DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH LINTON WELLS, DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH FELLOW AND FORCE TRANSITION CHAIR, NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY SUBJECT: STAR-TIDES HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TIME: 5:30 P.M. EDT DATE: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2008

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CHARLES "JACK" HOLT (chief, New Media Operations, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): Dr. Wells, thanks for joining us here for the Bloggers Roundtable this evening.

MR. WELLS: My pleasure.

My name is Lin Wells and I'm the transformation chair here at National Defense University, which is basically -- which is located about a mile south of the capital in Washington. What I'd like to talk about tonight is a project called STAR-TIDES, which is about affordable, sustainable support to stressed populations -- post-war, post-disaster or impoverished.

So, what we're -- from the military perspective, this supports the missions of building partnership capacity, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, stabilization and reconstruction, and defense support to civil authorities. What STAR-TIDES is is a knowledge repository, basically. (We're not a ?) field activity, we don't go out in the field and distribute MREs. We try to pull together information about what's happening in this space; make it available to decisionmakers and those who work in the field; and everything we do is published on the web at STAR-TIDES.net.

What we're looking at is three broad areas: One, is how to enhance -- basically enhance, extend and economize. The enhance is the ability of civilian coalitions, such as government, business and civil society to operate in these stressed environments. Second, is to extend the military's ability to interoperate with the civilians in this world. And the third is to economize by saving money through using low-cost logistics solutions and better integration of supply chains.

So, we're looking at seven infrastructures: shelter, water, power, integrated combustion and solar cooking. Heating, lighting, cooling is one; sanitation, and lots of information and communications technologies. The model then -- for example, we found, like, 75 different types of shelters that are cheaper than military tents.

So, then how do you decide, in scenarios of interest to people, which ones work best? So, we're looking at four scenarios, one of which is long-term building -- (inaudible) -- capacity, and refugee support in Africa. One is

stabilization reconstruction in Afghanistan. One is defense support to civil authorities in case of a major disaster here in the national capital region, natural or man- made. And the fourth is humanitarian assistance, disaster relief in tropical regions, either Central America or Western Pacific.

So what we've done then is a demonstration -- on the campus here at Fort McNair, which began on Monday and is running through Friday -- of these integrated technologies, integrated infrastructures in these four scenarios. So, in the Africa, sort of, "module," if you will, we look at the shelter for family-sized units, and how they'd handle water, and power and things like that.

And so we have -- and we put in, really, less than about $10,000 of government money into this, and have gotten well over a million dollars of private sector engagement. People have just come and (brought ?) their equipment. And it's been just really interesting to see some of the ideas that come up.

So, that's the background of what we're doing. And, as I mentioned earlier, you know, the energy solutions have been really interesting. We've been drinking water purified out of the Potomac through reverse osmosis or through high filtration units. We've got some very interesting British solutions for heating and protection.

So, anyway, that's what's going on, and I'd be glad to talk about it.
MR. HOLT: All right, well, thank you very much, sir.

So, Mark, you were first on-line, so why don't you get us started.

Q Yeah, I'm actually very interested because, clearly, one of the missions that the military's moving to is, you know, for lack of a better word, "nation building." And one of the key elements most -- (inaudible) -- is that they have no meaningful technical infrastructure (anymore ?). And --

MR. WELLS: No what kind of technical infrastructure?

Q (People ?) that -- you know, that you probably have roads, but that, you know, water, sewer, power, communication are all degraded pretty severely.

MR. WELLS: Oh, so you're saying in the nation -- in the nation, to be built.

Q In the nation, requiring building.

MR. WELLS: Right, right.

Q And that the ability to very quickly -- because, you know, in a situation like this time is really the essence on, you know, sort of, (deliver ?) infrastructure would seem like a fairly critical element in the kinds of things we're talking about --

MR. WELLS: Right.

Q And it seems like, as a clearinghouse, what you're really doing is you're creating a relatively scalable model, because what you're doing is you're taking off-the-shelf commercial -- (inaudible) -- I'm just, I'm checking what I heard, but I don't mean to be giving a speech.

MR. WELLS: No, that's okay.

Q You're talking relatively conventional off-the-shelf commercial technology and potentially -- (inaudible) -- it's light weight, so it can be used in this kind of environment. And, in theory, people who write large checks would have a shopping list which they could then turn to and, relatively quickly decide what they were going to write large checks for.

MR. WELLS: So, I mentioned the supply chain integration. There are really four different ways to deliver this kind of capability: One is from U.S. government contractor stockpiles, so that could be AID off to overseas, or DHS FEMA at home, or, potentially, DOD. Second, would be non-U.S. government stockpiles, so it's going to be U.N. OCHA overseas, or non-governmental organizations, or host governments. The third is to energize the commercial supply chain -- so, how can you bring Walmart to Mexico; or DHL or Fedex to bear on the problems. And then the fourth is empowering civilians. And, obviously, if we had had -- everyone in New Orleans had three days worth of food and water at the beginning of Katrina, it would have been a very different event.

So, the question is, once one's picked a scenario, how do you find the coalitions of business, government and civil society who will be needed to work together to solve the problem? You can't just treat this as a problem for DOD, or a problem for AID, or a problem for whatever.

So, in the Central American case, for example, what part of a Nicaraguan government does their FEMA equivalent? What local indian languages need to be spoken? Who is the -- who are the local NGOs in Nicaragua?

And then, only then, how does AID and USSOUTHCOM, and people like that interface with it. So, we're trying to take a holistic approach to this. -- (inaudible) -- to say, not just to handle the military piece, but to enable the civilians to work better in this environment as well.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Excuse me, Mark, any follow up?

Q Yeah, I got two, sort of, follow-ups. One is sort of an idle comment, which is I happened to be a guest at Blackwater's compound in North Carolina about a month ago. And, in sort of keeping with this, one of the things I noticed -- which, you know, I'm assuming I was free to talk about, was a highly portable, like, .4- kilowatt wind generator, which was, basically, something that was deployable out of a relatively small (truck runner box ?), and could be stood up, you know, relatively quickly pretty much anywhere you delivered it.

And so this seems like the kind of thinking, with the kind of thing that you're talking about in the context -- (inaudible) -- does that, sort of --

MR. WELLS: That's exactly -- exactly what we're trying to think about. We're trying to find as many of those as we can. Get them, you know, posted in a place where people either can -- and people can look at them and say, I'd like that. And then, ideally, I'd like to be able to figure out how to parse them, if you will, how to write an algorithm that says, "if you're looking at a shelter, these five different parameters are what makes it useful for cold, dry

climates," versus, "this is what you need to use in a warm, wet climate," that kind of thing.

Q And in this social context (poor ?) families tend to stay together, as opposed to that social context where they're perhaps a little more dispersed? MR. WELLS: Right.

Q (Interesting ?)

(Cross talk)

MR. WELLS: So, this, for example, and then the Africa scenario -- just to test the models, we're thinking in terms of family-sized units where the owners, the operators and the protectors of the environment -- of the infrastructure are more or less the same people.

On the other hand, in the Central American model we're looking at cases where, say, 1,000 to 1,500 village -- person village unit. Not so much (to ?) anticipate that's what the scenario would be, but just to give us some understanding of how you would do things differently in those different environments.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Q Have you got any governments involved in this at all?

MR. WELLS: I'm sorry?

Q Have you got U.S. mainland state governments involved in this at all?

MR. WELLS: So, STAR-TIDES is a -- the heart of STAR-TIDES is a broad coalition of several hundred people and organizations that range from Iceland to Singapore. We've got, for example, American Red Cross, Johns Hopkins University, Nashville Institute for Urban Search and Rescue, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore; InSTEDD, which is Innovative Support to Emergencies, Diseases and Disasters, an NGO.

So, there are a lot of different folks involved. We have worked with the California -- not so much California state, but with San Diego fire, police and sheriffs people, and also a little bit with Los Angeles. But, those have been kind of episodic connections, but aren't yet institutionalized.

MR. HOLT: Okay, and Andy?

Q Okay, thanks Jack.

And, Dr. Wells, I think maybe I spent too much time in the software industry, but when you describe all the different, sort of, vectors and considerations for these deployments, it almost sounds like something that would lend itself to a configurator-type of interface, where you plug in all the salient details and a really -- hopefully, well-designed program helps make suggestions for the different types of vendors and the different types of configurations of the technologies that's needed. MR. WELLS: Yeah, and I would love to have something like that. We're -- the project is less than a year old. We started last -- middle of October last, and so that's something I would like to get to. What we're doing -- in fact, this past two weeks has been

upgrading the web presence, which has been sort of marginal, in my view, up to now.

But also, in the coming year, there's going to be a lot of work done with -- (inaudible) --, back-ends, search engines, integrating databases to help do some of that. So, the answer is, watch this space. We'll check back in, you know, several months and see. But, up to this point, we don't have the programmers to write that, but I'd love to get to that stage.

Q Yeah -- (inaudible) --

MR. WELLS: Part of the --

Q And probably at this point you're just proving out the general concept and some of the individual things. It's too early to decide what goes in and what doesn't go into a system like that.

MR. WELLS: So, what we're actually really doing is -- and people think of this in infrastructures, but it's actually much broader than that because we're looking at how do you build and deliver a capability? And that's both a mix of, you know, identifying the infrastructures, then finding -- then parsing them against a scenario, and then looking to see if a supply chain model, which is better provided by, you know, again, U.S. government, or commercial supply chain, or whatever.

The second is the social network development and trust building, of how you actually get people to work together. The third is the policy doctrine and operating procedures so that the people on the ground, basically, don't have to come back and ask "Mother, may I" for everything they do.

Q Right.

MR. WELLS: The fourth is legal concerns -- if you're going to take things bought with Title X money, (what are ?) the constraints on leaving them behind? The fifth is the resourcing -- we're looking at short-term and long-term. If the average stay in a refugee camp is over seven years, which it is, then the way you, you know, -- (inaudible) --solutions, the way you resource them, are very different than the first 60 days after a disaster.

And then, finally, how do you put together a program of exercises, training and education to keep people from forgetting this? And, in particular, how do you bring together these kind of broad coalitions that can exercise and work together? Q That is a lot of -- a lot of moving parts. If you'll -- if you'll allow, I have a question that focuses in on a particular part of what you're doing.

MR. WELLS: Sure.

Q And while you are working on all the axes -- international and cross-cultural and cross-agencies, I'm going to ask something that's fairly DOD-focused, if you don't mind.

MR. WELLS: Okay, sure.

Q Take it as you will. In a DSB task force report that was released in February of this year --

MR. WELLS: This is the fuel (or a ?) fight?

Q Yes.

MR. WELLS: Yeah.

Q More fight, less fuel. Less fuel, more fight.

There were a lot of recommendation -- a lot of findings and a lot of recommendations, but they distilled down to two primary groups. One of them had everything to do with the fuel issue -- how do we get more, or different, or clean -- and/or cleaner fuel to make all of our various vehicles go --

MR. WELLS: Right.

Q -- and our generators were on the second category.

It was completely different. It was, our bases -- mainly our fixed bases, but you could -- (inaudible) --

MR. WELLS: Right. The vulnerability of the power grid, and we got to grab multiple sources of supply, and stuff like that.

Q I've been focusing like a maniac on both of those issues, and there's plenty to follow on the first one. And there's not -- at least from what I can tell, not a lot to track on the second one.

So, this is a scalable -- that's all the set-up for a scalability question, which is, could some of the systems that are being developed here, as part of STAR-TIDES -- which obviously are sometimes for very short-term and smaller deployment, and sometimes, as you said, up to seven years, they could be for a really large and somewhat sustained deployment -- could you imagine any of these capabilities being predeployed or forward-deployed, not tomorrow but in the fullness of time, to bases, especially bases that have a real critical or high assurance function, to help, to maybe start to fill that gap that right now, I think, the report identified, and that really, that no one's really thought of anything to do to help with that?

MR. WELLS: So, I think the answer is absolutely, yes. But, let me make a few points. First of all, STAR-TIDES isn't really developing anything at this point. What we're trying act at is a catalyst to cause things either to happen, or to -- for example, in the last couple days I've found several cases of overlapping programs that are doing approximately the same things. So, can we -- we're not trying to own all this stuff.

For example, -- (inaudible) -- is doing a lot of work on information-sharing in Afghanistan and Iraq. So, even though that's not a STAR-TIDES project, per see, we'll have access to all of the, you know, unclassified parts of it and make that available to anybody else.

Similarly, -- (inaudible) -- Acquisition Technology just did a study of how you accelerate trust-building in our hastily-deployed social networks. And that, again, is something we can draw on and fit into our project. So, were not trying to develop it ourselves. That said, I've been looking at this since "Brittle Power" back in -- you know, Amory Lovins' "Brittle Power" back in the early '80s. Are you familiar with that book?

Q No, I'm not. But the concept, yes. But, not that book.

(Cross talk)

MR. WELLS: So, I recommend going and getting a copy of it because one of the things that's troubling -- this was written about '82 or something by Amory and Hunter Lovins, basically laid out approximately the same parts, the vulnerability of the power grid that we still have. So, the --

Q But, I am familiar with -- I am very familiar with the Lovins, but that's one of their older books from --

MR. WELLS: It is, yeah.

Anyway, so of the systems -- we started off on this looking at -- I mentioned the family-sized energy units, and when we looked at Africa the model was, say, double-A batteries, where every family, you know, gets like 6 to 8 double-A batteries, and they could use that to power lighting, or cooling fans, or radios, whatever they wanted to do. And when they ran down the batteries, bring them back and get them recharged at a central station, and turn them around.

And somebody came by and said, "Well, this is all very nice, but suppose I want to do stabilization and reconstruction in Ramadi -- which is 300,000 people?" So, your model wouldn't work there. So, we began looking at things like what SkyBuilt Power is doing. Are you familiar with SkyBuilt?

Q Yeah, I was just reading about them today. They're an In- Q-Tel-backed company.

MR. WELLS: Yeah, I mean, they've got some deployable -- not (many ?) solar, but wind, and also, I think they even have some biomass systems.

Q That's right.

MR. WELLS: And so those sorts of things could certainly scale to some functions. I don't know, off hand, what you have that you'd be willing to rely on for Cheyenne Mountain, or Strategic Command Headquarters, but the concept certainly ought to scale. The question -- the problem, of course, with SkyBuilt, and things like that that are deployable systems is they get really expensive.

Q Right.

MR. WELLS: So, one of the issues I would think (we'd be ?) like to do is all the research that's going into alternative energy now is more look at "fix" systems rather than deployable systems for some of these bases to provide redundancy.

Q Yeah, this would be a -- this is an application where you'd be deploying -- you'd be deploying these systems not in emergency, not in a crisis. You'd know in advance you were doing it.

MR. WELLS: Right.

Q And, you're right, it would be a fixed system. So, almost like the difference between a laptop and desktop PC. My guess is there would be a lot of cost savings in the permanent, or the non- mobile system.

MR. WELLS: Yeah, I was actually at a seminar this weekend over at Johns Hopkins on -- well, it was a broad seminar on engineering innovation. But one section was on solving the 3-terawatt problem, which is, sort of a U.S. overall national energy problem.

And one group of folks got up and said, okay, for solar we'd so this, and for wind we'd to that, and for chemical energy conversion, we'd do this. And, you know, all of it looked as though there were -- I don't know about feasible, but at least reasonable solutions for thing like bases that would be coming along in the next few years.

Have you been following the -- Al Shaffer and the DOD Energy Task Force work?

Q Yeah, to a certain extent. He and I have exchanged e-mails a couple times. I spend half my time focusing on what Shaffer and company are doing out of the Pentagon; and the other half -- I'm based up in Boston, so I'm at almost every significant event that's going on at M.I.T., which right now is a real hotbed.

MR. WELLS: Sure. Sure.

Q And this is also pretty parallel to John Robbs', sort of, you know, flexible, sustainable community stuff as well.

MR. WELLS: Uh-huh. So, I mean one of the things that surprised me, frankly, in this STAR-TIDES -- and every time we do this I learn something new, is this, they call it "Solar Stick," which is a -- it came out of the yachting industry. And it was very light weight, robust, portable systems for both solar and wind, and very high capacity batteries -- 1,000 amp/hour batteries that were very portable.

So, while that wouldn't be the solution to what you're talking about, they certainly could handle things like disaster victims and, you know, living in cafeterias, and things like that, for temporary shelters, that sort of thing.

Q Well, thanks -- thanks for taking on that question. MR. WELLS: Yeah, yeah. I'm cautiously optimistic, and I think, really, DOD is -- one of the things that we -- I spent 16 years now for secretary of Defense, and before I left last year one of the things people were seriously asking was, if you look at the very high- speed integrated circuits, and (arp ?) and that, and GPS, what's -- what are comparable energy investments that DOD might make, going forward, that could have true strategic national importance. And I know what the answers are at this point, but there are people thinking on that scale.

Q Sure. Well, thank you.

MR. WELLS: Yeah.

MR. HOLT: All right, anything else? Anybody else?

Q I've got a bunch of stuff to read, and will be smarter about this next week than I am today.

MR. HOLT: All right. MR. WELLS: Okay, if you have a -- neither of you is in the D.C. area, right?

Q Yeah.

Q I'm in Boston, and usually down there twice a month, or so.

Q I'm in California, and shuttle back and forth to New York City, but occasionally down to the D.C. area.

MR. WELLS: Okay, well, I'd be more than happy to talk. We'll be here at Fort McNair through Friday. And then next Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday we'll in the Center Court of the Pentagon with the STAR-TIDES -- (inaudible) --

Q I'll be -- I may be able to visit you in the Center Court on Tuesday.

MR. WELLS: Well, please do. We'll be -- we'll be opening at, opening at about noon, and open until 18:00; and then we'll be open from 7:30 to 18:00 on Friday -- on Wednesday.

Q Jack, could I beg your help with access, if it comes to that?

MR. HOLT: Yeah, we can -- we'll see what we can do.

Q All right. Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Sounds good.

Q Terrific.

MR. WELLS: Well, I appreciate the chance to talk, and you guys have my contacts, and I'd be glad to be in touch.

MR. HOLT: All right. Thank you very much, Dr. Wells, for joining us for the Bloggers Roundtable this evening.

MR. WELLS: My pleasure. Q Thank you.

MR. WELLS: Ciao.

Q Bye-bye.

MR. WELLS: Hey, Jack, you on?

MR. HOLT: Yes.

MR. WELLS: So, that go all right?

MR. HOLT: Yes. Yeah, great.

MR. WELLS: Okay, -- (inaudible) -- (disrupting phone tones) --

MR. HOLT: Yeah, we've got -- yeah, I think, you know, get these guys going, and we'll get -- we'll get some --

MR. WELLS: I'm sure they'll get some stuff written up about it, and some --

MR. HOLT: Looks like we may be looking at touching base again and doing another one here in -- oh, I don't know, maybe three or four weeks, and see what happens.

MR. WELLS: I'd be more than happy to. By the way, when John comes on -- I notice he's out at Leavenworth, through a convoluted set of processes, I help run a forest in Atchison, Kansas, which is just north of Leavenworth, devoted to "World Friendship Through Flying."

MR. HOLT: Oh, really?

MR. WELLS: And Atchison is Amelia Earhart's home -- birth place. So, this was set up there as a Bicentennial gift to the country to commemorate women's aviation, and World Friendship Through Flying, and things like that. So, every year, in the third weekend of June, which would be 1921 and 2009, we have induction ceremonies for new honorees.

MR. HOLT: Oh, really? Okay.

MR. WELLS: So, if he's fairly close by to that, we'd love to have him learn about the forest, and come by and join the ceremonies.

MR. HOLT: All right, I'll let him know.

MR. WELLS: Okay.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir.

MR. WELLS: Take care. MR. HOLT: Thank you much, sir,

MR. WELLS: Bye-bye.

END.