

Remarks prepared  
for delivery by

Ambassador Charles A. Ray

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Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense  
For  
POW/Missing Personnel Affairs

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NATO Personnel Recovery Conference  
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Good Morning,

Distinguished guests and conference attendees, it is an honor and privilege to be with you today, especially considering the important topic at hand, and my role as the main proponent for personnel recovery policy for the United States government. I want to especially thank Major Bart Holewijn for extending an invitation for me to speak with you today, and to the Swedish Ministry of Defense for hosting this event in a phenomenal setting. My only complaint would be that it never really gets dark at night here in Stockholm.

NATO has a tendency to use many acronyms and Bart used DASD in my introduction. DASD stands for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs, I have spoken many times about personnel recovery and how it is the sum of military, diplomatic, and civil efforts to recover and reintegrate isolated personnel. Sometimes we think of personnel recovery from a limited perspective of only rescuing military personnel, but in today's environment, the term "personnel recovery" is much broader than that. From my time in the U.S. State Department, I learned the crucial role that not only military, but diplomatic and civil efforts play in successful personnel recovery.

After spending 20 years in the U.S. Army, I retired and began working for the Department of State. More than 20 years of service there has placed me in locations around the world from Africa to Asia, including assignments as the Deputy Chief of Mission in Sierra Leone, Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City and most recently, the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Over 40 years of government service I've witnessed the vast range of capabilities that different embassies have—and this is true not only for U.S. embassies, but for NATO embassies as well. No two are alike.

Some are large—with hundreds of people on station, while others have only a handful of people. They are all organized differently, with different responsibilities depending on a multitude of factors including where they are located and how large their staffs are.

One commonality among all embassies is that there are people stationed there to serve the interests of their nations. Therefore, they must feel secure in knowing that their countries will do everything in their power to keep them safe in the environment abroad.

My staff at the Defense Department's POW/Missing Personnel Office is working hard to educate the DoD, as well as other agencies in the U.S. government such as our worldwide embassies, about personnel recovery. This is not an easy task. Our organizations are vastly different, but we must all have a

common understanding of what personnel recovery is. Not only that, we must be able to communicate that understanding among our partner nations.

I am pleased to tell you that we are close to having a defined national policy for personnel recovery in the U.S.

After some very energetic discussion among the various agencies, we have finally agreed on a definition after over 2 years for personnel recovery, which is the sum of diplomatic, military, and civil efforts to prepare for and recover persons who become isolated from friendly support or who are held against their will. And we define an isolated person as one who has become separated from friendly support and is forced to survive, evade capture, or endure being held against their will.

It is important that we speak with common terms of reference, and I applaud the efforts by NATO and other international partners to develop such common terms and definitions. Common terms of reference lead to a common understanding despite our differences in language and culture. Having a common understanding improves our likelihood for success and our ability to work together toward common objectives.

Now that other agencies are aware of what personnel recovery is, we must implement a plan to educate and train all of those serving the interests of our nations.

Military members are not the only personnel at risk of isolation. Embassy security officials, for example, know that all of their employees are at an increased risk for isolation. As today's conflict situation has no battle lines or uniforms, each nation's citizen is vulnerable targets -- yours and mine. We only have to read the newspaper or watch the evening television news to see the latest activities happening in Africa regarding kidnapping. And I know some of you have been personally affected because many of the NATO nations represented here today have responded to the kidnappings of their citizens.

Each of you is part of the world's first line of defense. You are a manifestation of our recognition that we have an obligation to protect our people. Saving lives whether in peacetime or in combat is one of the most concrete examples of any nation's commitment to its people. It is a commitment from one military person to another, one that we, as public servants, have to our fellow citizens, and one that human beings have to each other.

We should all value the dignity of human life, both in our own countries, but also as we work increasingly in coalitions around the world.

Based on these common values and ideals, we can build a collective set of rescue capabilities that can be leveraged by all to mitigate future risks.

Later today we will entertain discussions about leveraging civil and diplomatic efforts. They can also be described as establishing personal and private relationships outside of official contacts. Those relationships built over

years of coffee and golf can lead to networks that have capabilities which formal military and diplomatic contacts may not achieve.

And personnel recovery doesn't necessarily mean saving lives in the traditional manner, that is, when lives are in harm's way in combat. We must step away from the classic combat search and rescue mindset and broaden our view of personnel recovery to include prevention, risk mitigation, education, training, equipping, and rehearsing our people who serve outside our own borders. And even more importantly, we need to collaborate across international borders and consider diplomatic and civil avenues for recovering our citizens.

Today's conference theme -- Diplomatic and Civil aspects of Personnel Recovery -- will enable us to establish new solutions to successfully cope with our changing global security environment. In this room are the people who will be charged with leading and maintaining the momentum to build personnel recovery efforts now and into the future. By combining the collective military, diplomatic and civil capabilities from each of our nations, we can mitigate risk and increase the chances that our men and women serving abroad will return to friendly control should they become isolated.

In today's environment, we face non-traditional risks. I repeat this, we face non-traditional risks. So it becomes necessary to deal with them in non-traditional ways. It is critical that we work together to find new solutions to educate, train and prepare our personnel. Not only do we have to think outside the box, we have to think the box out of existence.

Today you will hear from some of the leading subject matter experts regarding diplomatic and civil personnel recovery efforts from several nations. As they speak, please keep in mind that we need to foster that model of common terms of reference outside the military environment, to build a common understanding to achieve common objectives. It is clear to me that this approach will lead to mutual benefits from our bilateral and multilateral interactions.

In America, our people expect the government will not leave anyone in harm's way. This promise allows every U.S. service member, contractor, and civilian in a foreign duty location to be confident that government will make every effort to bring him or her home. This is an important commitment.

The security risks impact all of us regardless of our duty, position, rank or location. Kidnappers and hostage-takers do not just see military personnel as valid targets. They see anyone they can exploit to achieve their personal objectives as a viable target.

Sadly, we have all experienced this horror, with medical personnel, relief workers, journalists and tourists seized simply because it was easy. This reality increases the importance of prevention efforts through force protection training and education programs. It also mandates, I believe, that we develop proactive personnel recovery capabilities ensuring that our troops, our contractors, and our citizens are prepared before they are sent into harm's way.

We are responsible for giving the individuals the training and tools they need to survive. These tools will enable our nations to respond collectively, so that we save lives. We save valuable time and are able to react immediately when our people become isolated.

As we adapt to a changing world, our responsibilities have expanded to cover any viable target serving overseas, whether he or she is a warrior, a government contractor, a host nation interpreter, an embassy staff employee or an ordinary citizen. This is a serious responsibility.

Currently in the U.S. Central Command area alone, there are more than 200,000 U.S. Department of Defense contractors. There are more citizens than soldiers serving abroad, who is responsible for them?

Our people are at a higher risk now, more than ever before. Our adversaries are more advanced and relentless, and the boundaries of war are no longer clearly defined. In today's environment, we work in coalitions and with partner nations, both of which present new challenges.

Some of the diplomatic questions to be addressed, for example, are:

How do we identify each of our personnel recovery capabilities, so as a collective body we can synchronize planning, preparation and response?

How do we implement a common training program on rescue techniques and procedures? How do we cooperate with each other to rehearse personnel recovery action plans? If we can work together to answer these questions, we can create a new paradigm that is more agile, flexible, and responsive.

This new way of thinking will involve building relationships outside normal military contacts, sharing information among those who need it, and ensuring those who can perform the rescue mission are prepared to do so without regard to national identity. We must break down communication and language barriers, grow partner-nation capabilities, and practice our profession together. Ultimately, I believe we will increase international cooperation for a common good.

Within the U.S. government's agencies and side-by-side with partner nations around the world, our combined personnel recovery capabilities can help us conduct the personnel recovery mission on a global scale. We can reduce or mitigate risk not only as it applies to an individual's survival, but to our nation's strategic security.

Working together, we can meet several critical objectives in the personnel recovery mission, such as developing an effective, global capacity to protect and recover our citizens in danger wherever they are...or denying an adversary's ability to exploit captivity of our people through propaganda...or developing capabilities that contribute to crisis response and regional stability...and finally...creating a global environment that is inhospitable to violent extremists and all who support them.

This conference is the perfect opportunity for us to begin the process of finding new solutions to meet these objectives.

If we are going to send our people to foster peace around the world, then it's our responsibility to build an effective system to bring them home. Not somebody else's. Yours and mine! Our people should be confident that they have been trained and prepared for any situation they might face.

I urge you to take advantage of this time to build new friendships, share your professional experience and insights with one another, and begin your homework of creating official and private relationships to build a *global* personnel recovery capability across diplomatic and civil avenues.

I say it often and while there might be those who are tired of hearing it, in my view this is the least we can do, as a government, for those who risk their lives as they go into harm's way supporting our various national interests.

Thank you and I wish you all the best for a successful conference. (25 minutes)