on things like just being aware of the environment and knowing that at a moment when you see something that's very frightening or distressing, that's also a moment when you have to be thinking of your own safety and paying attention. You can’t just collapse.

MARVIN KALB: We've got only a couple of minutes left, and there are in the audience many young reporters. And Martha, you talked about talking to young people before. And I'd like to ask all of you, starting with Rajiv, and we’ll end with Martha, what advice would you give a young reporter who might shortly upon graduation be in a war zone and what it is that he or she will face?

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: My most basic advice is don't go marching off to a war zone shortly after graduation without-- [laughter] Well, I mean, without the requisite training, without the resources of a large news organization to back you up. And quite frankly, a large news organization ain’t going to send you out to a war zone right upon graduation. Iraq and Afghanistan are not anything like sort of the smaller guerilla
conflicts in Latin America where people of a certain generation cut their teeth. Or even some of the conflicts in Europe some years ago. And so this is not a place for people to sort of get started.

MARVIN KALB: Cami?

CAMI MCCORMICK: Yeah, as a young journalist, I just went out and covered-- I had the love of a story and went out to places like Russia and there were a lot of young people doing exactly the same. When the Iraq war first happened, there were a lot of young journalists out there, lot of young freelancers. A couple of years into it, they’d gone, it was that dangerous. It’s no longer a world in which you can just go out to a war zone, you're absolutely right, on your own and certainly a news organization is not going to send anybody but very experienced journalists.

MARVIN KALB: We've only got a few seconds left. Laura, then Martha?

LAURA KING: To any young journalist, I'd say, “Just think of all the different ways you can tell a story and different points of view that you can bring to bear.”

MARTHA RADDATZ: I've taken young journalists with me who had no experience in Iraq. But I felt that was a good way to go, and that we were in a very-- the safest environment we could be in in Iraq. And I'm thinking of one young producer, Karen Travers, who's at ABC who hadn't been there. I would not have taken her outside to a convoy. I think one of the things we're all saying is don’t go if you have experience. What do you get when you have experience? It’s not like you're in a completely safe environment. But I think it’s things like--

MARVIN KALB: Martha, I've got to--
MARTHA RADDATZ: Oh, sorry. If I'm in a Humvee, I know what questions to ask and how to get out or how to open the door, or anything. A young journalist needs experience.

MARVIN KALB: I've got to cut you off.

MARTHA RADDATZ: Cut me off.

MARVIN KALB: They're turning the clock for my thanks to our splendid audience. But my very special thanks to our panelists who represent, in my judgment, the best in war reporting; Martha Raddatz, Laura King, Cami McCormick, and Rajiv Chandrasekaran. I'm Marvin Kalb. And as Ed Murrow used to say, “Good night and good luck.” [applause] I'm sorry to have cut you off.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is now your time to ask questions. And there are microphones where? There's one there and one there. And what I'd appreciate you doing is go over to the two mics and then ask a question. Identify yourself, ask a question. And if you begin to make a speech, I'm going to be nasty and cut you off. So we start over here, please?

QUESTION: Hi, my name is Anousa Romanian (?). I'm a freshman studying in the School of Media and Public Affairs at GW. I've noticed as a new consumer, it can be very demoralizing to read bad things over and over again about wars. So, how do you guys tell stories that instill compassion rather than fatigue in a news consumer?

MARVIN KALB: Laura, a story about the women in Afghanistan?

LAURA KING: Well, yes. I think when you're writing about policy type questions, the story can kind of have the life leeched out of it, and there just always have to be people in there.
**MARVIN KALB:** Please, a question?

**QUESTION:** Joe San Giorgio, George Washington University. My question is what has your experience been in covering and dealing with private contractors like Blackwater on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan? What's the real story there?

**MARVIN KALB:** Thank you. Rajiv, you want to try that?

**RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN:** You know, it’s a very difficult world to crack. They generally don't offer embeds. [laughter] They in many cases keep the media at more than an arm’s length. But there's been some excellent journalism that has been performed in this area, and I think most notably to my colleague, Steve Fainaru, who spent a year for the *Washington Post* writing about the role of private contractors in Iraq, for which he won a Pulitzer Prize a couple of years ago, and also wrote an excellent book on it. With enough tenacity, you can crack through some of that. But it’s not as simple as saying, “Hey look, I want to go and hang out with the Blackwater guys for a month, so let me line up this embed.”

**MARVIN KALB:** Okay. Yes, please?

**QUESTION:** My name is A. R. Hogan, I'm a journalism history doctoral student at the University of Maryland. I'm wondering if you have drawn any professional or personal lessons from the CBS News war reporting by Edward R. Murrow in World War II and Korea, and George Herman in Korean War as well? And so Ms. McCormick, if your colleagues Kimberly Dozier of CBS News and Bob Woodruff at ABC News have helped you in the process of recovery? And then lastly, why doesn’t the peace movement get more attention in all this reporting on wars? Thank you.
MARVIN KALB: You want to try one, two or three of those?

CAMI MCCORMICK: Well, I'll try one or two quickly. I learned from Murrow to get out and cover wars. To get out, you have to be there, out there, seeing it to cover it and that's where my interest in it came from. As far as our colleagues Kimberly Dozier, who’s a very good friend of mine at CBS, she was injured in a car bombing in Iraq and we lost two very dear colleagues who were her crew, obviously she taught me a lot. I went through this experience with her. After she was injured, she was here for me when I was injured. So, it’s something very few people in the world experience to begin with, but it obviously helps to have someone else know what you're going through.

MARVIN KALB: Martha, on the last question having to do with the peace concept?

MARTHA RADDATZ: I just do war, you know? [laughter] I mean, I think news organizations have covered the peace movement through Congress more than anything. And I mean, I haven't seen any huge groups of people out protesting. I mean, I should take that back. There have been huge groups of people protesting, but not regularly. And the passion that you saw in the healthcare debate, that was pretty profound, I think. But regular protests to the war, I have not seen huge, huge groups. And if I start getting emails about that, or something, okay. But remember, I'm covering the war. So ask my bosses that.

MARVIN KALB: But peace demonstrations, such as the sort, for example, that we observed during the Vietnam War, that does not exist now?

MARTHA RADDATZ: No.

MARVIN KALB: And one of the basic reasons it doesn't exist is that we are not drafted into the service now.
MARTHA RADDATZ: It’s a volunteer military, that's true.

MARVIN KALB: It’s a volunteer army. Yes, please?

QUESTION: Hi, my name’s John Lane from George Washington University. My question is sort of about you've all covered this since I was in junior high, but from the very beginning. How radical is the shift in Afghanistan and in Iraq from the early operations to the COIN op, the counterinsurgency strategy by Petraeus and McChrystal?

MARVIN KALB: Rajiv?

MARTHA RADDATZ: Pretty radical.

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: Pretty significant. I mean, Martha remembers from the early days when you'd have units in Iraq rolling into villages with pieces of heavy armor announcing their presence by sending off 120 millimeter tank rounds into buildings and calling in air strikes to level housing compounds. That isn't supposed to happen anymore. I'm not trying to say that it never happens. But the idea that you're actually out there-- Let me add one more thing. I remember distinctly early on, probably six to eight weeks into the U.S. presence in Iraq, overhearing a conversation, talking to some people in the green zone about all the looting that was happening near Sadr City. And having somebody tell me, “Oh, that's a green on green issue. We don't get involved in that. That's Iraqis on Iraqis.” And today, that's very much an issue that concerns people like General McChrystal and General Odierno in Iraq because population security is central to counterinsurgency.

So I think there's been a fundamental evolution in the way the U.S. military writ large conducts these operations. And what constantly surprises me is I understand how flag
officers can read this doctrine and can say, “Okay look, we're going to fight this and wage this conflict differently.” But it’s amazing how the military, as this vast institution, has managed to sort of push this all the way down to sort of the young marine lance corporals and the private first classes. They may not have read field manual 3-24, but they get the basics of counterinsurgency and what the commander’s intent is in a way that I don't think the intent was ever very clear early on in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** It wasn’t. If I can just do quickly, my example is in 2004 going up to Crete with General John Batiste, and he was talking about if anyone who’s coming at him, or anybody was-- if there was anybody suspicious. And he said something like, “I don’t want any of you to take any chances, just fire back.” And years later, when General Pete Chiarelli was over there, and I remember distinctly him saying to guys, “Look, we're losing a lot of civilians at these checkpoints. And if you can just take half a second to think, to make sure. I know this sounds--“ That was radical, radical. And now it’s exactly what McChrystal’s doing. And I also remember in a session, because we go off into these briefings in the morning and listen to what the day holds. And they went from how many you killed to then Petraeus and Chiarelli and others would start asking how many lives they saved, or how many people at checkpoints weren't killed and that you took that half second and lives were saved? And that to me was a radical shift and really showed where we're--

**RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN:** Several months ago, Stan McChrystal issued this tactical directive that severely limits the use of air strikes in Afghanistan. This is the sort of thing that would have been unthinkable three, four, five years ago in Iraq, or even in Afghanistan. Today, if U.S. forces are receiving gunfire from a housing compound, you know, a hundred meters away, they can’t just call in an air strike and level it unless they're in imminent danger of being overrun or killed. Just simply knowing that there are- - and seeing-- a couple of Taliban and they're shooting at them is not sufficient because there could be women and children in there. And unless they can observe the place for 24
hours and establish a pattern of life, McChrystal doesn’t permit them to do that. And that's just a fundamental way-- And he argues, and I think rightly, that you can kill two Taliban, but if you wind up killing a couple of women and children, you've wound up setting yourself much further back in the overall effort. And so big change.

**MARVIN KALB:** Thank you very much. Question, please?

**QUESTION:** My name is Michael Coren. I was a freelance journalist in Cambodia and Indonesia and East Timor. I'm curious about the aspiration of war reporting beyond the broader goals of just shedding light on the events of the day, informing the public, checking the official story. What does the best war reporting aspire to do? What impact is it supposed to have on national safety?

**MARVIN KALB:** The big picture? What do you think, Laura?

**LAURA KING:** Yeah, the big picture. I think that anybody who is engaged in this kind of work would just hope that they can illuminate issues and make them accessible to readers and listeners here. And I think that our stories don’t always succeed in doing that. I mean, sometimes, you look back at one of your own pieces and you say, “Oh, I wish I had described that better. I wish I had said more about what it sounded like and looked like and smelled like. I wish I had brought the reader closer to the story.” And I think that's what you always aspire to.

**MARVIN KALB:** Cami, what is your thought on that question, that are journalists in a war situation too much tied to the need to report what is right there where they're embedded, as opposed to the broader issue that is raised by this reporter?

**CAMI MCCORMICK:** Yeah, well it’s certainly a challenge because so much is happening when you're out there. Especially if you're caught up in a gun battle or a
bombing or some sort of situation where it’s very— your first reaction would be to write about that. Or, if you were embedded with a group of soldiers and marines and you see really good stories there, obviously you want to report on that. But I think if you have time to stand back, one of the important jobs of a war correspondent is to write stories and to report stories on radio and television that make people think, that make people question what's going on, especially in a war situation. Just to write enough stories and to create enough interest and more people do start asking questions one way or the other about it.

MARTHA RADDATZ: Look what happened in pre-surge. I mean, that to me is— you had an administration at the time that was saying that we were winning in Iraq. And President Bush, even at the end of his term said, “I knew we weren't, but I said that because I thought it helped troop morale.” I think the troops knew that they weren't succeeding, either. But I think the American people figured it out, and I'm proud of that, in a sense. I'm proud of all of us, that the press continued to report over there objectively because we were on the ground, because we could come back and we could ask questions to policymakers, to the administration, to generals, about what was really going on. And if that means that a change is needed and the American public figures out, I think we can feel pretty good about that.

MARVIN KALB: Okay, thank you very much. Yes, please?

QUESTION: Thank you. My name is Linda Jansen, I'm in the United States Army. In fact, I met Martha over there in Baghdad. You've all covered our efforts in Afghanistan to build military or security capacity. The other side of it is to build governance capacity for Afghanistan. Rajiv, you wrote a very good book on our efforts to do this in Iraq. You're very critical of the CPA and those types of efforts, but we needed that kind of a look. Can we look forward to a similar effort on our governance building in Afghanistan?
RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: A similar sort of literary journalistic effort?

QUESTION: Yes?

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: Look, I'm still trying to get my head around all of that. And it is certainly a subject worthy of continued examination because you're right, the building up of effective governance over there and effective security forces is the exit strategy. Or at least it’ll define what sort of Afghanistan, or what Afghanistan is like as U.S. forces draw down since the commitment there, as the President has indicated, will not be sort of open-ended and in perpetuity.

And look, I think there are-- our efforts at governance are, in some ways, all over the map. There is in some places a tolerance for corrupt local power brokers. In other areas, there are efforts to challenge that. There are efforts to try to create new, effective forms of local governance. Sometimes with sort of two steps forward, one step back. Take for instance Marja where the newly appointed mayor of Marja is somebody who had lived in Germany for 15 years. Brought back in, we try to give him some oomph by giving him some money that he can use to hire people for reconstruction projects, and such. It was just reported on Friday that he had served four years in prison in Germany for attempted murder, but Afghan government officials believed that he sort of paid his debt and now is ready to move on. And you could argue that in comparison to some other figures in the Afghan government, one case of attempted murder is--

MARVIN KALB: Four years is nothing.

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: --is fairly small potatoes compared to what some other individuals have been accused of doing over time. That said, it would be interesting to see, will somebody like this be able to essentially stand up and with our assistance emerge as a real credible leader? Or will he be seen to be sort of a western puppet? And I
think it’s too early to tell right now, but these are the sorts of questions that we all have to be looking at going forward.

MARVIN KALB: Okay, we've got only two minutes to go. So we’ll take a question here and a question there. I'm sorry, I apologize to the rest of you. Yes, please?

QUESTION: My name is Mina Saud, and I'm with Platts. I'm a reporter as well. My question was for Laura. You said Pakistani journalists are viewed with skepticism. And I'm wondering if they're viewed with more or less skepticism than U.S. journalists, and why? And I'd like everyone else to answer that question.

LAURA KING: To clarify that, I think they're viewed with suspicion by the Afghan authorities who believe that the Pakistani government and the Pakistani intelligence services are behind many kinds of malfeasance in Afghanistan. And that sentiment spills over, unfortunately, onto working journalists. And it’s very difficult for them to have dealings with Afghan officials that are not colored by that somehow.

MARVIN KALB: Last question. Yes, please?

QUESTION: Hi. Connie Long, congratulations. Very quickly, do the soldiers open up to you? Do they think this war is winnable, whatever that means, winnable? And are any of them bitter about the situation?

MARVIN KALB: Do the reporters think-- excuse me, do the troops--?

QUESTION: The soldiers?

MARVIN KALB: Think that the war in Afghanistan is winnable?
QUESTION: Right, whatever winnable means in this case?

MARVIN KALB: Cami, give us a shot on that.

CAMI MCCORMICK: Well, when you're out there with them, you get as many opinions about the war as you do sitting in this room. I mean, that's the honest answer.

MARVIN KALB: Really?

CAMI MCCORMICK: Most of them will tell you that they're there to do a job, this is their job, and they're obviously wanting to win and do their jobs well. But if you talk to them about their opinions of the war, you'll get a lot of different opinions.

MARVIN KALB: Laura?

LAURA KING: Well, I've probably spent less time with the troops recently than my colleagues here. But yes, I think people will open up, soldiers will open up, about their doubts and fears, even as they're talking about their belief in their mission. It's one thing to believe in what you're doing that day, and it's another to think that it's going to lead to overall success.

MARVIN KALB: Martha?

MARTHA RADDATZ: I think you get a lot of opinions, too, and I think one of the things that I've heard recently people say is, “Look, I think we're going to succeed because we have the best soldiers we've ever had here now.” And I said, “Well, wait a minute. I've been covering soldiers a long time. You had great ones in Iraq three years ago.” And they say, “Yes, ma’am, they're the same soldiers.” So, we talk-- only they have more experience. We talk to probably the same soldiers year after year after year, and
some of them-- up in ranks. I mean, a lot of young guys you don’t. And I think there's always a feeling that they can succeed, but there is obviously a feeling that they may not have enough time to succeed. They all are very well aware of public opinion and whether the people have the will to succeed. I think that question back there about fatigue and what kind of stories can you cover was an excellent one. Because I think they’re aware of that, too. That people aren’t paying attention. And if people aren’t paying attention, then the American public kind of says, “You know, is it worth it?”

MARVIN KALB: Rajiv, let me ask you a specific question. In that kind of fatigue, could there be a buildup of the kind of anti-press sentiment that one felt during the Vietnam War?

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: I suppose. I haven’t detected it.

MARVIN KALB: You haven't? Okay. Now, you can go back to your other answer.

RAJIV CHANDRASEKARAN: No, I just want to sort of bring it full circle just to note, first off, that I'm struck just given at times just how arduous the conditions are, how seemingly relatively high the morale is. Thinking that, boy, if I was getting shot at and wet up to my waist and sleeping in near-freezing temperatures, I might be a little bit more unhappy. But, clearly this-- because it’s an all-voluntary military, I know a lot of them talk about the strain of repeated deployments, but they believe they're-- they're there to do their job, and I'm just sort of struck by the commitment.

But just one last, quick point to make. In this town, you can’t walk into a federal building and just go and expect to talk to rank and file people, rank and file government workers, without a public affairs officer hovering over your shoulder and supervising every conversation. You can’t do that with State Department diplomats overseas with on the record conversations. When you're with the military and we're talking about the diversity
of opinions among the soldiers, one incredibly refreshing thing as a journalist is that when you're with them, there is no shortage of opinions, and most of them, many of them, will talk to you on the record with name attached. And I think that's just one amazing thing about our military today, that they have a culture that will allow that and will allow soldiers to speak their minds. Admittedly, some at some points in Iraq have gotten into trouble for saying things that were overly critical. I'm not trying to say that there's total freedom of speech within the ranks, don't mistake me.

But the ability to be able to go and talk to people on the record, on bases without sort of a public affairs official sort of supervising everything, that's just a-- as a journalist, that's a freedom that you just don't have in other places.

MARVIN KALB: I think that's a marvelous and important point. And I thank you very much, Rajiv, and all of you for a really splendid conversation. You've brought us into the process a bit, and we appreciate that very, very much. And thank you, indeed. And thank all of you for coming, thank you very much.

[applause]

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