

**CNN Late Edition With Wolf Blitzer (Excerpt)**  
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Guests: John McLaughlin, Stansfield Turner  
Wolf Blitzer, Host, CNN.COM, -- Aired 12:00 ET

WOLF BLITZER, HOST: Joining us now to talk about the lingering threats, two guests. The former CIA director Stansfield Turner who headed the agency during the Carter administration and John McLaughlin who was recently a deputy CIA director and acting CIA director. He is now a CNN national security adviser. He's also a senior fellow at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies here in Washington.

Gentlemen, thanks very much for joining us. Why is it so hard, Admiral Turner, to capture Osama Bin Laden?

STANSFIELD TURNER, FORMER CIA DIRECTOR: He's in an area of the world where communications facilities, transportation facilities are pretty sparse. He's in an area of the world where there are lots of people who sympathize more with him than with us or with the government of Pakistan or the government of Afghanistan and are willing to shelter him. It's a very difficult proposition.

BLITZER: So you think he's going to be sheltered at least for the foreseeable future? In other words, is he ever going to be captured?

TURNER: Oh, I think he will eventually. But it will come out about probably because somebody spills the beans on him. And we haven't found that coincidence yet where we find a person who is willing to defect but has had a good contact with him, and knows his pattern and knows the kinds of places he's been.

BLITZER: John McLaughlin, you've spent many, many hours, days, months, years searching for Osama Bin Laden. The same question to you: why is it

so hard to find him?

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN, CNN NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER: Well, as Admiral Turner said, he is in one of the most difficult parts of the world to get at. Gary Schroen made this point as well. He's harbored by people who are friendly to his point of view and so forth. But I would say this...

BLITZER: Let me interrupt for a second. Because this is the United States of America, the greatest superpower out there. There are friendly governments in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The United States has enormous economic capabilities, financial capabilities and technical capabilities to get the job done.

So a lot of frustration out there that he's still a free man.

MCLAUGHLIN: Well, of course, everyone is doing their utmost to capture him.

What I would say is I'm certain his life has become more difficult. The kind of captures of people who have been instrumental in his plans and his activities have stressed his communications, forced him deeper underground and made him someone who is no longer the push-button commander of this movement, who continues to inspire it. But he's under considerable pressure.

BLITZER: Did the capture, the arrest of the supposed number three of Al Qaida, Abu Faraj al-Libbi, by the Pakistanis, presumably with U.S. help, did that create a situation that could lead to the capture and killing of Osama bin Laden?

MCLAUGHLIN: Yes. Anything that you do in the way of a capture like

al-Libbi is important because you gain documents, you gain electronic media, you gain what the person is willing to tell you. You learn more.

Going after someone like Osama bin Laden is something that you do in increments over a long period of time.

There's an important point to make, though, about the war on terror. As important as it would be to capture Osama bin Laden -- and it is everyone's utmost desire -- in the war on terror, there's nothing like a decapitation strike. In other words, if the plotters in July of 1944 had succeeded in killing Hitler, it probably would have ended World War II.

So that is not the way the war on terror works. As important as it is to get him, it would not necessarily end the war on terror.

BLITZER: Do you agree with that assessment?

TURNER: Oh yes, I think so. There are so many fanatics involved in this.

BLITZER: So killing Osama bin Laden wouldn't end the terror threat to the United States?

TURNER: No, but it would certainly curtail it. I mean he's got a lot of charisma and he's got a lot of moxie. He knows how to do these things. He's organized it well.

So it's a big step forward but it isn't -- I agree with John -- going to terminate the whole terrorist problem.

MCLAUGHLIN: The important thing, Wolf, if I could interject here, is to continue attacking the networks that have now, to some degree, de-centralized.

I mean, Al Qaida has an Asian face, it has an African face, it has a face that is Middle Eastern. And a lot of these groups are operating with the inspiration of bin Laden but operating to some degree with independence.

So this is a movement that has to be attacked globally and consistently and relentlessly. And taking him out would be a big victory; don't misunderstand that.

BLITZER: Admiral Turner, do you agree with Gary Schroen, the CIA officer we just heard from, who has written this new book, who suggests that the Pakistani government of Pervez Musharraf, while friendly to the United States and helpful in the war on terror, there are limits as to how far he and his government might go, and they're not necessarily inclined to help find Osama bin Laden because that might be too much of a burden that would be created on his government -- the anger that that would generate within Pakistan?

TURNER: Oh, absolutely. The old saying is, "All politics is local." Musharraf has got to stay on our good side for his purposes of international relations, but he's got to maintain his own position in that country, which he's got lots of people who are more inclined to support Osama bin Laden than they are George Bush.

BLITZER: Do you think that Musharraf is holding back?

MCLAUGHLIN: No. No, I don't think he's holding back at all. I think he's a courageous leader who has been enormously helpful to us in circumstances that make it very difficult for him to do so.

He's got extremist elements in that society, including people who are represented in the parliament.

So he does this at great personal cost, but I don't think he's holding back on this. BLITZER: Do you think he's giving the U.S. access to Abu Faraj al-Libbi, the number three Al Qaida operative, who's being held in Pakistan? He also is accused of trying to kill, assassinate Musharraf at least on two occasions.

Is the U.S. getting the kind of access it would like?

MCLAUGHLIN: Well, I don't know that specifically, but, based on everything I do know, I would be very surprised if the Pakistanis were not making available to us the information that comes out of al-Libbi.

BLITZER: There's a difference, though, Admiral Turner, making information available, handing over a report, or briefing the U.S., and letting American interrogators go in there and question a suspect like this.

TURNER: Yes, I have no knowledge as to whether they're letting us in there.

I am a little more skeptical than John. I think Musharraf, with good intentions and with good feelings toward the United States, and knowing that his bread in many ways is buttered on our side, still has to protect his domestic side, and there are just a lot of Pakistanis who are more inclined to favor bin Laden than they are us.

BLITZER: Here's a sensitive subject that I don't know how much you can talk about, but we'll talk about it: this report over the past couple of days that a CIA-operated Predator drone with a Hellfire missile went after a top Al Qaida operative inside Pakistan, fired that missile, and killed him.

Now, the Pakistanis are disputing this, saying that they don't allow U.S. aircraft to fly over their airspace in these kinds of operations, although we've independently confirmed that it did happen.

Give us some perspective on what's going on.

MCLAUGHLIN: Well, on this issue, Wolf, my former hat weighs heavily on my head. For the same reason that the military won't discuss operational details, because it gives too much information to the enemy and endangers our forces in the field.

There's not a lot I can say about the operational use of the Predator. It's well-known from the Afghan War and some other subsequent incidents that there is such a weapon, and it has been used.

(CROSSTALK)

BLITZER: And it's well-known that it's the CIA that has been using these weapons.

MCLAUGHLIN: CIA has had...

BLITZER: As opposed to the Pentagon.

MCLAUGHLIN: Correct.

Now, what I would say is, without confirming that this happened or didn't happen, that reports like this are typical. I mean, this burst into the public view for a few days. As someone who used to sit where I sat, what I can tell you is that the war on terror -- this is something that goes on, not necessarily using the Predator -- but the war on terror goes on every single day, 24/7; CIA officers, other people in the military, out there, fighting these terrorists and breaking up these networks on the front lines.

They occasionally burst into view with a report like this, but I want to tell you that it goes on all the time.

And without grinding down these networks the way we are, this movement would come roaring back at us.

This fellow that is named is someone who is -- I would characterize him as an important facilitator, that is, someone who would be important to moving messages, moving supplies, and at a time when, to refer back to my earlier comments about the fact that bin Laden is having difficulty doing all of those things, this would be an important person to take out of the equation.

BLITZER: All right. Admiral Turner, stand by.

We're going to take a quick break, but we're going to continue this conversation -- lots more to talk about with former CIA Director Stansfield Turner and John McLaughlin, when "LATE EDITION" continues.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BLITZER: Welcome back. We're continuing our conversation with former CIA Director Stansfield Turner and John McLaughlin.

Admiral Turner, we're talking about these targeted killings of terror suspects out there using these Hellfire missiles from these drones, these Predator aircraft. In your day at the CIA, that was a no-no, right?

TURNER: That's correct. President Ford issued a presidential directive that we would not conduct any assassinations. Every president since then has reaffirmed that executive order.

Presidents, I believe, have held it in abeyance to put out a secret order saying, OK, we're going to not observe that for this period of time.

And I'm not opposed to not observing it with respect to the war on terrorism, but we want to be pretty careful here that we don't get back into a situation where assassination is a normal tool of our country's foreign policy.

Among other things, if we go around assassinating leaders of foreign countries as opposed to just terrorists, the most vulnerable leader in the world, probably, is the president of the United States, and we don't want to start a cycle of assassination and counterassassination.

BLITZER: John McLaughlin, you served in the CIA much more recently, just left a little a while ago. Those concerns, I'm sure, are felt at the CIA.

MCLAUGHLIN: Oh absolutely. Whether it's the military or some other part of the U.S. government, lethal authority is never exercised lightly. It's taken very seriously. All sorts of checklists apply.

And essentially we are in a war with people who want to kill us, and in a war you kill the enemy.

BLITZER: What about this other policy -- and I want to get both of you to weigh in on this -- it's called extraordinary rendition, where the U.S. government picks up a suspect, either here or abroad, and hands then him over to Syria or Saudi Arabia or Morocco or Egypt or Jordan for questioning, and there's concern that that individual could be tortured. You're familiar with this policy.

MCLAUGHLIN: Well, the policy of rendition has been used sparingly all the way back into the Clinton administration.

Once it became apparent that we were in a global war with terrorists, assurances are always sought from the country to which a person is rendered that they will not engage in torture.

And in many cases, they are wanted by legal authorities in that country, so there's a legal basis for sending them there.

But many lawyers are involved in this and have different views, but nothing is done that is characterized as illegal by our government.

BLITZER: What do you make of this policy?

TURNER: I'm very nervous about it. Yes, we have to let down some rules in order to fight this war on terrorism.

But we also have to maintain our basic standards and our basic ethics. And I think the whole process of rendition is very fraught with danger.

BLITZER: All right, we'll continue this discussion down the road, but let me thank both of you for joining us here on "LATE EDITION."

Admiral Turner, thanks very much. John McLaughlin, thanks to you as well.

TURNER: Thank you.

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