

Siebel Scholars Discuss Global Topics at Conference

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Lindsay
MacDonald
Hubbard, Siebel
Scholar

On the weekend of November 2nd through the 4th, current and former classes of Siebel Scholars as well as Siebel System's Leadership Circle, the internal Siebel recognition program for high performers, met in Boston, Massachusetts to discuss "The Threat of Global Terrorism" and "Crisis Management" at the Siebel Scholar's Annual Conference 2001. These topics were born from an informal conversation during a scholar's dinner last year. At that time, no one realized how timely the Conference topic and guests speakers would be.

The annual conference was created to bring together future business and technology leaders to engage on some of the most pressing topics of today. This weekend marked the first time the 55 current scholars met. Alumni from the 2001 class were also invited to participate. Among the attendees were recent GSB alums, **Peter Frith, Jeanne Kwong, Jeb Morrison, and Joaquin Valle del Olmo** as well as current scholars **Scott Berg, MBA2, Aaron Cheris, MBA2, George Hu, MBA2, Deborah Liu, MBA2, and Lindsey Hubbard, MBA2.**

The Dean of the Sloan School of Management and the Dean of the School of Engineering hosted this year's conference at MIT. Television host, Charlie Rose moderated the event. Under the theme of "Crisis Management," all of the speakers were individuals who had faced times of extreme stress. They shared with us how they dealt with the situation, what carried them through and what lessons they took away from the experience.

Tom Siebel's vision for the conference is to provide an opportunity for future business and technology leaders to take time out of their busy lives to think about the most pressing topics of today. His hope is that this will encourage civic involvement of these potential leaders. Indeed, for us, it was an informative and energizing experience. The speakers and following Q & A were interesting and in some cases eye-opening.

Morning session Crisis Management speakers included Dr Jerry Linenger, United States and MIR astronaut; Scott O'Grady, Air Force pilot who was shot down over Bosnia; Kurt Muse, a prisoner of General Noriega; and Denny

Fitch, former United Airlines captain and pilot trainer who helped crash-land a DC 10 that had lost all hydraulic control.

A last minute addition to the list of illustrious panelists was Joe Perella, Head of Investment Banking Division at Morgan Stanley. He came to share the story of his friend, Rick Rescorla, the Vice-President of Security. Rescorla was working at the World Trade Center South Tower when the first terrorist attack occurred in 1993. Because of his experience during that crisis, he issued an immediate evacuation order of the Morgan Stanley offices on September 11th when the North Tower was hit. Perella credits Rescorla's action to defy the Port Authority order to stay in the South Tower with saving the lives of nearly all the employees of Morgan Stanley. Rescorla lost his life on that day, but his story of courage lives on through Perella and others.

In the afternoon session centered around "The Threat of Global Terrorism", William Gavin, FBI Assistant Director during the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, shared his experience in capturing the ring of terrorists and bringing them to justice in the American court system. He told us the dramatic story of how he and fellow FBI agents captured Ramsey Yosef in Pakistan and flew him 22 hours straight to the United States while refueling in the air because of fears that other governments would hold him and not extradite him. And he imparted the fateful conversation, which has, in the past two months, become an eerie foreshadowing of the current crisis. Gavin flew in a hooded Yosef by helicopter towards the city of New York. Gavin removed the covering on his head and pointed to the World Trade Center towers and said, "Look. They are still standing." To which Yosef replied, "They would not be if I had more money and explosives."

Security was tight in the hall when General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander-in-Chief during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and Benjamin Netanyahu, General and former Israeli Prime Minister entered. General Schwarzkopf spoke passionately about what America needed most in this new war. He reflected on the war in Vietnam by saying that US troops never lost a battle engaging the enemy, but because the American people's support waned, we lost the war. He emphasized that the American people must commit their hearts and minds to this fight against terrorism, or the terrorists will win.

Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke eloquently on three main points that he reiterated at various points in the conversation. First, the world cannot tolerate terrorism in any form. He defined terrorism as the systematic targeting of innocent civilians in order to further a cause, regardless of the justness of that cause. Second, states that sponsor, support, or harbor terrorists cannot be allowed to exist. Actions to remove these governments may include the replacement of the leaders by force or sanctions, but Netanyahu was clear that the only thing that these governments will respond to is a credible threat of force. Third, the end game for the terrorists is to gain access to nuclear weapons, likely through the government of these rogue states. If this occurs, this could mean the end of civilization because the terrorists are so rabid about their beliefs that they will stop at nothing to achieve their goals, including detonation of nuclear weapons.

When questioned why Israel preemptively and systematically identifies and assassinates suspected terrorists, Netanyahu was very clear. He said, "If you knew that someone was driving here to this auditorium with a car bomb, would you want someone to stop him or do you want to wait until after the attack and then rely on law enforcement?" He was clear to differentiate this from deliberate attacks on innocent civilians.

Ultimately, Netanyahu was certainly the most controversial of the speakers and had to face the toughest questions, but even those Siebel Scholars who disagree with his stances were impressed by his poise. That is not to take anything away from the rest of the speakers who were also interesting and thoughtful. The combination of the quality speakers and the interactions with the Siebel Scholars as well as the Siebel Leadership Conference made the conference a worthwhile endeavor that exceeded the expectations of all of the Stanford Siebel Scholars.