wasn’t really respected. Fast forward for me, if you would, from then to now, almost 42 years. How has that changed? And why is it changed??

GENERAL STANLEY MCCRystal: It’s changed more fundamentally than even we realized. When I first got to West Point, it was the summer of 1972. The class of ’76, which I was in, entered that year, statistically had the easiest time of being admitted to West Point of any class in its history because it just wasn’t that popular and that’s how I got in. But I remember we got to West Point and the army had been buffeted by things from Vietnam, the My Lai Massacre, a number of other things were still ongoing. There was really a crisis in confidence in the army – and of course the nation was going through quite a bit. But you are a little bit protected from that at West Point. You get in there and it’s a cloistered environment. After about four or five months, you get to go out for your first time for a few hours. We went down to a football game and then after that we had two hours in New York City. I remember we got off this bus and we had to wear our gray full-dress uniforms. You don’t think of yourself as different but you get out, and you are sort of looking like the guards from the Wizard of Oz, and a car drives by and a young girl sticks herself out almost to the waist leaning out of the back window and flips us off. You don’t know her but you suddenly realize that there’s this feeling about who you now are, that you don’t feel like you had anything a part of but suddenly there was that depth of doubt and question. Now as we went forward, the first few years of my career in the army was still sort of sorting its way out. I went to the 82nd Airborne and it was really in bad shape in the late 70’s. Then things started getting much better in the late 70’s early 80’s. And then suddenly the army changed sort of with society; we went from having to beg people to reenlist in the army in my first tour - to in the early 1980’s, we did these boards to see if we would allow them to stay in the army.

And so suddenly the army got more professional, society started having a different view of the military, and by the end of the 1980’s suddenly it had changed dramatically - how we were treated; how we thought of ourselves; great confidence; probably the apogee of that was the First Gulf War. And it has been through this entire last, more than a decade of war where the military has had a very difficult time, as you can imagine, it’s a long and it’s the only time in American history where we tried to fight an extended war without a draft army - with entirely a volunteer force – which means it’s the same people over and over. A lot of people fought, but a lot of the same people fought. There was a Ranger, non-commission officer who was killed two summers ago who I had known. He had enlisted right at 9/11, he had had 14 tours – now Ranger tours are 3 and 4 months long so it’s not years – but his whole career had been at war. He got married, had two kids, and then he was killed on his 14th tour. So that’s who’s out there, and that’s different from any time in
history, and so it’s a different dynamic but fortunately the people of the United States, whether you felt you supported the war politically or not, we were able to separate that from your feeling about the military and that’s very appreciated. We could never have – the force could never have – continued to do what it has done had that not been the case. That sense of support and the sense of inclusion into society was the determinant.

MCCARTHY: And let me, if I may, narrow it down now to the Special Forces, because I know that when you first entered the Rangers, they talked about the Special Forces guys outside as “speckled feces,” which is about as insulting as it gets. And yet today, the Special Forces can do no wrong. How did that transformation come about?

GENERAL: American military, like much of American society, doesn’t like elitism. And so what happens is usually with each war we found elite units. We form them because there’s a requirement for them, and then as soon as the war’s nearing an end we get rid of them because there’s an antibody, the rejection of the idea of it. During the Second World War, we formed the Rangers, we formed the first Special Service force. As soon as the war was over, got rid of them. During the Korean War, we formed the Rangers again in a slightly different form, we formed Special Forces. As soon as the Korean War was over we got rid of the Rangers again, we kept Special Forces but in a smaller thing. Then we went to Vietnam, we grew them both again, brought the Rangers back and grew Special Forces. As soon as the war was over, we did the same thing again. And when I entered Special Forces as a young officer – I was in the 82nd First – in 1977, I decided I was going to go be a Green Beret because I had seen the movie, and as I tell people, why didn’t I go see Wall Street? But I became a Green Beret, and as I started to go – I went and volunteered for it – and guys started saying, “Sir, you’re going to speckled feces.” And I said, “What?” They thought it was a place where people went when they were lazy and what not. Special Forces was struggling in the late 70’s, but it started to get better and better and then in the 80’s I went to the Rangers and suddenly we started this rebirth of American Special Operating Forces, which is the Rangers, Delta Force, Seal Team 6, the whole gambit of it. It’s great because we’ve developed this incredible group of professionals. The danger is – and you didn’t ask me this question – but the danger is you start to think they’re the tool for every job. And because they seem sexy and there’s a temptation to want to solve it with that - and they are going to be very incorrect, improper for many things.

MCCARTHY: Yes, I was actually going to push it further. When we see movies like Zero Dark Thirty, and I understand that it stuck to the facts to a certain extent, but the impression is our Special Forces can go in, solve any problem, and extract without loss of life, to the American side. I’m concerned that gives perhaps civilians a sense that we can do anything we want with no loss to American lives in combat and of course that’s not really the case.

GENERAL: Yes, there are two dangers with that – and you hit the first one perfectly Terry – and that is, and when I was doing this people would say we want to consider an operation - they’d ask you, “What’s the level of risk?” and we’d assess it and we’d come back and say, “It’s high risk.” But it got to where decision makers got very used to success so they started almost to forget that your investment advisor says you can invest in this and get this rate of return and its high risk. Well you hear that rate of return and you think of the risk; well I’ve never lost money before so it’s going to be okay. But the reality is: it is high risk. And high risk not just of loss of life but also of mission failure which is national consequences. So that’s one problem, and it’s very dangerous stuff. Our Special Operating Forces are so stunningly good right now. Compared to anybody in the world there is no comparison, and compared to anything before there is no comparison. But that doesn’t mean they can do any and everything. We fought against Al Qaeda in Iraq – I’ve told some people this – at one point for more than two years we did 300 raids a month. Just my force in Iraq alone. That’s 10 a night. Most operators were on 4 month rotations: 120 days, and they would go for 4 months, come back home for 8, then they come for 4. On the 120 days they’d do 120 raids. Every night. And when I talk raids, I’m not talking about patrols I’m talking about somebody’s going to the door and somebody’s getting shot. And yet we had this so good that we got almost overconfident that we always won the firefight. And so that’s the part of it that’s a danger. The other part of it, however, is you have a movie like Zero Dark Thirty and you see what went. And it was great. And actually the depiction of the raid there was extraordinarily accurate to what a raid looks and feels like. But the danger is the real story of Zero Dark Thirty - probably we ought to begin it at the raid because look at
all the ramifications of that with our relations to Pakistan and all. Anything we do that is a military action, we have to realize, has a cost to it; a reaction to it. And so just because it’s small and feels surgical, doesn’t mean it doesn’t carry the same level of an act of war and so it’s just part of the calculations the nation has to do.

MCCARTHY: I’d like to approach the Rolling Stone article issue because it’s out there. In 2010, they come out with a story and you read it at two o’clock in the morning I believe, and then you went for a run and then you had to fly back to Washington and you resigned. How did you see that from your perspective? It was in the press, we read it all in the media. But for you, this was your career. How did you feel that that was handled and how you treated it, and how you were treated?

GENERAL: First off – for the background. The year that I commanded in Afghanistan, the war was not very popular. And so one of the things that we had to do was get support for the war. We had to get it with our European allies, with the Afghan people, with the press, with the American population, so we had to do a lot of things. I did a 60 Minutes story that I didn’t want to do but came out okay. And then we had a lot of press through and I did a number of embeds. An embed doesn’t mean the person’s with you all the time, it means they come in for a couple of days and you don’t see them for a couple weeks, then they come back for a day or two, and this was one of them. They came to me and said, “How about having a guy from Rolling Stone?” I said, “Why would I do that?” They said, “Well you’ll get a different part of the American readership to see what you do.” I said, “We’re pretty transparent in what we do, so alright.” So we brought this guy around and he was in and out for about 6 weeks, he was with us 2 or 3 times. I asked about it about two weeks before the article came out. I said, “Is that article ever coming out?” and they said, “Yeah yeah, he’s working it.” Then I get woken up about two in the morning, my exec woke me up and said, “We gotta talk, we have a problem.” I said, “What?” He said, “The Rolling Stone article came out.” I said, “Really? That’s going to be a puff piece.” He looked around the command group. He says “It’s not.” So I went downstairs – I lived right above our operations center – and he shows me the article. And as soon as I read the article I knew what was happening here. The title of the article was “Runaway General,” we’ll just start with that. Then the article basically paints my command team as a sort of out of control group, attributes to us a bunch of comments about leaders and whatnot, that sort of thing, vice president and whatnot. And as soon as I read I said, “Alright. This is going to cause a conflagration.” Because we live in that world right now. Look what General Shinseki is going through right now. What happens is we rush to the conflagration faster than we can investigate the reality of it. So this was a pretty tense political time and I knew there was this perception of a civil military issue. So this article came out and as soon as I read it, I said, “Alright, well it’s going to be impossible to deal with this in a way where I can go, ‘Now let me investigate it, let me figure out what’s true and what isn’t true.’” And I didn’t know what in the article was accurate. I knew that the overall depiction was not correct because I knew my team. But I didn’t know on the fact. So I made a couple of calls – I called the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman obviously, but I sort of knew what the deal was. So I went out running and I came back and I actually thought - a couple of times I said, “I’m asleep. This is a dream, and I’m going to wake up.” Because my whole life I thought I might be fired for incompetence or I might be killed. Those were pretty realistic possibilities that I thought a lot about, but I never thought I would be accused of disloyalty. Never in a million years. And so when this thing comes, it was an out of body experience. So the morning comes and it got to be daylight and we’re starting to deal with things. I got a call from the Chairman who says, “Okay we’re going to want you to fly back to the States later today and meet with the Secretary of Defense and the President.” As I did that whole process, I was able to think about it. Now, it was blowing up in the press over here. I couldn’t see that but I had a sense of that. There were really two real options: one was to say, “No, I don’t think it’s true. I think we have got to fight this, I want my day in court.” But you have got a war to fight. You have got 150,000 guys who have got to follow you and you think about - what’s that situation then? And then the other option is to say, “Alright, whether or not I think the article’s correct, what I have done is allowed myself to be in a position that puts the President in a tough position,” and I’m not supposed to do that. Whether I think it’s fair or not, it’s certainly not fair for the President to suddenly find himself pressured by this. So I made the decision that I would go in and tell the President that I would stay if he wanted me to or offer my resignation if he wanted that, which is exactly what I did. And I never really had a second thought. I mean I’ve thought about it and replayed this in my mind a million times since then, but I don’t have any doubts that what I did in terms of offering my resignation was right because the most important thing at that time was the mission.
And what you didn’t need was a controversy between a General and the President being on the front page. The hardest part of it – I don’t know if any of you all have ever been there – everybody says, “Well, I’d like publicity.” Maybe you would, maybe you wouldn’t. It’s because, particularly if you think it’s not fair, it’s really not a venue to say that. That’s not an option. And you have got my 85 year old father reading this, my son off at college reading this, my wife reading this. That’s what you think about. You think about that and you say, “Look what I’ve just positioned, that you are in now, that I feel responsible for.” That’s the way it works. How do I feel about it now? Kind of like I got hit by lightning. I sort of feel like it’s just one of those things that happens. It comes around, a number of things line up, and poof these things happen to you and you really can’t stop it and you can’t cry about it, there’s no point in it. You decide you’re going to move forward. And so from that day on in your life, you can either replay that forever, you can argue that forever, you can try to say, “That wasn’t right,” or you can live moving forward and say, “What I’m going to do is conduct myself so that everybody who meets me says, ‘Wait a minute. I read that story and I met this guy, and they are not congruent.’” And then let each person make their choice, and that’s what I do.

MCCARTHY: Let me just add a coda to that story because not a lot of people followed this, but in April of the following year in 2011, the Department of Defense’s Inspector General’s office finished their review of this whole affair because it was a serious affair with allegations that the Office of the President had been impugned. They found no violations of DoD standards and they also said, and I’ll quote, “Not all the events occurred as portrayed in the article.” I’ll leave it up to you to make your judgments. But that leads me on to leadership lessons because that was, in a sense, also a lesson in leadership. And that seems to be a theme that runs through your career; this search for leadership, mastery of leadership, exercising leadership. I’m curious about leadership in the midst of rapid change because that is what war is about. Things are changing all the time and not always the way you want them to. It’s easier, I think, if you’re in a measured environment and you know what’s going to happen and say, “Well if I change this…” But when you’re in a war, you’re not in control of everything. Leadership there becomes paramount. But how do you practice for that?

GENERAL: Yeah, that’s a really great question because I’ve spent the last few years studying that. I spent the first years of my career experiencing it and trying to deal with it sort of intuitively and now I’ve been studying it. And I can think about it this way: if you can think about something that’s fairly organized that you know, think about the game of chess. That’s 6,000 years old, got understood rules, each side has 16 players, each of the pieces has a unique capability and how it moves, a set of power. And there’s a version of chess called blitz chess. And that is very rapid clock movement, so you have move, move, move. And you think, “That’s really hard.” But then you think about it, all of the pieces move in a set way and even if you’re moving fast, it’s iterative. You make a move, then your opponent makes a move. You make a move, then your opponent makes a move. And no matter how fast it is, that doesn’t even begin to capture the complexity in which we’re living in an environment now, whether it’s business or government or war. Because in reality, there are no such rules. First off, the pieces are not predictable in how they can move. And the second, it’s not iterative. You don’t make a move, and then your opponent makes a move. In fact, your opponent can make 4 moves simultaneously and if you don’t move quick enough, they can move 4 more again. And if you make one, they can do 6. Or you’re not playing against one opponent and in fact you’re playing against… imagine if all the chess pieces on the side against you aren’t controlled by one person but in fact they all have a mind of their own – they’re seeing it from their own level – they’ve got their own brains and they’re dealing with it. And so suddenly they are this thinking, learning entity at a factor much faster than you are and you’re trying to go through this process, “Now wait a minute I’ve got to think back to what the strategy of chess is,” and suddenly you find yourself in this reactive mode where the speed and complexity has grown so fast that you just sort of want the merry go round to stop so I can get back to my strategy. That’s the way war has gotten. It has become disorientingly fast and simultaneously it’s become interconnected, meaning before you might have a war that took place in a certain place, and although it was connected in some ways to other parts of the battlefield or other parts of the world, that was a very delayed process. Now it’s connected through information technology instantaneously. If you think about the fruit seller who burned himself to death in Tunisia, December 17, 2010. Here’s a fruit seller, Mohamed Bouazizi, kills himself because he’s angry with the government. Had good reason. January 11th,
Robertson Lecture Series on Global Business Leadership

The government fell. That's barely 3 weeks later. The government fell because one guy killed himself, but it went viral. January 18th, 2011, just another week from that, a video blog was put out in Egypt that said, “Come to Tahir Square on the 25th for a rally.” On the 25th, over a million people showed up. February 11th, after 40 years in power, Mubarak's out. They didn't know what hit them. The Egyptian government was pretty good at population control for a long time; they didn't know what hit them. And that's the way things are now. It is at a point where the master leader, the master strategist, can't do it. Nobody is capable of doing it. So it's up-ended how we have to run organizations. And what we did in Joint Special Operations Command is: we didn't study this and realize it, we realized it through trial and error, and we up-ended the way we operated so that we decentralized our execution and the authority to make decisions way down so that they could decide, really, by themselves. But at the same time, we centralized information so that everybody had to tell everybody everything all the time. So this became this learning organization, but the leader's role changed fundamentally in that I didn't make a lot of decisions. My decision was to create the venue, stimulate the constant conversation. As I said, I used to walk around and spin the pie plates on the sticks, like on the old Ed Sullivan Show. I'd just keep it going and the organization does the work. But it's fundamental change for the leader because you don't have that same feeling like, “I am the man, I make the decisions. I am Napoléon making the critical moves at a time. I'm the chess master.” You're not. You create the chess board, you set the rules, and you enable your pieces to do it. Long answer, but I'm fascinated by that question.

Mcearthy: Bob asked me to ask you about drones; immensely useful military tools, both for observation and for delivering weapon systems, but do create pushback as we've seen in Pakistan and more recently in Yemen. I'm wondering, do we need a new rulebook to govern the use of drones because there's never really been anything like them before? How do you see that developing in our military?

General: That's a good one. There have been a bunch of times in history where the rules have sort of changed. It used to be bad form to kill officers on the battlefield, particularly the shoot officers – I thought that was a great rule, but it got changed. And that sort of changed the unwritten rules of the game. And what has happened with drones is there are technological leaps that changed some of the calculus. Missiles did it first, things like tomahawks, but drones brought it home because we could put so many up. And what it allowed you to do: it allowed you to look at things you couldn't look at before and shoot things that you couldn't shoot before with zero risk to yourself physically. So you could put this thing up, you could drone it over them, whatever you want that you could shoot whenever you want. And if they shot it down, so what? Just get another one, they're not even very expensive. Well it's great. And to be honest, drones are going to become common in everything. Not everybody in this room, but some of the young people in this room, will fly on unmanned passenger jets in your life. Guarantee it. Just a generational thing. As soon as the old people get over it, the young people are going to do it. But here's the challenge with drones: if we go back to 1988 when President Clinton; remember he did a strike against Al Qaeda because of the threats to President H. W. Bush? He shot tomahawk missiles into the Sudan and into Pakistan. Or Afghanistan. One went into Pakistan when it shouldn't have but the rest went into Afghanistan. If you asked most Americans the next morning whether we were at war, none of us would have said we were at war. We shot some tomahawk missiles last night but we're not at war. But if you'd asked the people at the receiving end of the tomahawk missiles if they were at war with the U.S., different answer. And so the answer is, we've lowered the threshold for ability to do what is really an act of war. We can watch them – violate their sovereignty to watch them – and we can shoot them. And because we haven't put ourselves at risk, we sort of say, “This isn't war, this is just what we do.” So the danger is, if you lower the threshold for that kind of operation, you may take it less seriously than it is and you may underestimate the reaction from the people who are receiving it, and even more the reactions of the people who see it. In Pakistan, we're hated and our drone operations are hated. But they are more hated in the Punjab than they are in Waziristan where the drone strikes have gone. Because the people who live in Waziristan don't love them, but they know why you're shooting and they know who you're shooting and they sort of get it. The people in the rest of the country just see it as a violation of sovereignty and this is wrong. People in the rest of the world, to a great degree, view it the same way. I sometimes ask people: what if Mexico came into the U.S. and in Texas shot a drone and killed a drug dealer? I don't think we would say, “Hey, good on you!” I think we'd feel that wasn't right. So I am an advocate of the use of
drones, but what I would say is I don’t know if a rulebook’s going to do it, but a cultural appreciation for this. Every time you do something, it has a value and it has a cost. And sometimes we can do a better job of appreciating the perception of people at the other side of this thing. And then do your calculus and whether it’s worth it. And because they’ve got this special aura around them now, we need to admit that. Drones have a special effect, so if you kill someone with a drone it seems a little more offensive to some people than it does if they’re killed another way. We just need to appreciate that. War and everything is about a perception.

MCCARTHY: We’ll get some questions from the floor, but let me ask one more because I know it involves something you’re quite passionate about. This Saturday is Armed Forces Day, I don’t know how many people knew that. Third Saturday of May, has been since 1949. We don’t have a draft; not many people are connected any more. You are in favor not just of the draft, but something even more comprehensive: national service. Explain the thought behind it and where you’re at.

GENERAL: Yeah, thanks for asking about that, Terry. I am. And here’s why: if we go back to the Second World War, 16 million Americans in uniform but every family touched by it in some way. People working, people sacrificing…. And then we think about the term that Tom Brokaw said so well “the greatest generation” and we have got part of the greatest generation in here. But my belief is that the greatest generation was not the fact that they won the Second World War or survived the Depression. That was great. But what made them the greatest generation; it’s what they did with that experience and with the values that were inculcated in them from that; the sense of citizenship. I think what we’ve done is we’ve let the concept of citizenship deteriorate a bit. I think people are starting to feel that citizenship is paying taxes, it’s voting, and I’ve done my share. But in reality citizenship is this wider responsibility. Think about the times in parts of the nation where you couldn’t raise your barn without help because you couldn’t physically do it. Think about militias on the frontier; you had to be a community to do things. We’ve let that deteriorate and so as a consequence we don’t know each other in communities, inside communities, and we are segmented in communities, and the sense of who’s a citizen and what that means isn’t as strong as it used to be. So my belief is a way we can help fix this is to give every young American between 18 and 28 the opportunity and the implied responsibility to do a year of paid, national service. Full-time for 12 months. Healthcare, conservation, education, some range. Could be military if they want, but you don’t need everybody in the military. Something that takes them out of their comfort zone and they go do something, they get a living stipend, 12-15 thousand bucks – not enough to get rich but enough to keep you in food and what not. Serve with people from around the country, and at the end of that year, the product is not the work they do, although the work must be of value. The product is them. The product is different citizens. And they may not be a better citizen in a day, but they will be.

MCCARTHY: We have two microphones. If you put your hand up, we’ll get to you. We have to get the General out of here by 9 o’clock or those Navy Seals are coming in the roof so keep it short!

AUDIENCE MEMBER: General, thank you so much for coming to Los Angeles and helping us understand some of the more subtle effects of what you’ve been through. I was chatting with a fellow who was just in Iraq a little while back, and he said that it was just a terrible mess, and said that he didn’t think that had American military forces stayed there that they would have been able to prevent some of this take back that Al Qaeda and the Sunnis have done. Can you address that question?

GENERAL: Yes, ma’am.. The answer is really would Iraq be where it is now – which is a real problem state – if American forces had stayed? And this is my personal opinion, but I agree with that. We really - in 2005 to about 2008 – wrestled Al Qaeda down to the ground and we beat them up, and essentially took them out of the fight. What has happened since then in my view – and I think America stepped away too quickly – I think we should and could have worked through the Status of Forces Agreement. But we’ve allowed Iraq to give way to some of its baser instincts. The government, Prime Minister Maliki has done a lousy job of convincing the Sunnis and the Kurds that they are a part of this nation, and so as a consequence the Sunnis particularly are frightened and they are irritated and they are tinder for people like Al Qaeda in Iraq – now ISIS – to raise up again. And so as a consequence they are starting a pretty serious fight again.Fallujah was occupied. And the thing about war is once you start a war, you could start a war for
one reason and then pretty soon it continues for its own reason. Because you start it for political reasons and you have got certain
instates. But once you’ve killed each other, then you fight because you killed my brother, you killed my family, etc. And so the
conflagration doesn’t have to have tremendous logic after that because it has passion. And then the problem in Iraq is made worse
by the fact that there’s a perception of Iranian control of the Shi’a dominated government. But even worse, across the border in
Syria now you have this open sore, this bleeding ulcer of Syria which in parts of the opposition is a pretty fundamentalist group. So
now the Sunnis in Iraq get at least support from what’s happening in Syria, which just makes it worse. So I think we made a
mistake there and I don’t think we’re going to go back and correct it, but I think we’re going to live with it for a while.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: General McChrystal, your concept of national service – is that compulsory or is it voluntary, and if it is
compulsory, has there been push back from civil libertarian groups?

GENERAL: The answer is it is not compulsory. When I first voiced the idea, it was. And I’ll be honest, when I get at night by myself
and do the things you don’t talk about, I dream of compulsory national service. But smarter people said no, we have got to make it
voluntary. So what we are trying to do is make it voluntary comma but expected. So we’re working with businesses, and colleges,
and what not to get preferential hiring, preferential admission and credit for it afterwards, a GI bill-like support. So we’re trying to
make it in every young person’s best interest to do it because they get advantages from it. So we’re not asking them to do it just
for altruism. I didn’t enter the army to serve the nation; most people don’t. They enter because it looks like it’s going to be fun and
it’s an adventure. Then when you’re there, you get the bug. And that’s, I think, the key to this. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I don’t wish to sound patronizing, but in light of your comments about the article, I have a feeling that you
should feel vindicated based upon what is happening currently.

GENERAL: That’s kind of you. I sort of feel like life goes on. I was given the gift of a painful experience and if I’m not smart enough
to try to grow with it, then I missed that opportunity. So that’s what I try to do. So I don’t really take any great solace in anybody
having any other problems. The individual who wrote the story was killed in a car accident right here. They told me – I was giving
a speech – I walked off the stage and a reporter was waiting for me and he told me that. He was an old friend of mine. And he
says, “How do you feel?” And I said, “How can I feel?” A human being died…. I take no pleasure in that…so I guess I take more
pleasure in just trying to move forward. You’re kind, sir. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Would you comment on the Wounded Warrior Project? Bill O’Reilly and others have done a lot for this
project. Why is there a need for a Wounded Warrior Project with payments from citizens? Isn’t this a responsibility of the federal
government?

GENERAL: Yeah, that’s a great question. I’m not going to talk about the Wounded Warrior Project, that is one of the big ones but
there’s a whole bunch of them so I’m going to lump them all together. Actually the government does a pretty good job; on the
medical part I think they do a great job. The problem is the government isn’t good when somebody is ready to leave the hospital
and go back to their community. The government isn’t good at that and is never going to be too good and that. You really don’t
want them to be too good at that because you don’t want the government to control everything at the local level. I think what we
have to do, and I actually think it’s useful to have things for wounded warriors and families, because it brings America back into a
sense of, young people go to war from our communities. They’re not created in some lab or test tube and made into soldiers.
They come from your houses, your streets, your towns, and you send them over. You vote, you pay taxes, you send them, they
fight for you. When you come home, when they come home, they belong to you. Not to the government. And so I actually think
it’s very good that we have the requirement because it forces Americans to do it. Now I will say there are some needs I think
could be better met, and I hate the fact that we have some veterans and families who go through a lot of bureaucracy and what
not. We ought to automatically do that. We shouldn’t just be relying on generosity. But I do like the idea that it forces Americans
to be involved. Here’s a statistic: during the Civil War, 1 out of every 68 Americans was wounded, so you knew somebody who was wounded. You saw them in your town, or on your street, or in your family. About 2 years ago, last time I checked, it was about 1 out of every 7,260 Americans is wounded. You don’t even know somebody who’s been wounded most likely, particularly if you live in a lot of areas. So having that connection, I think, has some value. Great point, sir. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sir, I have to preface this. I’m a former naval officer and I’ve served many years. As we speak about the Wounded Warrior Project and so forth – how do you feel down the road? Because now that you’re out, and I’m finding this as a tremendous impact: women who have served – and I don’t mean to sound sexist, but this has to come off that way – what I’m finding is that the services are leaning more toward, “it’s all about the men, but we forget about the women who have served.” And we’ve served combat, we’ve served administratively. I served for three admirals and I can honestly tell you, we work equally as hard but we somehow do not receive that kind of recognition. So how do you feel about that?

GENERAL: Well, I agree with you. That the services, no matter how hard we try at a lot of things, reflect American values, and because the services by the nature of what they are: a conservative institution – it’s not politically, but culturally – don’t change as fast as we hope they will. They change pretty well but they don’t change. So female service members have a tougher road home. Typically female officers will be put in assignments that are – they are good - but they are not the path to being senior leaders. It’s much harder to become a senior leader as a female because the same opportunities aren’t open to you. We had this big argument about whether women can be in combat sort of after the fact they’ve been in combat for the last 15 years. And I watched them get wounded, I watched them fight, I watched them do all of those things, and it’s time we go on and just admit that. Part of that is the service’s problem, part of that is just our society. We’re just slower to reflect things than we probably ought to be. I think inside the services, most service members may be slow to it, will admit that. But it takes a while. I was at West Point the last year when it was all male and then right after I graduated, the first female entered. And I remember all these old grads were saying West Point will fall into the Hudson River, it will just go to the dogs....it just won’t be the same. I didn’t have much of an opinion because I was about to leave. But you know, it didn’t. It just kind of did fine. But it takes a little time, and I know that’s tough on social change but it’s borne out by experience, so thank you. Thanks for your service.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Speaking with one of my friends who served, they’ve noticed that since 9/11 there’s a whole generation of soldiers who have more combat experience than really anyone has had for many generations in our country, and they’re being led at the top by people who don’t have nearly as much experience. I’m curious what challenges that presented for you when you led men, and how you think that’s affecting the military now.

GENERAL: Yes, it’s an interesting challenge because the early years of my career when we were all kind of hoping to go to war to get experience we didn’t, then I spent a decade at war as a general. But my experience was therefore different. I had sergeants and lieutenants and captains who knew things and had experience that I didn’t have. And so I couldn’t go down to them, put my arm around them and say, “This is how you do this in combat,” because I didn’t have that experience. And so the first thing you have to do is you have to get over it. You have to apply what we call reverse mentoring. You’ve got to ask them what works. But then you got to understand you still have a role. And so while that’s very true, we also now have a lot of senior leaders who also have been shot at a lot as well. So it’s probably not as bad as you think, but it’s always going to be an issue because technology and experience changes so fast that even if we had fought – if I had fought when I was a young man, the experience I had wouldn’t have been nearly as relevant as it might have been 100 years ago when change wasn’t as fast. So it’s got to be a different kind of leadership. It’s much more collaborative than it is directed now. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You talked about the greatest generation and maybe there’s a new greatest generation, but what’s happening is that although Americans seem to really respect and admire people in the military, there’s this narrative going on about wounded warriors and people who can’t really handle the stress. And as a result – I was talking to an Army captain the other day -
and he said he applied to five coffee shops for a job – and he’s a pretty intelligent guy – and he was rejected by all of them. He’s been to HR departments that say, “Can you really handle this?” And so what’s happening it seems is that the narrative, what the media’s putting out there is a very different one, and as a result it’s having all of these negative effects. How would you address something like that?

GENERAL: Yes, and really what he’s talking about is post-traumatic stress syndrome. It started… people said, “Well, it’s real.” And it is real. Anybody who’s been in combat comes back different. But it doesn’t mean you come back damaged, it doesn’t mean you come back deranged, it doesn’t mean you come back anything. You just come back different. And some people it’s very hard on, but the vast majority come out just fine and they come out stronger. But because we’re trying to take care of people, we haven’t communicated that as well as we could. And so quite naturally there are some people in business and other people who go, “Wow, I don’t know if I should bring that person in because they might have issues, they might get violent, etcetera,” when in reality there’s not a track record statistically that says that’s going to happen. But I know that there’s a perception. And I think we’ve got to balance our well-intended reporting of this. I think it’s produced some negative effects. So I think we’ve got to step back and we’ve got to see this for what it really is. Most people who come back come back better, because they’ve had experiences, more mature, they’ve been tested. So I think your point’s exactly right. Thank you.

MCCARTHY: Time for just one more question.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I think we’d all like to know what you’re doing now.

GENERAL: Yes, it’s funny. When I got out of the service I didn’t know what I wanted to do because I had not expected to get out then and in that way. I got a call from a guy that asked if I’d come teach at Yale. And I had never even been there. So I said sure. So I’ve just finished my fourth year at Yale and I am going to stay there, and I’m going to stay until at least we beat Harvard. But I’m writing a second book and it will be out in the late Fall, early January period about leadership and about management, about these things; not military, it’s about what I’ve thought about it since then and I’m really excited about that. Then I started a company with some Navy SEALs – which is exciting. We work with civilian companies on how to change their culture. We don’t work with defense, we don’t work with the government at all. We go to companies and we say, the environment that we described about the speed and what not; we help the companies try to deal with that. And it’s been fascinating because reality is: leadership in a corporation, in the military is so similar it’s shocking. The only thing I’ll finish with: when you’re in the military, you think civilian companies are very different. And so when you just get military guys together, at some point in the conversation somebody will rap the table and go, “We’re all screwed up. If we were a civilian company, we would never put up with the inefficiency and stupidity we do.” I got out and I started working with civilian companies, and at every meeting at some point somebody raps the table, looks at me, and says, “The military would never be this stupid, would they?” I say, “No.” Thanks so much.

MCCARTHY: General, thank you very much.