

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Interview of General Peter Schoomaker  
Type of Event: Interview  
Date: February 19, 2003  
Prepared by: Bonnie D. Jenkins  
Reviewed by: Len Hawley  
Classification: ~~Top Secret~~  
Team Number: 3 (Counterterrorism Policy)  
Location: 2100 K Street, NW  
Participants – Non-Commission: General Schoomaker, Major General Romig  
Participants – Commission: Philip Zelikow, Michael Hurley, Steven Dunne,  
and Bonnie Jenkins

Background

(U) General Schoomaker has a rich history in the U.S. military. He spent 31 years in a variety of command and staff assignments with both conventional and special operations forces. He participated in numerous deployment operations, including DESERT ONE in Iran, URGENT FURY in Grenada, JUST CAUSE in Panama, DESERT SHEILD/DESERT STORM in Southwest Asia, and UPHOLD DEMOCRACY in Haiti. He also supported various worldwide joint contingency operations, including those in the Balkans. He served as the Commander, Special Operations Command (SOCOM) from November 1997 – November 2000. He assumed the office of Chief of Staff of the United States Army on August 1, 2003.

The Long Standing Problem of Terrorism

(U) Schoomaker has been involved in terrorism issues for over 25 years. It is his view that the U.S. never responded to terrorism as it should have except after 9/11. Prior to that time, counterterrorism was not a mission of the military. Traditionally, terrorism was a criminal and law enforcement issue. As a result, terrorism was tied to such factors as indictments, elements of proof, extradition, etc. This had the result of limiting the tools that could be applied to the problem.

(U) Schoomaker believes terrorism was a constant threat and one he has seen for many years, since the time he joined the Special Operations Forces (SOFs) and during his tenures with the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) and DELTA Force. Today, there is no one in charge of interagency efforts. Richard Clarke, the former National Security Coordinator for Counterterrorism, was very good at keeping the interagency engaged in the counterterrorism issue, but he was viewed with suspicion. It was a bureaucratic dance that undermined interagency efforts.

The Mission of Special Operations Forces

(U) Zelikow asked Schoomaker how Special Operations Forces (SOFs) saw their mission in the 1980's and 1990's. In response, Schoomaker provided a background on the creation of SOFs.

(U) In 1977, German forces rescued hostages in a hijacked Lufthansa Airlines. After witnessing the ability of the forces to rescue the hostages, the U.S. government began to focus on developing its own hostage rescue capability. The government decided in October 1977 that it would create a cadre of individuals who could rescue hostages in addition to other related capabilities. A special mission unit was activated in November 1977. It was given two years to train and be prepared for hostage rescue missions. After the two years elapsed, in 1979, the forces were validated and approved by DoD. Immediately afterwards, in 1979, U.S. hostages were seized in Iran. That incident became the focus of the newly designed Special Forces. Schoomaker himself was part of this operation.

(U) In 1980, the mission was told to prepare for a second insertion for another hostage attempt. However the hostages were released in January 1981.

Surrogates and the Military

9/11 Classified Information

(U) Currently, the CIA has "the market" on covert action authorities in the United States. However, the agency does not have the resources to carry out those activities. As a result, DoD is often asked to provide the agency with detailees.

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Classified Information

(U) Schoomaker took a brief moment to describe the MC-130 to Commission staff. The MC-130 is an aircraft that can penetrate hostile airspace and has electronics that can jam and evade radars. It is not a stealth aircraft but it does have great survivability. When asked what plans were developed for the use of the AC-130s and MC-130s carrying Blue 82-bombs, Schoomaker remarked that SOCOM worked hard on the plans for AC-130 precision targets and in getting the platform into places where it would survive. SOCOM examined the potential collateral damage with the use of the AC-130 and MC-130. There were two issues of significance regarding these aircraft.

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Classified Information

(U) Schoomaker was asked about the accuracy of the AC-130. If in fact it is very precise, leading to less collateral damage, why was it not more seriously considered as a means to go after al Qaeda and UBL before 9/11? Schoomaker noted that during the U.S. war in Panama, an AC-130 was used to target a police station. In front of the station, very close by, was a Nativity Scene. According to Schoomaker, the AC-130 was able to destroy the police station without doing any damage to the Nativity Scene. The AC-130 is very accurate. However, while the TLAMs provide reasonable accuracy, the lives of the troops launching the missile are not put at risk. With AC-130s, there are crews involved in the flight and as a result, there will be a requirement for combat search and rescue in case the platform runs into problems. This was a concern for those policymakers who wanted very low risk in a military operation against UBL and A-Q. It was a tradeoff. The TLAMs were lower risk than the AC-130s. However, the AC-130 was a better precision weapon.

9/11 Classified Information

(U) The risk to these platforms depends in great part on existing air defenses. While the military can predict the range of radars and can suppress such radars, the threat posed by MANPADS is higher because these weapons are more difficult to track, particularly during the day.

(U) In addition, the MC-130 is a much better protected aircraft. It can drop a precision weapon if one can be developed for that use. A lot will depend upon the scenario in which the weapon would be used.

9/11 Classified Information

(U) Zelikow noted that with the use of the TLAM, there is a 70% chance that it would result in a large number of unintended casualties whereas the AC-130 had great precision. Schoomaker acknowledged that it is difficult to understand why the TLAMs were preferred over the AC-130. However, it was a judgment call. In his view, it would have been preferable to have boots on the ground to survey the situation.

Actionable Intelligence

(U) When asked what kind of actionable intelligence is required to conduct an operation with the AC-130, Schoomaker remarked that it depends upon the target. If an AC-130 is to be deployed from the continental United States, the flight time, orbit time, and other issues must be addressed, including shifts in crew members if the plane is to go from the

continental United States (CONUS). However, it was unlikely the plane would fly from CONUS.

(U) The idea would be to place a platform in theatre close to the target so that it could respond immediately to actionable intelligence. The closer the platform is to the target and the better intelligence that exists, the more likely the operation would be a success. However, he does not recall the intelligence ever having been very good.

(U) Schoomaker also noted that there was no attractive option if there was less than the type of intelligence required for the operation. If there is knowledge as to where the individual targeted is located, and if the individual has a pattern of activity that is predictable, the military will use actionable intelligence to conduct an operation. However, if the target, here UBL, regularly travels to different places and that is difficult to track, there will be more difficulties in planning an operation that targets UBL.

(U) Schoomaker was asked about the possibility of the platform being stationed at Oman. Would that have provided a better option for a military operation against A-Q and UBL? Schoomaker responded that once again, everything depends upon the situation. What has to be considered is the flight time, whether the aircraft was on alert and on launch, whether it would fly over Pakistan or Iran, etc. Also, the other issue is the location of the combat search and rescue team. These are all simply issues of geometry, Schoomaker said. They are time and distance considerations. Having actionable intelligence, and resolving outstanding issues, will increase the number of options.

9/11 Classified Information

#### SOF options in Afghanistan Pre 9/11

(U) When asked why the U.S. had not developed a SOF options for going after A-Q and UBL pre 9/11, Schoomaker responded that if SOCOM had the resources and the charter to act unilaterally as a supported command, it would have had more ability to push the options through the chain of command that it had developed. However, again, SOCOM was a supporting command to other commands. He also never believed that Zinni thought the SOF options were viable. There were also problems with Pakistan and forward deploying assets in the region.

(U) Zelikow asked about Clarke's complaint that the military would provide options for boots on the ground that always had a large "footprint." Schoomaker remarked that Clarke's heart was always in the right place and he was very concerned about terrorism. In addition, he is not anti-Clarke. However, a small footprint requires very good intelligence. When there is little information, the commander will have to send in more troops to conduct the operation.

(U) Schoomaker did want the Commission to understand the military's position. He provided an example. He recalled when he was JSOC Commander, he received a call that someone was leaving Iraq and that JSOC was to capture that individual. The footprint could not be too big. There was no picture of the individual to be captured. The belief

was that the individual would depart by airplane or ferry boat, possibly on the way to a hotel. However, information on which hotel the individual would be going to was not known. There could only be a 15-20 minutes flight time for the troops to conduct the operation. Schoomaker was told to prepare options in 24 hours and that he would brief his superiors on the options. With so little information, it was difficult to develop an option with a small footprint, which is what Schoomaker prefers. However, since the forces were going in with very little information, a larger force would be required.

(U) Zelikow pushed Schoomaker on this and added that in the case of the AC-130, there would have to be a search and rescue force, in addition to other personnel. Schoomaker agreed and added that in general, he was frustrated. His point is that if the U.S. wanted the military to use Special Forces pre 9/11, SOCOM would have had to have the charter it has post 9/11. The decision to make SOCOM a supported command, in his view, is a huge step forward. The command can plan its own operations and in a shorter time frame. He proposed this idea in the 1990's but at that time, it was necessary to have the concurrence of many people who were not thinking progressively. SOCOM as a supported command was not a serious consideration. Schoomaker spoke to Secretary Cohen and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Hugh Shelton on this issue. The idea was not shot down, Schoomaker said, but since it was not in the Unified Command Plan, it was not supported.

(U) Zelikow asked if Schoomaker thought it was unusual that Shelton, who was once the commander of SOCOM, did not support the idea of SOCOM as a supported command. Schoomaker reminded the Commission that Shelton was his predecessor at SOCOM for only 18 months. He did not have any SOF experience but grew up in the world of conventional forces, which is a different environment from that of SOCOM, where he spent many of his years in the military.

War with UBL pre 9/11

(U) Zelikow remarked that many people believe the United States was at war with UBL before 9/11. Schoomaker responded that the U.S. thought it was at war with UBL and yet SOCOM was always given excuses as to why it could not conduct operations against the terrorists. In his view, many people today say the U.S. was at war with UBL before 9/11, but that is hindsight.

9/11 Classified Information

~~Top Secret~~

9/11 Classified Information

Richard Shultz, Jr., "Showstoppers" article in the Weekly Standard

(U) Schoomaker stated he did not read the classified version of the "Showstoppers" article. He did read the unclassified version and was interviewed by Shultz. When he agreed to the interview, he was informed the study would be classified and would remain so. Schoomaker is dissatisfied with the way in which the press picked apart his statement. However, he agreed with the views expressed in the article, which is that there were nine self-imposed constraints that kept special missions sidelined. He recalls a proposed mission

At that time, Schoomaker briefed the Secretary of Defense Perry that there was a moderate to high risk to a SOF operation

However, it was decided that the Special Forces would not be given a mission. There was concern about the risks involved. It was a big risk but Schoomaker saw it as an acceptable risk. It would have been a big victory for the U.S.

(U) Zelikow informed Schoomaker that General Zinni was not in favor of many of the options presented for military operations in Afghanistan pre 9/11. Schoomaker agreed that it may have been unlikely before 9/11 to conduct many of the options planned, however that is not true today. Schoomaker said that he and General Zinni are good friends. However, there is not a great deal of understanding of what the SOFs can do or confidence in what SOFs can accomplish. There is a reluctance to have military operations that are conducted that cannot be controlled. The SOFs operate very discreetly. In addition, the forces in the region must continue to live there and they are understandably not comfortable with the high risks associated with a SOF operation.

(U) Zelikow informed Schoomaker that General Zinni stated in his interview that Schoomaker, as the Commander of SOCOM, was engaged in activities in the CENTCOM region that Zinni was not aware of. Schoomaker denied any truth to this statement. Generally, a combatant commander wants to know what is going on in his area of responsibility. This is true of all regional commanders. In addition, CENTCOM is a very fragile theater because of the major threats emanating from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, etc. Today, the coordination between SOCOM and the regional commands is better than ever before. There have been two successive wars in CENTCOM and very good SOF operations in the region.

9/11 Classified Information

Final Thoughts and Today

(U) When asked if he had any other key issues regarding al Qaeda and UBL that he would like to discuss with the Commission, Schoomaker said he does not believe the U.S. did all it could have to bring the fight to al Qaeda and UBL. In addition, SOCOM was not used to the best of its abilities. The reason SOCOM was not used more was

~~Top Secret~~

because of such issues related to risks and control of the SOF operation, and not because SOFs did not have the necessary capabilities or willingness to engage.

(U) The relations between the CIA and SOFs are very positive today. Schoomaker noted that as he travels to Afghanistan and Iraq, he witnesses how the two organizations are working together. It is not perfect but there are many very highly qualified people working jointly on the war against terrorism. SOCOM detailed individuals to the agency but no detailee was ever provided to CIA to operate outside Title 10 authorities.

(U) When asked if there is more of a need in the military for clandestine direct action, particularly in preparing the battle space, Schoomaker remarked that those efforts do exist and are moving in the right direction.

(U) As a recommendation for the commission, Schoomaker stated the nation must solve the gaps in human intelligence (HUMINT). The U.S. must take advantage of its ability to pull together knowledge that can be acted upon. There must be an effort to give authority to the Secretary to do operations and not be constrained by 12333. "The bureaucratic mess is onerous," Schoomaker stated. If the military is to do counterterrorism, it must have the capacity to act proactively. This requires accurate intelligence. "We owe it to the troops to ensure we know what we're doing. We cannot rely only on technical means," Schoomaker said. Intelligence must be predictable. In his view, too many people are aware of U.S. SIGINT and satellite capabilities.

(U) Schoomaker again noted that before 9/11, not many people in the government acted as if the U.S. was at war, even though they say today that they were. He stated, "folks are not calling it like it really was." There were people working hard to address terrorism, but there was not much support for these individuals. Schoomaker said that no one anticipated an airplane would ram into a building. However, for a long time, at least as far back as 25 years, the U.S. was sending out the same message, which was if the terrorists "picked" at the U.S. below a certain level, the U.S. would not act. Above that level, the U.S. would pull its troops out. Until 9/11, the U.S. was not willing to seriously take the fight to the enemy.