President George W. Bush
Oral History Project

BRIEFING MATERIALS

Joshua B. Bolten

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Presidential Oral History Program

MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED OR CIRCULATED
Joshua B. Bolten News Timeline
Prepared by Christopher M. Loomis
Miller Center, University of Virginia, 11/19/2010, revised 05/31/2016

1976  Joshua B. Bolten graduates with a B.A. from Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

1980  Bolten earns a J.D. from Stanford.

1985-1989  Bolten is the international trade counsel to the Senate Finance Committee. (http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov)

1989-1993  Bolten serves in the George H. W. Bush Administration, including three years as general counsel to the U.S. trade representative, as well as one year as deputy assistant to the president for legislative affairs. (http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov)


1999  Bolten joins George W. Bush’s presidential campaign as policy director. (The Washington Post, 03/07/1999)

2000

Nov.-Dec.  Following the election, Bolten serves on Bush’s legal team during the Florida election dispute, and is one of the first people Bush calls after the Supreme Court issues its decision in Bush v. Gore. (The Washington Post, 01/29/2001, 02/03/2001)


Bolten and I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby discuss Vice President-elect Dick Cheney’s role in the new Administration. Bolten later says, “The president made it clear from the outset that the vice president is welcome at every table and at every meeting.” (Barton Gellman, Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency, New York: Penguin Books, 2008, pp. 50-53)

2001

January  Bolten begins serving as deputy chief of staff for policy. Within the White House, the Domestic Policy Council and the National Economic Council report to

On the 29th, Bush announces the National Energy Policy Development Group chaired by Cheney. Bolten is a member, as are Commerce Secretary Don Evans, Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Director-designate Christine Whitman, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, National Economic Council Director Lawrence Lindsey, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Mitchell Daniels, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Director Joe Allbaugh, Intergovernmental Affairs Director Ruben Barrales, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Interior Secretary Gale Norton, Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, and Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta. The task force is criticized for keeping its proceedings secret, but lawsuits by Judicial Watch and the Sierra Club, aimed at forcing the Administration to release its records, are unsuccessful. (The New York Times, 01/30/2001)

February

March

May
On the 17th, the Administration’s energy task force report is published. It supports an increase in production of oil, gas, coal, and nuclear energy, calls for further study on global warming and fuel economy standards, and promotes renewable fuels, alternative energy sources, and conservation. Critics argue against its secret meetings, the influence of large oil companies, and its advocacy of drilling in Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. (National Energy Policy Development Group, Report, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Printing Office, May 2001; The Washington Post, 05/17/2001)

August
After the Senate passes a version of the patients’ bill of rights opposed by Bush, Assistant to the President and Director of Legislative Affairs Nicholas Calio, Chief of Staff Andrew Card, and Bolten broker an agreement with Rep. Charles Norwood (R-GA) – who leads a bloc of moderate Republicans in the House – concerning patients’ legal rights in relation to their health care providers. Bush personally closes the deal in the Oval Office and holds a press conference with Norwood. The agreement on the House bill forces the legislation to conference.
committee and forestalls a veto of a popular measure. (The Washington Post, 08/03/2001, 08/05/2001; New Republic, 08/20/2001)

September Bolten is at the White House during the terrorist attacks on the 11th, and is in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center when Cheney orders the military to shoot down United 93. Bolten recommends calling Bush about the shoot down order. Cheney calls the president at 10:18 a.m., then gets news that United 93 crashed in Pennsylvania. Bolten also sends John Bridgeland to the White House Situation Room and to FEMA to check on the federal response. Bridgeland later returns to the White House with the Emergency Declaration for the Release of Federal Aid to New York and Washington for the president to sign. (Bridgeland, pp. 25-38; Dick Cheney, In My Time, New York: Threshold, 2012, pp. 3-4)

In the days following the attack, Bolten and Rice decide to create interagency “pods” or groups of officials who would take responsibility for different elements of the 9/11 response. Bolten heads the Domestic Consequences Principals’ Committee to handle federal emergency assistance, victim compensation, border security, civil aviation, and to reopen the financial markets. (Rice, p. 81)

October On the 26th, Bush signs the Patriot Act.

2002

January On the 8th, Bush signs the No Child Left Behind Act.

March On the 14th, Bush announces the Millennium Challenge Account initiative. Bolten had originated the idea of enlisting the help of U2 lead singer Bono to promote the effort. (Condoleezza Rice, No Higher Honor, New York: Crown, 2011, p. 227)

On the 27th, Bush signs the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002.

June Bush announces his proposal for a new Department of Homeland Security on the 6th. Bolten is part of a small group of top-level aides who developed the plan – dubbed the biggest reorganization of the federal bureaucracy since the 1940s – under tight secrecy between late April and early June. (The Washington Post, 06/07/2002, 06/09/2002)

Summer Bolten creates a task force to develop a plan to use antiretroviral medicines to fight HIV/AIDS for African countries in need. Bolten recommends a $15 billion, five-year program, and Bush agrees to the plan. (Rice, pp. 228-229)

August The Secret Service bans most trucks on 17th Street NW, which runs to the west of the White House, in order to prevent a bombing. The decision comes after discussions among District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations Joe Hagin, and Bolten. (The Washington Post, 08/09/2002)
November  Bush asks Bolten to develop a “sweeping” approach to fighting AIDS in Africa. Bolten, Gary Edson, Jay Lekowitz, and Kristen Silverberg spearhead the project and bring in Anthony Fauci, the renowned AIDS researcher, as their only outside consultant. They decide to focus on securing funds to develop an AIDS vaccine. The plan is kept secret, even from HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson and Colin Powell, until is presented to Bush on December 4th (Peter Baker, Days of Fire, New York: Doubleday, 2013, pp. 234-235)


2003

January  In his State of the Union Address, Bush announces the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Pepfar) and asks Congress for an initial $15 billion in funding. (The New York Times, 01/05/2008)

April  After Democrats and moderate Republicans oppose a proposal made by Bush in January for more than $700 billion in tax cuts, Bolten, Friedman, and Treasury Secretary John W. Snow work to revise the plan. Bush eventually signs a $330 billion tax cut in May. (The New York Times, 04/22/2003)


July  Both Republican and Democratic members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee sharply question Bolten and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz about the Administration’s request for $87 billion for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Bolten later meets with congressional Republicans to assuage their concerns about the bill, particularly, the $20 billion proposed for reconstruction efforts in Iraq. Congress sends the bill to Bush in early November. (The Washington Post, 07/30/2003, 09/26/2003; The New York Times, 11/04/2003)

December  On the 8th, Bush signs the Medicare Modernization Act that includes prescription drug benefits. It also provides $86 billion in tax breaks and subsidies to encourage employers not to drop existing drug coverage for their retirees and creates health savings accounts to allow Americans to save for medical costs. The bill also includes $14 billion that private insurers can tap to provide health insurance for Medicare recipients in unprofitable markets and provides $25 billion for rural hospitals and providers. (Congressional Quarterly, 2003 CQ Almanac, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2003, pp. 11-7 to 11-13, S-82)
2004

**February** The White House sends Congress its $2.4 trillion budget for fiscal year 2005 on the 2nd. Bush’s budget calls for increases in spending on defense and homeland security, while proposing decreases in real terms for other discretionary expenditures. The plan does not include the cost of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. (*The Washington Post*, 02/03/2004; *The New York Times*, 02/03/2004)


2005

**February** On the 7th, the White House releases its $2.57 trillion budget for fiscal year 2006. The proposal increases spending for the departments of State, Defense, and Homeland Security while cutting the rest of the discretionary budget. Although the budget projects cuts in the deficit from $427 billion to $390 billion, it does not include the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. (*The Washington Post*, 02/08/2005)

**Spring** Bush launches his bid to restructure Social Security around private accounts. Bolton – who had advocated in 2002 delaying Social Security reforms because of the war – reportedly recommends that Bush formulate a specific legislative package. But the White House instead opts for Rove’s strategy, which lets Congress take the lead. Bolton later joins Bush in barnstorming for Social Security reform around the country, but the initiative stalls during the summer. (Draper, pp. 296-304; *The New York Times*, 01/12/2005)

**September** In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Bolten helps oversee federal spending on relief measures in the Gulf region. He also meets with Republican members of Congress to address their concerns about the costs of the recovery effort. (*The Washington Post*, 09/14/2005, 09/21/2005, 11/21/2005)

2006

**February** The White House submits its $2.77 trillion budget to Congress on the 6th. In addition to increases in security-related expenditures, Bush calls for his tax cuts to be made permanent. (*The Washington Post*, 02/07/2006)

April

Bolten institutes a number of changes in the White House staff. Press Secretary Scott McClellan resigns and Rove gives up his policy responsibilities. U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman replaces Bolten at OMB, Joel D. Kaplan becomes deputy chief of staff for policy, and Tony Snow becomes press secretary. Porter Goss also leaves as director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and is replaced by Michael Hayden. (The Washington Post, 04/19/2006, 04/20/2006, 04/26/2006; The New York Times, 05/09/2006)

In the face of numerous calls by military officials for Bush to replace Donald Rumsfeld, Bush publicly issues a statement of confidence in his Secretary of Defense, at Bolten’s urging. Privately, Bolten wants to ease out Rumsfeld, but Bush’s resolve makes this impossible in the short-term (Peter Baker, Days of Fire, New York: Doubleday, 2013, pp. 452-453)

May


Summer

Bolten, National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley, Counselor Dan Bartlett, White House Counselor Ed Gillespie, and Rove meet to review U.S. strategy in Iraq as the violence increases. In a meeting of the national security team on August 17th, Bolten asks, “If it gets worse, what radical measures can the team recommend?” Following the meeting, Bush authorizes Hadley to undertake a more thorough review of the Administration’s Iraq policy. (Bush, pp. 370-371; Cheney, p. 460; The Washington Post, 06/03/2006; The New York Times, 08/16/2006; Newsweek, 12/18/2006)

June

On the 13th, Bush travels to Iraq with Bartlett, Hadley, Bolten, Hagin, and Snow. (The Globe and Mail, 06/14/2006)

August

Bolten receives a memo from Peter Wehner arguing that Rumsfeld needs to be relieved of duty. Bolten discusses the trajectory of the war with Wehner and Wehner concludes that replacing Rumsfeld would be a necessary part of convincing the public that the White House had changed strategies (Peter Baker, Days of Fire, New York: Doubleday, 2013, pg. 479)

September

As Democrats and Republicans debate national security in the lead-up to the midterm elections, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) sends the White House a letter criticizing its conduct of the Iraq war and proposing a “new direction” in the conflict, including pulling troops out of the country. Bolten counters with a formal reply arguing that the Administration has already adopted most of Reid’s recommendations and that his suggestion for a troop withdrawal is “dangerously misguided.” (The New York Times, 09/06/2006)
On the 6th, Bush acknowledges for the first time the CIA’s program of secret detention of terrorist suspects in foreign prisons and the use of harsh interrogation methods to collect intelligence. He defends the CIA’s work as “having saved lives.” He also expresses a willingness to work with Congress to authorize new military commissions that were struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court case in *Hamden v. Rumsfeld*. *The Washington Post* acknowledges a year-long effort by Rice to steer the Administration toward public disclosure of the detention program and to reformulate it to meet international legal norms. Bolten supports Rice’s efforts. (Rice, p. 502; *The Washington Post*, 09/07/2006, 09/08/2006)

Mitch McConnell, the Senate Majority Whip, sets up a meeting with Bush, through Bolten. In the meeting, McConnell urges Bush to consider bringing some troops home from Iraq, believing that the war’s unpopularity among the public would cost Republicans control of Congress. This happens the day after McConnell criticized Democrats for suggesting the same thing (Peter Baker, *Days of Fire*, New York: Doubleday, 2013, pg. 487)

**November**

Prior to the midterm elections, Bolten assigns key aides to begin contingency planning for a Democratic victory. Following the midterms, Bolten holds what another aide calls “a lot of hard discussions” with Bush regarding Iraq and arranges meetings between the president and critics of the Administration’s policy, setting the stage for the surge. (*The Washington Post*, 11/09/2006, 07/02/2007)


**December**

Seven U.S. attorneys are fired on the 7th. Bolten later says he does not recall whether he was briefed on the dismissals in advance. It is later reported that Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM) may have called Bolten in October regarding U.S. Attorney David C. Iglesias, who was among those fired. (*The Washington Post*, 03/03/2007, 08/12/2009)
January

Harriet Miers steps down as White House counsel on the 4th and is replaced by Fred Fielding. Bolten, who reportedly wants to strengthen the counsel’s office in preparation for a wave of investigations once the Democrats take over Congress, had raised the possibility of Miers’ departure when he became chief of staff the previous spring. (The New York Times, 04/21/2006; The Washington Post, 01/05/2007, 01/09/2007)

Before announcing the troop surge in Iraq, Bush meets with House Democrats to brief them on the plan. He is joined at the meeting by Bolten, Cheney, Gates, and Rice. (The Washington Post, 01/10/2007)

After Bush announces the troop surge, some prominent Republicans and practically all Democrats condemn his plan. Wehner emails Bolten, Rove, and Bartlett on the 12th, worried that “the presidency was on the line” and that these prominent Republicans might ask for Bush’s resignation over the War in Iraq. Bolten and other top officials note that Bush had never seemed more isolated than in the days after the announcement of the surge (Peter Baker, Days of Fire, New York: Doubleday, 2013, pp. 526-527)

February

After an investigation by The Washington Post reveals terrible conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Bolten and Gates agree on the need for immediate action. Gates fires Secretary of the Army Francis J. Harvey shortly thereafter. (Newsweek, 03/19/2007)

March

Bolten and Bartlett join Bush in the Oval Office to watch the announcement of the verdict in Libby’s trial on the 6th. After Cheney’s former chief of staff is found guilty on four felony counts, Bush consults Bolten and other aides before commuting Libby’s sentence in July. (The New York Times, 03/07/2007, 07/04/2007)

On the 21st and 22nd, the House and Senate Judiciary committees issue subpoenas relating to the U.S. attorney firings to several White House and Justice Department officials, including Bolten, Rove, Miers, and Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. Bolten’s subpoenas are for White House documents, for which he is the custodian as chief of staff. The White House offers to turn over some correspondence and to make aides available for private interviews, but Bush insists that his aides will not testify under oath or provide documents, citing executive privilege. (The Washington Post, 03/22/2007, 07/08/2007, 02/15/2008)

May

After Bush vetoes a war spending bill on the 1st that sets a timetable for American withdrawal from Iraq, he assigns Bolten, Hadley, and Portman to negotiate a compromise bill with congressional leaders from both parties. He instructs Bolten to find “common ground” benchmarks that tie funding to progress in the conflict.
July

On the 25th, the House Judiciary Committee votes 22-17 to hold Bolten and Miers in contempt for refusing to comply with subpoenas regarding the U.S. attorney firings. (*The New York Times*, 07/26/2007)

August

On the 13th, Rove announces he will resign at the end of the month. Bolten says he will divide up Rove’s portfolio among several aides, noting that “I don't think Karl can be replaced by one person.” (*The Washington Post*, 08/14/2007, 08/16/2007; *The New York Times*, 08/15/2007)

Gonzales resigns on the 27th. Bolten is reportedly among those who had pushed for him to step down, believing that Gonzales had become too much of a political liability. Bolten later says of the departure on PBS, “I think Alberto came to the realization that, as unfair as the attacks on him over the last several months have been, that at some point you need to let that unfairness, in a sense, stand, and step aside for the good of the department.” (*Newsweek*, 09/10/2007; *The New York Times*, 08/28/2007; *The Washington Post*, 09/10/2007)

December

On the 13th, the Senate Judiciary Committee votes 12-7 to hold Bolten and Rove in contempt for defying subpoenas concerning the U.S. attorney firings. (*The Washington Post*, 12/14/2007)

2008

January

Bolten, along with Paulson and Gillespie, are among the advocates in the White House for an economic stimulus. Bush announces the proposal on the 18th and signs the $145 billion measure into law the next month. (Paulson, pp. 84-85; *The New York Times*, 01/17/2008)

February

On the 8th, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) files an amicus brief sponsored by gun rights activists pertinent to the upcoming *DC vs. Heller* Supreme Court case. The White House is caught off guard when Cheney is listed as one of the signatories to the brief, which the administration never officially endorsed. Cheney officially does this in his capacity as “President of the Senate,” on the advice of David Addington and Hutchison. With permission from Bush, Bolten confronts Cheney about the move and warns Addington that any such future actions would get him banished from the White House (Peter Baker, *Days of Fire*, New York: Doubleday, 2013, pp. 578-579)

In a 223-32 vote on the 14th, the House votes to issue contempt citations to Bolten and Miers for refusing to cooperate with a House Judiciary Committee investigation into the U.S. attorney firings. Republicans walk out of the chamber in protest. (*The Washington Post*, 02/15/2008, 03/11/2008)
On the 29th, Attorney General Michael Mukasey refuses to refer two House contempt citations to a federal grand jury. The Administration states the information sought is protected under executive privilege. Mukasey says Miers and Bolten’s noncompliance with the subpoenas is not a crime. Democrats respond that they plan to sue. (The Washington Post, 03/01/2008)

March
Bush invites Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and his wife Cindy to the White House, where he endorses McCain for president. Bolten, Gillespie, and political adviser Barry Jackson meet with McCain’s staff to plan Bush’s participation in the campaign. (The Washington Post, 03/06/2008)

The House Judiciary Committee files a lawsuit in federal court, which claims that Miers and Bolten are not immune from testifying based on executive privilege. Additionally, Miers and Bolten must identify all documents being withheld from Congress. (The Washington Post, 03/11/2008)

June
On the 23rd, Congressional lawyers ask U.S. District Judge John D. Bates to order Bolten and Miers to testify before the House Judiciary Committee. The move is considered unprecedented because Congress is asking the court to order Bolten and Miers to comply with a House subpoena compelling their testimony. Judge Bates states, “Whether I rule for the executive branch or I rule for the legislative branch, I'm going to disrupt the balance [of power].” (The Washington Post, 06/24/2008)

July
On the 11th, Paulson calls Bolten to schedule a morning meeting with Bush. Later, in a lunch with Bush, Cheney, and Bolten at the White House, Paulson makes the case for going to Congress for expanded authority to deal with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The proposal becomes the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008, which Bush signs into law at the end of the month. (Paulson, pp. 143-144)

August
Paulson calls Bolten on the 25th and tells him that there is “no good alternative” to placing Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in federal conservatorship. The action is announced on September 7th. (Paulson, p. 165)

September
On the 14th, Paulson calls Bolten to inform him that Lehman Brothers will file for bankruptcy after efforts to find a buyer for the foundering firm are unsuccessful. (Paulson, p. 215)

On the 18th, Paulson meets with Bush, Bolten, Gillespie, and Bernanke. Paulson and Bernanke advise Bush to ask Congress for $500 billion to buy toxic assets from the struggling financial firms. They warn that the consequences of inaction would be an economy “worse than the Great Depression.” Bush agrees to this request, afterwards vowing to Gillespie and Bolten that “if we are looking at another Great Depression, you can be damn sure I’m going to be Roosevelt, not Hoover.” (Peter Baker, Days of Fire, New York: Doubleday, 2013, pp. 610-611)

October On the 6th, a three-judge panel from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit refuses to compel Bolten and Miers to produce documents and testify in the House, effectively ending efforts by the current Congress to force the two to provide information related to the 2006 U.S. attorney firings. (The Washington Post, 10/07/2008)

On the 9th, Bush signs the India nuclear deal. Bolten helps get the bill to Congress for a vote. India will receive U.S. nuclear technology and fuel. In exchange, India must allow its civilian nuclear power plants to be inspected and must separate the military and civilian nuclear programs. (Rice, pp. 696-699)

Bush names Bolten as chair of the Presidential Transition Coordinating Council, which is charged with planning the transfer of power to the next Administration. Following the election of Barack Obama, Bolten helps streamline security clearances for incoming appointees and also sets up a “tabletop” exercise simulating a response to a terrorist attack for Obama’s national security team. (The Washington Post, 10/10/2008, 11/09/2008; The New York Times, 01/20/2009)

December Despite Bolten’s entreaties for support at a luncheon on the 10th, Senate Republicans block a plan to rescue Chrysler and General Motors. Consequently, on the 19th, Bush uses $17.4 billion in TARP funds to temporarily sustain the auto companies. (The Washington Post, 12/11/2008; The New York Times, 12/20/2008)

On the 24th, Bolten is instrumental in reversing the pardon of Isaac Toussie, who pled guilty to mail fraud for “falsifying documents for would-be home buyers seeking government-backed mortgages.” Toussie’s father, however, had made substantial contributions to the RNC and to John McCain’s presidential campaign and his lawyer, Brad Berenson, was a former Bush White House lawyer, and so Toussie was somehow able to circumvent the normal pardon process that runs through the Justice Department and the pardon attorney. The New York Daily News reported the contributions and Bolten, with Bush’s permission, made sure to reverse the pardon before the embattled administration could be accused of handing out pardons to donors (Peter Baker, Days of Fire, New York: Doubleday, 2013, pp. 629-630)

2009

January Bolten hosts a session for incoming chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, that includes all living chiefs of staff. (Cheney, p. 516)
Bolten and Card organize a final party for Bush and the outgoing Administration, “Crossing the Finish Line,” at Glen Echo Park in Maryland. *(Slate, 01/19/2009)*

**September**

Bolten becomes the John L. Weinberg/Goldman Sachs & Co. Visiting Professor at Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

**2010**

**July**

On the 21st, the Justice Department announces it has found no evidence of wrongdoing in the firings. *(The Washington Post, 07/22/2010)*
TIMELINES

- Joshua B. Bolten News Timeline, prepared by Christopher M. Loomis, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 11/19/2010, revised 08/31/2012.

- Timeline of the Bush Presidency, prepared by Justin Peck and Bryan Craig, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 04/30/2010.
SELECTED WRITINGS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY JOSHUA B. BOLten


- Joshua B. Bolten, “Sunday Exclusive; Chief of Staff Josh Bolten,” This Week, ABC, 11/12/2006.

THE 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND WHITE HOUSE DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF


DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

WHITE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF


• Michael Abramowitz, “Two Advisors Reflect on Eight Years With Bush; Bolten and Hadley Decry ‘Mythologies’,” *The Washington Post*, 01/02/2009.
KEY ISSUES IN THE 2000 ELECTION AND AS WHITE HOUSE DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF

2000 Presidential Election

Stem Cells

Patients’ Bill of Rights

September 11th and Homeland Security

AIDS

Economic Policy
KEY ISSUES AS DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

Budgets


• Peter Baker, “President Sends ’06 Budget to Congress; Programs Are Cut, But War Costs Are Not Included,” The Washington Post, 02/08/2005.


Tax Cuts


Iraq and Afghanistan


KEY ISSUES AND EVENTS AS WHITE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF

Personnel Changes

Iraq

The Economic Crisis
U.S. Attorney Firings


Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy

- Describe your day-to-day duties within the White House. Who fell under your supervision and with whom did you work most closely? Comment on your relationships with other senior staff, including Chief of Staff Andrew Card and Karl Rove.
- How was the policymaking process set up within the White House? Describe the functions of Rove’s “Strategery Group,” as well as the domestic and economic policy councils.
- Comment on your involvement in specific initiatives, including the patients’ bill of rights, prescription drug coverage, campaign finance reform, AIDS, and the energy task force.
- Describe the events on September 11th and your subsequent leadership of the “domestic consequences” group.

Director of Office of Management and Budget

- Discuss your appointment as the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). What did you see as the principal challenges facing OMB upon your arrival?
- Describe your responsibilities at OMB. Did you make any changes in OMB’s management, organization, or overall role from your predecessor, Mitchell E. Daniels Jr.?
- Discuss OMB’s function in economic policymaking in the White House and your relationship with others on Bush’s economic team.
- Describe the process of formulating the budget. How did you balance the president’s priorities, especially regarding security-related expenditures, deficit reduction, and tax cuts? Who most influenced the shaping of the budget, and how much was Bush personally involved? How were conflicts with cabinet agencies resolved?
- Discuss OMB’s role in planning the budget for military operations and reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. How did you coordinate with the Pentagon and other agencies? Assess the political challenges of moving war funding through Congress, and describe your role in securing the passage of these appropriations.
- Discuss the administration’s response to Hurricane Katrina, as well as OMB’s involvement in managing federal relief expenditures.
- How important was the management function of OMB during your tenure there? Were there any special developments in this regard we should note?

White House Chief of Staff

- Tell us about how you chose to deal with the media.
- What were your objectives in making several key personnel changes after taking over from Card, including replacing Press Secretary Scott McClellan and later White House Counsel Harriet Miers, as well as removing Karl Rove’s policy responsibilities?
• What did you initially see as the principal challenges in Iraq? Did you see your own role in internal debates as more of a facilitator or an advocate? Discuss Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s resignation and the hiring of Robert Gates.

• Describe your involvement in the U.S. attorney firings, as well as the investigations that followed. What factors contributed to the administration’s decision to invoke executive privilege in response to congressional subpoenas? Comment on your role in the deliberations leading up the resignation of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. How did you react when the House passed contempt charges against you and Miers?

• Discuss the administration’s handling of the economic crisis in 2008. Comment on your recruitment of Henry Paulson as Treasury Secretary. How did his arrival change economic policymaking within the administration? Describe your own role in the White House’s major initiatives – including the stimulus, HERA, TARP, and the auto bailouts – and particularly your negotiations with Congress.

• Discuss the administration’s relationship with Senator John McCain’s presidential campaign. Describe your role in orchestrating the transition following the election of Barack Obama.

The Bush Presidency in Retrospect

• What do you consider your most significant accomplishments as a senior member of the administration?

• What were Bush’s greatest assets as president? Assess his strengths and weaknesses as a communicator, domestic policymaker, a legislative leader, and a leader of public opinion.

• Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Bush presidency. What features of the Bush presidency were overlooked or misunderstood by the press?

• How should the Bush presidency be viewed in history? What were its most significant achievements? What are scholars most likely to overlook in evaluating the 43rd presidency?