



**The Neal Asbury Show**  
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**Former Ambassador John Negroponte Gives High Marks to President Obama's Afghanistan Military Plan.**



**M**aking his third appearance on the nationally syndicated The Neal Asbury Show on WZAB-AM, former Ambassador John D. Negroponte, the first Director of National Intelligence under President George W. Bush, gave high marks to President Obama's most recent military plan for Afghanistan. He noted that since Obama inherited the situation in mid-stream he didn't have much flexibility, and was pleased to see that Obama intends to stay engaged in Afghanistan.

Ambassador Negroponte reminded the listening audience that the plotting for 9/11 began in Afghanistan, so he was pleased to see Obama "take strong hold

of the reins of the situation." But he warned that the U.S. needs to define success in Afghanistan and make sure that the situation is stabilized and that the Afghan army and police manage the effort. In a previous interview with Neal Asbury, Ambassador Negroponte harkened back to the 1960s when he was a staff member at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, South Viet Nam, and reiterated that he is gratified that the U.S. has learned lessons from Viet Nam about the importance of training and arming the country's home military forces.

While many people are troubled by Obama's proposed timeline for withdrawal from Afghanistan, it wasn't a major concern for Ambassador Negroponte, who preferred a timeline over an open-ended policy. One reason for his acceptance of the policy is that Obama talked about 2011 as the start of bringing troops home, not as a date for a total withdrawal. Ambassador Negroponte noted that even when military troops begin coming home it won't stop American civilian engagement since he predicts that there will be a U.S. presence in Afghanistan for some time.

Ambassador Negroponte proposed that if Al-Qaeda hadn't planned the 9/11 attack from Afghanistan, "we probably wouldn't have gone in there. Our mission is to defeat Al-Qaeda or contain

them, and we need to make sure that we keep the Taliban from coming back," said Ambassador Negroponte.

One of the inherent problems with Afghanistan is that it is poor country, without the financial resources of a country such as Iraq with its oil deposits. But Ambassador Negroponte is pleased that countries like Japan, which is putting up \$5 billion to pay for the training and salaries of the Afghan police force, will also be able to build up the Afghan army, which will help maintain control of the country. He remains concerned that the country still isn't safe enough to encourage American companies to invest in Afghan industry.

He is gratified over the progress being made in Iraq since he was the first U.S. Ambassador in 2001, especially the stability being enjoyed in most parts of the country. A positive sign is that the Iraqi government is bidding out oil contracts, although some U.S. companies that made a successful bid are unsure if the contracts will be honored in the event of a governmental change. Despite the fact that Iraq isn't quite stable enough



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for American business investment, an encouraging sign is that a recent conference in Washington D.C. for American investors interested in Iraq drew 800 participants.

As far as Iran, Ambassador Negroponte does not believe that the current sanctions will change Iran's behavior. The only way to move Iran is if Russian and China tighten the screws on Iran's government, but he sees some dissension at the top of the Iranian government, with some infighting among top leaders. This is something that is manifesting itself in the groups protesting, many of which owe their allegiance to factions within the administration. But Ambassador Negroponte warns against the U.S. taking any direct action because the Iranian government would exploit America's role and use it as an excuse for cracking down on the protest movement.

Since Ambassador Negroponte was the U.S. Ambassador to Honduras during the Central American civil wars in the 1980's, he is particularly pleased with the renewed stability in the country and the results of the recent election, which he thinks the U.S. should support.

Also joining the show was Ralph de la Vega, who was named President and CEO-AT&T Mobility and Consumer Markets in October 2008. Today, he leads all consumer marketing, sales, content, converged services and customer care for the company's wireless and wired businesses.

De la Vega shared his inspirational story with listeners, which he recounts in his book "Obstacles Welcome." The story begins in 1962 as a 10-year-old-boy when he and his family prepared to come to the U.S. from Cuba. It was then that he heard the "five words that changed my life: only the boy can go." It appeared that only little Ralph's papers were in order, so his father made the difficult decision to let his son go to Miami until the rest of the family could make the trip, which took another four years.

De la Vega's resettlement to the U.S. instilled in him a deep appreciation for the entrepreneurial spirit of America as the Land of Opportunity.

"I wouldn't change my life in any way, it made my life what it is today," said de la Vega, who said he learned many life lessons during his journey. The most important of which is: "in order to be your best, you must be willing to take a risk – go outside your comfort zone. I have been fortunate to have been given difficult situations to show what I can do," he added.

This attitude propelled him to the top ranks of AT&T, which today is ranked ninth on the Fortune 500 list.

The inspiration for his book came during many of his speaking engagements when members of the audience suggested he write a book. Young people were especially receptive to his messages, so

with the support of AT&T, his book is being distributed to 25,000 high school students who participate in AT&T's shadowing program (students follow AT&T managers to learn about the business).

The foundation for his book is based on his "Pyramid of Principles," which he uses to evaluate managers: 1) show integrity – leaders demonstrate integrity; 2) be credible – do what you say you will do; 3) promote teamwork; 4) show a positive attitude, which is contagious and will impact other employees; 5) strive for excellence – improve yourself each day; 6) have a vision, and convince others of this vision.

The Neal Asbury Show tackles free trade and enterprise issues every Friday from 5:00 PM until 6:00 PM on WZAB-AM 880 and is co-hosted by Richard Roffman, a veteran 30-year publisher with extensive domestic and international experience. The show is streamed live on line at WWW.880THEBIZ.COM, which is affiliated with Bloomberg Radio and CNBC, and can be heard nationally on 920-WGKA (Atlanta); KSEV (Houston); 1500 AM (Washington D.C.); 1220-KDOW (San Francisco); and 1300-KKOL (Seattle).



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