



# THE ASPEN SECURITY FORUM

**JULY MARKS THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY** of the founding of the nation's premier forum on national security and counterterrorism, the Aspen Security Forum, which brings together the most senior present and former government officials from all the relevant government agencies (The White House; the Departments of Homeland Security, Defense, State, Treasury and Justice; the intelligence community; and key congressional committees); opinion leaders from think tanks and academia; and noted print and broadcast journalists to discuss and debate the key issues affecting America's security.



**W**hen we gather at the Aspen Institute's idyllic campus in Aspen, Colo., from July 23-26, a bewildering array of issues will fill the agenda. If there is any overarching theme this year, perhaps it is the mind-numbing challenge of confronting the security threats that face us in a time of profound contradictions.

More than a decade after 9/11 and a massive investment in Afghanistan and Iraq to defeat terrorists, "for the foreseeable future, the most direct threat to America, at home and abroad, remains terrorism," as the president put it in his commencement speech at West Point this summer after suggesting just a year ago that the end of the war on terrorism was in sight. Perhaps the president was right last year to say that "this war, like all wars, must end," but, if so, it is clear now that it will not end any time soon.

If anything, the war is intensifying, at least on the part of terrorists. Al Qaeda Central, the top-down organization headquartered along the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan that attacked us on 9/11, is but a shadow of itself — but its ideological affiliates have spread like a virulent virus to

all corners of the globe. A few years ago policy makers had to worry about only Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the Yemeni affiliate, which has launched a number of foiled attacks on our homeland, and, to a lesser extent, Al Shabab in Somalia. Now there is grave and rising concern too, about Boko Haram in Nigeria and other terror groups elsewhere in West and North Africa; the resurgence of Al Qaeda in Iraq now that American troops have departed; and, perhaps most worrisome of all, the fear that Syria is today what AfPak was before 9/11 — the world's top training ground and launching pad for terror attacks against the United States in particular and

the West in general.

And, this changing and growing threat comes against the backdrop of declining military budgets; rising isolationism, not just on the part of ordinary Americans, but even key leaders in the formerly resolutely hawkish Republican party; and a deep reluctance on the part of the president to use military force absent a clear, present and direct threat to American security. So, one contradiction is that the threat is increasing, but it seems that our will and resources to combat it are declining. We seem to be outsourcing the problem, using our limited budget and diminished force structure to train others to protect themselves and, to a degree at least, us, too.

Another contradiction is that we Americans seem to want two conflicting things at the same time: maximum security and maximum privacy. This is not just the post-9/11 world; it is also the post-Edward Snowden world — meaning that Americans seem willing to go only so far in giving the government the authority it needs to protect us, lest our civil liberties be compromised in the process. The public is pretty much evenly split between those who think

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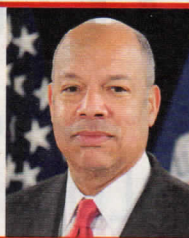
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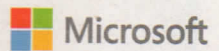
Snowden a traitor and those who think him a patriot. In an earlier era, with a less expansive notion of privacy and a less jaundiced view of government, this would not be a close question. Today, security officials' freedom of maneuver will necessarily be severely constrained.

The recent release of Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl from Taliban custody in Afghanistan, in exchange for the release of five Taliban leaders from our custody in Guantanamo, points up another contradiction: Americans do not leave their own behind on the battlefield, but Americans do not negotiate with terrorists, either. Having now set the precedent of negotiating with terrorists to

recover an American from the battlefield, it is legitimate to ask whether we have ended one crisis only to create others in the future.

As if these conundrums were not enough to drive and shape the dialogue in Aspen, the nation faces a host of traditional national security threats that were merely looming on the horizon last summer. With Russia's annexation of Crimea and its continuing threat to Ukraine's sovereignty, it is clear now that Putin is an adversary to be confronted and not a partner to be accommodated. Likewise sensing American weakness and vulnerability, China is now actively testing the firmness of our commitment to defend allies against

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Chinese aggression in the South China Sea and elsewhere in the Asian Pacific. North Korea is threatening yet another missile launch. The so-called Mideast "peace process" is in shambles. The recently re-elected Bashir Assad in Syria is stronger than ever. And, whether Iran's nuclear program can be stopped at the negotiating table is a 50/50 proposition at best.

To discuss and debate these issues we will convene some of the biggest names in security circles, at home and abroad. Among them are:

- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff **General Martin Dempsey**
- Secretary of Homeland Security **Jeh Johnson**
- U.S. Army Chief of Staff **General Ray Odierno**
- Chief of Naval Operations **Admiral Jonathan Greenert**
- Commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command **General Charles Jacoby**
- Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency  
**Lieutenant General Michael Flynn**
- Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism **Lisa Monaco**
- Director of the National Counterterrorism Center **Matthew Olsen**
- Deputy Director of the National Security Agency **Richard Ledgett**
- Transportation Security Administration Administrator **John Pistole**
- Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence **Michael Vickers**
- Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence **David Cohen**
- Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs  
**Daniel Russel**

- Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs **Andrew Weber**
- State Department Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator for Counterterrorism **Tina Kaidanow**
- U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO **Ambassador Douglas Lute**
- Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan  
**Ambassador James Dobbins**
- Chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee **Michael McCaul**
- The Ambassadors of Britain, Egypt, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Singapore
- New York City Police Commissioner **William Bratton** and
- Former Federal Bureau of Investigation Director **Robert Mueller**

Presented by the Aspen Institute in partnership with The New York Times and CNN, the forum will feature a conversation between a speaker or a panel of speakers and a noted print or broadcast journalist from The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Associated Press, The Daily Beast, Time, Politico, The New Yorker, Foreign Policy, CNN, ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox, NPR and CBS.

With its breathtaking beauty high in the Colorado Rockies, and its air of informality, Aspen is the perfect venue for policy makers and concerned citizens alike to consider the most profound security issues facing our country. We hope that you will join us at the Aspen Security Forum next month for three intensive days of dialogue that will no doubt help to shape the nation's security agenda for the year ahead. ★

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