

Joining the Team
Interviewer

Okay, today is July 28, 2011. We're at the offices of L-3 Communications in Arlington, Virginia, with retired General Richard Cody, C-O-D-Y. Welcome, General.

Richard Cody

Thank you.

Interviewer

This is an oral history for the Center for Oral History Program at West Point. I wonder if you could just start by telling me when you first thought you might join the Army. How old were you, and what was your dream for it?

Richard Cody

I was probably 16—1966, 1967. I was in Montpelier, Vermont, my hometown. And, you know, back then, we were watching the Vietnam War on TV a lot, and kept seeing those Cobra helicopters. You know, they came into—I think they came into theater about, oh, '65 or '66, but by '67-'68, I knew that I wanted to go to West Point or Norwich University, which is just up the road from my hometown. And, you know, I was lucky enough to get accepted at both, and I chose West Point.

Interviewer

During that time, the mid-'60s, there was a lot of social strife already.

Richard Cody

Right.

Interviewer

There's particularly in your generation. Vermont was a haven for hippies.

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

You were going counter to the trends of the time for your generation, weren't you?

Richard Cody

Well, I think—I think all of us who joined, '68, '69, '70, even '71, I think we were all, you know, those of us who elected to pursue going to West Point or pursue a ROTC scholarship. Or even the enlisted soldiers who weren't drafted and volunteered to go. I think all of us were—were counter to what America felt in terms of what was going on in Southeast Asia.

I didn't think much about the, you know, the conflict of ideas and why we were there and everything else.

Richard Cody

And, you know, I played sports. I played basketball and baseball, and I like being part of a team. You know, the military was teamworkâ€”â€”Be All You Can Be,â€” you know, a slogan later, when we started the all-volunteer force. But it was just something I wanted to do.

Interviewer

So you didnâ€™t have an attitude, necessarily, about the war as a policy decision orâ€”

Richard Cody

No, not at allâ€”no. I lost aâ€”I lost a good friend who got killed. I had one of my classmatesâ€”not classâ€”he was about twoâ€”two years ahead of meâ€”who got wounded over there.

Weâ€™re a small town. Montpelierâ€™s only about 8,500 people. Vermont back then was probably only 600,000.

Richard Cody

But not a lot of guys and gals were, you know, volunteering to go into the military out of my class. In fact, I think I was the only one that went to a service academy or to ROTC from my graduating class in 1968.

Interviewer

So you say you lost a friendâ€”you mean a friend from high school, youâ€™re talking about.

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

And who was thatâ€”can you tell me the details?

Richard Cody

Yeah. He was a Marine. He was actually aâ€”aâ€”we used to play ball against him. He was a great athlete. His name was Harmy Bove. He was a three-letterâ€”

Interviewer

Bove, B-O-V-E?

Richard Cody

B-O-V-E, yeah. And he gotâ€”he went right in right after graduation and joined the Marines, and then it was my first year at West Point when he got killed over there.

Interviewer

Howâ€™d you greet that news?

Richard Cody

Well, I got it from you know, I heard about it immediately. You know, we weren't close friends, but we were competitive against each other. He was from Burlington High School, and I was from Montpelier, and he was such a great athlete. He used to wreak havoc with us, quite frankly.

Richard Cody

But, you know, it's a guy that I respected, and, you know, he volunteered to go. He signed up. He wasn't drafted.

Interviewer

So that must've driven the reality of the war home to you at that time.

Richard Cody

Oh, sure. Sure, and by that time, I was, you know, a Plebe at West Point, and I think I think I'm accurate in saying that every Friday at Thayer Hall on the they'd put nameplates up of graduates who had died. And, you know, we'd see that, and as the years went on during my time there, you know, I can remember George Bass, who was a Firstie when I was a Plebe. And I think it was our my junior year when his name went up, when he got killed. So I mean it was all around us.

Richard Cody

It wasn't as prevalent when I was in Vermont as a high school student, but once I got to West Point, I mean it was an everyday. I mean, we followed it in the news. We had all the back then, almost all of our tactical officers and quite a bit of our instructors had served in the Vietnam War, and so I don't think the dean back then would like to know this, but, you know, a lot of our classes, we'd ask questions, you know, like with Buddy Bucha, for instance, you know.

Richard Cody

You know, half his half the time, you know, an hour class, we'd spend 20 minutes talking about the Vietnam War and what happened over there. And then he'd poop us up for what we needed to know for that particular lesson plan.

Interviewer

Well, it must've been, I'm imagining, very tempting to use that time to sort of what were you what had you signed up for? What were you going to get into? And you've seen these reports of of those you knew, actually, coming back as having been killed in action. And having gone into the dream of the Army because you wanted to fly the

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

A helicopter, it must've your curiosity must've been dreaming about what it was like to be there in theater am I right?

Richard Cody

Yeah, I think we all thought about it. You know, in my mind, you know, the questions you have is if this war's still going on while I'm there, after I graduate, you know, how will I handle it?

You know, how will I deal with the stresses of combat, and stuff like that. I think everybody that was at West Point had that probably in the back of their mind. But quite frankly, you know, the "you know, I was 17 when I went to West Point. I didn't turn 18 until after Beast Barracks. I turned 18 some 15 pounds lighter after Beast Barracks, as I remember.

Richard Cody

But the training you get and the camaraderie that's built—the mutual adversity you go through as part of whether it's your platoon or, you know—mutual adversity, of course, with math and all the other courses they give you and stuff like that. You tend to build up an understanding of stress and how to deal with it. You also understand that you're not the only one going through it, and, you know, to me, it wasn't that big of a burden.

Interviewer

Now, did you come from a military family?

Richard Cody

No. No. In fact, I was the first one in my dad's side or my mother's side that served. Actually, I take that back. My grandfather on my mother's side was in World War I. He was—he was a tanker.

Interviewer

What did your father do for a living in Montpelier?

Richard Cody

Car dealership—ran car dealerships and movie theaters and bowling alleys. Yeah.

Interviewer

Are they still around, those?

Richard Cody

Oh yeah, the dealership's still alive and running.

Interviewer

Still in the family?

Richard Cody

Still in the family.

Interviewer

What kind of—what kind of—what make of cars did you sell?

Richard Cody

Only American. My grandfather was a Lebanese immigrant from a place called Wadi Anoubin, Lebanon, in the mountains, and as the story goes

Interviewer

This is your grandfather on the Cody side?

Richard Cody

Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer

Cody is actually

Richard Cody

It's a changed name from Ellis Island. His real name was Ouda, and it got changed

Interviewer

O-D-A?

Richard Cody

O-U-D-A.

Interviewer

Oh, O-U-D-A.

Richard Cody

And it got changed when he went through Ellis Island, back about 1917 or 1918. And the four families all migrated to Vermont because the mountains and stuff were very similar to what they had in Anoubin, Lebanon. So my grandfather

very, very patriotic

he grew up through the Depression, and everything else, and he's smart businessman. But when his boys

of which my dad was the oldest

started getting into the car business, it was all American cars, and he would never let us have foreign car dealerships.

Interviewer

This was General Motors or Ford or?

Richard Cody

All General Motors, yeah.

Interviewer

All General Motors, okay.

Richard Cody

Yeah, Cadillacs and Chevrolets.

Interviewer

Are you Lebanese on both sides?

Richard Cody

No, just "just on my dad's side.

Interviewer

What's your mom's ethnic background?

Richard Cody

She's "Bacon, so it's English.

Interviewer

So who sponsored you to come to West Point, then?

Richard Cody

Senator Stafford, Bob Stafford. I was recruited by Bobby Knight, in the basketball "

Interviewer

Is that right?

Richard Cody

Yeah. I was 5'11", so point guard. And so I got "once they let them know that, you know, that I'd passed everything and got in, Senator Stafford.

Interviewer

So Bobby Knight was then the "he was the assistant coach, is that right, or was he the head coach?

Richard Cody

No, he was "he was the coach, yeah. Yeah, he was the head coach.

Interviewer

Bobby Knight being the coach that went on to years of success at Indiana later on.

Richard Cody

Yeah, and he had Coach Bob Bliss with him. In fact, Bliss was the guy that I talked to. He was the assistant coach.

Interviewer

And so you played at Army?

Richard Cody

No, actually, I got cut.

Interviewer

Is that right?

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Tell me about the first practices and how you got cut. That's surprising after being recruited.

Richard Cody

Yeah, well, they recruit a lot of guys. You know, it was?

Richard Cody

What was a Bobby Knight practice like, let me ask that, or tryout like?

Richard Cody

Oh, I think Beast Barracks was a piece of cake compared to basketball practice. Yeah, he was—he was a tough guy.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Richard Cody

But, you know, he's very, very smart—he knew what he wanted. You know, he's—you know, I think back now on my career and some of the people I had to deal with and hard taskmasters. You know, Bobby Knight was certainly probably one of the toughest taskmasters, next to my dad.

Interviewer

Is that right?

Richard Cody

Yeah, so.

Interviewer

Did you play any sports, then, at West Point?

Richard Cody

Yeah, I played baseball in my freshman year, and played B-Squad soccer.

Interviewer

Were you a middle infielder—what you were, what's your?

Richard Cody

No, I was a pitcher.

Interviewer

You were a pitcher, really?

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Righty or lefty?

Richard Cody

Righty, but not much of a fastball, so that's why I only played one year.

Interviewer

So you threw junk then. You threw

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Curve balls and

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Sliders

Richard Cody

Hopefully stuff that they couldn't hit.

œA Hundred Punishment Tours and the Class of 1972

Interviewer

So your class, class of 1972 tell me some of the distinguished people, and not-so-distinguished people, that you remember from that class and what their stories were.

Richard Cody

It's funny. I mean hopefully they've hidden my records at West Point, because I graduated so low on the totem pole for military aptitude, cause a lot of the demerits I had. Plus, you know, you have the poop sheets that you get every 90 days or I can't remember now. So I was not, you know I read the Blue Book as a guideline to see what I could get away with, so I had quite a few hours on the Area, six months confinement.

Interviewer

What kind of things did you do to get demerits like that?

Richard Cody

Well, I got caught gambling. That was a prettyâ€”

Interviewer

Gambling where?

Richard Cody

In my roomâ€”me and four otherâ€”well, three other cadets.

Interviewer

What were you gambling on?

Richard Cody

We were just playing poker.

Interviewer

Uh-huh.

Richard Cody

Yeah. We had a lot of money sitting out there. Back then, I think it was dollar bills. And upperclassmen came in to get some money and change for a pizza, which we did, and five minutes later the OC came by.

Richard Cody

We got busted. Interesting storyâ€”many years later, that upperclassman was a colonel, and I was a two-star general running Army Operations, and he had to call for a favor. He wantedâ€”

Interviewer

And you remembered, I bet.

Richard Cody

He wanted to know if I remembered him. I said, â€œOh, absolutely. Youâ€™re the guy who put me in six monthsâ€™ confinement.â€” And then I gave him what he wanted, butâ€”

Interviewer

So you had six monthsâ€™ confinement for?

Richard Cody

Gambling.

Interviewer

Poker? Really.

Richard Cody

Yeah. Yeah. We gotâ€”

Interviewer

And what does six monthsâ€™ confinement mean? What did you actuallyâ€”

Richard Cody

Wellâ€”

Interviewer

Have to endure?

Richard Cody

You get to go to the library, which I did a lot. You get to go to the gym, one hour, and classes, but the rest of the time youâ€™re confined to the Company Area. And of course, for a Plebe, I mean youâ€™re confined anyways.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Richard Cody

You lose any weekends that you may have had freedom for certain weekends, you know. But it was a long winter. And you get to walk the Area, also, so I probably had a hundred punishment tours, easily.

Richard Cody

Then I got caught drinking.

Interviewer

On post?

Richard Cody

Yeah, down at the soccer goalâ€”down in the old soccer field. Somehow the OC figured we were out there.

Interviewer

I mean you were quite a rebel, then, werenâ€™t you, back then?

Richard Cody

That was myâ€”letâ€™s seeâ€”that was my sophomore year, myâ€”after that, I never got caught doing anythingâ€”got smarter.

Interviewer

So you smartened up.

Richard Cody

Yeah, you smarten up after a while.

Interviewer

Why don't you tell me about some of your classmates?

Richard Cody

Well, I actuallyâ€”when you say â€œremarkableâ€ or anything, first off, I think all of them. I liked almost everybody, â€™cause I was absolutely amazed, one, when I got there and, you knowâ€”you know how we go through the process, and you get to learn whoâ€™s doing what, and who was valedictorian, who is this. I mean I was just absolutely amazed I was there.

Richard Cody

I mean 1968, the young men that we had thereâ€”I was in awe of all their credentials and what theyâ€™d done. Some were, you know, former soldiers. Some had gone through prep school. I think 26 of my classmates madeâ€”made General Officer.

Interviewer

Is that right?

Richard Cody

Not that that should be a measure.

Interviewer

Thatâ€™s a high percentage, I would think.

Richard Cody

Yeah. But, you know, for a smallâ€”coming out of a small town of Vermont, and then seeing the different guys from, you know, California, and from Idaho, and from all the different states, and their experiences, you know, andâ€”

Interviewer

Did you find it intimidating?

Richard Cody

Little bit, yeah. I mean you sit there and say, â€œGeez, how did I get here?â€ But I enjoyedâ€”I can't think of a classmate that I disliked, you know.

Interviewer

Who was your first captain?

Richard Cody

Baldwin, Robert Baldwin.

Interviewer

Where is he now?

Richard Cody

I don't know. And then he was King of Beast, and then I think Kip Nygard was the Second Beast Detail. The man with the red sash was my first sergeant. I've forgotten his name now. He'll get mad that I forgot his name, but, you know, you remember some of those things.

Interviewer

Yeah, sure.

Richard Cody

But our classmates, we remain close friends all these years. I mean one of the reasons why I retired in Washington, D.C. is because I've probably got 45 of my classmates here. A lot of them got out. We had a pretty high attrition rate. By '76-'77 I think we had about 40% of our class still on active duty, and a lot of them got out and did great and wondrous things in the business world or in other things. And a lot of them stayed in, and we got to serve together in different places.

Leading a Platoon from "McNamara's 100,000"

Interviewer

How about you? Did you always know you were going to make a career of the Army, or did you think you'd do your obligation and get out?

Richard Cody

I thought I'd do my obligation and get out, and go back in the family business.

Interviewer

And then run one of the dealerships up there, huh?

Richard Cody

Yeah. Yeah. But I got deployed to the 25th Infantry Division in 1972. Had about 50 of my classmates that all got deployed there at the same time. We were all brand-new lieutenants. I guess the Army had a plan, because the 25th had just gotten back from Vietnam.

Richard Cody

You know what the Army was like then—we can get into that later. But about seven months after we got there, the reduction in force came for the 25th Infantry Division, and a lot of captains disappeared, and majors and stuff, and we ended up being in captains' and majors' spots very, very quickly.

Richard Cody

So my time in the 25thâ€”I had four years there in the 25th Infantry Division. Got accepted for Flight School while I was thereâ€”that was really the turning point. Iâ€”

Interviewer

You werenâ€™t deployed to Vietnam though in that time?

Richard Cody

No. The only deployment we had was in â€™75, April of â€™75. I deployed to Guam as part of Operation New Life, and we evacuated all the Vietnamese and created, you know, Tent City and all that.

Interviewer

I do want to talk about that a little bit but letâ€™s back up, â€™cause I doâ€”I think itâ€™s appropriate right now to go into what you referred to before, what the Army was like in the early â€™70s, â€™cause itâ€™s very differentâ€”

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

In the â€™70s from what it is 20 years later, or even now. Can you characterize that for the audience?

Richard Cody

Yeah. First off, Iâ€™m very careful to talk negatively about those who fought in Vietnam, because for whatever bad things that people tried to generalize and say, you know, â€œShake â€” Bakeâ€” sergeants, you know, â€œShake â€” Bake lieutenants,â€” and stuff like that, we have to realize that it was the institution that did that. There wasnâ€™t a lot of leader development as they expanded the Army and did the rotational 12-month tours and all that. And so there was a lot of churn and a lot of velocity in the personnel while we were fighting that war.

And so with that as a backdrop, you know, you join the Army in â€™72.

Interviewer

By European Army, you mean American Army based in Europe had this drug problem?

Richard Cody

Yeah, thatâ€™s right. Yeah. Yeah. And so we had the same problems in the 25th Infantry Division. They had just been pulled out. We hadâ€”my platoon, I had 38 or 39 soldiersâ€”all were draftees. Several were clearly â€œMcNamaraâ€™s 100,000.â€” I hadâ€”

Interviewer

With that, youâ€™re referring to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.

Richard Cody

Yeah, right, whenâ€”

Interviewer

What do you mean by â€œMcNamaraâ€™s 100,000?â€

Richard Cody

Well, thatâ€™s when they lowered the category to bringâ€”to getâ€”open up the opportunity for the draft. You know, a lot of these guys had, you know, moral background problems, you know, whether arrests and stuff like that.

Interviewer

A tough crowd.

Richard Cody

It was a very tough crowd. I think I had five soldiers when I took over my platoonâ€”now, you got to remember, coming from West Point, where, you know, you take your formation, everybodyâ€™s lined up, everybodyâ€™s present and accounted for, my platoon sergeant said, you know, â€œEverybodyâ€™s present or accounted for, sir. We have five soldiers we have to pick up from the correctional facility.â€

Richard Cody

So I had five soldiers that could not live in a barracks. They were serving time in a correctional facility, and weâ€™d go over and pick them up after formation every day. Sign them out and theyâ€™d go to work, and then weâ€™d sign them back in at night, so thatâ€™s kind of, you know, the Army I had.

Interviewer

This mustâ€™ve been depressing for you, though, as a young Army officer dreaming of your career aheadâ€”

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

As you arrive out of West Point, to see whom you were going to be leading now.

Richard Cody

Yeah. But, you know, what I learned about this is it really formed my early opinion of the American soldier and the necessity of the leader of soldiers. And that is you have to believe that every soldier wants to do well, and itâ€™s your job to create conditions for success for them. Youâ€™ve got toâ€”

Interviewer

Evenâ€”even these conscripted soldiers.

Richard Cody

Yeah, even these, because, you know, if youâ€™re drafted and not a volunteer, youâ€™re there because you donâ€™t want to be, but you got drafted anyways. You may not have liked the training you had.

Richard Cody

And so I took it as a challenge. You know, a lot of them didnâ€™t have high school diplomasâ€”part of the 100,000. And, you know, by and large, they were good kids, but they needed some discipline. They neededâ€”they needed to look in the mirror and see their human potential. So, you know, they were my platoon, and I had a great platoon sergeant.

Richard Cody

And my job was to keep them out of trouble and, you know, any time we had conflictâ€”and we did. I mean you didnâ€™t go into barracks at night on the weekends without your platoon sergeant and without carrying a weapon, because of drugs and marijuanaâ€”

Interviewer

Other officers mentioned this.

Richard Cody

And drinking.

Interviewer

So you carried your weapon to protect yourself among your own soldiers.

Richard Cody

Well, we carried it because thatâ€™s what they told us to do. I never had to pull it out or anything.

Interviewer

Right.

Richard Cody

You know, troops, you know, theyâ€™d be unruly, you know. If you went to a frat party at ten oâ€™clock at night as a policeman, itâ€™s not like everybodyâ€™s going to stand at attention and say, â€œThank you, Officer Smith, for coming.â€ And so I mean your expectation ought to be that way.

Richard Cody

But by and large, that crowd just lacked leadership, and it lackedâ€”it lackedâ€”I say â€œleadershipâ€ in terms of the velocity caused. You know, it wasnâ€™t unusual to have two or three company commanders doing a tour in Vietnam, doing a 12-month tour. It wasnâ€™t unusual to haveâ€”

Interviewer

So by velocity, you mean instability, right?

Richard Cody

Instability, yeah, the velocity of change.

Interviewer

Yes.

Richard Cody

And so now, in '72-'73-'74, we were doing a reduction in force of the military. But the leaders were staying, and your platoon sergeants stayed—I mean I had the same platoon sergeant for the 19 months I had my platoon. And I was still there, and we had some kids come in and come out, stuff like that. But you can slow down and do the counseling, you can do the goal-setting, you can, you know, do those type of things.

Leadership Development in the Modern Army

Interviewer

So you think things actually got better with the reduction in force than they had been in the years previous to that.

Richard Cody

Yeah. I mean we had captains that were sergeants before. In fact, my company commander was a sergeant, sergeant first class, went to OCS, became a captain, and then reverted back to a sergeant first class while I was there, because of the reduction in force.

It wasn't like the Army sent him other than to OCS and any types of schools and leadership or immersion of what's expected of him—he was off to Vietnam.

Interviewer

PLDC is?

Richard Cody

Is Primary Leadership Development Course for E-4s that want to become E-5s. And they're, you know, we unit-select them and put them through that—it's a

Interviewer

ANCOC was what?

Richard Cody

ANCOC is the Advanced Non-Commissioned Officer Course, and BNCOC was the—I should know this—Basic Non-Commissioned Officer Course. We didn't have those type of institutions just yet.

Interviewer

So you blame all this, really, on the—an institutional failure. That the Army was really not prepared to manage the—the stress of this

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Size of a force.

Richard Cody

Sure.

Interviewer

And "and the demand?

Richard Cody

I don't blame "I just say it's an offshoot of it.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Richard Cody

I mean the Army has to go where they're sent, and they have to respond to what they "what the National Command Authority wants. And so as the Vietnam War kept stepping up and stepping up, and we had a draft? a draft is a very inefficient way to develop leaders, in my mind. And later on in my career, when everybody thought we were stretched to the max, and "Why are you calling on the National Guard and recalling individual ready Reservists? Why don't we just draft? " And I said, "Ohh "a lot of us said, "We've been in a draftee Army."

First off, the return on investment over time is not there, and you really, you know, volunteers who are committed and the institution is committed to developing them is the way you want to go. And I think we lacked a little bit of that in the '60s and '70s. Doesn't mean that we didn't have great leaders, but the size of the military and the way it was "the personnel changes were going, and the velocity of the op-tempo, didn't "you know, wasn't conducive to capturing all that.

Interviewer

So as an historical side note, of course, the draft goes until the mid-'70s, and then "

Richard Cody

Yeah, '73.

Interviewer

'73 "and then we return to an all-volunteer Army. It's been the professional Army ever since.

Richard Cody

Right.

Interviewer

Do you think we would ever go back to a draft? Do you think there's any inherent benefit as a democratic force for us to go back to a draft?

Richard Cody

It's not a draft that is limited to two to three years, and only because we've learned so much about leader development. We've learned so much about soldiers' tasks, especially in an asymmetrical world, threats that we're going to face where you don't have definitive lines of forage, of battlefields. Everything's 360 now, which means soldiers have to be more pentathletes and decathletes vs. just their one particular thing.

Richard Cody

That takes a lot of training. It takes a lot of leader development. And so getting volunteers who are committed to two, three, four-year enlistment terms, to me, is a better way to approach this thing.

Richard Cody

Now, the challenge for America is this—the all-volunteer force won. That's the great Army that went to Desert Shield, Desert Storm. That was really the showcasing of what the all-volunteer force could do, I think. Certainly OIF and OEF—Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan—and our Special Forces, which benefit from the conventional force, because that's how we grow them, and then they pick those soldiers. That showed what an all-volunteer force, world-class Army can be.

Interviewer

What's the drawback, though? What's the

Richard Cody

The drawback is this—in 1973, when we started, and we started keeping—the Army started this, and we started keeping—I think it was keeping record about the demographics. And I believe it was—back then, it was Max Thurman who ended up being the Vice Chief of the Army. But if you remember, he was—ran a recruiting command when we stood it up. They started keeping demographics on 17 to 22-year-old males in the United States, and looking at high school, looking at moral turpitude, physical fitness—in other words, those gates that you look for—the minimum qualities that would allow you to serve in the military.

Back then, it was almost 80% across that population, back in the '70s and '80s. That has been diminishing now to the point where it's 35%.

Interviewer

Why? Why do you think that happened?

Richard Cody

Well, I think, one, we have, you know, certainly you take a look at the physical fitness coming out of our high schools. We're building more prisons in this country than we are investing in high schools—our high school rates right now in terms of graduates is diminishing.

Richard Cody

It's certainly a bigger binomial population that you're looking at, so 35% of this population today vs. 80% of the population back in the '70s is—you know, I don't know what the numbers are. But you're still—an awful lot of great young men and women now that still inside that 35% of the males is still enough—but that's for all the services.

Richard Cody

And so America is going to have to look at what do we do? How are we investing in our children? How we're investing in our schools—how we're taking care of obesity, and, you know, other physical fitness issues, as well as, you know, the drugs and other things that require waivers. And sometimes we just don't want to give a waiver.

Interviewer

Do you think it's any danger to the growth of the professional warrior class, in a sense—I mean separate from the general population? When I was growing up, when you were growing up, I'm sure everyone in your neighborhood, there was an uncle or, you know—

Richard Cody

Right.

Interviewer

A father who had served. Now, it's much more likely to be a segregated community of military families. Offspring of military officers produce more military officers—but even more critical, the separation of the Army, and the Armed Forces, for that matter, from the general public.

Richard Cody

I've heard people say that. I've been away from—I say "away"—I've been out of the active duty force for three years. I've traveled a lot in what I'm doing. I don't fear that.

Richard Cody

One, I think our Army, which—and our military—I shouldn't just say the Army. But our military right now is held in extremely high regard by our population, and I think that's a good thing. As long as the leaders of our Army and the soldiers of our Army adhere to the tenets of, you know, loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage, that's not going to be a danger of the warrior class or something different.

Richard Cody

As well as they maintain the moral compass of the institution. I think that's a good thing for America at this time. What I do worry about is how the influencers—you just mentioned the parents. You know, you're right—when I grew up and you grew up, because of World War II and Korea War, it was not unusual for 12—12 houses on a street of 20, all of them had served in something, one of the services. Two-year hitch, four-year hitch, whatever, and so they understood the military, and they either had a good experience or

not a good experience, but they understood it. And they were more inclined to encourage their son or daughter to join.

We don't have that today. One, because we downsized our military quite a bit, and two, we went to the all-volunteer force, and we do have a large percentage now in the Army that I can speak for of second and third-generation soldiers—more so than we've had before.

Richard Cody

And, you know, I don't think that's a bad thing, and I don't worry about a warrior class, but if people are saying—you know, before the Army really looked like a cross-section of America. Today, it's still a cross-section of America, but it's a pretty high cross-section of America in terms of the quality of the individual.

Richard Cody

Especially those who have volunteered watching this war—not reading about it in the papers, but watching it the 24-hour news cycle, and still raising their right hand and saying, “America, in your time of need, send me—I'll go.” That's a highly level of patriotism, which I think is a good thing.

Unexpected Evacuation from Saigon
Interviewer

You were—let's go to a few historical moments that you were part of. You referred before to the—your deployment to Guam, and the—what you saw was really the tail end of the Vietnam War.

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

In other words, the evacuation—

Richard Cody

Right.

Interviewer

From Vietnam, as Saigon fell.

Richard Cody

Right.

Interviewer

Can you describe what it looked like on that deployment?

Richard Cody

Yeah. It was eerie at first. First off, I had to call my fiancée up, who I'd been dating for—let's see, I'd been dating for six years, and tell her that I was

deploying. Couldn't tell her where I was going"watched the TV"not like we had CNN back then, and we didn't have cell phones or anything else. I said, "But our June wedding is probably not going to happen," and so I landed at Andersen Air Force Base, along with some other elements from the 25th Infantry Division, the 27th Wolfhounds Battalions. I had a lot of my classmates in those outfits"Mike Deegan and"one that I remember well.

Richard Cody

Then"let me see"it was the 27th and the 35th. No, excuse me, the Bobcats, First of the Fifth. So you had the 27th Infantry Wolfhounds and the Bobcats. They were the Infantry units that were going to provide security and manpower for this over 50,000 Vietnamese refugees at any one time in what we called "Tent City." It was built up on Orote Point, an old Japanese airstrip on the southern part of Agana, Guam, and they lived in GP larges that the CBs construction battalions had put up"probably about 26-2,700 GP larges.

Interviewer

GP larges"what are GP larges?

Richard Cody

Is a General Purpose tent, large"big. You know, you can put 25 people in there. And lined all along the runway were the Southeast Asia latrines, you know, with the four holes and 50-gallon-cut-in-half barrels, and that was a latrine that we had. And we had huge mess halls"

Interviewer

Describe that again. So the latrines"why do you call them Southeast Asian latrines?

Richard Cody

Well, that's"

Interviewer

That was just the"

Richard Cody

That's how they made them. They're made out of plywood. They cut holes. They put little plastic seats on them. And then in the back, you'd flip up, and you had these slide-in, slide-out, cut-in-half 50-barrel drum. And the Bobcats had the mission"and one company of the Wolfhounds"had the mission. Every day they called them the shitter platoons. They'd have to go, and would go down and pull those out, and we used some construction water pump vehicles, and we reversed the pumps on them so that they became suckers.

Richard Cody

We didn't have "Johnny-On-The-Spots" [portable toilets] and all this other stuff, and this was all done on the fly as we got in there, because the boats were coming in"all the cargo boats"the Green Spring, the Green Hornet. Helicopters were hanging off the sides of them. Airplanes were coming in"commercial airplanes landing at Andersen Air Force Base with evacuation.

Interviewer

This was not a planned operation, really.

Richard Cody

Oh, this wasâ€”this was something else.

Interviewer

Chaos, right?

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Richard Cody

I donâ€™t think I slept the first three days. I mean we hit the ground runningâ€”all of us.

Interviewer

Again, to give the historical perspective hereâ€”Saigon fell rather precipitously.

Richard Cody

Thatâ€™s right.

Interviewer

And there was, therefore, the evacuation of thousands of foreigners, as well as Vietnamese.

Richard Cody

Right.

Interviewer

Into theâ€”into the water, really, right? I mean thatâ€™s reallyâ€”

Richard Cody

Even part of the Tiger Division came. And it wasâ€”it was, you knowâ€”I look back on it now, and it was unbelievable what we were able to pull together.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Richard Cody

I mean it was as complex an operationâ€”I mean we had twelve thousand babies show up

on two boats, Operation Babylift. You had Operatio] Eagle Pull, and Eagle Pull was the operation prior to Operation New Life, but because [South] Vietnam's capital fell so quickly, it never turned to that. So it was

Interviewer

What work did you do on this?

Richard Cody

I was in charge of the airlift, sealift, and ground transportation. There was supposed to be a major coming over to run it, but he never showed up, and so I was a first lieutenant, and I worked for the 45th support group commander, who was in charge of the two Infantry battalions. We had the 702nd Reserve Hospital out of California—these were all reservists.

Interviewer

Did you know what you were doing? I mean when you arrived there for such a job? I mean this is obviously different than what you've trained for.

Richard Cody

Yeah. We—there was no medal task on this thing, but, you know, you find out what job has to get done. You get good—I had two E-6s and an E-7 that were just wonderful. I had a team from the Air Force, from MAC ALC, 61st MAC ALC, out of Hickam.

And, you know, I was a first lieutenant and had these great NCOs, and we made it happen. I mean it was—it was no mistakes, because you were moving stuff; so I'm sure if you look back and say, "Boy, that wasn't really efficient," but it was effective. And, you know, and we're dealing with masses.

“We Can Do Better Than This.”

Interviewer

Now contrast this experience, which is really, in some ways, the nadir of the Army story in the twentieth century

Richard Cody

Right.

Interviewer

Or post-Second World War—with the Desert Storm experience, for you.

Richard Cody

Well, watching this piece, it really was kind of a low point, although I would say the lowest point before Desert Shield-Desert Storm was Desert One—the failed rescue mission in '79.

Interviewer

Were you involved in Desert One?

Richard Cody

I was involved after it failed.

Interviewer

Again, let's™s back up to this.

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

That was the attempt to rescue the hostagesâ€”

Richard Cody

Yeah. That was theâ€”

Interviewer

At the American Embassy in Tehran.

Richard Cody

That was the Deltaâ€”Delta Force was the ground force. They had just been formed up by Charlie Beckwith. And then you had a mixture of Air Force and Navy Marine pilots flying 53s with specially adapted MC-130s.

Richard Cody

And it was an air-ground-sea operation Force up toâ€”to their hide sites, go in on vehicles, take down the compound, get theâ€”the hostages out. 53s pick them up, bring them back to the base, load them up on 130s, everybody goes home.

Interviewer

Were you involved in the planning of that?

Richard Cody

No. I wasâ€”I was a young captain in the 29 Cav at the time, in the 24th Infantry Division, and I was flying Cobras. In fact, I was testing the modernized Cobra Helicopter at the time.

When that thing failed because a couple aircraft broke down, then they hadâ€”didnâ€™t have enough to execute the whole portion. They decided to scrub the mission, reposition some of the helicopters for refuel off the tanker, the 130s that were in the desertâ€”very audaciousâ€”very audacious plan, by the way. Brown-out conditions happened, hits a C-130, we have a big fire, a lot of people hurt and killed, and everybody loaded up.

Richard Cody

They burned the aircraft, called in air strikes, and everybody left. That, to me, was the nadir or the low point for the U.S. military strengthâ€”although Vietnam certainly attributed to some of that.

Interviewer

And whyâ€”why do you say itâ€™s the nadir if itâ€™sâ€”

Richard Cody

Because, you know, youâ€™re in the middle of a Cold War with the greatest nation in the world. You had the Entebbe Raid. You had other things going on, and here weâ€™

Interviewer

The Entebbe Raid would be the Israeli strike and rescue attempt in Uganda, right?

Richard Cody

Right. And, you know, and we had American hostages, and Iâ€™m sure the American people had expectations of, â€œGeez, we can do better than this.â€

Interviewer

So itâ€™s kind of a humiliation to the experience, right?

Richard Cody

Yeah. Yeah, and I donâ€™t fault anybody on that mission. I mean Iâ€™ve read everything on that thing, obviously, because we got formed up right after that, and that was the birthing ofâ€”or the genesis of whatâ€™s now the 160th Special Operations Regimentâ€”the Night Stalkers.

Richard Cody

And a bunch of us pilots got pulled out from different places. I was put in charge of the Little Bird gunships that we built out of the Vietnam-era OH-6. Others were working with the Chinooks and the Black Hawks, and we actually started planning another going back in.

Interviewer

It heldâ€”Special Ops Command came out of this, too, is that right?

Richard Cody

Thatâ€™s correct.

Interviewer

Yes.

Richard Cody

Special Ops Command came out of it. The 160th came out of it. It solidified our Tier One forces. Specialâ€”

Interviewer

And Goldwater-Nichols was really a result of this, yes.

Richard Cody

And Goldwater-Nichols was a result of all this. And so those things, plus President Reagan

coming in, and the Big Five for the Army in terms of the Apache helicopter, the Blackhawk, the Bradley, the Abrams tank, and the Patriot Missile System. On the other side, it brought in other things, like F-117 and all those. All those seeds were planted, and you saw the military regain. At the same time, for the Army, we were doing things like the National Training Center, the Joint Readiness Training Center, the CMTC over in Europe.

Interviewer

CMTC is?

Richard Cody

Is the Combined Combat Maneuver Training Center—you know, Grafenwoehr and all that. And so we started investing in battalion and brigade commanders and staff, and the units going through a force-on-force experience—very, very harsh experience. And it was really as well as it was a tactical experience, it was also a leader development experience, and for everybody from, you know, a squad leader on up to the brigade commander. And you had observer/controllers.

And so now we had task condition standards. We always had them before, but we were holding ourselves accountable. Gunnery tables for tanks and Bradleys and Apache helicopters and Cobra helicopters.

Interviewer

So you see Desert One as having triggered, really, a sort of

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Rethink of that, yeah.

Richard Cody

Exactly. I mean

Interviewer

And I'm a little unclear where you were for Desert One, then. You were

Richard Cody

I was in—I had just gotten back from South Korea.

Interviewer

Right.

Richard Cody

I went to—I was in the 25th for four years. Flight School, went to the Second Infantry Division for a year, flying in—I was in the First Brigade. And then I came right back,

and I joined the 29 Cavalry Squadron.

Interviewer

So you're watching this from afar, but you're

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Have it nonetheless, it's affecting your understanding of where the institution is at that moment.

Richard Cody

But yeah. And after 1980, when this all started ramping up, the training we were doing—the Bright Stars, the other—other type of—Instant Thunder training that we were doing was so much more real, so better focused. And it was really—you could just—I mean compared to what we did before, it was—it was really graduate-level stuff.

Interviewer

So look at it now, when we arrive at Desert Storm—the first chance, really, to erase the shadow of the '70s, right?

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

I mean how did it—where were you? How did you—how did you look upon this engagement, and what role did you play?

Richard Cody

Yeah, I was a battalion commander in the 101st Airborne Division. I commanded the Apache battalion. General Bennie Peay was the—was our major general.

Interviewer

Peay spelled how?

Richard Cody

P-E-A-Y. Brigadier General Hugh Shelton was our ADC. Interesting enough, they were majors in the 25th Infantry Division when I was a lieutenant. I knew them. Yeah, it's kind of interesting how those things go.

Richard Cody

So I was commanding the Apache battalion. We had just come back from six months of training out in the deserts, just south of Fort Ord, working as OP4 and R4 flying the Apaches against the new air defense systems—the ADATS, the Air Defense Anti-Tank System that the Army was looking at after Sergeant York had gotten killed.

Richard Cody

And so we had six months of training out there, and if you remember, now, the Apache was kind of new. We had just started fielding it. We had battalions built up. They had a little bit of a skirmish in Just Cause, but nothing of size, and

Interviewer

Just Cause was the operation

Richard Cody

Just Cause in Panama.

Interviewer

In Panama.

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Noriega.

Richard Cody

That's correct. And so I had been in command a year, and then it was August 2nd it was my birthday. I had all the officers my wife had the officers over as a surprise birthday. It was my 40th birthday. My warrant officers and all my company commanders and everybody and then my mother called. I thought she called to wish me a happy birthday. She says, "You see what's on going on on TV? Does that affect you?" And we hadn't looked at it. The next day planning started, and we

"If America is Going to War, Send Me."

Interviewer

So what was going on at that moment?

Richard Cody

Well, that's when Saddam Hussein

Interviewer

That was the invasion of Kuwait

Richard Cody

The invasion of Kuwait that's right.

Interviewer

By Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi forces.

Richard Cody

Yeah, to capture back his province. And so the next day planning started. I knew my battalion would go, because we were the only Apache battalion in the 101st at the time, and we always had contingencies and different types of OP[eration] plans that we were on. I can't remember the exact date, but I believe it was the 12th of August we were gone. I mean it went quick.

Interviewer

Was there excitement in the air?

Richard Cody

Oh, sure.

Interviewer

I mean you didn't want to see war happen, but you were nonetheless, this is an opportunity to use the toys you've been building for the last 15 years.

Richard Cody

Yeah, I mean there's always excitement. You know, in infantry divisions and this was my second tour in the 101st; I'd been there as a company commander prior to that. You know, soldiers train as a team, crews train as crews, infantry, the same way your squads and platoons. And the training we've had up to that point I mean, hey, if America's going to war, send me.

So there was now, was there concern by the wives and the families? Absolutely. You know, what's this mean? I mean, you know, you saw how it was played out. I mean this is a big bad guy, and he's taken on poor Kuwait, and they're slaughtering and they're murdering, and they're doing all these things, threatening oil.

Richard Cody

We took off we were the first units of the 101st to deploy. On that airplane was Hugh Shelton with me he was the ADC, assistant division commander. We had six Apaches on a C-5 with all the crews. We had landed at Dhahan. They'd lowered the nose and the back of the aircraft, both sides, so we start pushing out. It was 110 degrees, so it sucked the wind right out of you. And we stayed there through I got back the end of April, so we were there a long time.

Interviewer

So Desert Shield, then Desert Storm.

Richard Cody

That's right.

Interviewer

You were there through both parts.

Richard Cody

Yeah, the whole thing.

Interviewer

What part did the Apache division play during that time?

Richard Cody

Well, 101st got the 82nd was in. We got my battalion got attached to the 82nd for a while, until the 101st started flowing in, and then you remember everything that flowed in. You know, 18th Airborne Corps

Interviewer

You were out of Saudi Arabia, then, is that right?

Richard Cody

Yeah, we were in Saudi Arabia. We were we went over to King Fahd Military Air Base. It was the runways and everything were in construction, but everything else wasn't done, and so we moved in there. And then we started leapfrogging up past Jubail as a really, a screen, in case Saddam was going to come south, as part of an air-ground task force. And we were also tied to the eastern provincial province, the Saudi National Guard. Pretty thin I mean it was a thin line in the sand in August when we were there. And then we started building troops up.

Richard Cody

And so we spent the better part of September, when the division came in, working on COM plans and going out and doing maneuver training as part of the air-ground task force of the 101st. To do that, in case we Desert Storm was going to prevail. Early in September, I got called in to Special Operations Command Post. Colonel Jesse Johnson was what you would now call SOCCENT Commander, and he read me onto a top-secret, then top-secret piece, where they had already started planning the air war and the ground war.

Richard Cody

And they had a dilemma in that there was three radar sites, and if you remember, Saddam had gotten most of his military air defense systems as well as his tanks and his BMPs from Russia. And so he had quite an array of radar warning systems, air defense systems that were tied he had the SA-2s, SA-3s, and the SA-6 [surface-to-air missiles]. He also had these are all air defense systems to shoot down enemy aircraft, so he had a picket fence on the Saudi border and the Iraqi border, as well as the Jordanian border, to protect himself from an attack.

Richard Cody

So I guess in their war planning they looked at we've got to take out these three radar sites for this wave of Tornados and F-16s, F-117s, and other stuff, that were going in looking for Scuds as well as taking out the AT&T downtown Baghdad. And they identified these as critical sites to take out, and they were trying to figure out whether they were going to do it with ground special operating forces, do it with a missile strike, do it, you know, how they were going to take it out.

Richard Cody

And so he laid it out for me—he said, “Can your Apaches take these things out?” And I said, “Well, you know, show me some more pictures. You know, how big are they?” And they’re a kilometer wide. You had flat-faced radar, you had troposcatter radar, you had spoon rest, you had ZPU-4s, which are the manned Quad 40 antiaircraft.

Richard Cody

And they were all tied, and they reported back to a sector operations center to alert Baghdad, and that would give them ground control intercept of fast-movers penetrating their airspace well in advance of the fast-movers getting over the target. So we looked. I said, “Sure we can take them out.” I said, you know, “We can take them out from about six, seven kilometers with our Hellfire missiles. We’d need, you know, good pictures of them and stuff, but yeah, we could do it.”

Richard Cody

So that started another part of what my battalion was doing. So we were working and planning and working everyday for the eventuality of what we would do for an airborne assault—excuse me, an air assault of our brigades, infantry brigades, as part of that task force. But I also had bifurcated nine crews, which I was one of them, practicing about every other night with the special operations forces to go in and take out the radar sites. It was kind of interesting.

Interviewer

And did you, in the end, take out those radar sites?

Richard Cody

Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer

So once it went to Desert Storm that was part of your mission.

Richard Cody

Yeah. We—if you remember all the politics back and forth about the deadline that they gave Saddam—

Interviewer

Yes.

Richard Cody

And right after Christmas of 1990, we got called in, and we’d done several rehearsals, and I named the task force. I had ended up with nine Apache crews. We had a red team and a white team, four Apaches each on those teams. I had a spare Apache just in case we had a problem that would loiter south of the Iraqi border.

Richard Cody

And so we had done several live fires at night, and this is flying low-level, 50 feet off the deck, night-vision goggles. Had to have extended-range fuel tanks that we never flew combat with, and they weren’t ballistically tolerant. I mean they were just a ferry tank,

but we decided we needed it for the legs, so we didn't have to refuel coming out or going in.

Richard Cody

And we practiced avoiding their radar systems, where we flew with the Special Ops Pave Low helicopters that were going to have the Para-rescues, in case we got shot down, because the estimate was we'd lose probably one aircraft at each site because of you know, these things were designed to

Interviewer

Right. Right.

Richard Cody

Take down systems. So right after Christmas, we had called in, got briefed, and said, you know, it looks like the mission's going to go. You need to deploy your forces now.

Richard Cody

In the meantime, they had picked a place way out in the western side of northwestern side of Saudi Arabia, very close to Jordan. The place was called Al-Jouf, which in Arabic translated in starting point. It was a small Aramco station that had a small dirt airstrip that had been paved over. So we took off on the I think the 14th no, excuse me, the 15th of January.

Richard Cody

The night before there was a lot of rumors going around. I actually circled my entire battalion, all the enlisted and everybody else, outside of earshot on the tarmac, and I basically laid out that several of us were going to go someplace. I need you guys operational security is absolute must. You can't talk about it. Just say we went out on a training mission or whatever. But I need you all to band together and go, you know, radio silence on this stuff until we get back. And to a man, we didn't have an OPSEC violation. I mean that's the teamwork that you can build.

Richard Cody

And these are, you know, a lot of them crew chiefs and pilots and stuff like that, but they understood, you know, the severity and the necessity. So we took off and flew it, geez, was about a seven-hour flight. We had to refuel a couple times, and we landed there. Got another special operations update, and it was there that I laid out the target folders.

Richard Cody

Up until that time, I hadn't told the pilots what we were doing. This was all rehearsing, rehearsing, rehearsing. It was only then that we lay out the real targets, where they were going, and what was going to happen. We spent the day checking on our aircraft.

The night of the 16th we were going to go and, you know, take all the stuff that, you know basically go into isolation. Don't have any identification on you. We all had the regular, you know, if you get captured, went through all that stuff.

Interviewer

Where are you while all this is going on?

Richard Cody

Iâ€™m flying”

Interviewer

One of the”

Richard Cody

Iâ€™m flying in white”white Team. I had a W-1 in the front seat”great kid who remains my friend ever since. And I had a captain leading the other team. He was one of my company commanders. In the meantime, I got the rest of the battalion back there. I gave the XO command of it, â€™cause we knew once we lit this match, we werenâ€™t sure if they were going to counterattack, and so we had plans for that.

Richard Cody

And so we crossed the border, got shot at with a MANPAD. It missed. We think he shot at the noise. He did not alert, â€™cause it was a roving patrol.

Interviewer

A MANPAD is?

Richard Cody

Is a Manned Portable Air Defense system. It was probably an SA-7. And so I said a little thanks to the guys who designed the jammers, because they seemed to work. And we got to the targets about half a minute early. Weâ€™d never been there before.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Richard Cody

Now, you remember, weâ€™re flying”it was zero illum that night.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Richard Cody

Weâ€™re flying 50 feet up wadis at about 100 knots, which is about 125 miles an hour, give or take. We hit our target indexes on the Apache, and thereâ€™s the big radar site sitting out there.

And then we lined up in our attack formation and started launching Hellfires. The attack lasted no more than four minutes at both sites simultaneously.

Interviewer

But you didnâ€™t lose any choppers or anything.

Richard Cody

Didn't lose a thing. We turned around and screamed out of there at 50 feet on the deck. About that time, as we got closer to the Iraq border, Iraq-Saudi border, we could see the jets coming overhead, 'cause we could see them with our fleer and our night-vision goggles. And we're going the wrong way, and they've got look-down, shoot-down radar, and over the COMs AWACS West let them know we were friendly.

And I got back "I think we got back about 4

00 to Al-Jouf, refueled, did a quick debrief, and we were down Tapline Road to KKMC, King Khalid Military City, which is still not where we needed to be.

Richard Cody

Put new Hellfires on, 'cause we stashed them down there, and then flew all the way down to King Fahd. The whole time we're listening to the air war on our radios, and what's going "what's going on. And we got back I want to say 14:00 that day, so we left at 12:00 and got back at 14:00 that day. I was 40 years old. Brian Stewmon, my young W-1, was "

Interviewer

How do you spell Stewmon, S-T-E "

Richard Cody

S-T-E-W-M-O-N.

Interviewer

Uh-huh.

Richard Cody

He's now a W-5 in our Army "CW-5. He was a W-1. And we'd sing to each other to keep ourselves awake. Probably not something we'd want to record. But we landed, and I can never forget, my crew chief comes out and the whole battalion, saying, you know, "Thank God you guys are back." You know, they were all counting the airplanes coming down.

Interviewer

Sure.

Richard Cody

You know, probably like something out of Memphis Belle, you know, because "

Interviewer

Yeah. Yeah.

Richard Cody

And they said, "Sir, you all right?" I said, "Oh, we're fine. How about getting

the maintenance stand,â€”â€”cause I was stiff. So they had to roll the maintenance stand out so I could get outâ€”I mean I was really stiff. Then the next day, we launched and moved to our new site along Tapline Road. We turned around and had to fly back up,â€”â€”cause the division was moving out. In the meantime, while all this is going on, the division was getting ready to move to its next lodgment site, up along Tapline Road, to get ready to launch the ground war. So that was the first strikes of the war.

Interviewer

Thatâ€™s very interesting.

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

High point for you of your military career?

Richard Cody

Iâ€™d say it wasâ€”it was a high point. You know, youâ€”you know, you look at it, and you say, â€œMan, that was kind of scary.â€” Yeah, it was scary, but God, we had some great pilots, we had trained well, we trusted each other. I mean when youâ€™re flying that close to each other, youâ€™d better trust everybody. And we had trust in our equipment, and, you know, quite frankly, yeah, it was an adrenaline rush for a long time. But we didnâ€™t have time to think about it much, because the next day we were moving out.

Richard Cody

And then the two days following that we were running reconnaissance back into Iraq, looking for the right place to launch what was then the largest air assault in history of the 101st into Cobra, as part of the left hook for the ground war. So, you know, itâ€™sâ€”I donâ€™t want to say it was business as usual. We felt good about it, but I think we expected that from ourselvesâ€”at least I did. I mean I wasnâ€™t surprised that we could do it. I wasnâ€™t surprised that my guys that were flying in each one of the aircraftâ€”I knew theyâ€™d hit the target.

Richard Cody

Some people didnâ€™t, but, you know, weâ€”we actually believed in that Hellfire missile, and we believed in our rockets and our 30 millimeter [machine guns]. And we actually believed the aircraft would do fine, and they did. Did we have a few hiccups? Sureâ€”I mean a couple of us flew with a couple little caution lights that were running, but we knew it was probably a cheap part someone bought that failed. But the machine was running good. So we didnâ€™t worry about it.

Reports From Abu Ghraib

Interviewer

Letâ€™s move on to anotherâ€”another war, and another moment, this one much darkerâ€”your advice during the time in theâ€”in OIF when Abu Ghraib comes down. Tell me whereâ€”when you first heard the news of that and what your reaction was.

Richard Cody

Well, I heard it like everybody else when it popped out. It wasn't like

Interviewer

This is 2003, is that right?

Richard Cody

Yes. It's 2003, and, you know, there was a back-channel message, you know, that went out through the back to the Army. Remember, now, because of Goldwater-Nichols we need to set the stage. The Chief of Staff of the Army and I was the G-3 of the Army at the time.

Interviewer

You were G-3, okay, I'm sorry.

Richard Cody

I was and the Chief of Staff of the Army was Pete Schoomaker, and the Vice Chief at the time was George Casey. We had an acting Secretary.

Interviewer

Acting Secretary of the Army.

Richard Cody

That's right. We had an acting Secretary of the Army at the time, because Secretary White had left. And so under Goldwater-Nichols, the CENTCOM commander has all the authority, and we are in a Title 10 U.S. Code Title 10 lawman, equip, train, deploy. We don't fight the forces. We don't deal with the day-to-day operations in theater. Our job is to sustain the fight and sustain the institution and provide the combatant commander.

Interviewer

Again, that's what you're explaining here is the Joint Command structures

Richard Cody

The Joint Command structure.

Interviewer

So that the cooperation between the forces is at maximum potential.

Richard Cody

That's right, yeah. So it wasn't like we get we get day-to-day reports

Interviewer

Right.

Richard Cody

From the field. We get roll-up reports, and thatâ€™s not to say we didnâ€™t know what was going on. We did, because every morning we get those roll-ups. So we saw that we had a problem. And of course, you know, it came out because it was a young soldier who said, â€œThis is wrong. I mean this is not somethingâ€the system worked after we found out about it. Andâ€

Interviewer

The response works, you mean, as opposed toâ€

Richard Cody

Yes, exactly, yeah.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Richard Cody

At the time, I didnâ€™t think much of it. Iâ€™ll be honest with you. As the G-3 of the Army, Iâ€™m the operations deputy. My job was to mobilize and deploy and redeploy forces. I was in charge of the readiness of the Army, and quite frankly, I was working on OIF-2 and OIF-3 rotationsâ€

Interviewer

Sure.

Richard Cody

Looking whatâ€™how many more National Guard units we were going to have to mobilize, what the balance was going to be. Plus we were already into the thinking of restructuring the Army while we were fighting from a division based to a brigade-based. And so I didnâ€™t pay as much attention to it, because, quite frankly, it was in General Abizaidâ€™s hands.

Interviewer

General Abizaid was then the CENTCOM commander.

Richard Cody

He was the CENTCOM commander. It was in, you know, General Sanchezâ€™s hands, because he was the CJTF commander over there. And, you know, OSD was looking at it, and, you know, the Chief [of Staff] was involved. I didnâ€™tâ€

Interviewer

Letâ€™s explain what weâ€™re actuallyâ€because weâ€™ve talked around it, but what is actually the report down that youâ€™re hearing at this point?

Richard Cody

Well, the report down that weâ€™re hearing is weâ€™ve had some abuses to Iraqis at Abu Ghraibâ€™Iraqi prisoners, done by one of our reserve units out of Maryland. And, you know, there was several pictures that showed, you know, bad things, and there was 26

pictures in particular, I think, that everybody was concerned about.

Interviewer

These pictures had not been released to the press yet in anyway.

Richard Cody

No, they had not been released. Iâ€™

Interviewer

So this is all internal at this moment.

Richard Cody

Yeah. And so it was a shockwave, for sureâ€™ everybodyâ€™s getting concerned. There was a lot of allegations out there that this was command-directedâ€™ that these soldiers were doing those thingsâ€™ and weâ€™re talking about five soldiers nowâ€™ because they wanted to soften up the prisoners.

Richard Cody

I mean this is the mythâ€™ soften up the prisoners so that we could find out more about al-Qaeda, more about IED emplacers, and stuff like that. I never believed any of it, because I knew who the unit was. I knew the structure in terms of how we do business. Iâ€™d been a division commanderâ€™

Interviewer

This is a Reserve unit anyway, right?

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

So itâ€™s likely thatâ€™

Richard Cody

Well, but theyâ€™re active duty now. But their purpose in life was to provide the incarceration of EPWs and prisoners of war. As the divisionâ€™

Interviewer

EPW is?

Richard Cody

Enemy Prisoner of War. Back a little bit, we had the same type of setup, a couple EPW camps set up in Kandahar, when I was a division commander, when we sent the 101st over in 2002â€™

Interviewer

In Afghanistan.

Richard Cody

In Afghanistan. And there is a great line of demarcation between the Military Police, who incarcerates, who runs these things, and their internment companies, and MI, who does interrogations. And all of us

Interviewer

That'd be Military Intelligence.

Richard Cody

Military Intelligence. All of us know that. The other thing is we have a manual that our soldiers follow, and everybody's trained on these things. So as we started hearing stories about, you know, this was directed to loosen up the prisoners, stuff like that not

Interviewer

You knew this was lying coming from the bottom up that's what your thought was, right?

Richard Cody

Exactly. I mean these are guys who are now in trouble. They're going to get court-martialed. And, you know, later on, no one was able ever to prove it.

How did I get involved? In June of '04, I become the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army. General Casey leaves. After a short stint as the Vice Chief, he goes over to take over Iraq. I end up being the Vice Chief, and CENTCOM decides that rather than them handle it, because they're absorbed with the war, that it's an Army unit. We're dealing with allegations all the way up to the three-star level in terms of being a three-star commander. We had the two-star or one-star MI. You had Military Intelligence. You had the operations general. And you also had the one-star brigade commander, who was a reservist that was commanding it, all involved, which meant the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, who was in charge of general officer misconduct and investigations it all came to me.

Interviewer

Did you initiate the Taguba investigation?

Richard Cody

No, that was initiated by, requested by CENTCOM, and we picked the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staffs picked a guy, and they went over and did it.

Interviewer

So you they picked

Richard Cody

Tony Taguba.

Interviewer

Antonio Taguba, who was aâ€”

Richard Cody

Heâ€”heâ€”

Interviewer

Where had he been before that? He was aâ€”

Richard Cody

I canâ€™t remember where Tony was at. I think he may have been in Third Army at the timeâ€”Iâ€™m not really accurate with it. But heâ€™d been a brigade commander at Fort Hood when I was there, and he was aâ€”

Interviewer

So his role was to investigate.

Richard Cody

His role was to go over and investigate. Anytime you have problems like that, rather than have the command investigate it, youâ€™d go to the next-higher level, or get an independent, and thatâ€™s how we do it. And so Tony was not under the three-star command, and so he went to investigate that and do fact-finding.

Interviewer

Did you know Tony before this?

Richard Cody

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I know him very well.

Interviewer

And respected him?

Richard Cody

Yeah. Yeah, I mean he didâ€”you got to remember, now, all while this is going on, IEDs are all over the place. This isâ€”Abu Ghraib is getting mortared a lot, as is every other place, so itâ€™s not like you can just drive around and everybodyâ€™s fighting.

Richard Cody

So we had four different studiesâ€”not studies, but investigations on this thing, and each one wrote upâ€”we had General Kernâ€™s report, Retired General Kern, Paul Kern. You had another one that was commissionedâ€”not commissioned, but ordered, so you hadâ€”end up with four different investigations during about a year time period.

Interviewer

All done, thoughâ€”

Richard Cody

All done in Iraq, interviewing people.

“Frat Party Gone Bad”
Interviewer

But with “not released to the public.

Richard Cody

No.

Interviewer

The public had no knowledge at this moment.

Richard Cody

No. So then it got tossed to me to deal with the recommendations of these different reports, and so “and the reason why I had it is “cause we had five general officers involved. I spent the better part of three months reviewing every bit of all the interviews. Everything from privates all the way up, from the different reports.

Richard Cody

I got done, had my lawyers work with me, and everybody else. There was great hue and cry that someone needed to get court-martialed, if you remember. And everybody was targeting “targeting General Karpinski, “cause she was the commander.

Richard Cody

If you remember during the sergeant’s [Staff Sergeant Ivan Frederick] trial “and I think of his name in a minute “his defense lawyer wanted to call Rumsfeld and others to be part of it, and the military judge said, “No, it’s way too low on the chain of command, “because the assertion was the tone and tenor “this was command-driven, to do this.

And so that was kind of what everybody thought. This was pushed down from the top. Have “have the Military Police soften these guys up.

Richard Cody

As I dug into all this, this was a frat party gone bad. These were five soldiers that were unsupervised, night shift, and of the 250-some-odd photos that we looked at, most of them were about intimate relations they were having with each other.

I mean this was ill-disciplined soldiers. It had nothing to do with the military intelligence or being part of any type of torture to get intelligence. This was just soldiers not doing the right thing. But the optics were we need to court-martial somebody, because we were court-martialing enlisted soldiers. As I reviewed it all “and I had to go over it and report to the Senate every once in a while, let them know where I was.

Richard Cody

And they were very shocked when I said “

Interviewer

This is still in privateâ€”this hasnâ€™tâ€”

Richard Cody

Yeah. Yeah, it hasnâ€™t been released. And I informed them that I found no fault of any violation of UCMJ or conduct unbecoming of any of the general officers.

Interviewer

UCMJ is Uniform Code of Military Justiceâ€”

Richard Cody

Right.

Interviewer

Right?

Richard Cody

And in General Karpinskiâ€™s piece, you know, I said, â€œListen, we deployed all these internment battalions late.â€ They were all Reservists, â€”cause 95 percent of the Armyâ€™s internment capability is all in the Guard and Reserve. We only have two active-duty units, and theyâ€™re at Leavenworth, which was a TDA, a non-deployable type outfit.

So they were rushed in there because no one thought they were going to have that many EPWs, and it was great restraint to mobilize more than we needed. So you send in those leaders.

Richard Cody

This goes back to the lessons learned in Vietnam and how this circle comes back to haunt youâ€”had we spent the time to mobilize them earlier and gotten the approval and recognizedâ€”by the way, the commander on the ground said, â€œI need these,â€ but it took a long time to get them, because there was reluctance at OSD to mobilize them fast enough.

Interviewer

OSD is office of Secretary of Defense?

Richard Cody

Yeah, which meantâ€”

Interviewer

Now, what do you mean by â€œthe lesson of Vietnam?â€ Iâ€™m not quite sure I follow that.

Richard Cody

When you have velocity where you donâ€™t get everything trained. Our process was 130 daysâ€™ worth of training for Guard and Reserves before we sent them into combat. That

way, you had your individual training, you had your collective training, your specialized training for that theater.

And during that time, you get to see who can step up, who canâ€™t. You get to validateâ€”reinforce command and control, reinforce leader-to-led, reinforce building trust soldier-to-soldier, leader-to-soldier, and unit-to-unit.

Interviewer

So if that had happened, theseâ€”

Richard Cody

I donâ€™t know.

Interviewer

Youâ€™re hope isâ€”

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

That if that had happened, we wouldâ€™ve had less a chance of havingâ€”

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Morally suspect people like this in theâ€”okay.

Richard Cody

Weâ€™yeahâ€”well, I donâ€™t know. But I do know it was very rushed, because I remember it all. We alerted and mobilized them very fast because of the necessity, because our Infantry units were picking up prisoners all the time. Every IED event went on, they would pickâ€”and you couldnâ€™t have the Infantry guard thatâ€”God, thatâ€™s the last thing you want to do, because you want them to keep doing what they do best. And you donâ€™t want to have a whole bunch of EPWs around Infantry guys that areâ€”need to be fighting, but moreâ€”you just donâ€™t want to do that. You want the professionals to handle them.

Interviewer

So more EPWs than you anticipated.

Richard Cody

Yeah. Well, I think thatâ€”

Interviewer

A lack of preparation for those you had.

Richard Cody

The military did not miss more than people thought. Remember, now, in May of 2003, people thought this thing was going to wind down. In May of 2003, they thought we were going to come off eighteen brigades and go down to six by next June.

Interviewer

Well, this gets back to sort of the central pieces of

Richard Cody

Failed expectations.

Interviewer

One of the central critiques of the war

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Which was that that it had not prepared for the defense.

Richard Cody

Right.

Interviewer

For that peace, I'm sorry.

Richard Cody

So what does it mean to an Army, and what does it mean back to Abu Ghraib? It meant that General Karpinski, who recently got promoted, got sent over to take over command of 10-some-odd battalions, with 40-some-odd of these detention camps. Had never been afforded the opportunity to go to any of the training sites back in the continental United States to see these units, learn who the leaders were, and establish things. She had to do it while they were in contact. She took over, boom, and she took over this large thing that was make-it-up-as-you-go-along in some cases.

Richard Cody

And the leaders down below her didn't have what I think the requisite amount of training and opportunity to learn about their soldiers. Then you put them in Abu Ghraib—Abu Ghraib is at the nexus down there at the terrible place. They're getting bombed a lot. The soldiers are living in terrible conditions. This is well before the big base camps and all the stuff that came in in 2004-2005. This is still on the tail end of the victory and Saddam's statue going down.

Richard Cody

Youâ€™ve got Sunnis, youâ€™ve got al-Qaeda, youâ€™ve got Shia, all fighting, and youâ€™ve got these soldiers enmeshed in this stuff, and itâ€™s seven days a week. And this is where you need strong leadership, and you need strong moral compass. Clearly, it was somewhat absence in the case of Abu Ghraib, but as you looked at it, at each level, there was no violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice at the five general officersâ€™ level. [1:20:05] So I gave four letters of concern, and one letter of reprimand, and everybody thought that was a slap on the wrist.

Interviewer

I mean were you concerned at this time that no matter what your integrity of your judgment on itâ€™

Interviewer

Four letters of concern to the leadership.

Richard Cody

To theâ€™each one of the leaders.

Interviewer

Uh-huh, and one reprimandâ€™who was the reprimand to?

Richard Cody

Letter of reprimand went to General Karpinski, and sheâ€™d already paid. She was relieved of command. But there was many that wanted to have this court-martial, so that everything could come out. I said, â€œThereâ€™s nothing to come out. This is it.â€ You know, anytime that she found a problem, she corrected it. Was she overstretched? Absolutely. Was she prepared for this? No. Well, whose fault is that? Isâ€™some of itâ€™s hers, clearly. Some of itâ€™s the institution for creating thatâ€™thing.

Interviewer

When was the Taguba Report leaked, then, which is what started the public awareness of this, right?

Richard Cody

Very soon afterwards. And of course, that generated the Kern Investigation.

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

That theseâ€™we have not only reports, we have pictorial evidence here, right, that might get out into the public. And not only does this have tremendous damage for the Army, but for theâ€™the mission in Iraq as well.

Richard Cody

Yeah. Well, listen, it was a terrible, terrible information setback. But it was snapshots. You had to have the context, and context, no one wanted to listen to. I mean, soâ€™I mean I saw

every picture, as I said. I saw all the soldiers'™ investigational reports, each one of the sworn statements, who was doing what to whom. What'™

Interviewer

By 'œcontext,' you just mean that the'™that the pictures may have suggested there was more of this than was really going on?

Richard Cody

Yes, and there wasn'™t. And, you know, let'™s be clear. Torture was the four bodies burned hanging from the bridge out in Fallujah. What was going on in there was certainly not correct. It was debasing to those prisoners, for sure. It wasn'™t even close to the standards of discipline in'™that we train our troops to. But in terms of torture, it wasn'™t torture. Now, it was, you know'™I mean we need to sep'™and that was one of the problems I think we had throughout this thing. I mean torture [is] cutting people'™s heads off. Torture [is] burning bodies, hanging them, and everything else. These were people that were abusive, for sure, making fun of, sure, but in terms of torture, it was a pretty tough line it just didn'™t cross.

Interviewer

You'™re referring here, of course, to the'™in this case, the enemies'™

Richard Cody

Humiliating, for sure.

Interviewer

But the'™in other words, our enemy practiced a level of abuse that was far greater than anything that we were'™was suggested by Abu Ghraib.

Richard Cody

Absolutely, yeah. Now, having said'™

Interviewer

But it doesn'™t'™but it doesn'™t exonerate us, so'™

Richard Cody

No, it doesn'™t exonerate so you'™you'™

Interviewer

We should be at a higher standard, though.

Richard Cody

Exactly right, and these soldiers absolutely failed that, and they got punished for it. We took the appropriate action. But to raise it back up to your general officer corps, or your colonels and stuff like that, and suggest that they created that, and actually issued orders'™none of that was true, at all.

Interviewer

Now, the Taguba report gets leaked, and then Taguba gets called in—is that right? Can you explain what happened there in that instance?

Richard Cody

I don't know what—again, I don't know when Taguba—

Interviewer

Eventually relieved of his—

Richard Cody

No, no.

Interviewer

No?

Richard Cody

Tony—he did his report. His report, again, was done under—he had to get it done very quickly. It was done under absolute austere conditions. I mean he was in a combat zone, and—

Interviewer

Right.

Richard Cody

You know, didn't have—I think he had enough staff to collect it. I mean, he—his report was pretty darn good. I'm sure he would've wanted to spend a lot more time to make it thorough, just like any other investigation. But then when he got back, he got reassigned, and he got reassigned to OSD as the two-star deputy to—the Under Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. And then all this discussion about Tony getting relieved of anything—he wasn't relieved. The truth of the matter was he'd been a two-star for a while.

Richard Cody

Every year, the Army looks at who is going to be nominated for three-star, who's going to be nominated to retire at—after a certain—after their three-year mark—this was required to retain your rank that you achieved—and who would we leave to keep on past that.

Richard Cody

And the reason for that is because the number of promotions to major general are dictated on how many major generals you have. And so Tony, who had done great work throughout his career, it came down to the judgment of the board of directors of the Army, which are the four-stars, that he was one of several two-stars that would retire past their third year mark.

Richard Cody

It wasn't like it was "you know, that's a normal thing to do. Each one of us generals know. We all sign a piece of paper saying, you know, we have to serve at least three years as a brigadier general or three years as a major general. In fact, when I became the Vice Chief, I signed a letter saying I acknowledge that I only "I will serve three years, and if not reappointed, I will retire. We all sign those letters. And so it was my job as the vice chief to call each one of them and say, you know, "it's time to retire."

Interviewer

But then how "he has this understanding, it seems from what I've read, that he "that he was relieved.

Richard Cody

No. No. Listen, it's unfortunate. And again, this is because of the noise level of all that, and I'm sorry he feels that way, because I can "I can say unequivocally, inside the Army leadership, no one was upset with his report. No one was saying, "Oh, geez, I wish he hadn't done that." I mean the institution's not like that. We wanted to get to the truth.

Interviewer

What about the Secretary of Defense?

Richard Cody

Yeah, but he doesn't have any control.

Interviewer

No, but he was disappointed by the report.

Richard Cody

Yeah, he was disappointed by every report. I think he was disappointed by the entire situation. But, you know, again, Tony's was the first cut at this report. It was the first "it was almost like sending the Cav in to develop the situation. And once more and more stuff came out, you had to get another investigation and go cover these things, and go take a look at this and that.

Interviewer

So you think because he was "the report was the first one, there was some eyebrow-raising "could it really be that bad?

Richard Cody

Yeah, but "

Interviewer

And until you had the successive reports that confirmed it "

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

It was reallyâ€”that actually reaffirmed what he had done in the beginning, yeah.

Richard Cody

Yeah. Yeah. Listen, he went and testified to Congress. It was impressive. I mean heâ€™s a man thatâ€™ of great moral courage. He called it the way he saw it. But I also can say that the factâ€”first off, the fact that he didnâ€™t move on or make three-star had nothing to do with his Abu Ghraib report. Thereâ€™s only so many three-star positions. You know, usually they go, you know, depending upon things, you know, usually you command a division or something, which he had not done.

Richard Cody

That doesnâ€™t lessen at all his great career, and itâ€™s unfortunate that people think that he was the fall guyâ€”he wasnâ€™tâ€”absolutely not. Itâ€™sâ€”or just like a couple of the other people that retired, you know, Lieutenant General Sanchez, you know. He was the commanding general, and, you know, Secretary Rumsfeld wanted to promote him to four-star, but couldnâ€™t get Senateâ€”knew he couldnâ€™t get Senate approval. And he was the commanding general while this was all going on. So everybodyâ€™s thinking that Rumsfeld was trying to influence and pick and choose and had a grudgeâ€”that wasnâ€™t there, either.

Richard Cody

He recognized this for what it was. You know, we hadâ€”we had five soldiers that failed our ethos, and we had one soldier who saw it and reported it, and then we took action.

Richard Cody

Terrible in the eyes of the world, but clearly way out of context. And then what it tells all of us as leaders, though, we have to maintain our moral compass. You have to ingrain in your soldiers, you have a moral obligation to train, discipline, encourage, motivate, and all those things of your team before you put them in harmâ€™s way. You have a moral obligation to make sure theyâ€™re well-trained, well-equipped, and well-led.

â€œModularityâ€ in the U.S. Army

Interviewer

I think, though, what I get as a theme from the arc of your career, that your concern is that when the velocity increases, as you said, whenâ€”which it inevitably does during a war, â€”cause war isâ€”

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Foggy, as the phrase goesâ€”

Richard Cody

Thereâ€™s nothing efficient about unleashing the dogs of war, especially in an asymmetrical counterinsurgency, counterterrorist, pick the term you wantâ€”thereâ€™s

nothing clean about that. Theâ€”first off, the enemy plays with no rules, and the dilemma that our soldiers face every day, and their leaders, knowing thatâ€”

Interviewer

In an asymmetrical environment, youâ€™re talking about, yeah.

Richard Cody

Yeah. It creates all kinds of things. And so weâ€™re seeing it now. Rates of suicides are up. Numbers of commanders being relieved, because we still hold people to standardsâ€”I say â€œwe,â€” Iâ€™ve been out of it for a while, butâ€” and lot of this is the build-up of just wear and tear on a very small force. You know, to go back to when I became theâ€”the G-3, to get this Army ready for war after leaving the 101st, weâ€™re 482,000 strong, andâ€”on the active duty side.

Richard Cody

When the request for forces for OIF came, we looked at them and said, â€œWow, we got to get 10 to 12,000 National Guard and Reserves,â€” because they had the skills and skill sets that we did not have fully in the Army. And we said, â€œOh, by the way, this is a small Armyâ€”if this thingâ€™s going to last two or three years, one-year rotation after another.â€” This is where the deployment for twelve months, back home for twelve months, and then back inâ€”by 2007-2008, we had kids with three and four tours. And they kept moving up, as well as non-commissioned officersâ€”tremendous stress on the force, that a draft canâ€™t fix.

Interviewer

Yeah. Do you think we did not commit enough forces in the beginning?

Richard Cody

I believe General Eric Shinseki, who Iâ€™ve got great, greatâ€”you want to talk about a man with moral courage. I was his G-3. We studied this thing. We had several sessions. In fact, Bob McClure, whoâ€™s up at West Point, he was our strategy guy. He was in on those sessions. We always feltâ€”General Shinseki and I and the Army staffâ€”â€”cause, you know, we looked at the METTT, you knowâ€”the mission, the equipment, the training, troops available, and time. We thought that the forceâ€”we couldnâ€™t get in fast enough.

We wanted the Third ACR [Armored Cavalry] in a lot quicker.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Richard Cody

And all their ships were in the Mediterranean, and then that got turned off, and we had to swing it all the way around.

Interviewer

Got turned off â€”cause the Turks wouldnâ€™t let us go through, right?

Richard Cody

Wouldn't let us go through, that's correct. And that kind of gave the Third Infantry Division—they had to charge all the way to Baghdad, the 27 Cav, all the way to Baghdad with no relief and passage of lines with anybody. They were the point of the spear all the way through. It would've been a lot easier, and we could've had control of a lot better the chaos, had we had the Third Armored Cav to pass through, as well as relieving

Interviewer

That's the 4th ID.

Richard Cody

4th ID coming down from the north. That didn't happen. And then you're talking about an army that disbanded, and you've just decapitated the leader of 26 million people, a very militarized state. We didn't have enough boots on the ground. And so when General Shinseki said 200,000, I—“you know, we all kind of agreed with that number. We all had worked it. Mass has a quality all of its own when you're actually taking down a country, in terms of stabilizing it.

Interviewer

So was this Secretary Rumsfeld's mistake, then, in not heeding that advice? I mean he was trying for a leaner—

Richard Cody

Yeah. I think everybody got enamored—and again, this is conjecture on my part. I think everybody got enamored with the success of using the Northern Alliance and Special Forces and the 10th Mountain and 101st—

Interviewer

In Afghanistan.

Richard Cody

In Afghanistan. Certainly the Battle of Anaconda and Mazar-i-Sharif said, “Gee, you know, this—we can do this.”

Interviewer

But it's a very different place—Iraq from Afghanistan.

Richard Cody

Extremely different, and oh, by the way, take a look at Afghanistan today. We've got 100-some-odd-thousand soldiers in there. I mean, again—

Interviewer

You have to take a while to—to—to come to the conclusion that a—that a mission's been successful.

Richard Cody

Yep.

Interviewer

Don't you?

Richard Cody

Now, let me say up front, though, we didn't have an Army big enough to do this, and so part of our discussions throughout the time I was at the Pentagon is how fast we can grow the Army. And General Schoomaker, our Chief [of Staff], and I pushed for growing an army faster.

Interviewer

But that comes back to the velocity problem you're talking about.

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Because when you grow an army faster, you have these pockets of

Richard Cody

Yeah, but grow it faster—if you remember, we were using the [National] Guard and Reserves more so than anybody knew than had seen before. We took—we mobilized eight National Guard brigades for OIF-2 and 3, and that was so we could grow the Army, take the OIF-1 force, get them refit, retrained, and repopulated with new recruits. Not change the standards in basic [training]—give time for the guys and gals who came out of OIF-1 to go to BNOC, not waiver it.

Interviewer

BNOC is?

Richard Cody

BNOC being the Basic NCO Course. In other words, get a good rhythm, vs. bottom out the shock absorber. And we bottomed out the shock absorber is what we did—no flex in the system. And that's what caused the stress on the force.

Interviewer

Speak to me a little bit about the—the discussions that you were part of, and continue to be part of, I imagine, in some respects, about counterinsurgency vs. conventional warfare. Can we build for both?

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Or can we—do we have to isolate ourselves and predict what's going to happen in

the next”

Richard Cody

I think we have to be balanced, and, you know, General Abizaid was the first one saying, “Hey, listen, we’re in a counterinsurgency.” He said that two months after he took over, and again, there were plans on the streets already, in the building, that we were going to come down from eighteen brigades down to six by June of 2004. I have a chart that I kept that showed us at 18, 19, 23, 23, 21, then 23 again for the surge. We surged four times in Iraq from 2003 through 2008.

Richard Cody

And we never met the expectations. And, so when you have that as expectations, showing, you know, better case, and you’re always executing the worse case, the whip, in terms of velocity, ends up being your troops you have to turn right around in combat faster. And so we knew that we had to build a balanced force as part of what we called “modularity,” you know, and build it so it could do stability operations, do defensive operations, and offensive operations. And then build a”other specialized brigades that could augment based upon how the missions change, whether it was civil affairs, PSYOPS, cultural, or more heavy engineers, because we’re really going to plow through with a mobile force.

Richard Cody

And part of the restructure was to restructure the squad and the boots on the ground, more teeth than”more tooth than tail. Make it so that our combat service support didn’t have to support this wide an Army of disparity, but one that we crank back in, and make those formations more pentathletic than one-of-a-kind events.

Richard Cody

And we had to do that while we’re fighting a war, and growing it. And so, I think you’re seeing, as we come out of this, that we can have an Army that is trained for conventional as well as asymmetrical conflict.

Richard Cody

But if you have one half employed all the time and the other half has to train just to go relieve the other guy, you end up with one mission set that never gets trained, and that’s where we are. We haven’t trained a heck of a lot in the conventional right now.

Interviewer

Are you concerned that we could face a conventional threat that we can’t respond effectively to?

Richard Cody

No. I think, one, no one will defeat us on the battlefield. We can get it back very quickly because of leadership, but it won’t be as effective, initially.

The “Long War” Before and After 9/11

Interviewer

Where were you on 9/11?

Richard Cody

I was running with my first sergeants and company commanders in the 101st Airborne Division. I did it every four months where it was just us, the leadership, and then weâ€™d do a run around three miles. And then Iâ€™d meet with them at a big mess hall and weâ€™d talk about what was on their mind in terms of where weâ€™re going with the Division, what leadership challenges, and whoâ€™s usually Iâ€™d ask them, â€œIs there anything Iâ€™ve been putting out that you guys donâ€™t understand or think is stupid,â€ you know, and they were never shy about telling me how stupid I wasâ€”in a very respectful way, but.

So weâ€™d just finished the run. I was back in my office getting ready to go to meet with them, andâ€”

Interviewer

This is your office at Campbell.

Richard Cody

At Fort Campbell, Kentucky, yeah. And my chief of staff said, â€œPut the TV on. A small airplane just hit one of the Twin Towers.â€ I turned it on, I look at it, I said, â€œMike, thatâ€™s not a small airâ€”â€ Iâ€™m a pilot. I said, â€œThatâ€™s a jetliner.â€ And then the second one hit, so we quickly closed down the post, went into preparation. Closed down the air space around our post, we have two huge airfields there, and I had about 25% percent of the Armyâ€™s helicopters on our post, as well as the 160th and Fifth Special Forces group.

Richard Cody

So itâ€™”it was ingrained in my mind. I knew we were under attack after I saw the second one.

Interviewer

You did. And whatâ€™”

Richard Cody

Yeah.

Interviewer

Whatâ€™”did you have any idea of who we were being under attack from?

Richard Cody

No. I figuredâ€”I figured it was extremists. I mean they tried to blow that place up before, if you remember, with theâ€™”in the parking garage. And, you knowâ€™”

Interviewer

In â€™93, yeah.

Richard Cody

Yeah, and we had, you know, strikes in Yemen. I mean, you know, this has been a long war if we go back. America sometimes doesn't study history, and I'm glad you're you all are doing this. I mean the IEDs were coming out of Lebanese Hezbollah. I mean this isn't something new. The Marine barracks, the Embassies

Interviewer

But for it to happen on American soil, though.

Richard Cody

On American soil

Interviewer

Yeah.

Richard Cody

Absolutely.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Richard Cody

But I mean these people had been plotting and planning for a while. Our intelligence knew it. It was a matter of

Interviewer

Did you feel especially vulnerable, though, that they had struck on American soil?

Richard Cody

Oh, absolutely. I mean knowing that they could break into our airlines. I mean those of us who are pretty that fly the airways and stuff, we know how many airplanes are up there. I mean it's scary. America, I think, was shocked when they put up remember the maps they put up?

Interviewer

I do.

Richard Cody

I mean how many were out there? I mean that was what we were all worried about. It was

Interviewer

Did you feel it would lead to what it led to?

Richard Cody

Yeah. Yeah. I immediatelyâ€”I grabbed all my brigade commanders and sergeant majors and my staff, and I said, â€œOkay, letâ€™s take a look at where we are right now.â€

Richard Cody

And I hadâ€”I had units in Kosovo at the time as part of the rotation for Kosovoâ€”had a brigade over there. And I said, â€œOkay, letâ€™s take a look at the training schedule. I want to relook what weâ€™re doing.â€ We had about a two-hour meeting, and I said, â€œYou know, the Infantry Company should be our focus right now. And we got 27 Infantry Companies in this outfit, and everything should be focused on supporting them for fire, maneuver, attack, and defend.â€

Richard Cody

And so we just trainedâ€”took the whole training schedule, checked it out, and re-did a new one, and we went to live fire, day and night, and rotated in and out. And every part of the division was part of itâ€”the Artillery, the Air Defense, the Engineers, the Sappers, the Logistics, and everything to focus on it. And I remember it because right afterwards, my G-3, who, by the way, is taking command of the division in two weeks. He was Lieutenant Colonel Jim McConville, West Point class of â€™79 or â€™80, I canâ€™t rememberâ€”probably â€™79. He said, â€œSir, we may not have enough ammo in our accounts for what youâ€™re aboutâ€”â€

Richard Cody

I said, â€œListen, itâ€™ll come. Donâ€™t worry about it.â€ I said, â€œYou know, just letâ€™s keep going.â€ And so I mean as early as that, we startedâ€”I mean get going, and the troops were pumped. Leaders were pumpedâ€”they understood. It wasâ€”it was tough, because of families. Someâ€”I mean I met with all the family support groups to talk to them, let them know that we were going to up our level of training. I put a lot of security measures, armed soldiers, at every gate. I had Humvees, armed Humvees, at every one of the schools. I had seven schools on-post, five elementary, two middle [schools], and a high school.

Richard Cody

Weâ€”when those things hit, one of the first things we did was we shut down all the buses, and we took all the bomb-sniffing dogs through to check every bus. I mean weâ€”we had some plans in place. It wasnâ€™t the first time we knew that weâ€™re threatened. I mean weâ€™ve had other indications that, you know, terrorist attack on Fort Campbell and stuff. So we just rolled those things and took some drastic measures, but, you know, got a message to troops, get ready, weâ€™re going to change what weâ€™re doing. Weâ€™re going to focus a little bit. You guys are ready right now, but weâ€™re going to train you a little bit more.

Richard Cody

Andâ€”but you got to go to the families and let them know whatâ€™s going on. And I can remember sendingâ€”me and my sergeant major and stuffâ€”we talked to the children in the school. Went around and met, you know. Of course it was easy, â€™cause they were DOD schools. Theyâ€™re on my post. But weâ€”we tried to reach out to everybody, but we knew, those of us at the command group, and certainly myâ€”I would say at least from a battalion commander and sergeant major upâ€”knew that we were going to go.

Interviewer

You think the country's safer now, for what we've done in the past 10 years?

Richard Cody

I think so. Are we really safe? No. Are we safer? Yes. You know, this is "this is an enemy that's growing. This is an enemy that we have the Rolex, they have the time. We'd like to, you know, have a V-E Day, or a V-whatever Day" it's not going to happen. This is an amorphous group, it's amoeba-like, and it's growing, and we have to be ever-vigilant.

I mean our lives are forever changed since 9/11 in terms of security and ways we need to think about things.

Richard Cody

I think one of the offshoots of this has been a resurgence of trust in the America fighting man and woman, and respect that we didn't have from the Vietnam War, unfortunately. I mean regardless of whether you think we should've gone to Iraq or not, whether we had the [Weapons of Mass Destruction] evidence or not that the National Command Authority made, America has always been clear on one thing: they absolutely support the men and women that are fighting for them—they understand that. So from that aspect, 9/11, with the terrible loss of over 3,000 people, in many ways, I think our enemies did not understand how it would gel the American spirit.

Richard Cody

And we've got a whole lot of that, and the Army as an institution, and West Point as an institution, through its leadership, needs to be part of it.

Interviewer

Thank you very much, General. Appreciate it.