



GEORGE H. W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT M. GATES

July 23-24, 2000
College Station, Texas

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Naftali: Dr. Gates, welcome. We're pleased to be here today for your oral history as part of the Bush Oral History Project. Before we begin and introduce ourselves, I'd like to read from our policies and procedures page so that you understand the nature of the confidentiality of this particular session: "To encourage candor, respondents are assured of the strict confidentiality of their remarks and of their control over access to the record of the proceedings. Accordingly, only the respondent is free to report his remarks to persons not present at the interview. Interviewers do not divulge respondents remarks to respondents in other sessions."

Before we begin, it will be helpful to the future transcriber if we each identify ourselves so the transcriber can get a sense of our voices. I'm Tim Naftali.

Edwards: I'm George Edwards.

Masoud: I'm Tarek Masoud.

Brands: Bill Brands.

Martin: Rob Martin

McCall: James McCall.

Naftali: Since you [Gates] will be doing most of the talking, they'll figure out who you are.

Gates: May I suggest that if you all want to shed your jackets and ties, I've sort of dressed down for today and you've all dressed up, so please make yourselves comfortable.

Naftali: We didn't realize that this was actually taking place in Seattle. Well, I'll kick off with the first question to get us started and then it will be a free form, free flowing seminar from that point on. We will stop about two hours into this for a break. Your vocal cords will appreciate it and we all will want some more coffee. Then we'll continue until lunch.

Before the tape rolled, you were discussing performing the role of a bridge, both personal and intellectual, among the mentors that you had early on. I'd like to start this by having you talk a little bit about your intellectual mentors. How you came to study the Soviet Union in the middle 60's, well, even earlier than that. When you entered this process of learning about the Soviet Union, became a Kremlinologist, what books did you read? Who were your mentors? Were you reading Merle Fainsod? Were you reading Brzezinski at that point? Where did you get your intellectual guidance in that period when studying the Soviet Union?

Gates: My academic work moved steadily eastward with each degree. I did most of my undergraduate work in history on Western Europe. I did most of my Master's degree on Eastern Europe, when I was at the Russian and East European Institute at Indiana, and then virtually all of my doctoral work was on Russia and the Soviet Union. It was at the doctorate level that I really focused on Russia. My advisor was a professor at Georgetown named Joseph Schiebel who was a disciple of and had studied under Don Treadgold at the University of Washington. Both Treadgold and Schiebel had been influenced by Karl Wittfogel and particularly Wittfogel's work on oriental despotism. And one of the chapters in Wittfogel's classic on oriental despotism was on Soviet communism and its resemblance to oriental despotism and the Asiatic mode of production, the role of government in controlling all of society and so on. A very heavy weight on the influence of the Tartar occupation of Russia for two and a half, three centuries. So I was heavily influenced by those folks and I would say that there was a certain synergy between my graduate work on Russia and the Soviet Union and what I was seeing about the Soviets at the Agency in my work as an analyst. In other words, the contemporary manifestations of what I saw as historical Soviet and before that Russian behavior. So that really was the intellectual underpinning, if you will, of my work.

I was very impatient at the Agency with my colleagues, because when I started work in the Soviet area, at the Agency, in the part of our organization that worked on Soviet foreign policy, I was the only person who had a graduate degree in either Eastern European or Russian history. I felt that a lot of the people that I was working with were either American historians or political scientists, people with degrees in political science and so on, and had never really focused on Russia or the Soviet Union. I saw, frankly, too often where I felt that they regarded the Soviet Union as just another nation state with all of the characteristics of a typical West European nation state. In my view it led them to underestimate both historical and ideological factors that shaped the Soviet Union. And, I would say, that, again, it was sort of a learning process, throughout. I was also very much influenced by Brzezinski. Brzezinski and I had a very similar view of the Soviet Union. I suppose I should say I shared his views to an uncommon degree. And, to a considerable extent, Scowcroft's as well, because he had focused more on Russia and the Soviet Union in contrast to Kissinger who really hadn't.

Naftali: Did you differentiate at all between German totalitarianism and Russian totalitarianism, or did you believe in one model for—

Gates: No, I thought they were different and based on historical differences between the two countries and frankly that the Russian totalitarianism had deeper roots.

Naftali: To follow up on that point, take us back to the Agency in 1966, which is, I believe, when you began.

Brands: The Soviet analysts were in a bit of a funk at that point, at least it appears, as a result of the materials that you got declassified as DCI (Director of Central Intelligence). The Soviet analysts were underestimating at that point Soviet military power after having spent about a decade overestimating Soviet power.

Naftali: What do you recall of that period and who were your professional mentors when you entered the Agency?

Gates: Well, part of the problem with the Agency's strategic assessments— and I always gave them a very hard time about it— was that most of the people who were involved in making projections of Soviet military forces, and particularly strategic forces, had no historical background at all in dealing with the Soviet Union. Mostly they were engineers, some were scientists, but they were basically

technically oriented people. So they were very much driven by the data they had in front of them and by assumptions that were made by policymakers and they bought into those assumptions. One of the major reasons why the Agency underestimated through a good bit of the 60s was that the analysts bought into McNamara's view that the Soviets wouldn't build any more than they needed because it wouldn't be logical and they didn't need to have as many as we did and therefore they wouldn't build as many as we had. Just oblivious to the political considerations from the Soviet standpoint and sort of ignoring things like the comment by the Soviet official after the Cuban missile crisis to the American official, "You will never put us in this position again."

So we had this unusual situation. When I was in the Air Force, I'd be briefing the crews on Soviet strategic developments and the numbers of Soviet deployments of ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) would exceed the high end of the range of the intelligence estimates before the documents were even published, they were deploying them so fast. And everybody was playing catch up ball. So first it was: Maybe they'll build just as many as we have, or build up to two-thirds of what we have. Then, well, maybe they'll build as many as we have, maybe they'll just have a few more so they'll say they're kind of equal. Then, you know, when they ended up with half again as many as we had in terms of ICBM launchers, then everybody said, "Gee, how did that happen?"

Of course there were a lot of people, the whole Team B exercise in '76, which George Bush approved, grew out of this perception on the part of a lot of people that there was a mindset at the Agency that persistently underestimated Soviet strategic power.

Naftali: Whom did you work with in the early days?

Gates: The first mentor who really helped me and from whom I learned a lot was a man named Howard Stoertz. I talk about him in the book, how he had run the imagery analysis office at the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and then was actually the guy chosen by Helms to be the senior intelligence representative on the strategic arms delegation to the negotiations. And it was in that context that I first started working with Howie and I worked with him for I guess three years and served with him in Vienna, in Geneva, at the negotiations and learned a lot from him. We had incredible arguments because he was one of these technically oriented people. Howie had an interesting background. He was a very hard-line guy, or a fairly hard-line guy towards the Soviets, but came from a Quaker background and a technical background, so Howie desperately wanted there to be a strategic arms treaty and he was always fiddling with the numbers and trying to come up with proposals and ideas that the Soviets might buy and that our side might buy and that would be an equitable agreement between the two sides. He'd show these things to me and I'd look at it and I'd just glance and say, "Howie, they'll never buy it," and he would get so mad because I would just look at it and say, "They won't buy it."

Finally at one point he gave me one and he folded it over and he said, "I want you to read this and think about it overnight and then come in and tell me what you think. I don't want you to look at it right now and tell me." And we got into a row the next day that brought the Marine guard up to find out what was going on because he was slamming his hand on the desk and it was just— But he was very disciplined and it was my first experience in the use of intelligence to support policy in a direct way. And he really was the first intelligence professional, in my view, to take a broad approach, a forthcoming approach to making intelligence available for the use of policymakers in a form that they could actually use it. In essence, it was due to Stoertz's efforts that virtually the entire negotiations over a twenty-year period of strategic arms, took place almost entirely on the basis of American data, on both sides. And it was our willingness to allow that intelligence information to be given to the Soviets that I think made the negotiations possible. So, both in terms of my inclination to be forthcoming in terms of declassifying

stuff but also the use of intelligence in support of policy, really, I think, derives from those early lessons under Stoertz.

Naftali: Was it this work with Stoertz that led to your meeting Kissinger?

Gates: No, I actually had never met Kissinger and I had never met Brzezinski before they both offered me jobs. Actually it was Scowcroft who made the call for Kissinger in terms of my going to the NSC (National Security Council) in '74, and I had never even met Scowcroft at this point. I tell young people, never underestimate the importance of serendipity in your career or your life.

I had a good friend who was the deputy executive secretary of the NSC and when Bill Hyland went to State with Kissinger, towards the end of '73, it left a vacancy on the NSC in terms of a person dealing with the Soviet Union. My friend mentioned my name to Denis Clift who had taken Helmut Sonnenfeldt's place as the Senior Director for Europe which included the Soviet Union. It was Clift who actually interviewed me and then made the recommendation to Scowcroft and Kissinger that I be hired. And the irony in terms of how I ended up working for Brzezinski is another object lesson in how you treat people. When Ford lost the election in December, I decided to go back to CIA on my own initiative, because I knew that the incoming Democrats were going to fire everybody on the NSC and I just decided that I didn't want to go through that. So I arranged something and I went back out to the Agency. I was later told that in March of '77, March or early April, Brzezinski came storming out of his office and he was shouting about the fact that they fired everybody who knew how to make anything work down there. One of the secretaries said, "I know somebody who could help you." And that's how I ended up working for Brzezinski. Had nothing to do with substance.

Naftali: Shall we move on to the Bush administration?

Edwards: Could we have a shift? When did you meet George Bush? When he was DCI?

Gates: No. I was at the NSC at the time and did not meet him actually until he became vice President.

Naftali: Did you have extensive relationships with him then?

Gates: Not extensive, but he was very intellectually curious as vice President. There was a very well known British scholar on Soviet affairs, Malcolm MacIntosh. He would, from time to time come over to the U.S. and Scoop Jackson loved this guy. Scoop thought that this guy hung the moon when it came to the Soviet Union, understanding the Soviet Union, and he was very good. It may have been because of Scoop that Bush found out about this guy. Anyway, I think the first time I met Bush was when I was invited to go to the vice President's residence for a dinner in honor of this guy and the vice President had invited half a dozen people from the government who were knowledgeable about the Soviet Union.

Edwards: Do you remember about when that was?

Gates: Well, it would have been about, probably in '82, because I think I was then Deputy Director for Intelligence at the Agency. And then I would see the V.P. from time to time after that on those kinds of occasions and occasionally at meetings and NSC meetings when I would back up Casey or when I would be representing Casey. Then when Casey got sick. The first time I really established a personal relationship with Bush was when Casey got sick in December of '86 and I was acting director and, of course, there were just incredible cross currents of politics and personalities and everything else. I was dealing with President Reagan and Don Regan, chief of staff of the White House, and all of this intrigue and everything, including intrigue on the part of the White House on how to get Casey to resign when he couldn't write and couldn't speak, and Mrs. Casey wasn't having any of it.

During all of this I started meeting privately with Vice President Bush to seek his counsel in terms of how to handle some of these cross currents and some of these intrigues and I consulted with him on whether I ought to withdraw in '87. Because I had been told that I'd probably get confirmed but it would take six to eight months and I had decided that was too much time, that would be too damaging to the Agency and the government and everybody else.

So I consulted a lot with him, beginning in January of '87 through the spring of '87 and that's really when we first, that may have been the first time we ever met alone.

Edwards: Then, of course, in '89, you're named Deputy National Security Advisor. Can you tell us how that came about?

Gates: Well, as I said in my book, I had maintained contact with Scowcroft after the Nixon and Ford administrations, but not very often. We'd run into each other occasionally at a conference or meeting or something and I was in the cafeteria at the Agency—I was deputy at the Agency at the time—and one of my security people came up to me and said I had a call from Scowcroft. I took it on a wall phone outside the cafeteria at the Agency and that's when he offered me the job. I'd never forgotten Brzezinski's comment that when he interviewed someone for the NSC, if they couldn't give him an answer right then, he didn't want them. Because if they didn't want the job badly enough to make up their minds promptly, he didn't want them on the staff.

This was a very difficult decision for me. On the one hand I really liked Scowcroft and Bush and had a lot of respect for them, but it meant resigning from the Agency. All the other times I'd gone to the NSC under Nixon, under Ford, under Carter, that had always been on assignment from CIA, so I'd always had that security blanket, so to speak, no pun intended. Because this was such a senior position, I felt I would have to resign from the Agency, but a factor on the side of going down and doing it was that I would not be eligible to retire for another eight years and the idea of serving as deputy at the Agency for another eight years beyond the three I'd already served was sort of a daunting prospect.

So I told Brent that I wanted to talk to him about it. I went downtown, I don't remember whether it was the same day or the next day, and we talked about the job and what it was going to be. I'd been down there long enough, as I'd described in the book, I had no illusions about the NSC. In contrast to a lot of people who go down there for their first assignment and anticipate the White House events and the White House cars and all these neat things that go with it, working inside the compound, I knew it was a horrible job, long hours, lots of game playing and intrigue, a lot of bureaucratic problems and sorting things through and trying to make things happen and how difficult it is and all of the backbiting and interagency rivalries and everything and the NSC basically has to try and manage all of that, as does the national security advisor.

So I had no illusions about the nature of the job, and I had seen a lot of deputy assistants to the President come and go. So Brent and I started talking about it and that was the point at which he said that he wanted an alter ego. He wanted somebody who in essence knew everything he knew and could step into his shoes whenever necessary, whether it was in a meeting with the President or a meeting with the other principals, or whatever. And it wasn't going to be the typical national security advisor and deputy. And the way these things develop is in a way that I think often doesn't come to the attention of political scientists and others looking at the record. In terms of perceptions of importance and the role to be played.

The first thing that Brent arranged that conveyed a different sort of status for me at the deputy assistant to the President level that was unique was that I would have portal to portal secure transportation. In

other words, I would have a White House car pick me up in the morning at my house, bring me to work, take me home at night. I didn't have a dedicated car during the day but I would have this portal to portal transportation. That was never done for a deputy assistant before.

Then, independent of the NSC, when you get on Air Force One or in a motorcade, where you sit is dependent on your rank. So the first domestic trip I took with Bush which was just a couple of weeks into the administration, I was sitting in the tail of Air Force One and he wanted to talk to me. Well, the upshot of all of this was that within a couple of months of my going to the White House I was promoted to assistant to the President, so I became the first deputy, and to this point the only deputy national security advisor to have also been an assistant to the President, just like the national security advisor. So that meant, when I got on Air Force One, I sat with Sununu at the front of the plane and was readily available for the President.

These little status things conveyed a message within the White House and throughout the government that this was a different sort of arrangement than had ever existed before, that this deputy national security advisor had an access to the President and a role in the White House that had no parallel. So, those little things, together with the way we began doing our business, conveyed that we had a different kind of structure in place than before.

Edwards: Let's talk about how you do business so we can get a sense of the job. I take it, is it correct, that all the paper that flowed to Scowcroft also flowed to you. Is that correct?

Gates: Yes, because if it didn't go through me, chances were nothing ever happened to it.

When Scowcroft left the White House at the end of the Ford administration there were two file drawers of action items in his safe, all marked urgent action. Some of them were two years old which is an object lesson of its own, in terms of the way government perceives urgency and how some of those situations unfolded. Let's just say that managing the paper flow was not one of Brent's strengths. And so, it fell to me. The stuff would come through me. A lot of stuff I would sign off on myself. And then the policy-oriented papers, a lot of the more important decision papers, I would send on to Brent. Then, what I would usually do at the end of the day is go into his office, rifle his in box, pull out the stuff that had to be acted on, make him sit down and sign them, or read them. One deputy national security advisor that I worked for referred to this process as the Strasbourg Goose Process as I shoved this stuff down his throat.

Naftali: And I hope you made good foie gras.

Gates: So all the paper work came to me first, everything.

Edwards: Did you sometimes screen it and send it back and say, "needs more work" before it would go—

Gates: More than sometimes, I frequently would send it back. One of the common faults, even at the NSC level, is that experts think that President's cannot conceivably understand an issue unless it covers several pages. One of our jobs in that front office was to protect the President. So one of my tasks was to make sure not only that the stuff was clear, but that it was concise. And I've been doing this my whole career, chopping things down to a page or a page and a half for senior officials, and that's what I did. Sometimes I'd make them do it, sometimes I'd do it myself. But also it was questions of clarity, questions of whether it had been properly coordinated, whether other affected members of the NSC had seen a piece of paper.

Everybody tries to slip their stuff through without having to share it with anybody else and play these games and we, I think, put a discipline in the process that after a few months, that became less and less necessary because they understood it wasn't going through if it hadn't been properly coordinated. So all the paper came through me. A lot of it went back to be worked on or re-worked. A lot of drafts would come over. And I spent a lot of time just sitting with NSC staffers. They would just come in and talk. Probably more time with Condi than with anybody else, Condi Rice, because we had a shared view of the Soviet Union and frankly we spent a lot of time conspiring against Brent. Trying to figure out the best approach to get him to alter his view or take a different tack in dealing with the Soviets or something.

Naftali: Can you give us some examples?

Gates: We did not disagree with the dominant administration position that they had to deal with Gorbachev and that he was a productive interlocutor for the United States government, he was doing a lot of things that we wanted to see happen. But, I think Condi and I were much more pessimistic about Gorbachev's prospects for success, particularly when it came to economic reform and managing ethnic conflict, than others. In fact, I think we were pretty confident that he'd fail. So, we thought, the question was, how much can you get done, how much business can you get done with Gorbachev, how much can you get out of him that serves our interests before he crashes and burns? On that the administration was all agreed. But Condi and I felt very strongly that we ought to be opening up and talking to other reform-minded people, and, of course, above all Yeltsin. And so the biggest issue on which we spent a lot of time on in '89, was in trying to figure out how to get Brent and the President to at least be willing to talk to Yeltsin and to begin a dialogue with the guy. Not to denigrate Gorbachev or anything else, but just the understanding that it was dangerous to pin everything on one guy and one guy who was walking a tightrope. So that was one of the issues where we spent a lot of time.

Naftali: How did you open the dialogue with Yeltsin?

Gates: Well, he came to the U.S. to give a speech at Johns Hopkins, and after a huge, huge fight in the White House—I mean these things were all leavened with humor and so on, that was one of the nice things about it—but after arguing a lot, we got Brent to agree to see Yeltsin. And the notion was that the President would do a drop by. But we didn't tell Yeltsin he was going to see the President. We didn't make any commitments at all that he would see Yeltsin. And when I get calls from journalists today doing bios, doing stories on Condi and her role as the governor's advisor and I'd say how tough she is and they want an example, and my example is the Yeltsin visit, because Yeltsin came in the west basement of the White House, we brought him in the back way which pissed him off and then he stops in the west basement lobby and says he's not going another step unless he's promised he'll see the President. And Condi, this slip of a woman, takes him by the elbow, looks him right in the eye and in Russian tells him he has an appointment with General Scowcroft, "You're going to your appointment with General Scowcroft," and propels him down the hall and up the back stairs to Scowcroft's office and also, at the same time, makes him leave his entire staff behind.

So he gets into Scowcroft's office in a very poor frame of mind and promptly puts Scowcroft to sleep in this meeting.

Naftali: Apparently it wasn't hard to put Scowcroft to sleep.

Gates: No, that's a low threshold. And he's just sort of just droning on and on how to help Russia and so on. That was the meeting at which I noticed he was missing two fingers, something a lot of people don't know about Yeltsin. He lost them playing with a grenade when he was a kid and that prompted the

line in my book that he was still playing with grenades but with much greater effect. Of course, his countenance changed immediately when the President showed up. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But there was a good discussion. Still, he did not do well and made a pretty negative impression, both in the White House and more broadly on that trip. But that was one of the issues where Condi and I really were of similar mind. I think that Larry Eagleburger and Cheney basically had the same view, that we ought to be reaching out more aggressively to other reformers.

Another area that came later, in January of '90, was that Condi and I thought that the U.S. ought to have reacted more strongly to the use of force in the Baltic states, Lithuania. There were some issues like that.

Naftali: To get back to George's questions about process, take us through—there were no normal days in the White House, we know that—but when would you meet with Scowcroft for the first time in the morning and when would you see the President?

Gates: Brent and I usually got in around 7:00. We would be briefed by the PDB (Presidential Daily Briefing) briefer before he or she briefed the President. We would get in about 7:00, read our cables, read the overnight materials and so on, and then the PDB briefer, I think, would generally come in around 7:30.

Naftali: Let's be very precise about this. There was a document, the PDB, but the briefer would provide additional information? Would he read the brief to you?

Gates: No, the briefer would bring the PDB to us and we would each have a copy of the PDB and the President was very security conscious. His time as DCI and his other experiences with leaking made him very concerned about leaks of intelligence material in particular. So, while he authorized that the PDB be provided to the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, the chairman of the joint chiefs, he also insisted that the way it would be done was that a briefer from CIA would hand-carry the President's daily brief to each of those individuals personally, meet privately with them, let them read it, answer their questions, take their tasking and then take the document back. So the PDB was never left with even the secretary of state or the secretary of defense—it was taken back. Same thing at the White House.

They would bring it in. Brent and I would often ask questions on the pieces that were in the Brief, before we would go see the President at this 7:30 briefing. We would often disagree with the pieces, would say, "Why do you think that? Do you have any evidence for that?" You know, it was a real grilling. The briefers were very professional analysts, you've got to admit, and I tried to keep some perspective, it is a little daunting for some GS14 or 15 analyst to come down to the White House and the people they're going to see are the fellow who's been national security advisor to two Presidents, the former DDCI (deputy director of central intelligence) and a former DCI who happens to be President. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In fact, when the Nicaraguan elections came along, CIA predicted that Dan Ortega would beat Mrs. Chamorro and when this was briefed, when Bush read this, he looked at the PDB briefer and he said, "I bet you an ice cream cone you're wrong." And when Bush was proven right, the briefer showed up the next day with an ice cream cone.

So Brent and I would go through the PDB, the PDB briefer would often bring, in addition to the brief itself, particularly interesting clandestine reports that may have come in or particularly interesting analysis by an individual analyst or something like that. In other words, the briefer would often bring us

more documents than just the PDB and we would read all that stuff and Brent and I would then meet, talk both between 7:00 and 7:30 and then from about 10 minutes of 8:00 until 8:00, what his agenda was going to be with the President because after the President's morning briefing, then we would have a national security meeting, just Brent and I and the President and usually Sununu would sit in on those. So we would get our agenda together, and I generally was the note taker and then we would go in and meet with the President.

President Bush, to the best of my knowledge, every day he was President, read the President's daily briefing. And any time he was in Washington, he would read it, he would have a CIA briefer bring it to him and when he was traveling I would bring it to him or Brent would. He was very disciplined about it. He would read it, he would ask a lot of questions. As I indicated with that example about Nicaragua, he wasn't afraid to disagree or express a different view. One telling moment, when it was fairly important, was on the Saturday before the coup in the Soviet Union, the coup attempt in August of 1990, we were in Kennebunkport and the President and I were sitting on the deck of his house at Walker's Point, looking out over the Atlantic and eating pancakes and he was reading the President's daily brief and the last item, the article in the President's daily brief was CIA's view that there was very likely to be a coup attempt because August 20th marked the deadline for the signing of a union treaty and so, if they didn't act before then, it would be much harder to do so.

I'll never forget the President turning to me and chewing on his pancakes and saying, "Should I take this seriously?" And I said, "Yes, and here's why." So, for all of the criticism the Agency has taken about Soviet things, on a lot of important stuff they gave the President good warning and that's one example, but it is also the way he would interact with the PDB. And the briefer would occasionally bring one or another of these documents and show them to the President. He would hand the President national intelligence estimates when those were prepared. The briefer would give them to the President directly. Bush was, to the best of my knowledge, the only President who received the briefing directly from a CIA briefer and received national estimates directly from a briefer without the national security advisor putting a memo in front of them and saying here's what we think of it. So he took his intelligence sort of unadorned by anybody else's view. Now, he would often hand it back after he read it and say, "What do you think?" Or we would tell him at another time, but he got this stuff straight, and I think he was the only President to have done that. And there'd be a little banter, usually in the room would be the briefer, the President would be at the desk at the Oval Office and to his left in the semi-circle would be the briefer and then Sununu would sit right in front of him and then Scowcroft and I kind of to his right with Brent sitting closest to him. In a lot of the pictures, that's the arrangement.

Then after the PDB briefer would depart, usually about 8:20 or 8:30, then we would have national security meeting, briefing if you will. Then, at that point, the vice President would come in and take the seat that the briefer had been in and it would still be the same cast of four people and Brent and I would basically go through the agenda. If we had a deputies meeting, one of the reasons the Deputies Committee worked was that most of the time when I went into the room I knew the outcome I wanted and a lot of the time that outcome had already been discussed with the President and with Brent and I knew where they wanted to come out. So I was able to steer the Deputies Committee in a way I think a lot of people in those kinds of meetings had not been able to in the past, or, at least, at a minimum, I knew the President's thinking on the issue or where he was headed in a way that I think was unprecedented. And we did these briefings every day of his presidency. I did most of the traveling with Bush domestically, almost all of it in fact. There was so much going on. He wanted either Brent or me near him all the time, no matter where he was, whether he was in Kennebunkport or traveling.

Brent's wife was very ill and was an invalid and so it was very difficult for Brent to travel. We early on established a division of labor in which I would do all the domestic travel with the President and Brent would do the overseas trips because he had to hire a full time nurse and have 24 hour a day care for his wife. One of the reasons that the President was never offended by Brent's sleeping was that the reason Brent was so tired was that he would complete a 15-16 hour day at the White House and then go home and care for his wife. He'd do the laundry, he'd do the cleaning, he'd go to the grocery store and he'd do these things. Then he'd run, at midnight or one o'clock in the morning. As Brent's wife became sicker during the administration, sometimes the President and I would conspire against Brent and I would find a way during the day to let the President know that Jackie was in the hospital again and so the President would call Brent, maybe at 4:30 or 5:00 in the afternoon and tell him that he was going over to the residence, that he was done for the day. Then Brent would go to the hospital and I would call the President and President would come back to the office and we'd do a couple more hours work. It was a very close feeling among all of us and I think it made a big difference on substance.

Anyway, so we would do this national security briefing. I would take the notes for further action and usually when we would leave that meeting we would go back and generally there were actions to be taken following from the discussion. Brent would call Baker, Cheney or both and let them know what had been discussed. One of the reasons the system worked was that Baker and Cheney totally trusted Brent to keep them informed and to fairly represent their views to the President. He was the only national security advisor in my view that ever was so trusted by the other two principals. Then generally the day would be marked by a whole series of meetings of one kind or another, a foreign visitor would be coming in or there would be a Deputies Committee. Sometimes, as I was mentioning to Bill at a meeting yesterday, what people sometimes lose sight of, or what people writing the histories often lose sight of is that particularly in the modern presidency, no crisis or event takes place in isolation. There are often several going on at once. So you are juggling all these balls, so there would be times, there were times in '89 and '90 when we would have three deputies' meetings a day and maybe one or two of them would be on the television, closed circuit television, but at least one, and often two, would be in person at the White House. So there would be all these meetings, there would be a foreign visitor come in and there would be all kinds of—you know, you'd go in and have a conversation with the President in terms of how you want to play this, he would have a briefing paper and everything, but then there'd be some conversation about tactics and so on or special things. The President knew many of these people already from his days in the UN (United Nations) and as vice President and in his travels and so on. So he knew a lot of these leaders.

One of my favorite—you asked about color—one of my favorite memories of these foreign visitors coming in, particularly these third world visitors, they'd have an hour meeting with the President and then there'd be a lunch in the family dining room at the White House. Now, that's just a smaller dining room on the state floor, it is not up in the residential quarters. The lunch would last an hour.

So Bush would essentially shoot his bolt with most of these people during the meeting and he really didn't have anything further to say to them. We would go into the lunch and there would always be the nicely formally printed menu card and so on in front of every place. Bush would take his and turn it over. And he would proceed to rate his advisors on the contribution they made to carrying the conversation so he didn't have to carry the entire burden of the conversation for an hour. And it would be Baker and Cheney, or Baker and Scowcroft, or me or Eagleburger, or whatever. And he would sit and he would keep score. If one of us would pipe up and launch into some conversation with a guy that took fifteen or twenty minutes, the President would just beam. Then we'd go out and have the formal departure ceremony on the West Lawn and all the

formalities and everything. Then we'd go back into the diplomatic reception room and the President would give us our grades. He would let us know whether we did well or not, whether we'd made a serious contribution to his well being during that lunch. I have just this incredible number of pictures of Scowcroft and the President and I and Marlin Fitzwater, often Mrs. Bush, and people just roaring with laughter and the occasion for it was the President's rating of his advisors and whether they had done a good job or not during the lunch. That was merely on the amount of time they chewed up in conversation.

Brands: Was there a consistent high scorer?

Gates: No, actually there wasn't. I remember one time I got a very high score for the time that it took and a very low score for the substance. He said, "You did a wonderful job, you chewed up about fifteen minutes, but God, it was boring. Who cared?"

It is sort of like, in these Oval Office meetings with these leaders, Bush would be, as you face the fireplace from the desk, Bush would be in the right hand wing back chair and his visitor would be in the left hand one and generally Baker, Scowcroft and I would be on the couch at the President's left and the foreign visitor's senior people would be on the couch across the coffee table.

Another time in one of these meetings, we were sitting there and these are the occasions for which Scowcroft got the award named for him, Brent is sitting back in this couch and fell sound asleep in this meeting with a foreign leader. Now, all of us understood this but sometimes the foreign leaders were a little put off by it and so Brent woke up and he was trying to keep himself awake, so he scooted forward on the couch and put his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands and promptly fell asleep again. His elbows slipped off his knees, he pitched forward and I had to put my arm out to stop him from falling into the flower pot in the middle of the coffee table.

Well, these things make for some great memories. I always use the example before there were seat belts, how a parent would hold out their hand to keep their kid from going into the dashboard, well, that's what I did with Brent.

But everyday would be a mix of these visits by foreign leaders, by meetings. There weren't all that many formal NSC meetings but there were—Brent or I every day would go to the White House staff meeting and those were excruciatingly boring because nobody ever did anything of any interest in those meetings. The only entertainment in those meetings essentially was sort of just watching Sununu perform and basically just bully and intimidate everybody. And the only people in the White House he didn't do that with were Brent or me. I think it was partly because he knew that each of us had a very special relationship with the President. We were the only other two in the White House that really had ready access to the President and basically could walk in and see him anytime we wanted. I mean he really left us alone and we actually had a better relationship with Sununu than anybody else in the administration. And I had a great relationship with his deputy, who was Andy Card.

One of the things that we did, and I guess it was my idea, and I cleared it with Brent, that smoothed over an enormous number of problems, is that I invited Andy to almost all of the deputy committee meetings. And so the domestic side—Andy was very discrete and he was smart and he had a good understanding of politics. He had a lot of Sununu's strengths and very few of his weaknesses in terms of dealing with people. He was very easy to get along with and I trusted him. So Andy attended a very large number of our deputy committee meetings. So the usual friction between the domestic and foreign policy side of the White House to a considerable extent was really absent because Andy knew what was going on and Andy and I had a close relationship.

Andy and I were often the ones on these domestic trips together. In the motorcades you would have the President's limousine and then behind the limousine would be what they call the "control" car and it would have a little sign in it and the dashboard said control. The control car was where the chief of staff, or Andy, and I, or Scowcroft, and the military officer carrying the football were in that car. We were always right behind the President's limo. It gives you a lot of time to talk and so on. So this relationship with Card and Sununu was very important in the smooth operation of the Bush White House and I think made a huge contribution. Again, it is largely a function of personalities. I've known some deputy White House chiefs of staff that I wouldn't trust with a secret if he were the last person on earth. But Andy and I got along very well and so it worked. We would do the White House staff meeting, one or the other of us, and we would get on with the rest of the day.

Edwards: Let me ask you another question about George Bush. You spent a lot of time talking about foreign policy and obviously a lot of things were happening in the world which forced things onto the agenda and you had to react, well, quite sensibly. And then there were the foreign visitors and what else, again, forced onto the agenda. What about President Bush's—you said before he was intellectually curious, being proactive. Did he come to you and say, "I think we ought to think down the line a little bit," or, "We ought to work on some strategic thinking," or—

Gates: He did that mostly with Brent. They spent a lot of time together, just the two of them, doing exactly that, and that began in the transition. And it came from both of them. For example, in the transition, Brent was the one that kind of put forward the notion that we really need to take some bold initiatives to try and get the Soviet troops out of Eastern Europe. But it was also the President, particularly as the administration went along, who would be saying, "We have to take an initiative to get out in front of this. We can't be seen as being reactive. The world has changed and we have to get out in front of these events and lead and here are some things that I want to do." On all of the major initiatives of the Bush administration that had anything to do with arms control or reducing forces or changing deployment patterns or things like that, all of those initiatives were sparked by either Bush or Brent and it was always the two of them pushing the rest of the administration, pushing Cheney and pushing Baker in particular.

Bush and Scowcroft on all of these issues were way out in front of the rest of the administration. And often Cheney and Baker would resist these moves. But the irony was that events played into the President's hand in a way that made their opposition fade away, usually sooner rather than later. A good example was the second round of reductions in Europe where in one meeting Powell and Cheney were adamantly opposed and believed that NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) would absolutely have a collective stroke if we proposed something and two weeks later came back from a trip to Europe and said the Europeans are waiting for this. But it was always on these broader, long range initiatives, these strategic moves, that was the product for the most part of a dialogue between Brent and the President, usually in private. A lot of what Brent and I spent a lot of time on was how to translate where the President wanted to go into an administration consensus in getting there and how to get there, and

that's one of the areas in which the Deputies Committee I think played an important role in terms of doing that. But it also had its down sides. For example, the whole concept of the new world order, and I gave both of them a hard time about this, I would tell them at the meeting that the new world order is what happens when the President and his national security advisor go fishing by themselves and the fish aren't biting. They sit there and talk and they come up with a notion about the new world order. They took it in sort of good grace. But they both played a key role—

Edwards: One other question along this line. Different Presidents have had different tolerances for conflict among their highest level advisors, and different Presidents have done different jobs encouraging discussion while maintaining at least civility and some degree of compatibility among participants. How would you describe George Bush's management, if you will, of the foreign policy process?

Gates: Bush welcomed differences of view. One of the reasons that the gang of eight became so important, not just in the Gulf War but more broadly, dealing with all of the things that were going on, was that it was a small enough group that he could get differences of view out on the table and not worry about leaks. He didn't mind differences of view at all, as long as they didn't show up in the newspapers, and as long as once he made a decision everyone saluted and went on. And that was the discipline of the Bush administration that that happened. Sometimes Cheney won, sometimes Baker won, sometimes Scowcroft won. Sometimes they all lost. But there was a lot of debate and dialogue. And Powell. Very key player in a lot of this.

Edwards: What would be the forum for most of that debate aside from NSC meetings.

Gates: As I say, there were very few NSC meetings. Generally the meetings were in the Oval Office. Sometimes they'd be in the residence, particularly on a weekend, they'd be in the residence. Sometimes, very rarely, they would they be in the Situation Room, most of the time they'd be in the Oval Office. It was one of those meetings that both Scowcroft and I wrote about where the President forgot to open the flue in the fireplace and everybody's sitting there in tuxedos choking to death and trying to figure out who's going to be macho and who's not. We're all choking. It was a meeting in January. I think it was before the war started, just before the war started, and we ended up having to open up all of the doors to the Oval Office to the outside to let the smoke out. First we were choking, then we were freezing. It was not a good way to make policy.

Brands: I'd like to follow up on something you described earlier and that is this extraordinarily cooperative relationship among the different members of the foreign policy side of the administration especially. How did that come about? Was that because of the people chosen? Was it because President Bush had known them for years? Was it something about General Scowcroft that made all this stuff work as well as it did?

Gates: I think it was all of those things. It was, first of all, I think, very important that almost everybody in the inner circle in the administration had known each other for a long time. I mean, it is kind of common knowledge at this point, Cheney had been deputy White House chief of staff under Ford when Bush was DCI and Scowcroft was national security advisor. Baker had been over at Commerce. They just all had these, we all had these relationships. I'd worked with Eagleburger and Scowcroft by that time for 15 years. I had known Cheney for a long time when he was on the intelligence committee. I had not known Sununu. None of us really knew Sununu. So there was just a long history that we all had, and we all had a lot of experience in government. Other than Sununu really. This was a very experienced group of people. Everybody had a great sense of humor. Humor played a huge role in the Bush

administration and both at the principals level and the deputies' level in making things work smoothly, just like Scowcroft wrote about it.

One of the biggest mistakes I ever made in my life was the night the SCUDs were launched into Israel we're all sitting there in Scowcroft's office and Baker is writing obscene doggerel to ease the tension. And he's posting these little limericks around the room. And I've kicked myself so many times for not grabbing several of those, because I sure as hell would have put them in my book, because they were really funny. I mean, there we are, with a great danger of the coalition shattering if Israel retaliates. Israel has never not retaliated in an attack and we're eating pizza and Baker, the secretary of state, is writing limericks.

But it was this ease with one another, I think it was the confidence that nobody was going to leak on each other, that there was no backstabbing. I think a big part of it also was that everyone was confident of his relationship with the President, so you didn't have anybody who felt the need to posture, who played games, because everybody felt very secure. I think that a big part of it was that everybody knew that was the way Bush wanted it.

I'm a firm believer, having worked through six presidencies and having been in the White House under four of them, that the tone and the approach in the White House is set by the President and he can change it any time he wants it. If President Carter had wanted to do something about the relationship between Vance and Brzezinski, all it would have taken would have been one meeting. I personally think Reagan's memoirs are undervalued because I think he's very revealing in his memoir in some ways, including when he talks about the value and the use that he made of the differences between Shultz and Weinberger. So he let that go on because he saw a purpose to it. And people knew that Bush did not want discord, he wanted disagreement, he wanted differences of view expressed, but he didn't want the kinds of personal relationships that had marred, in his view, the Reagan administration and earlier administrations, including the Ford administration. People forget just how bloody-minded the internal politics were in that administration, as Rumsfeld maneuvers to become Secretary of Defense and he arranges to have George Bush appointed as director of CIA so Bush won't be in the political game any more and Rumsfeld can run for President and Bush having been tainted with CIA can never run for President again, and Schlesinger gets fired in person by the President. Schlesinger fired for being disloyal and going up on the Hill and trying to undercut Ford's policies. I mean, Bush had seen all of that and he didn't want any part of it in his administration and all of us knew it, and knew that in fact, that probably the surest way to get into trouble with the President was to be seen as creating a problem in these working relationships.

So all of these other factors played an important role, but I think most important was that everyone of the principals involved, everyone of the key players involved knew that that's how Bush wanted things to be done.

Edwards: Maybe we should talk about the Deputies Committee now.

Gates: Sure.

Edwards: Would you just describe what the Deputies Committee was and your role in it and we can go from there?

Gates: Well every administration has something like the Deputies Committee and most of them don't work very well. Most of the best management lessons that I learned in my career I learned from negative examples, whether it was DCI's or running meetings at the White House. It is what immediately told me within a few weeks of the arrival of the Clinton administration that I would never have lasted had I

chosen to try, because the first time I sat through one of those four hour, free wheeling seminars, that would have been the last.

I believe that, Brent and I wanted to clear away a lot of the clutter that had grown up in the interagency forums in the Reagan administration and have a cleaner process but also have a Deputies Committee that in fact could really move the policy ball down the field efficiently and effectively. We knew that that required, first of all, that real deputies show up. In the past, most of the representatives at the table had been sort of third and fourth level people, particularly from State and Defense.

So Brent's and my original proposal was that not only would the DDCI attend and the vice chairman—and we were helped by Goldwater-Nichols because now there was a vice chairman of the joint chiefs so that would work. But we had a problem with Defense and State. We wanted Eagleburger to attend and we also wanted Cheney's deputy to attend. I think the first deputy was Don Atwood. Then immediately we ran into a problem because Baker didn't want Eagleburger to attend the meetings. He wanted Bob Kimmitt to attend. I think he wanted his man in the room. He also, I think, saw Eagleburger as having a different role in the department and being more focused on managing the department than spending all of his time in meetings at the White House. And he also thought that Kimmitt, given his role as undersecretary for political affairs, would be able to give the direction necessary in the department for things to be carried out.

We had the same problem with Cheney. We were disappointed in Baker's decision but had to live with it. In the case of Defense, Cheney actually made a much more sensible argument, I mean a rational argument of why Atwood should not be the guy. Because traditionally the deputy secretary of defense manages the Department of Defense and really doesn't get much involved in policy issues and that has been the case forever. So Cheney wanted Paul Wolfowitz. The key was, we wanted, the bottom line was, Brent and I wanted people at the table who had total confidence of their principal and ready access to their principal, because a lot of times, the way I'd run a deputies meeting is, I would, at the end of the meeting I'd reach the conclusion and I'd say, "This is our recommendation." And this might be at three o'clock in the afternoon. I'd say, "You go talk to your principal. If I don't hear back from you at five o'clock, we will assume you agree. And we will so inform the President."

So we needed people who didn't have to make an appointment, who could walk in the door and just get the read. And it worked better than we'd ever dreamed. And it got to the point, I knew we had made the grade when I began hearing Jim Baker say, "Well let's just let the deputies handle it." And, there were a couple of things that were very important. First of all, we never presumed to make a decision. We never presumed that we were more important than we were. The principals always knew that they had the job, not us. We might do some tactical things, but anything of any consequence went to the principals and they were informed of that, so they knew all the time what we were doing, what our options were, what we were looking at and so on. And I think that the second factor was that we did keep them very well informed of what we were doing, and the fact was, as I have suggested earlier, before I ever went in the room, Brent and I, at a minimum, Brent and I had talked about what the meeting was about, where we thought we ought to come out. Occasionally, there would be the times where we just didn't know. I mean, it would be an issue, we don't know what the right outcome is, so let's see what happens.

The other reason that I think it worked was that we kept the interest and the engagement of all of the members of the Deputies Committee. I think that in two and a half years, I could count on one hand the number of meetings that I let run more than an hour. Everything was done in an hour. I always concluded the meeting with a conclusion. I would summarize where the debate was, what the differences were, what our recommendation was, what the opposition view was if there was a different

point of view. That this was what we were going to convey to the President, either our agreement or our disagreement, but we've sharpened the issues.

My view was to use the Deputies Committee not only to devise policy options and to make recommendations on policy, but to cut away all the extraneous bull shit and so we had a sharp—if we had a difference of view, it was sharply defined and it was on the critical issue. It wasn't on some trivial or secondary bureaucratic conflict or whose going to get to do something as opposed to somebody else, but, if there is a policy difference here, and very often one of the reasons the Deputies Committee worked was because as we went through that process in the meeting it became clear, there was no difference between the agencies.

But, when people would gather, there would be this huge tugging and pulling over an issue and when we began to strip away all of the baloney, it turned out there really wasn't a serious difference in point of view between the agencies. So I think all of those things contributed to the success of the Deputies Committee. I think frankly that the perception on the part of the bureaucracy and of the individuals on the deputy committee, of Brent's and my special relationship with the President made a big difference. And the deputies, as time went along, began to take enormous pride in how successful we were in supporting and helping the policy of the principals, and in getting the government's work done in an efficient timely manner. What became a joke among us was that more and more parts of the government began wanting to have their issues brought to the Deputies Committee because it was a place they could get a prompt decision. We would end up with things from Commerce and the Labor Department, from the Post Office, that they'd had these issues that for years had been grinding around out there somewhere and they'd say, we can get a decision.

It got to the point where we had to be very careful about our agenda and keep it focused, because there were so many parts of the government that wanted to have their moment in the situation room.

Naftali: Who set the agenda?

Gates: I did, Brent and I did.

Naftali: Were these meetings regular, or were—

Gates: Well, they were issue driven and event driven, but anybody, in essence, could call for a Deputies Committee meeting. In other words, any one of the deputies could call for a meeting if they thought it was necessary. And often the events would force the Deputies Committee. Let's say that Brent and Baker talk after the morning national security briefing, and Baker or Brent might say, "Well let's have a Deputies Committee meeting and let them sort it out." And, the irony was that not only were there very few NSC meetings, there actually ended up being relatively few principals' meetings and I would say that 90% of the principals' meetings had to do with arms control because the two issues that I just hated in the Deputies Committee were technology transfer and arms control. Because all of these people became Talmudic. Medieval metaphysicians had nothing on arms controls experts for how many angels could dance on the head of a pin. And I would just get so frustrated. I would bet of the handful of meetings that ran over an hour, every one of them was on one of those two subjects. I would absolutely lose my cool on tech transfer. Because they would come in, Commerce and State and Defense would have this huge fight over whether some piece of machinery should be on the list or something. They would bring to the table of the deputies whether some three axis milling machine with tolerances of 3/10,000 of a whatever should be sold to the Soviets. And they would come in and they'd make their pitch and I would say, "Look around the table, do you see any God-damn engineers here? This is a policy making group. We can't make decisions like that. We don't know a milling machine from a flat

tire.” And I would send them all away. Because I tried to keep it focused on what we knew we could do and what we could handle.

So the meetings really were, as I say, driven by events, they were driven by the principals who would say it’s time for a Deputies Committee. I think my favorite Deputies Committee meeting of all time was the one during the Soviet coup attempt when I’m chairing a Deputies Committee meeting in the Roosevelt Room and the back benchers were the President of the United States, the secretary of defense and the national security advisor. It was a little reversal of roles there.

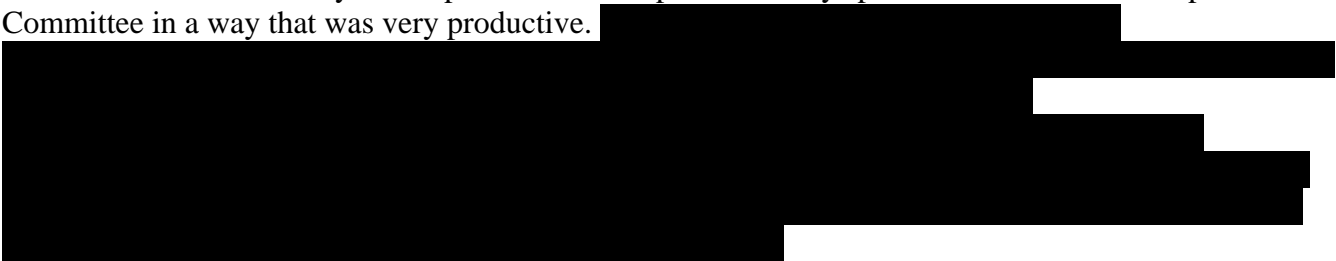
Brands: Did these meetings take place at a typical time of day? Did all the deputies know to keep this hour clear during the day?

Gates: No, they took place at all different times of the day. And more often than not, mid to late morning and early to mid afternoon, but they would basically—and one of the keys, and really the decision by Baker and Cheney to send Wolfowitz and Kimmitt was inspired in a way because the Deputies Committee became, in many respects, one of the primary responsibilities of the job for Kimmitt and for Wolfowitz, so they would just clear their calendar to come to these meetings. Everything else really was secondary. There were really very few, very few substitutions. Very rarely would somebody not be able to come.

Naftali: What would happen when you were out of town, since you were traveling with the President?

Gates: Well, it only happened once, when the Iraqis invaded Kuwait. And I’m sitting on Camano Island in Washington State on the shores of Puget Sound and we have a cousin come, one of my wife’s cousins comes over for lunch and she says, “I’m surprised you’re still here,” and I say, “What do you mean?” She said, “Well, because of what’s going on.” I said, “What’s going on?” She said, “The Iraqis have invaded Kuwait.” I said, “No shit?” So I was headed home the next day anyway so I call Scowcroft and I said, “Do you want me to get on a plane this afternoon?” and he said, “No, it’s not necessary.” But he said, “Come into the office immediately when you get in because I think you’re going to Saudi Arabia.” I was coming home on Saturday, he said, “You’re probably going to Saudi Arabia with Cheney and Schwarzkopf on Sunday.”

Let me say one other thing about the Deputies Committee. I think one of the main reasons why the Deputies Committee worked as well as it did was the unique chemistry among the individuals. It was a rare congruence of people who had their egos under control, people who had great sense of humor, highly developed sense of the absurd, who had a lot of experience in government and who respected each other. One of the great side benefits of the Deputies Committee, as they told me, was that it created relationships among the deputies that allowed them to solve a lot of bureaucratic problems bilaterally, outside of the Deputies Committee. That had not happened before. For example, between Dick Kerr at CIA and Dave Jeremiah at JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff), or between Kimmitt and Kerr and Kimmitt and Wolfowitz and so on. They developed a relationship that actually spilled over outside the Deputies Committee in a way that was very productive.



Naftali: What kind of paper did the Deputies Committee produce?

Gates: Well, not a lot actually as I recall. Occasionally there would be a policy paper, an options paper to look at. We more often directed the preparation of papers than spent a lot of time on them. We directed the preparation of a lot of interagency papers on policy options and things like that. Then we would meet and go over those papers. But I was not, I wanted to focus—my memory is a little vague on this—but one of the dangers of meeting on a paper is that you get bogged down in people wanting to change “happy” to “glad.” So my objective would be, if we had directed the preparation of an options paper, we all read the paper before the meeting and I’d just basically go around the table. I’d turn to Kimmitt first and I’d say, “Any reaction to the paper?” Bob might have a criticism or a suggestion or something and I would say, “Does everybody agree with that?” And then we’d just go around the table and we’d try to get it done as efficiently and as quickly as possible. But I would try to focus on the substance of the paper rather than the wording of the paper. I’d let the next two or three levels down worry about that. Because I wanted to focus on the substance and make sure we had the options right.

A good example was—I’ve read a lot of history, not as much as some of the people around this table—but I’m not sure that before a war was ever launched that there was a precedent in our government for sitting down and articulating very explicitly what our war aims would be, what our objectives in the war would be. But that’s what we did with the Gulf War, and the Deputies Committee did that. And we looked at three options: one was destroying the Republican Guard, the second was throwing Saddam out of Kuwait, and the third was bringing about a change of regime in Baghdad. Well, we agreed on the first two in about ten minutes and we spent two weeks debating the third one. But we weren’t debating a piece of paper. We were debating among ourselves: Is this a realizable objective? How do you actually make that happen? It sounds great but how do you make it happen? Do you have to occupy Iraq to get it? We had all just gone through the experience in Panama of not being able to find Noriega, eight or nine months before, and we had a hell of a lot more information and a hell of a lot more presence in Panama than we were going to have in Iraq. To what degree are we likely to shatter the coalition if we try to bring about a change in regime? And so on and so forth. So we ended up recommending against the inclusion of that as a war aim. And the President actually signed off on the war aims—so we knew going in what our objectives were going to be. But the Deputies Committee—sure there were things on paper, but we really didn’t focus on what was the language of the paper, we were focused on the substance.

Naftali: We’ll get back to the Gulf War a little later, but can you remember when this discussion occurred, over war aims, in the Deputies Committee?

Gates: Oh, it would have been probably in late November, December.

Edwards: We’ve talked about three basic roles, so far: advising the President, spending a lot of time with the President, talking about foreign policy; being the national security advisor’s alter ego; running the Deputies Committee. But there’s also the NSC itself and the NSC staff. Now, what role did you play in managing that?

Gates: Well, the virtue of the NSC staff is that it is very small. I mean, Brent and I wanted to keep it small and I think that we reduced the Reagan NSC by probably 25%, and it really didn’t require a lot of management. There are always in every organization a handful of people who are higher maintenance than others, but by and large they were all self-starters, they were all smart, and one of the great things about being national security advisor or deputy, is that there really isn’t a lot of management responsibility like there is in running a big agency or something. I mean, there is very little bureaucratic stuff, administrative stuff, that you have to put up with. There weren’t people that one felt you had to keep a close eye on.

Towards, about the last year, we hired one of these people who was kind of high maintenance. He was a good guy and a smart guy and we hired him on Africa. I think his name was David Miller. I'm not sure but I think that's right. And Miller was an activist. He wanted to do a lot of things and he wanted to run a lot of things. He was in charge of both Africa and terrorism, counter-terrorism, and for some reason guys who hold the counter-terrorist brief at the NSC somehow, there's something in the water over there that gets into them. He was very close to Scowcroft. He and Brent were very close friends. I spent more time keeping him corralled than I spent on the entire rest of the staff. And you never have to testify in front of Congress. The administrative things were really very, very modest.

Naftali: Just for the sake of future historians, can you remember a bad idea that this gentleman came up with that you had to get rid of?

Gates: He always had these great ideas for snatching terrorists overseas. You know, kidnapping them and bringing them back to the United States. And he'd get people all keyed up around the bureaucracy and so on and I'd get a call from Colin Powell or Dave Jeremiah and they'd say, "Do you know what this guy is doing?" and I'd say, "Oh no." And I'd basically, part of the problem was that I had a problem with bringing terrorists back to the United States to stand trial anyway because I think it is generally a bad idea because I'm always scared to death a good lawyer would get one of them off and here we are, we'd have kidnapped somebody out of a sovereign country, created a huge diplomatic flap, and then the guy walks. So I just, in principle had a problem with that and he was constantly trying to come up with one of these schemes. Generally he'd go to Brent. Brent usually was very phlegmatic about things like that. He very rarely would say, "That's a terrible idea," on things like this because he'd figure it would never go anywhere and so he'd just—you know, why burn up any capital in a personal relationship or anything? He kind of counted on me to make sure that nothing ever happened.

Edwards: Is there anything else? I mean is there such a thing as an NSC process?

Gates: Well, it is very idiosyncratic and determined by Presidents. When you have a highly structured process like existed under President Eisenhower, I mean, in some ways, the process became more important than the substance I think in some of those instances. My view is that the NSC, as a forum for advising the President, probably worked best under—better under Bush than any other President since its creation, because there was a disciplined process but it was an informal process that allowed the President to get the honest forthright views of his compatriots who weren't afraid of looking silly in front of somebody for taking a contrary view or weren't afraid that throwing an idea out on the table meant they would read about it in the newspaper the next day. I mean, in contrast say to the Reagan administration, where I remember sitting in one NSC meeting chaired by the President in the Situation Room and George Shultz sat there and crossed his arms and said, "I'm never speaking in one of these meetings again because everything I say ends up in the newspapers," and turned to the next guy. And for the next two or three meetings he didn't say anything. So here's the secretary of state in a snit and not going to play. You know, "I'm going to take my football and go home." You just didn't have any of that in this administration.

But the key is, both with the Deputies Committee and the principals around the President, one more time, comes back to the chemistry of the individuals. The Clinton administration has exactly the same Deputies Committee structure as we had in the Bush administration and my understanding from everybody is that it doesn't work at all. It has gone back to the way that it was in previous administrations in terms of kind of interminable, inconclusive meetings and people don't want to go because they view it just as a waste of time. One of the reasons we had all these guys continually come

to the meetings was that they felt it was a productive use of their time, that they got something out of it, their department got something out of it, and the process worked.

Naftali: Was it understood that you would report the conclusions of the meeting, of the Deputies Committee meeting to Scowcroft and the President?

Gates: Yes. And the way it would work, like I say, is that everybody would go home, go back to their home agencies and report to their principals. So the principals always knew, and then I would usually right after the meeting go tell Brent what had happened. Generally the next morning, you know a lot of times we wouldn't even tell the President what happened in a deputies' meetings because it wasn't something that was ready for him yet. But when it was important then I would probably, if we had a few informal minutes we would talk about it, maybe, the President would frequently would just wander down to Brent's and my offices and sit down and just chat. Sometimes I'd tell him in that situation and sometimes we'd be in a motorcade going someplace and I'd tell him. Sometimes, most of the time, I'd just tell him the next morning at the national security briefing.

But, I'll tell you, it really makes an impact on the bureaucracy and gets around when, as an example, during one deputies' meeting we really had a serious disagreement and I said, "Well, I'll just find out what the President wants." I left the meeting, went up, talked to Bush, came back down, said, "Here's what we're going to do." That kind of thing gets around.

Naftali: You described this institution as if it was always the same throughout the period that you were Deputy National Security Advisor, but did the Deputies Committee evolve at all? Was it always as important as you've made it out?

Gates: Pretty much. On the policy side pretty much from the beginning. Where it evolved really was in October of 1989, after the failed Panama coup. There was a lot of grumbling among the principals that our crisis management had been found wanting and the President explicitly gave responsibility to the Deputies Committee for crisis management at that point. From that moment on, that was a role that was new and it evolved. That was an arena where, for the first time, we started using the closed circuit television connections among the agencies that had been put in by the Reagan administration. I didn't like that for policy discussions, because you never knew who was off camera. Again, we felt, we all felt strongly about leaks and there were virtually no leaks out of Deputies Committee either during the Bush administration. I also felt that face-to-face give and take was more important for policy discussions. But the closed circuit TV is great for crisis management, because it allows each representative, the representative of each agency in effect to be right next to his information pipeline. In other words, if Kimmitt is in the State Department operations center, he's in a place where he can talk to the ambassador in any country just like that. If Kerr is out at CIA, he's right next to the CIA operations center where he can talk to a chief of station or he can get a raw cable coming in from a station instantly, not have to worry about somebody faxing it down to the White House or bringing it into a meeting or something like that. Same way over at Defense in terms of knowing where the forces are and what's happening there and so on. So the closed circuit television is a big advantage in crisis management. It also prevents, it also is good from a security standpoint in respect that you don't have a big line of big black cars lined up at the back gate of the White House with every newspaper man in town wondering what the hell is going on that there's a big crisis. Instead they just have to watch for the Domino's truck.

But I think it really helped. I mean, it was a little funny at the beginning and you could always tell somebody new to the process because the first thing they'd do, you could tell they were looking at themselves in their monitor because you'd all of a sudden see people doing this to their ties or sort of slicking their hair back or whatever, you know, you're on candid camera.

Naftali: Did you keep notes at these meetings?

Gates: Generally the NSC staff member kept the notes. I'd jot some things down but generally just as reminders to myself. The NSC staffer was responsible for taking the notes.

Brands: Did you use email?

Gates: No, not at all.

Brands: Was that a policy decision or just a technology—

Gates: Well, at that point, we really didn't have the technology. But even later when I was out at the Agency I refused to use e-mail because I didn't want people e-mailing me and thinking that I was immediately knowing what they were doing, that I was in real time reading their e-mail. I had this horrible fear of somebody e-mailing me saying, "I'm going to overthrow the government of X if I don't hear from you in the next four hours," and I get back five hours later and oh God. So it was a command and control issue for me at the Agency, but, and I frankly think, I have no intention or desire to go back into government, but if I were to do that, I still wouldn't use e-mail. I think it is a mistake from a command and control—

I think it is a great convenience for people at lower levels to communicate and so on but I think that for decision makers it is a bad idea.

Naftali: Let's take a few minutes break now, have some coffee.

Gates: When we come back I'll tell you about the Deputies Committee meeting that ended up being a charade involving the Vice President.

Naftali: Well, you've laid out very, very well the nature of the Deputies Committee. Now let's turn to some areas where the Deputies Committee earned its salaries. You arrive and the Bush administration announced a policy review on Russia and this policy review seems to take somewhere between three and four months. Why did it take so long? What were the debates at the time. You've alluded to one area of disagreement, within the inner family, what was going on there? Why did it take so long?

Gates: Well, I don't think there was any particular disagreement. I think that the biggest problem, as the staff kept looking at the paper, as it evolved, there was sort of no there-there. Below the Deputies Committee level, they kept pushing the bureaucracy to do more and I think it was just in an effort to try and get some substance into the thing, that made it take so long. Just trying to see if there was any creativity out there in the bureaucracy. I don't remember anything in particular. I mean, I don't think there were any specific big disagreements or anything that caused it to take so long, I think it was just the slowness of the bureaucracy. I know, as I recall, Scowcroft and I kept asking, "Where is it?" "Soon, soon."

Naftali: What was the big question?

Gates: Well, I think, it really goes back to the reason for the studies in the first place. And that was, I think both Brent and I believed, and I think maybe the President believed, that the Reagan administration had gotten out ahead of itself in the last six or eight months of 1988 in dealing with the Soviet Union, that their aspirations had outrun reality and had outrun the capacity of the government to absorb and deal with what they were trying to do. In other words, some of the arms control things that Shultz was putting on the table with the Soviets—and I don't remember the specific details—in fact had not been fully vetted by the Department of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs weren't even sure how they

would carry out what was being proposed and what the implications would be for U.S. security. It was more on the strategic side than the conventional side.

So I think the reviews derived from several motivations. One was what we thought was an entirely appropriate opportunity to just look at everything freshly and see where we were giving new people time in the government to catch up and come up to speed on what had happened and what the realities were around the world in these areas, especially in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Western Europe. We knew that there were a lot of dramatic events on the horizon, they were already on the way. The round table talks had already started in Poland in January, and so the notion was, I think I used the line in my book, “the triumph of hope over experience” that maybe there were some interesting ideas out there in the bureaucracy that we could use.

But I think that also there was a sense of “let’s see where we are” and if we think that the Reagan administration in its last six months or so was on the right track. There was never any idea that we would depart in any significant way in terms of going backward, in terms of the relationship with the Soviet Union. I think what we were trying to see is what’s the right way forward and how do we respond to some of the things that are going on in Europe, and the President’s and Brent’s desire to get out in front of these events that began during the transition clearly was a part of this. It wasn’t like the Kissingerian national security studies which more often than not were just an effort to keep the bureaucracy busy while the grownups decided what to do. But really, an effort to engage the bureaucracy and see—the thing you have to understand about Bush that’s different than probably any other President since Eisenhower, is that Bush really respected the professionals in government, at the State Department and Defense and Intelligence and so on, and always wanted to make sure that their views were heard from, that they had a chance to weigh in. I think that partly was part of this process as well.

We had this whole thing going on two tracks. One, we had this huge policy leviathan going on under the auspices of the Deputies Committee and second, at the same time we had going on, under the auspices of the Deputies Committee, and also among the principals, beginning very early on, the need to sit down and come up with some very bold new approaches in terms of dealing with the changes in Europe and in the Soviet Union and in preparation for the NATO summit.

Naftali: So you had the strategic and the tactical going on simultaneously.

Gates: But they were both strategic in the sense that they were both being driven by very large events and the need to develop a strategy on how to cope with them. What a lot of people don’t realize, and part of the reason that I think people characterize me often as a hard-liner was that my views on the Soviet Union were shaped very much in the ’80s by the intelligence we were seeing, by the information that was being gathered by the Agency in terms of what was happening to Gorbachev’s reforms beyond the rhetoric. In other words, the failures of implementation of the reforms, the failures and the collapsing of parts of the economy. That’s where I kept coming from in terms of the unlikelihood of his success in carrying out his economic reforms. The same things was true on the military side. Other than in their foreign engagements, such as in Afghanistan where there were bold moves and they were implemented, my view as an agency guy, as a CIA guy, were always shaped by the fact that for me, actions in this realm, in the international realm, always spoke louder than words and especially when dealing with governments like that of the Soviet Union, and particularly irreversible actions. And the first irreversible action in Europe that Gorbachev had taken, was announced in his December 1988 speech at the UN, that’s very late in the game. And CIA was saying, “You know, he’s talking about units that build bridges, he’s talking about armor. If this is carried out, it truly will change the character of the Soviet

military presence in Europe.” So we were waiting to see if he would do if he said what he would do. But it was only in December of ’88 that you saw this significant departure in terms of troop reductions on the Soviet side.

So there was still a tension in January, February, March, 1989, whether Gorbachev’s rhetoric would be matched by the actions of the Soviet military, in terms of actually beginning to do those things. And it was when we began to see them moving in that direction that it then became clear that some commensurate response was required by the United States to get out in front of this. All of the governments in the west and all of the press—a lot of the pressure that was being put on Bush to do something bold, was in considerable response to that December speech by Gorbachev. But we were waiting to see if the rhetoric would be matched by the actions. When it began to be matched by the actions, early on, long before our Soviet national security review came out, it was clear that we needed to seize the initiative. So you had these two tracks going on of basically the principals, the gang of eight—what would become the gang of eight—beginning to address some fairly bold initiatives, even as the reviews were going on because it had become clear by that time that we weren’t going to get anything productive out of the bureaucracy on any of the security directives.

Naftali: Did you have any intelligence that would lead you to believe in that period that the Soviet military would oppose the rhetoric of the General Secretary, or was the issue for you whether Gorbachev meant what he was saying or not?

Gates: I think that it was more we had seen too many instances of Gorbachev issuing dramatic directions and nothing happening. I mean, this was part of the problem with a lot of his reforms. He would announce it, particularly on the economic side, but also some on the political side, and then nothing would happen. Through inertia, through resistance, through fear of the bureaucrats that if they did it they’d be out of a job. So there were a lot of considerations associated with that, but it had more to do, I think, with not overt opposition, political opposition from the military, but whether they would in essence just try to wait him out.

Naftali: Did you have good coverage of civil and military relations in Russia at that point?

Gates: Not particularly. But we could see what they were doing on the ground with their forces.

Naftali: You mentioned earlier that General Scowcroft had an idea for one way of solving this policy problem which was to propose the withdrawal of American and Soviet forces from Eastern Europe. Why, did he want to do that or was that a way of prodding the system forward? Do you remember?

Gates: No, I think he wanted to do that. I think he saw a real opportunity. I think he saw, by late fall, 1988, it was apparent, at least in Poland, that the regimes were going to have to change in some respect in order to get cooperation to try to deal with their economic problems and that things would begin to become unraveled at that point. And I think that Brent really and truly believed there would be an opportunity to get the Soviets out. He was willing to be far more bold than anybody else. I think his initial proposal was “Let’s both take all of our troops out.” Because that would then—it was a radical reaction and I think in both his book and some of the others, and in mine in fact, I think I said I thought Cheney was going to faint or have a stroke or something. Brent said Cheney was stunned or something when he (Brent) put this on the table, but the idea was, if you got the Soviet troops moving out of Eastern Europe, then the East Europeans would find a way to greater independence from the Soviet Union and that would then have an influence in the Soviet Union itself. So I think it was a very strategic view on Brent’s part.

Naftali: In your book and in other places, there are some wonderful words about your trip to Moscow. But I was wondering, in retrospect, what effect that visit in, I believe it is May of 1989, had on you.

Gates: Virtually none. It was pretty much as I expected it to be. As I told Tom Friedman in the press conference, it was nice to see it from the ground level, but I'd negotiated with the Russians for years in SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) and so on, so I'd had contact with Russians, Soviets, for a long time. Moscow was about as dingy and dim as I expected it to be and the hotels about as crummy, and so there were very few surprises, in fact, I don't think there were any surprises.

Naftali: Did that even though, particularly for Baker I believe, did that event push the process at all? I mean these meetings in May, for you and Eagleburger?

Gates: No, I don't think so. I don't think that that had a significant effect in pushing our process forward. I think our process was going forward independently of that, and under great pressure from the President.

Naftali: And some pressure from the Europeans.

Gates: A lot of pressure from the Europeans, a lot of pressure from the press. And I think those both contributed to the President's feeling of a need to get out in front of it. But that was not a new feeling on his part, it antedated the European pressure and the press pressure. But, it put a premium on moving ahead, getting something through the bureaucracy.

Naftali: What were your responsibilities with regard to press relations? Were you expected to help shape the press's understanding of the process?

Gates: I actually had relatively little contact with the press. At Marlin's request, every week I would meet together with the three White House correspondents from the newsmagazines. On occasion I would do an interview but it was very rare. I didn't do much of that.

Naftali: Because it is at this time that you put out that significant piece on the nature of reform in Russia.

Gates: That was really a speech that I did for CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies) at a forum they were sponsoring in Brussels and the irony of the whole thing is that Scowcroft was supposed to do the speech and for some reason decided he didn't want to go and made me do it instead. I vetted the speech with State and everyone else.

Naftali: But you wrote the speech.

Gates: Oh, yeah, hell yes, I wrote it. But I never gave a speech after I became Deputy Director of Central Intelligence in '86 that wasn't vetted with the White House, the State Department and the Defense Department.

Naftali: Yes, you got into trouble in 1988 over a speech.

Gates: Well, yeah, Shultz tried to get me fired. He was furious. He called me up on the telephone, read me the absolute riot act.

Naftali: You said it had been vetted.

Gates: Absolutely.

Naftali: Well, who vetted it at State?

Gates: The Under-Secretary for Political Affairs. I'd sent it to Armacost, which I kept trying to remind him during the telephone call. Marlin and Frank Carlucci later told me that Shultz had gone into the White House to see Reagan—I think I've got this in my book—and demand that I be fired. Reagan listened and after Shultz left he turned to the two of them and said, "What am I going to do? I agree with Gates." So I survived it.

Naftali: So the other source of pressure, we talked about the press, the other source of pressure in the spring of 1989 were the Europeans and you and Eagleburger are sent out as—I think it was Margaret Thatcher who called you tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee.

Gates: Later.

Naftali: But you're sent out to stroke them a little bit—

Gates: No, Bush did not want to spring a major new proposal on them and surprise them. He didn't think that was the way to do business. So our job was in fact to inform them what the proposal was going to be and to get their reactions to it before he gave the speech. So the letters that we brought from him to the leaders and then the briefing associated with it that we gave, was really their first exposure to exactly what Bush was going to propose.

Naftali: Weren't you also supposed to hold their hands a bit because of their desire for a triple zero? They wanted to eliminate the Lance missile—

Gates: No, that came later. We knew, particularly in May of '89, that Margaret Thatcher would have had a stroke if we had proposed that at that point. Things moved far enough so that when we could do something more a year later she was willing to swallow it. But there was considerable concern that several of the European leaders would have problems, including Mitterrand. So, both Mitterrand and Thatcher, from a political standpoint, welcomed the proposal but both were fairly nervous about it in terms of its military implications. Mitterrand much less so than Thatcher. But he was certainly not as enthusiastic as Kohl was. Kohl, I thought he was just going to—he was slathering at the idea of this proposal, and Andreotti liked it a lot. But Thatcher was very skeptical and Mitterrand was a little uncomfortable.

So the irony was it was more hand holding to assure them that we weren't going too far, and to let them know that we were finally going to respond in some way.

Naftali: Well, that's another interesting example of the difference between rhetoric and action. The Europeans were talking much tougher than they wanted to act.

Gates: Oh yeah, always.

Naftali: Well, that certainly was the case—

Gates: Basic rule of thumb with the Europeans is, they're annoyed at us when we do something and they're annoyed at us when we don't do something. As long as you understand that, then you understand how to deal with the Europeans.

Naftali: Let's move on. Let's change venues for a moment and talk about China. You mentioned that of course, the White House sees all the time a collection of simultaneous crises. It's a luxury I guess to have only one crisis. You had problems in China. What's the intelligence background to Tiananmen Square, what kind of warning did you have? Did the Deputies Committee in the month before Tiananmen discuss where reform was going in China and provide some warning that there might be a violent clash?

Gates: I don't remember exactly what the intelligence was saying, but my recollection is that we had a pretty good appreciation that the pressures were building for the Chinese leaders to do something and they couldn't just let this thing go on. Then, in a way, we were just incredulous that Gorbachev went out and mingled with the crowd and that the Chinese A) let him do it and B) that he was insensitive enough to what was going on in China to do it. So I think there was a general appreciation of the likelihood of the Chinese cracking down. Then we began, of course, to see the movement of Chinese forces from around the country toward the capital and that made it pretty apparent that they were going to do something.

Edwards: Let me go back one step. Did you have a sense that the demonstrations were coming in the first place?

Gates: Well, you're really pushing my memory here. We knew that the students were very unhappy at the replacement, or the firing of Hua, but I don't think the intelligence indicated that anything would happen like the demonstrations that took place in Tiananmen Square. And I guess there was a feeling, and I'm really speculating here in my memory. I think what surprised people, as much as anything, was that the Chinese government allowed things to go as far as they did in Tiananmen without breaking it up or stopping it when it was much smaller. And we didn't realize until later, we got some intelligence that indicated that the Chinese leaders actually were fearing for themselves physically, that they were afraid that these demonstrators would move on the leadership compound and there began to be an actual physical fear on the part of the Chinese leaders for their own survival.

Naftali: The President knew James Lilly very well. They had known each other for some time. Do you recall that there was a separate channel for the President? I mean, was the President particularly interested in what Lilly was sending back from Beijing?

Gates: I think, as I recall, Jim came back once or twice and met with the President and they had an opportunity to have an exchange of views, and I'm sure that Brent passed to the President all of Lilly's cables on what was going on.

Naftali: When the violence erupted on the third and fourth of June, the CIA station chief was not in Beijing apparently. So one has the impression therefore that this was a surprise. I don't think that the Chief of Station would have left Beijing if he assumed that something big was happening.

Gates: I don't know what the circumstances of that were. I think it was a little bit, I mean, the timing of these things, the precedent for me in my career was established by the invasion of Czechoslovakia in '68 in that you reach a point where you can say they have the forces in place and they're ready to go but you can't predict the actual day that they're going to move, that they will take the action, and that was certainly the case in Tiananmen. I mean, we knew they were ready to go, they had the forces in place and so on, but I don't know what led to the—

Naftali: Did we try to influence the Chinese leadership at all?

Gates: I honestly don't remember what communications may have gone from Washington to the Chinese leadership warning them not to react. I'm sure that there were some but I just don't remember it. The one thing I remember, I was up in Kennebunkport with the President at the time and he was there for the Memorial Day weekend or some long weekend and I remember it was my first weekend at Kennebunkport with Bush and we had the death of the Ayatollah, Tiananmen Square, and a third thing happened that has never gotten any press play or any write up in the history books or anything else, a train in the Soviet Union carrying 1500 children to camp was going through a narrow pass parallel to a gas pipeline and the gas pipeline blew up and there were 800 children killed on that train. And because

of all these other events that happened, it never got any publicity, but we were dealing with all three of these things at the same time, and a humanitarian thing on the Soviet side, could our burn specialists help and things like that.

Naftali: Did we send people over there?

Gates: I don't remember whether we did or not, but this was my first weekend up there and all three of these things happened. I called Brent and I said, "What the hell is going on? Can't you keep control down there?"

Brands: There was a sense within the administration that the Chinese government might in fact back down. Were there discussions that took place as to what the American response then should be?

Gates: Yes, in fact, one of those little tidbits that's gotten lost is the fact that the United States government was the first government in the world to impose sanctions on China after Tiananmen Square. For all the criticism of Bush for his inaction, he acted first and with, in most respects, the most severe measures of any of the governments around the world in terms of imposing the sanctions that we did on the Chinese. It got kind of lost in the congressional uproar over the thing. So I think there was a sense—again, I would have to go back and read the materials because my memory on this is really vague—of inevitability that there was going to have to be a crackdown or the Chinese were going to lose control. And, so we had, we had already talked about some of the sanctions and that was one of the reasons why, I think he imposed the sanctions within 24 hours. So I think we probably had already prepared some contingency plans.

Naftali: Let's look at that a little bit more precisely. The President considered himself an expert on China for obvious reasons. You're in Kennebunkport with him. There is no deputies' meeting of course, so this is a decision the President makes there and then. He doesn't even get back to Washington before he made this decision.

Gates: But he, you know, he was just on the phone with Brent and with Baker constantly on the whole thing. I think that Brent was probably having some meetings down in Washington.

Naftali: Another story that really hasn't gotten enough play, I don't think, is the United States' assistance to dissidents afterwards to help some of them flee the country. I think the term in the secondary literature, the name for this is Operation Yellowbird, a name invented by journalists, but the United States did assist these dissidents to come out, did it not?

Gates: Yes.

Naftali: And then made it seem as if France had done it, because many of them ended up in Paris. I believe there were press conferences. But that was a US operation, was it not?

Gates: Not entirely but partly.

Naftali: Would you characterize that as a successful operation?

Gates: I'm sure the dissidents that got out classified it so.

Naftali: Did we assist all those we wanted to assist to get out?

Gates: Almost certainly not. I don't remember with any precision but you're never entirely successful in these things. A lot of them were already in prison and beyond our reach.

Naftali: I assume there were Deputies Committee meetings about China after the Tiananmen Square incident. What was the discussion before the Scowcroft trip out to China?

Gates: Actually, most of the actions with respect to China, as I recall, both before and after Tiananmen, were discussions primarily at the principals' level and dialogue among the President, Brent, and Baker. And I don't recall that the Deputies Committee played a significant role in policymaking around the Tiananmen Square events, including afterward and in the lead up to the Scowcroft/Eagleburger trip. I just don't recall that we played a significant role at all. I think that was mostly handled by the three of them, including the toast writing.

Naftali: Somebody actually wrote that?

Gates: I talked to Brent yesterday and he's going to China next month, or in October, no next month. I said, "Have you got your toast prepared? He's still a little sensitive about it." That's why I brought it up.

Naftali: It's a shame that the tape won't reflect the smile on your face. Let's move to another hot spot which occurs almost at the same time, just a little bit later. In May of 1989 there's an election in Panama and Endara wins and of course you get information from, I believe it was President Carter, that the election was stolen and from that point on—

Gates: I don't think we needed President Carter to tell us that.

Naftali: And so the United States policy is now to do something to remove Noriega. I assume there must have been a Presidential finding at that point to remove him? I don't know.

Gates: I honestly don't remember. At one point, I mean it was our policy, I don't remember a finding. What I remember about the situation is that the Agency lets us know that this major has come to them and asked for help in a coup attempt against—

Naftali: That's in October.

Gates: But this is the first time that I recall the Agency having a significant role, and there may well have been a finding by that time, but I will tell you I don't think anything happened under the finding before October. And there was a great discussion about whether to help this major or not.

Naftali: Moisés Giroldi.

Gates: There's a byplay between Powell and the Commander of SouthCom (United States Southern Command) and so on, but, in reality, the issue is not US troops but whether we will support this major personally, whether the Agency will support this major and give him some money and communications equipment and things like that. I remember we got into a huge twist over the question of helping this major and the proscription against assassination. There was a very strong feeling, I know I felt this way, I think Brent felt this way, and I think the Webster actually felt there was some risk along these lines as well, that if the major had any brains at all there was no way that Noriega would walk out of that room alive. That he'd just shoot him and say he was trying to flee or that he resisted or whatever, and so we were very concerned that we were being asked to join into something that would in fact lead to Noriega's assassination. And that, more than anything else, was one of the reasons why we decided not to help. We had no confidence in this major. The agency, as I recall, did not have any kind of a longstanding relationship with him. I think he was a walk in, in effect, and there was a real concern that he was just going to shoot Noriega or somebody else would.

So there was a general feeling on the part of the senior people in the government that we would not be a party to this coup attempt.

McCall: My impression was that there was some, you say he's a walk-in, etc. There was some discussion about the quality of the intelligence surrounding that attempt, etc. Do you feel the quality of

what was coming in from the ground was useful? What was the quality of intelligence on the situation in Panama at that time, and these principals.

Gates: I would say that the quality of the tactical intelligence, meaning timely intelligence that was actionable, was poor. As it usually is, in very short run kind of things. It is a little bit like the hostages in Beirut in the first half of the '80s. We collected an incredible amount of intelligence on those guys and it was always about 24 hours out of date. It was never something that you could lay your hands on. Same thing with Saddam's movements and where he was staying and hiding and the same thing with Noriega. What he was doing and his actual movements and where he was and so on, we were always hours, if not a day or two, behind. So, in terms of being able to act upon that intelligence, there was really nothing that we could use.

McCall: That implies also how quickly these things become stale. Do you feel that the windows of opportunity to assist in this coup vanished rather quickly because there was this quick staleness?

Gates: Well, I think the view that most of us had was based on what the major had told the Agency, that this was a coup attempt that was almost certainly going to fail. It was either going to lead to his assassination or it was going to fail. So, you know, neither one of those were particularly attractive in terms of getting involved. Obviously Noriega charged that we were but I don't believe that we were.

Naftali: It is clear from the secondary literature that it is hard to build up an opposition in an authoritarian country. But, would it be fair to say that the Agency at least, or the government was betting on a different horse and that this fellow, Girolodi, just came out of nowhere, that there was some hope that someone else would have done this, somebody with closer ties to the United States.

Gates: Well, there was clearly a hope that somebody would organize something. I would characterize it as in the same category as the hope after the conclusion of the Gulf War that somebody in the military would take care of Saddam.

Naftali: But this was unknown person.

Gates: That's right, that's my recollection. There was no specific horse we were betting on. We were continuing to hope that we would see some kind of action, and I think there must have been a finding because I'm sure the Agency was spreading some money around and trying to find out if there was anybody down there that was interested in doing this that might have some chance of success.

McCall: There's another aspect also to this, my recollection from what I've read or what I've heard, that this also is a period in which the President is galvanized to develop some sort of action to change the situation in Panama and move from being a little more passive to being a little more aggressive about the outcome he wants to see and planning for a possible action begins at this period of time.

Gates: I think that after the coup attempt, the military began doing some of its own contingency planning on its own. I don't think that after the coup attempt that at the White House there was a sense at that point that we would have to go in militarily. I think that one of the things, and my sense of the chronology may be out of whack here but I think one of the big things that changed was that the Agency assembled a fair amount of intelligence over the course of the year or so preceding the coup attempt that Noriega had been playing a double game with us on the narcotics side. That he had in fact turned over a lot of people to us and a lot of drugs and so on, but the Agency slowly came to the realization that what he was doing was getting rid of the competition so that his own activities would be more profitable and better protected. I think that contributed to a sense of the need to do something, that it was becoming sort of a criminal state in Panama, that was qualitatively different from anything we thought we were dealing with before.

But I don't think—and other's recollections may well differ and they may be more accurate—but my vague recollection is that after the October coup we figured we'd just be waiting around, sitting and waiting for another opportunity, for somebody else to come up out of the Panamanian armed forces or someplace and either take him out or launch a coup in some way.

Again, others' recollections may differ, but I think we did not begin seriously to contemplate near term military action regardless of the planning that was going on over at DoD (Department of Defense) until after the American serviceman was killed and there began to be some real problems with security for our forces and our soldiers. Then my recollection is that the assault on the American officer and his wife absolutely drove Bush around the bend. That was the last straw as far as he was concerned. He has a very old-fashioned sense of honor and propriety and so on and I think that the "Dignity Battalions" going after this guy's wife had a huge impact on him, I think even more than the killing of the soldier, and that was really just a step too far. And it was with that that I think he made up his mind that he was going to take this guy out.

McCall: This is also, you mentioned before how there was some disillusionment with the quality of the national security crisis management in the fall of '89 and that this process also galvanizes, to use that word again, how that is performed or rebuilt in the administration. Could you talk a little bit about what changes were made?

Gates: Well, I think that the key is that we are formally assigned the responsibility. We had taken on some aspects of these things before, but I think other parts of crises were handled among the principals, like the events surrounding June 4th and 5th or 3rd and 4th and so on and they realized that handling these things informally among the principals was just not the way to get this done and you couldn't gather them in the same way to monitor these situations and have a continuing dialog the way we could at the deputies level. And so, for example, with the military action in December, the Deputies Committee really didn't play a significant role in the military planning, but what we did was do a lot of the preparation for what kind of, for the public statements that would be made for dealing with the Congress, for resources, for dealing with other governments, initiatives, explanations to other governments about why we'd done what we'd done, about the political future of Panama and how we would try and organize that. The Deputies Committee got involved in the planning, contingency planning and so on for all of that kind of stuff, associated with it. And that kind of thing really just hadn't been assigned to anyone before

McCall: What about your observations though about how the rest of the process was working? For instance, this is a period also when the President is trying to keep the number of principals or players involved to a minimum. And at the same time there is the effort to try to get all the different pieces together from DoD and elsewhere to make this operation work. What I'm trying to get at is this thing becomes sort of a dress rehearsal for Desert Storm, this is like the shake-down cruise for how some of this stuff is going to work in the future. It anticipates some things.

Gates: To a certain extent. But again, going back to a point we were talking about much earlier, this is also all going on at the same time that Eastern Europe is liberating itself. I mean, this is the same three months in effect, October, November, December, and so the Deputies Committee is meeting essentially every day already on Eastern Europe. We're already beginning to think about German reunification and the implications of that. I was with Bush in September and I still believe the first time that US policy toward reunification was articulated by the President was when he was asked a question about it on a domestic trip in Helena, Montana in a press conference. He was asked about German reunification and basically said that he was for it, that he trusted the Germans. I called Brent right after that and said,

“Brent, we now have a policy on German reunification.” He said, “What is it?” I said, “We’re for it.” He said, “Who says so?” I said, “The President.” He said, “Oh, shit.”

So the Deputies Committee was doing Panama, we were doing Eastern Europe. We were at the very front end of beginning to think about a new initiative in arms control in Europe and German reunification. So we were kind of meeting all the time anyway. There were two or three other things going on. In some ways, yes, the kinds of things we did for Panama were a dress rehearsal for Desert Storm in terms of the kind of activities we were involved in, because we did essentially the same things for Desert Storm, in terms of the relationships with the allies, the fund raising, the public positions, the congressional briefings, the press relations, the initiatives with other government, making our pitch in terms of when to call certain leaders and what needs to be said to them and so on. A lot of those same things we had done in Panama.

McCall: Outside of the Deputies Committee, what were your observations about how the President with his immediate circle were handling the decisions for this?

Gates: I remember there was at least one meeting in the President’s office in the residence on a weekend where I think General [Thomas W.] Kelly joined Colin Powell in briefing Bush in how the operation would go. I was there and Brent was there and I think Baker and Cheney were there. So you did have this small circle that was intimately involved in knowing everything that was going on and Bush getting this information directly from the military and in essence giving them their head in terms of what they wanted to do. He wasn’t going to second guess the military deployments or planning or anything like that. So, I think in that respect too, it was, as you look back in retrospect, something of a dress rehearsal.

Naftali: Was there a discussion of war aims, sort of the ones you mentioned earlier?

Gates: No, nothing that formal. The goal was basically just to get Noriega out of power and try to put a democratic government in Panama.

Naftali: But, as you alluded to earlier, it was hard to find him and ultimately he—

Gates: It was very embarrassing actually. There was a lot of semi- good natured ribbing of both the military and the intelligence people from the White House.

Naftali: Where did you think you’d find him?

Gates: Well, they first thought that they would arrest him either at his office or at one of his residences, but the guy had about a half a dozen residences and what we didn’t realize was that he also had a large number of “hidey holes.” Again, this was one of the most instructive lessons for us in terms of the question of trying to bring about a change of government in Iraq. I mean, when it comes to paranoia, Noriega is a piker compared to Saddam. So the likelihood of being able to find Saddam we thought was almost impossible and it was based primarily on our experience in Panama.

McCall: Were there any problems with intelligence in terms of actually a clearing house of intelligence for different arms, in terms of the operation itself? Was there any sort of after action review about the quality of the intelligence, what might be done differently in the future?

Gates: Not that I recall. I don’t believe that there was. I don’t think there was ever a military action in my entire career, and probably not one in all of history, where the military commanders haven’t bitched that they didn’t have good enough intelligence. In the case of Granada they had wonderful intelligence. The only problem was that it was all at Navy headquarters in Norfolk and not in the hands of the people actually conducting the operation, as we found out afterward. But I think that part of the problem in

Panama for the intelligence guys was that the “Dignity Battalions” were such an inchoate entity. I mean, these guys aren’t wearing uniforms or anything, so it is very difficult.

The other thing that made a little bit of a difference in Panama was that much of the intelligence we had was military intelligence from SouthCom. So they were kind of reluctant to criticize themselves, so there wasn’t as much complaining about the intelligence in Panama, except maybe from the White House, as there would be later.

Naftali: Was there a Cuban dimension at all to this issue? I read somewhere that before the attack or early on, the United States sent word to the Cubans about what US policy was in this case.

Gates: Yes, and I think it was basically to avoid a misunderstanding that the Cubans might think we were coming after them as we prepared all these forces and started sending them southward. We didn’t want anybody to think we were going to attack a different country.

Naftali: Was there much of a Castro policy at this time?

Gates: No, not really. It was not a serious consideration. Noriega made all kinds of noises about buddying up to Castro and everything and we took it pretty much in the sense it was intended—just to bug us.

Naftali: Were there any communications with the Cubans at all about this?

Gates: Not that I recall.

Naftali: Because there would be later some discussion with the Cubans about narcotics traffic.

Gates: Right.

Naftali: Did those communications occur at this time?

Gates: Not that I’m aware of, not that I remember.

Naftali: Okay.

Gates: And that really ended up being a link established by the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigations) and the Agency. I mean, this is one of those cases where saying one thing and doing another is so clear. I mean, Castro willing to talk about Robert Vesco hiding in Cuba, and yes, we need to cooperate to prevent these planes using Cuba, coming over Cuba, delivering narcotics. And at the same time we’re getting intelligence by the ream about Cuban involvement in the narcotics trafficking and so on and so forth. So it was not taken very seriously.

Brands: What sort of discussions took place in the deputies group about the legal issues involved in going into Panama?

Gates: I don’t really remember specifically, but I am fairly confident that we must have had at least one meeting where we had representatives from both State and Justice in terms of how we would justify this thing in terms of international law and our right to do this and so on, getting the invitation from Endara and so on to take action, and to protect our own forces and that sort of thing. Because we would also get involved with those same kind of issues in putting together the UN resolutions for Desert Storm. Most of that coordination and preparation was done through the Deputies Committee.

Brands: Were you nervous, as you said you were regarding other instances, that Noriega would be brought back to the U.S. and a smart lawyer would get him off?

Gates: Yes. Yes I was.

Naftali: Before we switch to another region and you get to tell a story that you're looking forward to telling, Soviet behavior in Latin America was still a problem in this period, wasn't it?

Gates: Yes, it was. I mean it was odd. You sort of had the feeling, in contrast to during the mid '80s, that by 1989 the Soviets' heart really wasn't—that they really didn't give a shit about Latin America and it was sort of just a bureaucratic inertia in terms of continuing to be involved in Cuba. Of course, they were still sending a ton of money to Cuba. But also in Nicaragua. Baker from the very beginning in his dialogues with Gromyko, or with Shevardnadze, and even with Gorbachev, saying, “All this rhetoric and all this stuff about a whole new world and you want to do all these wonderful things. You want to be a part of the West, you want to do this, and you're still messing around in Nicaragua. What in the hell is going on here? What's the consistency here?” Their reaction was always really lame. There was no heart to it. It was sort of, “What am I going to do? I have all these bureaucrats whose jobs depend on continuing to ship this stuff and so on.” But it is clear that there were some powerful forces at work, probably in the KGB and in the foreign ministry, and in the party structure, that still felt that it was important to continue supporting these guys. You just had the feeling the senior leadership saw it as a loser but couldn't quite, you know, in keeping with the law of the conservation of enemies at home: “Why take these guys on when I'm allowing Germany to be reunified, when I'm watching Eastern Europe collapse? Do I need this fight with my own bureaucracy as well.” Finally, after some of that passed, you had the feeling they said, “Now, we can put an end to this.”

I think one of the reasons why—I mean, we pressed the issue, but I think we pressed the issue more for form's sake, because it was such an outlier.

Naftali: So this didn't lead to skepticism for you.

Gates: No, no, I don't think so. And in foreign policy there was no doubt in my mind by '87 that he was prepared to do some fairly dramatic and bold things, in cutting his losses in a lot of places around the world. Now, I was skeptical he would bring all the troops out on schedule in Afghanistan, and that's where I lost my \$25 to Armacost. But I was not really skeptical in terms of Gorbachev's foreign policy, particularly, I would say after early '88. I thought that our policy, both under Reagan and under Bush, was right, because he clearly was pulling in his horns. He was clearly changing the nature of the game in foreign affairs. So I didn't have much skepticism on that.

Naftali: So your concern was that he might not be the right horse though, he might lose—

Gates: My concern was simply that I was convinced that his economic reforms were going to fail. I was convinced he didn't have a clue how to handle the ethnic conflict that was growing and that he was going to be overwhelmed by events. That's why I wrote my memo to Bush that he might not survive 1990 or 1991 in power and we ought to be looking at other alternatives. My concern was not, by that time particularly, that Gorbachev was not sincere, but rather that he didn't know what he was doing, and that he was beleaguered, and that there was a very real chance that he would be ousted or forced to backtrack. I think that was Cheney's view as well. I was not—I noticed in the materials that you all sent, there was a—In the Scowcroft book, he said that I thought that the changes in Russia were cosmetic and that I believed Gorbachev was unlikely to succeed in reforming the Soviet Union. Well, the second part of that is correct. I believed he would be unsuccessful in reforming the Soviet Union because I believed that the Soviet Union couldn't be reformed, that to make the changes in the Soviet Union irreversible, that would make it no longer a threat to the United States, would mean that a communist Soviet Union would no longer exist. And that as long as the Soviet Union existed, with the kind of structure that it had and the history that it had, that it could always be walked back. And that Gorbachev's view that the Soviet Union could be reformed was fundamentally flawed from the very beginning and that was

basically my—It wasn't that I thought the changes were cosmetic, quite the contrary, he was dismantling the Stalinist bureaucracy. But because he remained a committed communist, he had nothing to put in its place. But he was letting loose forces that were very useful, absolutely, and the reason that I believed we ought to continue to work with him, right to the end, was exactly for that. He was accomplishing things that were very important to us, from our national security standpoint, beginning with the withdrawal from Afghanistan and a variety of other things.

Naftali: That meant you had to have a balance. You had to keep him around as long as you could before you shifted to someone else.

Gates: Right. And the administration's point of view that you can only deal with one President of the Soviet Union at a time was absolutely accurate, and there was no disagreement in the administration on that point at all. But you had to deal with Gorbachev, and the critics that said we stayed with Gorbachev too long, I always believed were totally wrong. You had to play the hand you were dealt. The question was, what do you begin doing to develop an alternative when he may not be the President of the Soviet Union any longer? That was where there began to be some grinding of the gears in terms of differences within the administration. Baker and the President and Brent—but mainly Baker and the President—were worried that even by holding a hand out to Yeltsin, that we would antagonize Gorbachev and create a serious problem in getting the things accomplished that we wanted to get accomplished. And there was a certain legitimacy to that view. We had to do it very carefully.

McCall: You're talking about alternatives to Gorbachev and cultivating contacts, did you view—You also criticized Gorbachev for probably not knowing where he was going to go, he did not have an idea of what kinds of reforms were necessary. Did you feel that the alternative people, such as Yeltsin, did have a clue?

Gates: What became apparent after Yeltsin was elected President of Russia was that he understood that communism was no longer an alternative for Russia. He was willing—he was really the first major leader in the Soviet Union to come around to the view that communism would no longer work and to say so. That I thought was a very important development. It was also why Cheney and Eagleburger thought Yeltsin was worth cultivating for that reason.

McCall: But did you have a strong notion of where he might want to take Russia beyond that, or, at that point the Soviet Union?

Gates: No, again, I don't think Yeltsin had a clue where he wanted to take Russia. One of the things that as an intelligence officer I spent a lot of time telling senior officials including Presidents, is that it is very hard for me to forecast to you the actions of a man who doesn't know himself yet what he is going to do.

Brands: You said earlier that when you first came to the Agency you were struck by the lack of historical perspective regarding the Soviet Union. Was that lack at all remedied by the late 1980s?

Gates: Yes, the Agency—beginning in the mid '70s, early to mid '70s—began hiring some really excellent people who had studied Russia and the Soviet Union. One of the people that Bush liked and took with him to all of the Soviet funerals was Bob Blackwell, but there were others as well, Grey Hodnett, Kay Oliver. These are all people who were absolutely steeped in Russian history and Soviet—

Brands: Did you have a hand in their hiring?

Gates: Actually, I have to confess I didn't. I was down at the NSC during a good part of that time and I don't know what prompted people to finally do it, but the amazing thing was, and it was just incredibly good fortune for the American government, all these people were hired in the early to mid '70s, so that

when the leadership changes, I mean, the people who have been watching the Soviet leadership have watched Brezhnev for 17 years. I mean, they'd been worn down. These people, the whole purpose of their professional life is to track the movements of these Soviets, of these doddering old men and their illnesses and trying to figure out what happens next. Fortunately those people faded into the background and for this period of incredibly dynamic change in the Soviet Union, from '80-'81 to the very end, CIA had a cadre of absolutely excellent people, and they had a huge influence on me when I was down at the NSC in terms of just how bad things were getting in the Soviet Union. As I say in the book, it was what they were writing, people like Grey Hodnett and others, that led me to go to Bush and propose establishing a contingency group to begin planning for the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Kay Oliver was the one that briefed President Reagan in 1985 before the Geneva summit and basically told him that the system can't last, the domestic stresses are too great, can't pick the date, can't tell you when, but it is doomed.

And people who argued that CIA missed the collapse of the Soviet Union just aren't familiar with the record of what was said and when it was said and what was actually put down on paper. That's one of the reasons why I declassified all the estimates.

Brands: There is the story of the mis-assessment of the Soviet economy.

Gates: Well, the problem there is that there are two, and I have had so many discussions with Senator Moynihan about this, the problem is that there are two kinds of analysis that were being done, economic analysis of the Soviet Union. The sector analysis and the macro analysis of the economy was exactly on the mark and CIA began briefing the joint economic committee of the congress beginning in 1978 about the deteriorating Soviet economy, that it was on a path to eventual collapse because it just couldn't keep up. You may remember the Carter administration put out a declassified estimate on the Soviet oil shortages, the decline in the Soviet oil industry for which we took all kinds of crap.

So there was this macro analysis and sector analysis that was in fact the economic analysis that reached the policymakers and the Presidents. No President beginning with Johnson— Let me turn it around, every President from Lyndon Johnson on made policy toward the Soviet Union with the knowledge and the conviction that growing Soviet economic problems were an ace in the hole for the United States. It is why Nixon firmly believed the Soviets would sign up to strategic arms limitations because they couldn't afford to continue the arms race the way it was going.

Where CIA got it wrong was in a different kind of economic analysis—the kind that was paid attention to primarily by experts—and that was in their modeling of the Soviet economy. The Department of Defense, because they wanted estimates of what portion of the Soviet economy was being spent on the military, insisted on the Agency building an economic model of the Soviet Union, of the Soviet economy. And we did. Beginning in the '70s. And this model was built on the same principles that models of western economies were built on. But, what the model couldn't take into account was how do you assign a value to a million pair of shoes that nobody wants to buy. And so the statistical analysis of the Soviet economy, while in its trend lines showed the same thing as the macro analysis and sector analysis, did show a Soviet economy that was stronger than in fact existed in reality. And that's where Moynihan and the other critics say, you just didn't notice that the Soviet economy was collapsing, because they were looking at these statistics. But, my point is, and having been the guy providing the intelligence on the Soviet Union on the NSC from 1974 on, Presidents of the United States never saw any of that detailed analysis, they saw the sectoral analysis and the macro analysis that said this was an economy in serious and worsening trouble.

Naftali: Did you think in terms of what trade-offs that would have meant to the Russians, Russian leadership? A weak economy? Trade-offs that they could not afford? Some defense build up? Or did you feel there weren't trade-offs, that the Soviet leadership placed such a high priority on defense spending and the arms race that they would suck their consumer sector dry in order to maintain—

Gates: What I think most comes as a big surprise to a lot of people is, and we later got confirmation from Marshall Akhromeyev, the Soviets themselves didn't have a clue what they were spending on the military because it was so fragmented, and the whole economy in a sense was so militarized. When you have a factory that produces widgets and a military inspector goes to that factory and takes the five best widgets for the military and the other 95 are flawed, what's the cost to an economy of that? And, it pervaded the entire economy.

I disagreed with our assessments of military spending from the very beginning because I thought there was too much we couldn't calculate. In our assessments of military spending, the economists tried to do like they did in the US, and so they would use these western categories and that's how you ended up with figures like 11, 12, 13% of GNP spent on defense. My view was that it was more like 30-40%, because of all the gray areas that they couldn't count, that were dual use, and where the best stuff went for the military. I think at the end of the day my number was probably closer in reality than the economists' number and I tried to get our economists to listen to some defectors. There was a defector who said that our numbers were way too low—and he had a thorough analysis of that. And I forced our people to listen to it. Let me put it differently. I forced our people to hear him out but they didn't listen. I mean, they did it because I told them they had to, but they weren't going to change their approach, and frankly, I think our economists didn't understand the politics of the Soviet Union. The reorganization of the analytical side of the Agency to integrate the political, economic and military analysis of the Soviet Union into a single office really didn't change that at all. So, I always believed, in fact, I tried in 1985 to stop doing a costing of the military effort. And I took an enormous amount of criticism for it, because all I'd been hearing was criticism from Cap Weinberger and the Department of Defense about how our numbers were too low. I said, "Right, I agree with you, so we're going to stop doing it because we can't do it well." A year later they came back to us and said, "We've got to have this, we need it for our congressional testimony."

Naftali: Do you recall moments when a shortage of resources, Soviet resources, shaped their military planning? That's really the most important—

Gates: I think not until very late in the 1980s. And that was part of the reason for my skepticism about Gorbachev in some respects. He would make these great speeches and he would make all these commitments and have all these discussions with Reagan and Shultz and all these guys, and yet we wouldn't see a damn thing change on the ground in terms of military production, in term of deployments of missiles, in terms of the number of tanks being manufactured. All that stuff just kept coming out like sausages. And we kept telling ourselves, these guys don't get it. They don't understand that this is what's wrecking their economy, or one of the things wrecking their economy. But I think until—it was an interesting conflict in the Agency in the late '80s, beginning about '87, '88, because the political/military analysts were saying that the Soviet deployments five years out would look like X, which was an increment, and the economists were saying they can't, they don't have the resources to do it. Well, in this case it turned out the economists were right. They had reached such a critical state in their economy that there was no way they could reach the projected force levels in, say, the early 1990s, that our military analysts were projecting.

But it was not until very late in the 1980s that that came to be true. And the irony is, and it just killed some of the Soviet analysts to admit it, but in many respects Reagan was right, you could spend them into the ground.

Naftali: What about the problem about assessing or estimating technological change. You're talking brute numbers—

Gates: I think we did a pretty good job on the technological change.

Naftali: That happens in the '80s, right? In the '70s you didn't do a good job at all.

Gates: No, I disagree with that. I think we did a good job. I think that by and large we were able to assess the technical characteristics of Soviet weaponry and technological change in the Soviet Union pretty accurately. We made mistakes on specific weapon systems, in some cases we would underestimate their capabilities, in other cases overestimate. But, by and large we got it pretty right.

Naftali: The NIEs (National Intelligence Estimates) on Soviet military power indicate that you were surprised, the Agency was surprised in the early '70s, with the number of intercontinental ballistic missile systems that the Soviets—

Gates: But that's not technological change, that's just the numbers—

Naftali: That's not just the numbers, but also the nature of them.

Gates: In what respect?

Naftali: I'm trying to remember, they were testing three or four systems, three or four MIRV (Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicle) systems and you had assumed they had only tested one. They were different, these weren't the same, and that led to an SMIE (Soviet Military Intelligence Estimate) I think in 1973, trying to figure out what the Soviets were up to.

Gates: Yes, I wrote the first draft. Because I was skeptical. Again, this was the holdover from the period of underestimating. But that really was less an estimate of the level of Soviet science and technology than it was of Soviet strategy and the level of resources they were prepared to throw into these things. And our military analysts were the ones that were saying they'll only do one or two of these because that's all they need and so on and so forth. And Fritz Ermarth and I were the ones that in essence wrote this "what are they up to" estimate that in essence said their programs are of a breadth that is not explained by the current assumptions of their military strategy.

Naftali: The problem for you was that you couldn't really determine what they were doing in their laboratories very well.

Gates: All we had tested—

Naftali: It was only when they tested—

Gates: There were very few, well, not entirely, we had some very good human sources. In fact, two or three of the sources that were killed because of Aldrich Ames were in fact scientists who had been giving us really outstanding information for 15 years or more. So, in a lot of respects we had a good fix on what they were doing in their labs and the level of their developments and where they were headed. We were sufficiently good at that that there were only a few cases where we really weren't sure what they were doing and we referred to these as the enigmas, and we would do papers on the enigmas. One of them was the "Caspian Sea Monster." They had this incredibly huge machine that looked like a giant bomber with the wings chopped off, about 20' from the fuselage, with these giant engines, that it was an

over water piece of equipment and we couldn't figure out what in the hell this thing was for. And we never did figure out what they'd spent all this money on this thing for. But there were only a handful of these things where we didn't have a pretty good appreciation of what they were doing. We actually in some cases got very good information on what they were up to because of what they were trying to steal from us and from the Western Europeans.

Naftali: That was a useful source of information. You didn't feel that there wasn't really a qualitative difference in the coverage of Soviet science and technology in the '80s?

Gates: No, I don't think so.

Brands: Would it be too much to say that U.S. intelligence in the 1980s knew as much about the Soviet economy as the Soviets did?

Gates: I would say we knew more about the Soviet—

Brands: So there it's actually qualitatively different in trying to count weapons or trying to figure out weapons because they presumably know how many—

Gates: We understood what was going on in their economy better than they did. In fact, we had one clandestine report, that I just loved, which had Andropov asking for copies of our economic analysis so he could get a better understanding of what in the hell was going on. And we had a number of Soviet sources that told us that they avidly read whatever we produced that they could get unclassified but also it was on their target list for the classified. In fact, we had very good intelligence that one of the reasons they were able to delay the onset of the crisis in their oil industry was because they used our estimate as a bible in terms of what was wrong and in terms of where to target investment over the ensuing five years in order to prolong the production that they had at that point.

Naftali: You know the Soviets didn't have national estimates.

Gates: Oh, I know.

Naftali: The system didn't produce it.

Gates: They had no analysts.

Naftali: They had no analysts. And no needs. I mean, they did have analysts, they were called the Politburo.

Gates: Well, what they did, the equivalent of what they did, if you put it in our system would be, for all of the raw intelligence to be sent to the Republican or Democratic National Committees to be synthesized and the provided to the policymakers.

McCall: Along the same lines, this is later in the game, when it is clear that German unification actually takes place and Glasnost is also opening up, some things in the Soviet Union in terms of conditions, were there lessons learned in East Germany, what was being revealed in East Germany and in Glasnost that changed some of the analysis or some of the gathering of information, how we target that? For that last stage of the game?

Gates: No, not really. Because, in many respects, what was being revealed in Glasnost was stuff we already knew, and they were just telling their own people what we already knew. What Gorbachev never understood—this was another issue that Shultz and I had a disagreement on. Gorbachev saw Glasnost, I believed, as a way of neutralizing his political enemies. Because, much of what was published in Glasnost was targeted at those who were opposed to his programs. Glasnost never once included

anything critical of Gorbachev. So, it was a political tool on his part. What he didn't understand and what, oh the Politburo member who was a key player in Glasnost, began with a Y, last name.

Masoud: Yakovlev.

Gates: What Yakovlev never understood, I don't think, is that the mythology of the Soviet Union was one of the pillars of the regime. A mythology that reflected a history that was not true and when they began to publish this stuff about what really was true, what had happened, it began to undermine one of those pillars. It was one of those many aspects as I talk about, Gorbachev's three blind spots in my book. This was one of his blind spots. He didn't understand the role of fear and mythology in maintaining control. He not only used Glasnost against his enemies but in the process began, information began coming out that was very destructive of the mythology. But Glasnost also became a weapon in the hands of the ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union in terms of publicizing their own histories and what the Soviets had done to them and encouraged the ethnic unrest that began to develop more openly in the mid 1980s. It was one of those things where I don't think we learned very much from Glasnost, but the peoples of the Soviet Union learned a hell of a lot.

Naftali: The interesting question of course is that this had happened once before in Russia, after the secret speech and after the attacks on Stalin and, of course, I'm sure that your knowledge of how that played itself out must have influenced you.

Gates: Well, we would just sit there incredulous, does he understand what he's doing?

Naftali: Because it had happened before and the end result was oppression.

Brands: What about the first, the first opportunity for post mortem was East Germany. Was there anything from that that was revealing in terms, the expectations?

Gates: You mean in terms of the documents we acquired and so on?

Brands: Just generally in terms of the insights into the intelligence gathering or where estimates were going wrong or right or what was indicated, what wasn't?

Gates: Well, it came so late in the game. We never really got into the Stasi papers or anything, even while I was still in the government. Most of that stuff has come out past my time. There was nothing that we had in 1990 or '91 or '92 that was changed by anything that we were able to get our hands on in 1989 or '90. Most of what has come out ironically, has tended to reinforce the views of many of the hard liners in the west. In other words, one of the huge debates in CIA was over the degree of Soviet and East German support for terrorism. And one of the things that has come out in the Stasi papers is that it was worse than, more than we who suspected they were more involved, had thought. Not in terms of orchestrating it, but in terms of supporting it and providing safe haven and safe transit and equipment and weapons and money and so on. The validation of the Katyn massacre. The number of these things just goes on and on in terms of the views of those who thought the worst of the Soviets. I don't know of a single instance yet where something has come out of the archives or the KGB papers or anything else that has shown that those who have more liberal views of the Soviet Union had been right on one of these historical issues.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[illegible]

[BREAK]

Naftali: Let's resume. Before we leave 1989, I want to ask you about one minor controversy involving yourself in the fall, perhaps you can shed light on it. There was a speech that you were going to give in October. I mention this because you have just, you earlier today talked about a description in a memoir that you recalled that didn't quite capture the event as you remembered it. There is some information in the Baker biography about the October '89 speech. What was the story? What were you intending to do with this speech and why did the State Department get so angry about it?

Gates: Well, I had been asked to give a speech to some, there was some meeting of college students from different campuses that was being held. I can't remember what the event or the organization was, and I had gotten approval to give the speech and I had drafted a speech about what was going on in the Soviet Union. And as was the practice with all my speeches, I not only gave it to Brent, but I sent it to two or three people on the NSC to review, Condi, probably, and others, and I sent a copy to Bob Kimmitt (State) and I sent a copy over to Paul Wolfowitz (Defense) and I sent a copy to the Agency. I got them back with a few minor changes, factual corrections and so forth. Then a day or so later, just a few days before I was to give the speech Brent said that he had gotten a call from Baker who was very upset about the speech and didn't want me to give it. So I said, "Let me see if I can satisfy him." So I revised the speech fairly considerably and put a lot of quotes from Baker in it including right up front in terms of what our approach was in terms of our wanting Gorbachev to succeed and so on and so forth, but it still was basically on the same theme of the likelihood of the failure of Gorbachev's economic reforms primarily and also his growing difficulties with the ethnic groups, the nationalities problem.

I sent it back over and Brent came back again and said that Baker still wasn't satisfied, didn't think I should give the speech. And I was just furious. I had done everything by the book. I had already gotten one clearance from State, from Kimmitt and company. But apparently what had happened was that either Ross or Zoellick got hold of it and took it to Baker and was just commenting on how it shouldn't be given. I was just furious and I sort of sulked around for a couple of days. Then I got over it. Baker was giving two speeches a couple of weeks apart, laying out U.S. policy towards the Soviet Union and I realized, after thinking it over and after cooling down, that my speech would have been a distraction and

because I was perceived as a hard liner, the speeches would have been compared and parsed and press would have found differences of tone or attitude of approach and it would have made a big deal and the differences between our speeches would have overridden whatever was the content in either one, in either his speeches or mine.

So I kind of reluctantly concluded that the decision that I not give the speech was the correct one and I was prepared to let the matter rest at that point. I wrote another speech for the group on crisis management or something like that and lo and behold there's a story in the press a few days later about Baker having quashed this speech and it produced a huge furor on the Hill, particularly among conservatives who didn't care for Baker a whole lot anyway. Baker was unhappy, the President was unhappy. I later found out from Tom Friedman who wrote the story that he'd gotten it from Baker himself and that Baker had leaked it. I just went to Brent and I told the President, you know, I didn't do anything. I didn't talk to anybody, I put the speech away, and I had, I was prepared to live with the decision. The State Department has put this out to make themselves look like the heroes and they have been the ones that have done this damage. I told Brent at one point privately, I said, "You know, the funny thing is, because of the way they've handled it, the speech has gotten a hell of a lot more attention ungiven than it ever would have gotten had it been given." I later sent a note to Baker in which I basically apologized for the whole contretemps and noted that it had been approved by State in the first instance but I believed that he had made the right decision. It was a very conciliatory letter and we got along fine and really didn't have any further problems for the rest of the administration.

I can't tell you how many journalists came to me and wanted copies of that speech, including Strobe Talbot and Michael Beschloss when they were writing what I regarded as a terrible book on the Bush administration. They came to see me and it was a big suck up and everything and at the end it was clear that all they wanted was a copy of that speech and I wouldn't give it to them and they never talked to me again for their book or anything like that. That's basically the story.

Naftali: Well, the content of your note to Baker is in the Baker memoir.

Gates: Is it really?

Naftali: Yes.

Gates: I didn't know that.

Naftali: Well it showed that he was right.

Gates: Of course.

Naftali: I just thought that we would get through that.

Brands: Did that sort of thing happen often at the State Department?

Gates: No, not really, I don't think so. More often than not it was the White House that got upset by people giving speeches. I was always very careful when I was at the Agency if I was going to make a speech to make sure the national security advisor got a copy of it. I didn't survive through five administrations by not watching my flanks.

Naftali: Let's move to another flank now. You mentioned that in June of 1989 during your first visit to Kennebunkport, at least to visit the President, the Ayatollah Khomeini died and the United States had to respond to that. What is your recollection of the United States' policy towards Iran and it's effect on American policy towards Iraq in '89 and getting to 1990?

Gates: Well, we really didn't pay much attention to Iran, to tell you the truth, as a policy issue, because there was nothing to be done. We paid attention to it as an intelligence problem, as a source of terrorism and we monitored sort of internal affairs and what was going on and so on, but I don't think there were, in contrast to when Mao died or other long-term leaders had died, there wasn't this great rush of enthusiasm in Washington that gee, maybe things will change for the better now that the old man's gone. I think people had a pretty realistic sense of what was going on there. There was really not much interest in having anything to do with Iran. One of the things I think you have to remember is all these players from the President on down had been on the edges of Iran-Contra, and Iran essentially was the third rail of foreign policy.

I like to remind people that since 1976 there had been two covert actions not communicated to the Congress, one by Jimmy Carter and one by Ronald Reagan. They both had to do with Iran and they both led to all kinds of hell breaking loose. So maybe somebody will finally learn. But there really wasn't much interest in anybody's part in pursuing any policy initiatives with respect to Iran.

Masoud: Around this time is when NSD-26 (National Security Directive #26) comes out which calls for more cooperation with Iraq. So was that more a move against Iran rather than being something for Iraq?

Gates: I think realistically that the NSD— well, CIA really had a good read on Saddam and nobody had any illusions about Saddam, but I think there was a general feeling that down the way, if we were to impose sanctions or something on Iraq, that the only way we could get the cooperation of anybody else is if we had made at last some kind of a good faith effort to try to improve the relationship with Iraq first and then show that it didn't work.

I think that almost everybody in the process believed that's how it would play out, it wouldn't work but we had to make the effort in no small part because of the attitudes of other leaders in the Middle East and we had to be seen to be doing it and we had to do it in a sincere sort of way. But both at the Deputies Committee meeting and I think there may have been an NSC meeting on this one, Dick Kerr, I think, briefed in both cases. It was an absolutely on the mark, raw description of Saddam and the nature of his regime and the unlikelihood of it changing. So there were no illusions anywhere along.

Masoud: Had you also had an accurate estimation of his likelihood to want to expand?

Gates: No.

Masoud: Because if you do think that things were going to deteriorate so badly, it puts the whole April Glaspie meeting with Saddam in a very strange light.

Gates: No, we didn't think he was going to expand. I don't think anybody had the notion that he was going to expand, but I thought, my recollection is that nobody thought that there was much room for improvement in our relationship with him in the foreseeable future. That's all there was to it. I don't think even the Agency at that point thought that he had an expansionist objectives.

Edwards: That's as of?

Gates: May of '89.

Masoud: Well, NSD-26 is in October '89.

Gates: Okay, October.

Naftali: So when do you start to get concerned about this?

Gates: Well, the issue doesn't come back to us, doesn't come back to the deputies, until I think April of '90 and this is after the British had busted them, this was after we had—Dick Haass had found out about some specialty ovens that were being shipped to Iraq and we were able to put a stop to that. It was just clear—there were several things that happened that made it clear that the policy wasn't working. So that what we had expected to happen had in fact happened. It not only hadn't gotten any better, but it was getting worse.

Agriculture was already making up their minds on the second tranche of the CCC (Commodity Credit Corporation) credits, and so we had a Deputies Committee meeting and Kimmitt and I in particular were very skeptical of going forward, which was already Agriculture's position because they saw their whole program being put in jeopardy by the way the Iraqis were behaving. Then we had a meeting in May and basically killed the program and essentially wrote off any chance for any kind of an improvement in the relationship and in fact saw the whole thing beginning to deteriorate, especially as his economic crisis intensified and he began— It was sometime during the spring that he had made his threat to Israel, well, what was interpreted as a threat. So I think there was a sense of growing, not crisis—but tensions surrounding Iraq were growing, as he tried to deal with his economic problems and began threatening his neighbors and demanding concessions from them, payments, or forgiveness of loans, that they had given Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. But through the whole period, the most significant aspect—one of these multiple sources of information questions that we were talking about earlier for Presidents—we were continuously being assured by Fahd, by the Emir, by President Mubarak and by King Hussein of Jordan, that these pressures were Saddam's way of doing business. It wasn't going to be a big problem and he wasn't going to do anything.

Naftali: The Emir said this?

Gates: Yes. They were the most relaxed of all.

Edwards: When did you begin to sense that something was going to happen?

Gates: Well, even when he began moving troops, again, the Arabs were all telling us: This is the way he plays the game. He's going to try and blackmail us and push us and he is not going to do anything. They were just absolutely adamant about it throughout. And the analysts as I recall, the analyst really didn't have a contrary view.

I have a sign that I kept on my wall for 15 years in government. Something to the effect that the best way to achieve complete strategic surprise is to do something that makes no sense or is contrary to your national interest. So even as the Iraqis start to move, everybody was sort of looking at it and saying what would be the point in Saddam doing anything? And even those who were most concerned, their notion was well maybe he might move in and take part of the Rumailia oil field. Or he might seize a couple of islands off of the coast that the Kuwaitis have had. But the idea was that it would be a very limited move if he moved at all and that certainly was the view of the Kuwaitis and everyone else. So he had this huge force built up by mid summer. Again, we were still being told that it was almost certainly for pressure or possibly some very limited kind of action.

Masoud: You made a very interesting point about the CIA, I think it was the '70s or '60s, how analysts covering Russia and the Soviet Union didn't really know the language, didn't know the history. Looking at this it sort of seems like the analysts that had to do with the Middle East weren't familiar with the history. I mean, Iraq had tried to invade Kuwait twice before. Do you think this was part of it—that the analysts at the CIA and the people giving us information on this just didn't know the region, didn't know the language, didn't know the history?

Gates: No, I don't think so. Because the truth of the matter is, the people who knew it best, the leaders, who lived in the region, who knew the language, knew the culture, knew the history, were all among the strong sources saying nothing was going to happen. Which had a huge impact on Bush. I mean, here are all of his closest interlocutors, particularly Fahd, Mubarak, and King Hussein, all telling him the same thing.

Edwards: And there's nothing in the system that's contrary to this, or nothing substantial?

Gates: Not that I recall.

Naftali: And then the troops not only mass but they mass on the border. And then, held to the same views?

Gates: Yes, including the Arab leaders.

Naftali: Isn't it Charles Allen who says that no, I think, I guess at this meeting on 7/28.

Gates: Charlie is a case study on what happens to people who are in the warning business too long.

Naftali: Chicken Little?

Gates: Chicken Little. Charlie was always a contrarian analyst and what others didn't appreciate was that in the warning business you can be wrong a lot of times and right only once or twice, but those are awfully important in a positive sense. One of my favorite intelligence anecdotes, which is apocryphal, but it is about the fellow who provided national security, was the national security reader and briefer for successive Prime Ministers of Britain over half a century and in the early '60s he's retiring. He is training his young replacement and young replacement says, "Well, what was the secret to your success?" And he said, "I went in to the Prime Minister every morning and I said, 'Mr. Prime Minister, today there will be no war.'" He said, "You know, in fifty years I was only wrong twice." That's the problem Charlie had. Charlie had the opposite problem. And the truth is, Charlie was a very unpopular guy in the Agency in a lot of quarters. I paid a lot of attention to Charlie just because he was an old friend. Sort of from the time I became DDI (Deputy Director for Intelligence) in 1981, early '82, I always pressed for contrarian views, people who have a different point of view to make sure that that point of view is carefully presented and taken into account and that policymakers knew that there were people who had a different point of view.

It was just like on the Soviet Union, Grey Hodnett's memo that came down to me, that was clearly identified as by a single analyst because nobody else agreed with Grey, everybody thought he was being too alarmist in terms of the likely collapse of the Soviet Union. But, getting memos like Grey's to policymakers so they knew there was another point of view out there and that they could act on it if they wished, I always felt was very important. My predecessors and my successors have not, in my view, had the same kind of approach and that was true, that covered a lot of what Charlie did over the years as well.

Naftali: So it was not unusual therefore for him to give the kind of warning that he gave?

Gates: No, that was his job. And managing the warning process at a senior level.

Naftali: Well, how do you know, right? Here's the problem. If this fellow is always saying that it is going to happen, when do you know to take it more seriously than other times?

Gates: Well, partly it depends on the stakes. If he is predicting that Saddam Hussein is going to invade Kuwait—

Edwards: And take oil fields—

Gates: And take the oil fields, and maybe go on to Saudi Arabia, because, of course, when things started to happen, nobody knew that he was going to stop at the Kuwaiti border with Saudi Arabia. Those are the kind of stakes that matter. I'll give you an example. We did a special national estimate in the mid '80s on the likelihood of the Soviets developing a nationwide ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile system). And, at the end of it we rated the chances of them doing that as no better than one in ten. But our view was that the consequences, if we were wrong, were so dramatic, that the policymakers ought to be aware of the circumstances surrounding that 10% probability.

The same kind of thing, in my view, ought to be done on things like the situation with Iraq and Kuwait, or North Korean ballistic missile or things like that. Unfortunately, I think both from a managerial and an analytical standpoint, all the bureaucratic pressures are against doing that sort of thing.

Edwards: So you've got this warning, somewhere in the system. What happens to it?

Gates: It basically, I think, I don't think anybody paid any particular attention to it. I'm not sure if Charlie is warning, see, I was on vacation, so I don't know if Charlie's memo even got down to the White House. Or got past the DCI.

Edwards: So they're on the border and what contingencies, I mean, are there meetings taking place here to—

Gates: Oh, again, I'm not in town for this two weeks, so I don't have any special insights in terms of what people were actually doing. I don't think there were any deputies' meetings. There was one right after the invasion that was held that Bob Kimmitt chaired. As far as I know, that's the only Deputies Committee meeting in the two and a half years I was at the White House I didn't chair. But I don't think there was any serious contingency planning going on, because I don't think anybody believed that he would take all of Kuwait.

Masoud: I guess the process you're describing, which sounds perfectly logical when it comes to listening to a chronic warner, is that when the stakes are pretty high, then you do something. And, so here's this guy who is warning that Saddam is going to take Kuwait. Then you have April Glaspie meet with Saddam Hussein. Now, what she should do if she's following the Gates rule would be to say, "Don't you dare think about going into Kuwait, we absolutely oppose this." But if you look at the [Iraqis'] transcript of that encounter, all she says is "We take no position on inter-Arab border disputes." What do you have to say to that?

Gates: Again, I think it has to be seen against the backdrop that we were being assured by all of his neighbors and longest term collaborators, that this is the way he does business and we're not worried, so why should you be worried. So there was this constant refrain. I mean, even if you have a Charlie Allen, you have people— Let's put yourself in the position of the President. You've got a, let's say, SES 4 (Senior Executive Service Level 4), national intelligence officer for warning who has no experience in the Middle East, no Arabic, no historical background, no understanding of the culture saying that he thinks that Saddam is going to invade and take Kuwait. On the other hand, you have the President of Egypt, the King of Saudi Arabia, and the Emir of Kuwait saying no he's not. Who are you going to believe?

Naftali: I understand that. But I think the question was simply, how you reinsure your position. Even if they're probably right, doesn't the United States want to be on the record, telling this guy that doing that would not be acceptable. I mean, after all, it is not helpful to the region that this guy plays these games. Couldn't we have weighed in and just—

Gates: Again, by not being there I don't know. And I don't know what happened to Charlie's memo. An important piece of information is, did it ever get out of CIA?

McCall: Well, my impression of what happened, because you were on a fishing trip those couple of days—

Gates: I'd been gone. I was gone for the three weeks prior to the invasion.

McCall: My impression is that he goes through and actually comes up to the White House because the night the news breaks, there is a discussion about whether or not the President should make a last phone call to dissuade Saddam, because Richard and Scowcroft meet with him outside the medical office and talk about it. So the warning had come through, but the Chicken Little syndrome had surely been there. But also this is the period where they'd come up to crisis once or twice before on this and receded and so there was the hope that it was receding again, because forces had come to the border and then pulled back. One of the questions I was going to have, do you have any sense about the satisfaction with the intelligence about those troops? You talked before, once you got it, sort of with SIGINT and other sources about the movements and the imagery, that you had a pretty good sense that it will happen, the question was when. Was there a sense of that? That it was eventually going to happen?

Gates: No, I don't think so. And I never heard from the President any expression of dissatisfaction with the quality of the intelligence before the event. One of the nice things about working for George Bush in the intelligence field is that uniquely among Presidents he knew the strengths and limitations of intelligence and he knew what could be done, what couldn't be done. He knew that all they could tell you is that the army is there and it is ready and it could go within a matter of hours, if they chose to do so. Whether they chose to do so is unknowable.

McCall: It seems pretty consistent that the big if is exactly that throughout this, and that is the piece that everybody feels could not have been filled. No one knew his intent.

Gates: Including his neighbors.

McCall: Including his neighbors.

Naftali: You go to Saudi Arabia—

Gates: A lot of the materials that I saw including some journals, some newspaper articles, had Powell on that plane and that was not correct. It was Cheney and I and Schwarzkopf. And what was absolutely hilarious was that one of the interesting aspects of being an assistant to the President is that in protocol you actually outrank the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I never even thought about the idea of stepping in front of Colin Powell. But, what it also meant was that I outranked Schwarzkopf. There were probably fifty staff on the plane and 48 of them were Schwarzkopf's. I was alone and Cheney had maybe two guys with him. There was a line to the head and a major would go stand in line for Schwarzkopf so Schwarzkopf wouldn't have to stand in line. There was a captain ironing his shirts back in the back of the plane. I mean Cheney and I were—Cheney had the private bedroom in the front of Cheney's plane and then there was a kind of a private quarters that had really big chairs and easy chairs and that was where Schwarzkopf and I were, just the two of us, and then there was kind of the rest of the plane where all these other people sat. It was just hilarious. I mean, they'd come up and they'd dust off his chair after he'd eaten and so on, you know, get the crumbs out of his chair.

I thought, my God, being a four star general is pretty nice. Here's Cheney sort of on his own, and here I am on my own. I haven't got anybody on the plane.

Naftali: What were your quarters like in Saudi Arabia?

Gates: Adequate. No, they were pretty spectacular. We weren't there very long. It was a pretty quick trip. One of my favorite memories of the thing is— they had this briefing book showing what we were going to do. You've got to remember, I'd been in the White House in the Carter administration when Jimmy Carter had sent one unarmed F-15 over Saudi Arabia as a gesture of American support. The Saudis never forgot that. So that's in the back of their minds. The United States says it is coming to help, yeah, right, we'll see. So Cheney makes the political presentation and then Schwarzkopf takes his briefing book which shows the charts of what we're prepared to do. He gets down, he kneels on one knee beside Fahd so he can show him the charts and show him what they plan to do, where they plan to put things and so on. He makes the initial presentation and Fahd says, "An initial deployment of 200,000 troops. This is not one unarmed F-15." These people mean business. And Abdullah is very unenthusiastic about this. He's sort of lurking over on the side. But when Fahd sees that we're serious, he had really already made up his mind.

And the truth is, we were delayed in our departure from the United States because Bandar was working with King Fahd and essentially the bottom line was we weren't even going to go if we didn't have a pretty good idea that the answer would be yes. We were not going to go and have a failed mission. So we were delayed maybe four or five hours leaving Washington while Bandar essentially wrapped this up with the king because we weren't going without pretty good assurance that it would be successful.

Naftali: You had already briefed Bandar on the size of the deployment?

Gates: Bandar knew everything, yeah.

McCall: Did you sit in on those discussions with General Scowcroft and Bandar or were you back at the White House at that time?

Gates: Well, Bandar may not have known the details, because Bandar went back to Saudi Arabia before we did. He was already there.

McCall: Bandar met with General Scowcroft at the White House first and the President talked with Fahd on the phone.

Gates: He may have had some idea of the scale of what we were talking about.

McCall: Then he went and saw Cheney over at the Pentagon, and I think they'd go into details then, but you didn't meet with Bandar before you sent him over?

Gates: No, you see, I didn't get back until Saturday afternoon. I immediately went down to the White House and Scowcroft said, "Pack your bags. You're going to Saudi Arabia tomorrow with Cheney." So this by-play before was not something I had had any part in or knew really anything about at that point. But it was clear to me that whatever information Bandar already had, the king was still pretty stunned by the magnitude of what Schwarzkopf laid out for him. I will tell you one story, I don't know if anybody else has told, and that is the story about the meeting where the President, the famous October 30th meeting, when the President is briefed on the offensive strategy and what it would take, because I'll never forget it.

The President had been pushing very hard for an offensive strategy and the truth, to throw Saddam out of Kuwait. And the truth of the matter is that the military, the chiefs were very content with the deployment of 200,000 to 215,000 troops to Saudi Arabia that essentially protected Saudi Arabia, and they had no enthusiasm for an offensive effort to throw Saddam out. And the President kept pushing and pushing and pushing and finally the military agreed to put together a plan and come over and see us.

This was during— and they came over with their briefing. And Schwarzkopf's deputy gave the briefing. Colin was there, it was the gang of eight plus the briefer who was Schwarzkopf's deputy.

In a shortened version, what happened was— My experience with the military over the years has been that they are so accustomed, after Vietnam, to civilians wanting to use military force that any time a President demands a contingency plan to consider, the military puts together a force that is so overwhelming that the President will balk at the cost and at the disruption and everything else and not do it. This is exactly what happened when President Reagan, for example, was considering an invasion of Libya in 1985 and the military came forward with a proposal that looked like D-day, for the Libyans for God's sake. We're talking about three carrier battle groups, divisions and so on and so forth, and that's essentially what I think the military strategy was in this meeting with Bush, to put together a package that was so daunting he would say, "Well, let's stand pat."

So the briefer starts out, "First we'll need the Seventh Corps out of Germany." Okay, you're going to take the heart of NATO's defense, that had been in Germany since 1945, where everything is painted dark green and you're going to move it from Germany to Saudi Arabia, the two heaviest divisions in the American Army. Okay. "Then we'll need six carrier battle groups." We had never put six carrier battle groups in the same theater of action since there were aircraft carriers, and we're looking, that's sort of a hundred ships or something like that by the time you count all of the other stuff.

Remember, this is a week before the mid-year elections. And then the poison pill. If that hadn't gotten him, this one would. "Oh, and you'll have to activate both the National Guard and the Reserves." In other words, you're going to reach into every community in America and take people away from their homes and their jobs. To the day I die I'll never forget, Bush pushed his chair back, stood up, looked at Cheney and said, "You've got it, let me know if you need more," and walked out of the room.

Cheney's jaw dropped. Powell's jaw dropped. Cheney looks at Scowcroft and says, "Does he know what he just authorized?" And Brent smiled and he said, "He knows perfectly well what he authorized."

Naftali: Well, for a second act.

Edwards: I have a question, because we're up to October now. What would have happened if Saddam had gone into Saudi Arabia before we had hardly any troops there at all?

Gates: I don't think there's anything we could have done. And it would have been a hell of a problem. And what people don't realize is, I mean everybody talks about Desert Storm being so wonderful and everything. We had five months to prepare and we went into a country with the best air and sea lift capability, infrastructure capability of probably any non-first world country in the world in terms of runways, in terms of dock facilities, port facilities and everything else. I mean, everything was ideal from our standpoint in terms logistics, including having a ton of time to go ahead and do this. In fact, one of the reasons why I proposed the creation of NIMA (National Imagery and Mapping Agency) in 1992 was a very simple episode—Webster told me about this—when the satellite went over at one point during the invasion, the Iraqi armor was less than ten miles from the Saudi border. And the satellite disappears, and nobody has a clue what's going to happen. Nobody even thought to send up like a piper cub or something like that to find out whether these guys are coming across the Saudi border.

So these guys all sit down in the White House in a high state of pucker, waiting to find out if Saddam is moving right on through to Ras Tanura, and it turns out he doesn't and he could have, and we wouldn't have known anything about it until he was there. The idea behind creating NIMA in my view was that you have one guy, like the Director of NSA, who has the ability to task every asset in the system from a

satellite to a piper cub airplane so you could get one phone call to the attaché in Riyadh and say, “Get your damn plane up to the border and find out if Saddam’s coming across.” But we were blocked.

Naftali: Did he go into the neutral zone? Did Saddam?

Gates: I don’t know, I don’t think so.

Masoud: But, when he doesn’t go into Saudi Arabia, because that really would have been the way to do it, to go straight through—

Gates: Yes, he probably wishes to this day he had.

Masoud: Absolutely. But, do you think, or did you think then, that if he hadn’t done it by then, it wasn’t in his plans. That he didn’t want to do it.

Gates: No, we did not know that and we were, we didn’t know it and we didn’t know what to think. We didn’t know if this was a pause of a few days to regroup, reinforce, refuel, resupply and so on and then move on in. Because Saudi Arabia was as helpless two days after the invasion as it was ten minutes after the invasion of Kuwait. So that’s why we sent over the aircraft as fast as we could get them, to put anything in place that would at least deter him or get him to slow down or reconsider or whatever. Because, until we began to have a serious force there, there was a general belief that he could go across that border pretty much anytime.

Naftali: From defectors or any other source of information after the war, did you ever get a sense that he considered going to Saudi Arabia.

Gates: I don’t know whether we heard that or not, I just don’t know. But, you know, the other side of it is, if he had been a real strategist, he would simply have taken the Rumailia oil field. Because if he had, he’d still be there. We would not have gone to war for the Rumailia oil field. We damn near didn’t go to war for Kuwait.

McCall: There still are stories swirling about one of the reasons that he didn’t do more was that he was still hoping to buy off some of the Arabs, that there had been this effort on his part to approach them and say you can have X amount of the loot from Kuwait. Did you have a sense of that anytime during the Desert Shield portion, hearing those stories.

Gates: No.

McCall: Because I knew Mubarak reported back on that and some others did, too.

Gates: It was interesting, after we left Saudi Arabia, Brent called the plane and said they wanted us to stop in Egypt, and it was essentially to get Mubarak’s permission to put the aircraft carrier Eisenhower through the Suez Canal, but also essentially to get him on board. Mubarak was very hot, he was madder than hell. Cheney and Schwarzkopf and I were sitting up in Alexandria in his palace, and he made very clear to us, he said, “I don’t care anything about the Kuwaitis, they’re a bunch of shysters and they deserve everything they got. They wouldn’t help us and now they’re asking for our help. I don’t care anything about the Kuwaitis, but Saddam lied to me.” And that made all the difference. Mubarak put Egypt in the war because Saddam lied to him. Not because of strategic considerations, not because of anything other than the fact that he felt personally betrayed and embarrassed.

Masoud: You also forgave a big chunk of Egypt’s debt.

Gates: He made this decision before anything was offered to him. He made it on August 5th, the same time he made the decision to let the Eisenhower to go through.

McCall: Do you recall anything about—this is another thing I’d heard from various sources—that the Kuwaitis stood down before the Iraqi invasion and actually at one point turned down an overture of American aid prior to that, the last couple of days ahead of time?

Gates: I just don’t remember. Again, not being in town—

McCall: Had you heard anything later? You came back to town, went straight off to Saudi Arabia, then did the Egypt leg. Then you went to Morocco to see –

Gates: We had this big deal. Scowcroft called me when we leave Egypt. He said, “The President may want you to go to Morocco.” I said, “Brent, we want to come home.” This of course was driving Schwarzkopf’s staff absolutely nuts. They had no briefing books for Egypt, no briefing books for Morocco and they’re going all these places and they can’t do anything to help their principal. “How can he perform without a briefing book, without us giving him all this support?” You know, we’re just sort of making these decisions on the fly up there in the front end of the plane and these guys are just going nuts at the back. I sort of wanted to say, go iron another shirt or something. So, I said, “Brent, we’re on our way to Shannon, and at a certain point, we’re going to run out of gas, in terms of going to Morocco.” He said, “Well find out how long before you have to go, how much time do I have before you have a no-go decision to go to Rabat without refueling?” I put the phone down, got the estimate from the pilot and I went back to him and told he we had about an hour. He called back in fifty minutes and said, “Go to Morocco.” I turned to Cheney and Schwarzkopf and said, “We’re going to Morocco.”

Naftali: To talk to Hassan.

Gates: To talk to Hassan and get him on board.

Naftali: Who presumable was already on. Ceremonial—

Gates: Yes, I think this was George Bush paying attention to sensibilities.

McCall: Wasn’t Hassan the first one to offer troops?

Gates: He may have been, I just don’t remember.

McCall: So when do you actually touch back in Tunis?

Gates: Let’s see, probably around, we did, we left Riyadh and did Cairo and Rabat all in about 18 hours.

Naftali: How did you get to Alexandria by the way?

Gates: Took the attaché’s prop plane. Because the runway at the airport in Alexandria was too small to take Cheney’s plane. So as the story appears in several of the books, we show up and here’s this little teeny, tiny, I mean, it’s like a clown car. You’ve got Schwarzkopf, Cheney, the ambassador, me, a couple of aides, a security guy, all piling out of this little tiny Cessna and here sits the 727 from Iraq and we’re parked next to it. One of the books says it was the only time in the war the Iraqis had air superiority. Of course Schwarzkopf alone was big enough to fill the Cessna, so it was a little tight.

McCall: You got back to the United States after the first four NSC meetings, about, how to decide the initial response. Then there’s a series of Deputies Committee meetings on the Gulf. Over the next few days from the 8th to the 15th, the 14th, there’s a series of DC meetings. Do you remember much about them?

Gates: No. But it presumably had to do with—there were three basic, several threads of activity for the deputies. The first was doing the leg work in terms of support to Baker and the President in assembling the coalition. The second was drafting and putting together the initiatives for the UN resolutions. A

third, once we really got rolling, was the fundraising activity. Brady always was very unhappy about the fundraising trips because he said that Baker got all the easy marks and he—Baker got the Emir and King Fahd and some of these guys—and Brady had to go to Tokyo and Seoul and places like that, really hard targets, Germany. He bitched and moaned about that through the whole episode. Then we did a lot of stuff in terms of the planning of the war aims and doing the war aims papers and just a variety of things like that.

McCall: How early did the war aims papers start?

Gates: I think we did not start that until probably December.

McCall: That late? So how would the military planning be made in terms of what the objectives were, what forces were going to be needed?

Gates: Well, I think it was pretty much as I said earlier, we knew, the President had laid down what the goal was, we were going to throw Saddam out of Kuwait. So that was pretty straightforward guidance for the military in terms of the size of the force they were going to need. What we were doing was just really codifying it, putting it down on papers. As I said, the first two aims took us about ten minutes, and it was the third one which was really the source of debate.

McCall: Slightly different track. A lot of controversy over the size of deployment, what was needed, what was overkill, and so forth, about the forces. You already addressed yourself to some of the reasons behind that. Did you have a feeling of a difference in opinion in evaluating the capabilities of the Iraqi forces based on what the CIA was saying, or something else?

Gates: The only difference on the intelligence of any consequence, and it was nontrivial, was the amount of armor being destroyed by the air attacks. And CIA felt that the military assessments in the command were overstating the amount of armor that had been destroyed. As it turned out, CIA was right.

McCall: Once the air war starts.

Gates: Yes, once the air war starts. And that really was the only issue over intelligence.

Naftali: In February of 1991, the press corps starts to criticize the CIA for not having a good war. There was a sense the CIA was not doing all it should.

Gates: Well, like I said, I think there's never been a war in history when the military didn't think that the intelligence was poor. The problem, the only real problem, this gets back to my initiative in creating NIMA, the only real problem in providing intelligence in the war, and Colin Powell put it absolutely right. He said, "No commanders in history ever had better intelligence." He was very public about that. Part of the problem was that Schwarzkopf didn't want intelligence and didn't like intelligence and he only got an intelligence unit in his command when Powell ordered him to take one. So Schwarzkopf was not an enthusiastic consumer of intelligence as a military commander.

Masoud: What's the reasoning behind that?

Gates: Beats the hell out of me, I don't know. The other thing though, and it was a real problem, was that in contrast to SIGINT which flowed quickly and fairly seamlessly from NSA (National Security Agency) directly to subordinate commanders in the field, imagery went directly from NPIC (National Photographic Interpretation Center) in the satellites directly into Riyadh into the headquarters. The problem there was that the military had 13 different transmission systems for imagery out of Riyadh to the subordinate commands. In contrast to the standardization of communications, and so on, that had

happened over the years under the director of NSA's authority, none of that had ever happened in the imagery world, so each service and even parts of each service, designed their own system for transmitting imagery and the result was the imagery piled up in Riyadh and in many cases did not get to the field commanders that needed it. That was the biggest criticism of intelligence support during the war. And it really wasn't a CIA problem as much as it was a military problem. But it was the reason why I wanted to create NIMA (National Imagery and Mapping Agency), because one of the most important authorities of the director of NSA is his ability to impose standardization of communications and to impose certain other standards that allow this transmission across systems and across bureaucratic lines of authority. And the same thing clearly was needed in the imagery world and that was the main criticism of intelligence after the war including post mortem that was done by the PFIAB (Presidential Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board).

Naftali: Were there SIGINT officers in the field, as there were in World War II with ULTRA officers, to brief commanders?

Gates: I'm sure there were within the military.

Naftali: Is that how they delivered it? What about the attack on the shelter, on Amariya? Was that a product of bad intelligence?

Gates: I think that most of us where were involved at the time continue to believe that that factory was exactly what we said it was at the time and that the "baby milk" notion was just—sorry, I'm mixing two things up. The shelter was in fact not only a command and control bunker, but an important intelligence node and what the Iraqis had done was bring in the families of the intelligence officers, put them in that bunker to protect them. So they had put civilians in a genuine military target. It was regrettable that there was an innocent loss of life, but it was quite a legitimate military target. And I don't think we knew in advance that they had the families in there.

Naftali: Speaking of civilians as targets, there was a period in the early part of this crisis where Saddam had human shields, as he called them. Was there ever any attempt to plan a rescue operation for these people?

Gates: Not in Baghdad, not that I know, I don't think so.

Masoud: Elsewhere? Because I think there were some being held outside of Baghdad.

Gates: I don't think there was ever any planning to do that. The only rescue mission that was every contemplated was in Kuwait for the people holed up in the embassy.

Naftali: In the U.S. embassy?

Gates: Yes. At the very early—

McCall: What about the choppers? At one point the President was talking about sending a couple of choppers in. Maybe it was the same— because I know there was one by sea contingency where there was one chopper—

Gates: Because I think that the embassy compound was near the water.

McCall: Let me ask about a different intelligence problem, and this was the issue of sanctions, the effectiveness of the sanctions. You alluded before to several sources of information that make it to a President. President Bush took some of the outside anecdotal evidence about the effectiveness of the sanctions very seriously. What do you remember was coming up through the system and what impact did it have?

Gates: I wasn't at CIA, I had resigned from CIA, I had no plans ever to go back to CIA, and so I had no stake in defending them or speaking well of them. But I think CIA had a great war. And one of the areas in which they had a great war was they did absolutely incredible work on monitoring the sanctions. There were over a thousand diplomatic demarches made on the basis of CIA's information to other governments over violations of the sanctions and they were very cooperative as it became necessary. Getting information down to a level of specificity that it became actionable. One of the areas in which CIA was giving us some outstanding reporting was on the impact of the sanctions in Iraq, and it was clear from CIA's analysis that the sanctions were essentially having no impact on Saddam or his decision-making apparatus or the military or anything else, other than the public in Iraq, and that the Iraqis could hold out indefinitely with what was being smuggled in and out. I have always believed that the argument to let the sanctions run was essentially a political one rather than a fact-based one, made by people who simply didn't want to launch a military conflict, including the military.

McCall: We made allusions before to Iran. During this period also there is some question about how porous the Iran-Iraq border was. I've heard stories both ways about how much on board Iran was and also that they were angling to take a larger role if we could provide them spares for their American equipment.

Gates: No, there was never any serious discussion of involving Iran in the war. There was no interest in that. We figured that Iran's attitude was, this is great, our two worst enemies going to war with each other.

Masoud: We often hear about the need to keep the coalition together and therefore we had to go and ask the Israelis not to do anything. Wouldn't we also have had to do that with the Iranians? The Iranians could have taken advantage of this moment of weakness for Saddam and gone and tried to take back what they had lost in the Iran-Iraq war. Had we ever sent signals to them saying hey, don't you do anything either?

Gates: Frankly we didn't care. I mean, in our case, that would have been our two worst enemies—

Masoud: Wouldn't it have broken up the coalition?

Gates: I don't think it would have.

Masoud: You don't think so? I mean, the Gulf states had no love for Iran.

Gates: Exactly. I just don't think it would have—Iraq had invaded one of their number. They didn't like the Iranians. So what's the harm in the two of these guys going at it? I think that the more legitimate factor was that Iran had played an incredible price in the Iraq-Iran war and I think there were in no position to anything of consequence, and had no desire to do it. I figure they'd just let us do it. Although, if nobody thought that the Iraqis would invade Kuwait, my guess is the same number of people thought the United States would send a force of a half a million soldiers to the Middle East to liberate Kuwait.

McCall: You had an interesting role at one point in October-November of '90 when the President is going around doing stump speeches during the campaign and he is on his Hussein equals Hitler mode. Could you talk a little about what your minder role was during that period.

Gates: He was reading this history of World War II by Martin Gilbert.

Masoud: Great history.

Gates: And the parallels just kept jumping out at him and I'd talk to Brent and I'd say you might want to soft pedal that a little bit and so on, but the truth is, he really believed it and, you know, we toned him

down a little bit, but not much. I mean, the reason that Bush felt as strongly as he did, in my view, was not jobs and not oil, but I think he believed very deeply that the world had a new opportunity with the collapse of the Soviet Union and to allow an unprovoked aggression to stand would have set a terrible precedent and wrecked whatever opportunity there was for structuring a new world order in the aftermath of the forty-year-long Cold War. So I think it was for mainly strategic reasons and his view of the future that Bush felt so deeply about invading, about reversing the consequences.

McCall: Do you feel that the rhetoric—

Gates: And the rhetoric became part of that. And because he in his own mind drew very direct parallels with Hitler's early aggressions in the late '30s.

Naftali: Do you think he intentionally mispronounced Saddam Hussein's name?

Gates: Absolutely—Sa-damn.

McCall: Do you feel that the rhetoric though boxed him in a corner a little bit when it came to war aims or the perception of the end of the war?

Gates: I don't know if it boxed him in as much as it made him vulnerable to criticism. And I'm not sure. It's a very fine line that in my view cannot be walked in making war. About 15% of the public favored the United States doing something to reverse this invasion, and the President in some way had to gin up the public that this was something, that this was an event that had to be dealt with and only the United States could deal with it and why it was important. I think that's why the historical parallels to World War II became important in terms of unanswered aggression. And, it is interesting to me that the comments about jobs, for example, was not Bush's, but Baker's. And I don't think Bush ever really made a big deal out of the oil aspect of it either. Others did, but I don't think he did. It was always the focus on unanswered aggression where he was concerned. That's why the Martin Gilbert book was so important. He would carry it with him all the time on Air Force One. He was just reading it through this whole preparatory period, and, so I think it created an expectation that given the enormity of the military victory that the political victory therefore should follow, which means the replacement of the regime, or the replacement of Saddam. Then, when it didn't happen, then obviously his strong rhetoric and the way he had characterized Saddam was politically awkward, but I don't think he ever felt boxed in by it.

McCall: Let me turn this a little bit towards what's going on in the NSC during the Desert Shield time frame. There's a lot of paper coming from Richard Haass and others up to you and Scowcroft. Can you describe what is going on, how things are being tasked?

Gates: Well Haass played an absolutely central role in all of this, it was really Richard's finest hour. Brent and I sort of joking, only half jokingly acknowledged Richard did his best stuff when he had less than an hour. If you gave Richard a day it generally was mediocre, but if you gave him a half hour it was brilliant. So he basically was staffing us on virtually every aspect of the thing. Now, other people would get involved insofar as we were dealing with coalition politics. The people representing other parts of the world on the NSC would have some bit part, but Richard was really the key, and Sandy Charles, who worked with him.

McCall: What about your own contacts say, with Bandar and the rest during this time. How active—

Gates: I had very little contact with foreigners during this period. My primary contact during this period was Primakov when he came to visit.

Naftali: Let's talk a little bit about Primakov, tell us what you remember.

Gates: One of the more satisfying experiences of my role during this period. Primakov came, I forget the exact timing, but it was in an effort to dissuade Bush from launching the war. So they had the meeting in the Oval Office and Bush left it open about whether he would want to talk further with Primakov. Primakov was to, in essence, stay around, hang out in Washington. Primakov was no sooner out of the office then several of us, Brent, the President and I, and I forget who else was there, probably Baker and so on, agreed that this was just a stalling action on the part of the Soviets, it was absolutely of no value and it was counterproductive and we had no intention of talking further with Primakov. Well, there was a luncheon being given in Blair House in Primakov's honor and I guess I was the senior American attending. So I was instructed to tell Primakov that he need not change his travel plans, that he could go home promptly. It gave me great delight to do so.

McCall: What were your observations about the Primakov/Shevardnadze split during this period and who had the ear of Gorbachev et cetera.

Gates: Well, Shevardnadze was really, I think, quite isolated in Moscow by early fall of 1990. The Soviet military already blamed him for the reunification of Germany. They blamed him for the Soviet army having to withdraw from Eastern Europe. They blamed him for some of the concessions that had been made in the arms control agreements and he had done a lot of these things unilaterally and then gone back and told Gorbachev that he had done them. Especially if he knew Gorbachev wouldn't agree beforehand. So Shevardnadze did not have a strong hand to play in Moscow in the political arena. But, because he was so close to the Americans, I think Gorbachev felt he had to continue to deal with him.

But during that period, Gorbachev in essence tried to play both sides of the street and he pursued two parallel paths; one trying to prevent a war and preserve the Soviet Union's relationship with one of its oldest clients, and, at the same time, work the western alliance and the U.S. through Shevardnadze and doing the Iraqi thing with Primakov.

McCall: Before we get too far off from the Desert Storm's effect, I have one question about this issue of Gorbachev versus the right wing et cetera, and this whole thing about selling out during unification and all. Prior to the Washington summit in May, early June of 1990, there were some reports swirling that the military was trying to reign in Gorbachev. The rumor was that they would not let Gorbachev go about without some sort of military aide to keep an eye on him. Prior to that summit there was some fear about how much independence Gorbachev actually had at the summit. Do you remember any discussions about that?

Gates: No, I don't think that ever came to us, any sense of that.

McCall: Were you at the summit meetings where unification was discussed?

Gates: Yes.

McCall: Do you remember much about that?

Gates: You mean the Soviet side having a collective apoplectic fit?

McCall: Could you give some color to that. I think it's a great incident, but we don't know much about it.

Gates: I'm sure you've talked to others. The meetings are sort of going along in a sort of desultory way, and the President makes the observation that, "Don't you think a country ought to have the right to chose its own alliance." And Gorbachev replied in the affirmative and then Bush followed up and he said, "Well under those circumstances, don't you think that the German people themselves ought to be able to choose which alliance they're in?" and Gorbachev said yes, at which point I thought

Akhromeyev was going to have a stroke. And all these guys are looking at each other and Gorbachev is kind of oblivious to the hubbub on his side, that all these guys are sort of falling out of their chairs and so on, figuratively speaking. We all knew something terribly important had happened and Brent, as I recall, wrote the President a note that sort of said, “Get him to say it again.” And he said it again. Then there was a recess and everybody went out and I’m sure the entire Soviet side beat up on Gorbachev, “What have you done?” and so on. And they had a couple of old German hands on their side, you know, who had followed the lore of all of the little arcana of four power authorities in Germany for decades. But he remained adamant and President in one subsequent session said that in their press remarks the President was going to say that Gorbachev had agreed with this and would Gorbachev chime in. And, as I recall what happened, there was eventually an agreement that Bush would say it and Gorbachev would not contradict it or deny it.

But it was one of those instances when everybody at the table knew a huge threshold had been crossed. I think there was a general feeling on our side that Gorbachev probably didn’t appreciate just how big a threshold had been crossed, but once he said it, his pride prevented him from walking back from it.

Naftali: Wow, he just reversed over 35 years—

Gates: Well, political scientists and historians I think will have a hard time grasping in the future that the reason that the Soviet Union was dissolved was that it was the only way Boris Yeltsin could figure out to get Gorbachev out of his job. To abolish the job, if that required abolishing the Soviet Union, so be it. That the hatred between those two guys, or the hatred of Yeltsin for Gorbachev was so enormous that he was prepared to dismantle the Soviet Union in order to throw Gorbachev out of a job, as Gorbachev had earlier thrown him out of a job.

McCall: There are a couple of things with the Gulf War that we should touch on before we leave the topic. One is the decision to end fighting and this has to do with how the doors were supposed to be slammed shut on Republican Guard. Do you remember much about what was known before the meeting, in terms of the situation on the ground?

Gates: Well, the whole thing started, in terms of the final phase of the war, with the “Highway of Death” sequences. And it really bothered Powell. I think it bothered Colin a lot more than it bothered some of the rest of us. And Colin, basically at one of our meetings, and I can’t remember the day, essentially said, “This is turning from a military conflict into a rout and from a rout into a massacre and the American army does not do massacres.” He said, “I think that we will have completed our objectives and be prepared to stop within 24 hours.” Then the next day he came in and we started talking about a cessation of fighting.

Naftali: When you say “we” it is—

Gates: It is the gang of eight. Started talking about a cessation of fighting and as I recall, the President asked Colin, “How much more time do you need?” Colin said, “Let me call Schwarzkopf.” And the picture that you’ve seen of Colin talking on the phone from the drawer of the desk in the Oval Office, that’s the secure phone in the Oval Office and that’s him talking to Schwarzkopf. And Schwarzkopf said that he thought that he needed just three or four more hours. I remember Sununu piping up and saying, “Well, if we extend it a couple of hours beyond that it will be an even hundred hours which has a nice ring to it.” So in fact, the military was given more time than they asked for to close the door. I think what happened was there was a fog of war problem, and that Schwarzkopf did not know exactly the status of the battle that was going on north of him and how much time would be required to actually close the door.

Naftali: Why was he in such a rush? Why wouldn't he wait for the fog of war to clear before making this kind of call?

Gates: I don't honestly know the answer to the question. And the degree to which Colin was pressing to end it. All I know is that the initiative in terms of when to end the war, the fighting, came from the military, not from Bush or any of the civilians, and whether Schwarzkopf had checked with his commanders and they underestimated what they needed, or whether he didn't check and just made his own off-the-cuff estimate, which is not unlike him, I don't know. But the initiative, in terms of— From the civilian standpoint the military was given more time than they asked for, regardless of how feckless the reason.

Naftali: At this point was there any hope of getting rid of Saddam?

Gates: We believed—well, first of all, we had hoped throughout the air war that we'd get lucky. We can't assassinate somebody but we can flatten his capital city and kill God knows how many people. And the truth is, we never targeted a single thing believing, or in the belief that he was there. We didn't have that good intelligence and we knew he was moving around and frankly, my guess was that he was staying in hospitals, schools and mosques. He's no dummy.

So, we were kind of hoping against hope that we'd get lucky but it was nothing more than a hope. We genuinely believed, and had some reason to believe from our intelligence, that the magnitude of the defeat was so overwhelming that the army would take out Saddam when the war was over. My recollection is that later, as we found out more, that that was not an unrealistic expectation and hope. But the unexpected uprisings by both the Kurds in the north and the Shiites in the south enabled Saddam in essence to tell his generals, "Without me you're going to lose the country. In order to fight these internal enemies in the south and in the north, you have to have me." By the time those rebellions had been put down he had, first of all, executed a couple of hundred generals and had re-established his terror network and re-established himself in power. I believe that had there not been those uprisings, that the army probably would have taken Saddam out at that point. But it had to have been within a few days of the end of the war.

Naftali: Was there any pressure from our Arab partners during this period when we were trying to decide whether to end the war or not. Was there any pressure either way from the Arab partners as to how long you could keep fighting and keep the coalition together.

Gates: Well the Arabs were very nervous about being involved in this thing in the first place. If you ever saw an army move slowly it was the Egyptians and the Syrian units moving toward Kuwait. They really were there pretty much for show. One of the things that I talk about, I don't remember whether I wrote about this or not, but in essence, there were two aspects to American policy, one was the essential importance of building the coalition and having a very broad coalition, and the second was ensuring that the coalition did not intrude at all into the military operation, that the coalition had no influence over our military strategy. And that pretty much worked out. And it really is a huge tribute to both Baker and Cheney, both in their individual efforts, but also in their collaborative effort that they were able to keep those two in tandem and make it work as well as it did. And I have to give Schwarzkopf credit in managing such a diverse coalition and keeping all those guys on board.

It really didn't matter. We didn't want them on the battlefield. They were just going to be in the way. It was a huge complication and we tried to position them in such a way that frankly, the only ground forces that were of any consequence were our own and the Brits and that worked out pretty well as well. But they never had any influence one way or the other. The one thing we did know for a fact, or just knew, it

was an assumption, but we all, to this day believe it was a valid assumption, that if we did try to move into Iraq, in any way to bring about a change of regime, it would have shattered the coalition instantly and we would have been alone. Possibly the Brits with us but even that's not entirely sure.

McCall: I want to go back also a little more to the decision to end the fighting, because there's an element that you raised before about war aims and this the destruction of the Republican Guard and also what forces were still intact on the ground there. Was there, do you remember what reports there were about what had gotten out, what might still be there in terms of coherent, say even division-size elements?

Gates: Well, we had the impression as I said, when the hostilities ceased, that those divisions had all been completely destroyed and their equipment captured. Even after some element of them escaped, Powell was very adamant, and I think accurately so, that as a fighting force, the Republican Guard had been destroyed, that they had in fact left behind nearly all of their equipment. They'd gotten some things across but mainly trucks and things like that, not armor, very little armor, artillery and stuff. And that the Iraqi capacity to menace their neighbors had been destroyed. And I think everybody, including the intelligence agencies, completely agreed with that. So I think there was a sense that, in fact, although we hadn't gotten everything, that we had accomplished the objective.

I'll tell you one story that got Scowcroft and I into some hot water with Schwarzkopf. Brent and I both read a lot of history and Schwarzkopf, after the air war began, kept saying he needed more time to prepare for the ground war, more and more force, more force to have arrived in country. And Brent and I made the mistake of beginning to make allusions to General McClellan—

Naftali: Oh my goodness. That was unkind.

Gates: Well, we thought justified. I mean, when you consider the force—

Naftali: Monty, Montgomery would have been a good comparison.

Gates: Well, this got back to Schwarzkopf, and, well, let's just say that when it came to the whole war effort, the three most hawkish people in the government all sat in the White House and the fourth was Dick Cheney. And everybody else really wanted the whole thing just to go away. And so the military was a little— Well, they thought we were civilians. After all, Scowcroft was an Air Force General, what does he know about fighting a war? They thought there were these civilians over there in the White House who didn't know what the hell they were doing, and then the McClellan thing really sort of ripped it.

Naftali: Remember when this was?

Gates: Well, it was after the air war began.

McCall: This was at about the time the Ken Burn's series on the Civil War was running if I recall. Because wasn't the remark, "General, if you're not using your army, do you mind if I borrow it for a while?"

Naftali: What role, if any, were the revolts to play in containing Saddam or removing him? These revolts, the Shiite revolt in the south and the Kurdish revolt in the north.

Gates: The truth is, they were the last thing we wanted, or needed. The United States played no part in fomenting either of those. They were really spontaneous.

Naftali: But, by March, you now have a policy problem, which is what do you do about it? Do you help?

Gates: Well, and our ability to do anything about it had been substantially reduced, if not eliminated by the agreement at Safwan.

Naftali: Was that a—

Gates: That was just a mistake by Schwarzkopf, and we were just horrified when we read it in Washington, but you can't go out and tell your commander to go back and say "Oops, you can't fly those after all, I lied. Gotcha." And Colin made clear later, and the Agency actually backed him up, that in fact, most of the worst harm done to both the Shiite and the Kurds was in fact by ground forces and not by the helicopters, so, in retrospect, in reality, allowing the helicopters to fly probably did not make the difference between success and failure.

Naftali: But wasn't there some consideration of doing something for the Kurds, especially in March?

Gates: I don't recall that there was. I don't remember when, I think that our preoccupation from very early on was the realization that we had a major humanitarian disaster brewing, as Saddam began moving north and attacking the Kurds. My problem is I can't remember the timeline.

Naftali: But I seem to remember that it was the British Prime Minister who was the one who suggested that there be a humanitarian zone in the northern part of Iraq. Wasn't that a British proposal?

Gates: I just don't remember.

McCall: Could you talk a little bit about the—

Gates: My problem is that beginning in May of '91, I have something else on my mind—

Naftali: Go ahead James, and then we'll start talking about that other thing on your mind.

McCall: Well I wonder if you might talk a little bit about the issue about weapons of mass destruction and the campaign to eradicate those targets. Is there anything you want to shed light on that?

Gates: Again, we had a lot of very good information from CIA.

Masoud: Anything from the Israelis by the way? I would imagine they would have had great intel.

Gates: It would be very difficult for us at the White House to differentiate where CIA got its information, I mean, what they got from liaison and what they got from their own sources, what they got from the Jordanians or the Israelis or the Egyptians or others, or the Brits.

The one and only time the President looked over Cheney and Powell's shoulder in terms of the military campaign, was particularly the bombing targets. And again, this didn't sit terribly well over at the Pentagon, but the President sent me over to the Pentagon to review the target list to make sure that there were no churches, mosques, hospitals. Were we going to bomb something that was right next to a great historical treasure, and so on and so forth. Sort of smiling through gritted teeth, Cheney and Powell and I over lunch, or Cheney and Powell with the gritted teeth, over a sandwich, took me through the target list and I was able to go back and assure the President. It was an awkward situation for me. They didn't like it very much, but we'd worked together closely enough and everything. And I explained, I said—

Naftali: Now, wait a second. You were supposed to, you were to look for targets, humanitarian targets, mistakes that they had put on this list?

Gates: No, no, I was to make sure, I was simply to look, I always regarded it mainly as checking off a box. That somebody outside the Department of Defense had looked at their target list, at the kinds of targets they were going to hit. No specific targets.

Naftali: Yes, but how would you know?

Gates: The kinds of targets they were going to hit, and make sure that there was nothing on there that would create a bad impression.

Naftali: But, how were you to know what these were?

Gates: Well, for one thing, for example, are you going to hit dams? Are you going to hit—how far down the oil production cycle are you going to go? So there were a lot of dual purpose targets that could very well have been on the list, that in fact had not been approved.

Naftali: They explained to you each point on this—

Gates: We went through targets, we went through categories of targets. In terms of, you know, you going to do food production? Are you going to hit certain kinds of factories and not other kinds of factories. That's what the discussion was about. It lasted about an hour, an hour and a half, and I was able to go back over to the President and say, for the record, that the target list and the categories of targets, the kind of targets being hit, were consistent with all the guidance that he had provided.

Naftali: You know, after your McClellan comment, they were now, now they had every right to call you Lyndon Johnson.

Gates: Well, except that the McClellan comment came later. After the air war had started. And, another thing that ticked them off, was that it was essentially Scowcroft, it was Scowcroft who rejected their original strategy for the war, for the ground attack. Because the original plan from Schwarzkopf, was a head-on attack, into the heart of the Iraqi line, a frontal assault.

Naftali: What an idiotic idea. Geez.

Gates: That's what Brent thought. And he said, "Why don't you do this?" and Swarzkopf said, "Oh God, that's so hard, it's out in the desert and it's dry and hot." Anyways Cheney immediately signed up with Scowcroft on that so Dick provided some considerable cover for Brent on that one. These guys thought they were getting a lot of help they didn't really need.

Naftali: Since you both were readers of history, and read a lot of history, you know about the D-Day deception and the role that deception plays. The marines off shore, was that our D-day deception?

Gates: Yes.

Naftali: I thought so. Did the marines know they were part of a D-day deception?

Gates: Probably not.

Naftali: No, I mean—

Gates: But, what nobody expected, including the marines, was that the marine force on land would move as fast as it did. In fact, the attack almost got out of whack because the marines were moving so fast as they went into Kuwait.

Naftali: I've actually talked to some FBI people who were running double agents during that period and my understanding is that you again, like the D-day, we were giving them the impression that the attack was going to be along the coast of Kuwait.

Gates: But the marines got their share in on the land. The guys on water didn't, but, come budget time, the Marines were covered.

McCall: What about the great SCUD hunt, is there anything you'd like to add?

Gates: Well, for those of us who had been involved in the strategic arms business and in watching mobile ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) for a long time, it was a very eye opening experience, about how damn hard it is. Our military was very unhappy at the magnitude of the air resources that were diverted to look for SCUDs and away from the primary targets, primarily in order to keep Israel out of the war. It was essentially a political decision, driven by the need to keep the Israelis out.

Naftali: Were there any crisis points in the relationship with the Israeli's that are not in the record, or that historians—

Gates: No, I don't think any that aren't already on the record. And, after the first couple of nights—and in a way, I mean, in some respects we sent Wolfowitz and Eagleburger over there as hostages, it was a very medieval sort of thing. As a gesture of good faith we'll let you take our Deputy Secretary of State and Under-Secretary of Defense for policy. If anything happens, well. That in essence was why we sent them over there. It was a gesture of good faith, and, you know, we share your pain kind of thing, or at least they do.

Naftali: Were the Israelis sensitive to how difficult it was to find these SCUDs? I mean, did they understand that?

Gates: Not particularly. And of course it made our military just furious. But the Israelis in essence were saying, you know, give us a few hours and we'll find them and take care of them. That sort of made our generals a little ticked that these arrogant Israelis thought that their forces were so much better than ours that they thought they could do that.

Masoud: But the Israelis had, of course, demonstrated their mettle against the Osiraq nuclear reactor. I know there had been some reports that after Saddam started lobbing these SCUDs at Israel, that in some quarters of the US government there was a feeling that we should just let the Israelis retaliate. What side did you come down on in that debate?

Gates: Nobody in the Gang of Eight ever said that.

Masoud: Nobody said that?

Gates: There may have been others in the government but that was never—every effort of the Gang of Eight was focused on how to keep them out. And that included Cheney, above all, talking to the Arabs.

Naftali: When we convene after the break we'll start talking about that other thing that was on your mind, but before we leave this period when you were Deputy National Security Advisor, did you, were you ever concerned about the relationship between India and Pakistan. Did you ever go out? Did you go on a trip in 1990?

Gates: Yes. When I was in Moscow with Baker. CIA's analysts had been increasingly concerned that the Indians and the Pakistanis were sort of blundering their way into a potential war, that both countries had very weak governments at that point and they were in an action-reaction cycle that neither was strong enough to stop. The analysts were very concerned that if a war did start that it would probably go nuclear. In the first instance by the Pakistanis who would undoubtedly been beaten, or would have been beaten on the conventional side by the Indians. So, they became concerned about this enough that I got word in Moscow that the President wanted me to go down and talk to Benazir Bhutto and to the Indian Prime Minister and see if we could stop the thing and with some proposals for trying to reduce the tensions.

So, when the meeting in Moscow ended, another plane was sent out with John Kelly and Richard Haass on board and then the three of us—actually we invited the Soviets to send somebody and they demurred. We thought that in light of all the things that were going on and so on, that it would be a heck of a signal if both the United States and the Soviet Union were trying to get these two countries to back off. Anyway, they demurred. So I fly to Athens where I'm supposed to try and meet Benazir Bhutto who is on a trip to the Middle East. She is in Oman or someplace and I'm in Athens waiting and offer about three or four venues for this meeting and I will go to her. It becomes quite apparent, quite quickly, over a period of two or three hours, that she doesn't want to meet with me. I finally decide, the hell with it and we go on to Islamabad. I have a meeting with the President and General Beg, the Chief of the General Staff, and one of the things we tried to do in both places was show them just how good our information on what they were doing was. So I laid out, in excruciating detail in front of these guys exactly where their forces were, how many there were, where they were positioned, who was commanding the units and so on. And these guys just were stunned. At one point, then, I talk about their support for terrorists in Kashmir and we know that there are thirty training camps in Pakistan, we know where the camps are and so on. It has the desired effect. Then I turn to General Beg and I said, "General, I have one other piece of information for you. Our military has war gamed every conceivable conflict between you and the Indians and there isn't a single one you win." I will give Beg credit. He had an incredible poker face. His expression didn't change at all, except for his eyes. Anyway, they didn't give the visit any attention at all. They had a sort of a house photographer take a few pictures and otherwise it was a very quiet visit.

I get to India and I am treated like a visiting head of state. I go in to meet the Prime Minister. When and the US President has a foreign visitor, you have waves of press photographers come into the Oval Office and take pictures and everything. They did that. Television, news, print media, and so on. Lots of attention. But I do the same thing with the Indian government that I did with the Pakistani government, in terms of here where your forces are, here's who is commanding them, here's what the strengths are and so on and here is what we know you're doing in Kashmir in terms of violation of human rights and where you're not playing fair. And in both capitals I laid out a menu of confidence-building measures drawn from our own experience with the Soviets in Europe in terms of on-site inspections, hot lines, a whole range of things. And give them a menu. I also offered to both sides that we will be prepared to serve as an honest broker and provide intelligence information, warning information to both sides, like we had done for 25 years in the Sinai, between Israel and Egypt, but offering our good offices in that respect.

The Indians— It was fascinating, I must say, I still don't fully understand it. But the Indians after that considered me their closest friend in Washington and I finally asked their ambassador why they had reacted so favorably to my visit. He said because it was the first time since the creation of Pakistan that the United States treated India and Pakistan alike, on an even basis. Anyway, within a couple of weeks, they didn't take up our offer of serving as an honest broker, but they did establish the hot line, they did begin to back away from the confrontation and they did begin to implement some of the confidence-building measures that we had suggested.

Naftali: Well, that's quite an achievement, let's take a break.

[Break]

Gates: Just some tid-bits actually, and prompted by the materials you sent me. There's a reference in some of the materials to my January 1990 trip to Manila to see Corey Aquino and that it was kind of a hand-holding operation, and to talk to her a little bit about corruption. The fact is, corruption was the

whole purpose of the visit. And, above all, corruption in her family. The President sent me because for reasons I will never understand, Corey Aquino, after she came to power, took a shine to me. I first went over and briefed her, as DDCI in September—no, I was still DDI. I went over within a month of her taking power, in spring of 1986, before I became DDCI, on what kinds of reforms were necessary. I had our people prepare a lot of stuff on reform in Asia and the importance of beginning with agrarian reform and so on and so forth. And she really liked what she heard. So when she came to Washington in September of 1986, she asked to see me. So I did that and we would talk about these reform measures and so on and so forth. I met with her probably four or five times. So I had a pretty good relationship with her. Again, it was a source of friction with Shultz, because I would come back from these sessions and I'd give a full report and I'd say, "What she's trying is going to fail because she doesn't know how to administer anything and she's surrounded by a bunch of buffoons. Her hearts in the right place, she says all the right things, but nothing is being done." And he had a much more optimistic view.

So, when the need came for someone who could speak very frankly to her, I got tapped, in January of 1990. I flew over in a G5, which meant refueling. I left Andrews, I refueled at Ellsworth, in South Dakota, at Elmendorf in Alaska, at Yakuska in Japan, and then into Manila. Spent six hours on the ground in Manila and turned around and flew right back. So I was gone about 66 hours and all but about six or ten of them were in the airplane.

Anyway, the President had written her a very blunt letter about the problem of corruption and the impact it was having on her being able to get anything accomplished. When I went in to see her, Mike Armacost was the ambassador, there were probably eight or nine people in the room in addition to Corey Aquino and myself, several of her advisors and the ambassador and several of his people and our station chief and so on. We exchanged all these pleasantries and finally she said, "Well, should we meet privately, or is it okay for everybody to sit in?" I said, "Well let me give you the President's letter and then you decide." She read the letter and her face got icier and icier. She finished it. She put it down on her desk very deliberately and she said we should meet alone. So everybody was dismissed except me. Then we had a very candid conversation about her brother who was running the Port of Manila. We didn't have a discussion. We had a one-sided presentation of the information that we had, and it was clear that I had really ripped it. We ended our meeting very formally and I left. Cheney came through two days later and she refused to see the Secretary of Defense and her answer to the ambassador and to the press was "I've seen one too many Americans this week." So that was my visit to Corey Aquino.

Naftali: Other than that—

Gates: See, the only way as Deputy National Security Advisor and as DDCI, I ever got to do any of these missions, was when failure was almost certain, and the State Department wanted to make sure it happened on my watch and not on theirs. So Baker, Shultz, these guys were all very willing to send me on essentially hopeless missions. That was the only time they'd every agree.

Naftali: Nothing came of this mission?

Gates: No.

Naftali: By the way, why did we care?

Gates: It was having a huge impact on her ability to get anything accomplished in her government.

Masoud: This was just after the coup attempt isn't it?

Gates: No, this is, oh— actually it would have been the next month, yes. And we regarded part of her problem with the military was they saw all this and as far as they were concerned, she was just

completely feckless and our view was that unless she began to address some of these problems that there would be many more of these coup attempts.

The next month, there's a reference to the origins of the European Strategy Steering Group on German reunification and NATO reform and so forth. The only reason the European Strategy Steering Group, the books put a much more weighty explanation on the importance of creating this, particularly the book that Philip and Condi wrote on reunification of Germany, and they're very flattering and they talk about the importance of the group and why it was put together the way it was and everything, but it was really a very simple answer. This group was created in addition to the Deputies Committee because Baker couldn't decide which one of his minions he wanted to represent him in the meetings and in the Deputies Committee only Kimmitt could attend, but he wanted Zoellick, Ross, and Reg Bartholomew also to participate. So the only way that we could do this without every other agency demanding to have four people there was to create a wholly new group, and that's the sole reason that the European Strategy Steering Group was created, was to accommodate Baker's need, or desire, to have several people in the room. It worked fine and it actually was probably a good thing to do because they all made a contribution.

Just an anecdote, I've got the story in my book. In May of 1990 when Gorbachev and Bush were at Camp David, Marlin and I were sitting on the porch of one of the cabins, and Gorbachev and the President came careening around the corner with Gorbachev driving a golf cart which I'm certain he had never done before, and they both waved at us and we waved back and while they were waving Gorbachev lost control of the golf cart and nearly crashed head on into a tree. He sort of recovered, the President turned as white as a sheet and kind of looked back over his shoulder at us as he went careening away. Marlin and I were joking that if they had crashed and we had the photographs, our futures would have been assured.

One of the things that we did in the European Strategy Steering Group, and in the Deputies Committee, but especially in the steering group, was that there was a lot of behind the scenes conspiring and figuring out ways to present very controversial things that people weren't going to like, particularly some of the people at State. So you would have a situation in which Zoellick and Blackwill would agree that proposing that each of the former Warsaw Pact states have a liaison mission at NATO. They were in agreement that that would be a good idea. Reg Bartholomew thought it was a terrible idea and so did the Department of Defense. So we worked it out so that when we actually began to meet on some of these initiatives, I would throw this out on the table as my idea and obviously throwing my support behind it. It was really their idea, their creation. Brent had approved it, Baker had approved it, the President was on board, but how do you get it past the rest of the bureaucracy which is hostile to it? We thought that if I threw it out on the table they at least couldn't dismiss it and they would have to wonder at who all had approved it.

So we would very often meet in my office before one of these Steering Group meetings or Deputies Committee meeting and orchestrate how these things would be presented in a way that would bring the bureaucracy on board and help foster a consensus, particularly on some of these bolder departures in arms control and that sort of thing. I just thought it was an interesting way to do business. But it also, behind it, suggests that we regarded this whole thing as pretty serious business and worthy of the investment of time and intellectual energy figuring out how to achieve a consensus in a bureaucracy or to build support for an idea in terms of managing the inter-agency process. That's really it. The other things I've already talked about.

Naftali: Let me ask you one question related to the Gulf War that perhaps you can shed some light on. Right after the Gulf War, the US seems to repair its relationship with Jordan relatively quickly. Was King Hussein indicating a different policy privately from the one he was taking publicly.

Gates: No, but he was more helpful privately in doing some things and in trying to observe the sanctions, in terms of taking care of Iraqi refugees, in terms of talking to us about what was up with Saddam. I mean, everybody in the group that had any experience in foreign policy was friends with King Hussein and they also understood the magnitude of the problem he faced. We couldn't let him off the hook entirely but we also knew he got 90% of his oil from Iraq. I mean, Saddam could just shut down Jordan very fast.

So we did what we had to do publicly and in private we were very critical. The President was very disappointed that King Hussein was not supportive and the king also, as he was wont to do, would say things in public that were very unhelpful. But, by and large, everybody knew that after the war was over, we would still want to do business with King Hussein. So there was a real balancing act in terms of making clear our displeasure with him but at the same time not burning any bridges.

Naftali: What about Yassir Arafat? Of course, our relationship with him has changed dramatically. But again, was there a private policy there on his part? Less hostile than the public one?

Gates: No, and he really ripped it. There was no sympathy for him as a result of a lot of the things that went on.

Naftali: And the Russians during the Gulf—

Gates: Well, we just knew that they were playing both sides of the street and the challenge was how do you keep them on board and not let them screw everything up. It goes back to one of the things where people have gotten the historical record wrong is this line of Thatcher's, reportedly to Bush, about don't go wobbly. It had nothing to do with the beginning of the war. It was after we had imposed the blockade and the first ship came through and the question was whether to attack it. This was in mid August 1990. I was up in Kennebunkport and this was the episode where Baker was trying to nail down Soviet support for the key UN resolution and Baker was asking for more time and that we not attack the ship, that we not board the ship and create an incident, while he was trying to get the Soviets on board. Cheney, Powell, Scowcroft and I all thought that we ought to board the ship. So it was really Baker against all of us. We had one of the famous pictures of this group sitting on the deck in Kennebunkport with Sununu and Eagleburger sitting in for Baker and arguing Baker's point of view

The President made the decision to wait. It was in the lead up to that decision that Margaret Thatcher made her comment about, "Now don't go wobbly on me George," because she was concerned that we might not act. As it turned out in my view, we were all wrong and Baker was right and the President made the right decision in agreeing to delay. Because, as a result, Baker did get the Soviets on board for a very critical resolution and they basically never left the ship as it were. They stayed on board for the duration. It got kind of dicey and pretty painful sometimes and very annoying a lot of the time but they stayed on board and Baker had been right. What was uncanny as we went through this process is that if Saddam at every turn made every wrong decision he could to make sure that the outcome was what it was, George Bush, in my view, at every turn, made every decision right on the key issues and the timing and everything else. This was one of them and it was one of the most important.

Naftali: Let's shift to that other—

Gates: It's important, most of the chronologies have the wobbly comment at the beginning, not well into it.

Naftali: But the President was, was he not uncertain as to how to respond to the invasion of Kuwait initially, in the early, early going?

Gates: He was uncertain. His entire administration was absolutely against it, except for Brent. Absolutely against it. Overall, overwhelming sentiment was that we could do nothing, it was a fait accompli. The President wasn't sure. Within 24 hours the President had made up his mind what he was going to do.

Naftali: Did Thatcher—

Gates: Thatcher in my view had a very small part in that.

Naftali: Let's turn to your return to the CIA. As you said, you had something else on your mind in the spring of 1991. There had been indications for a while that Webster was going to leave. What do you remember of the circumstances regarding his resignation?

Gates: Well, Bill didn't really give much sign that he was ready to leave. There were a lot of rumors and he was confident that Sununu was leaking a lot to try to damage his position. But Bill really kept his own counsel and I think it was not until about a week before the public announcement that he told Brent and the President and I that he thought the time had come to retire. I then had and still have enormous respect and affection for Webster and I always believed that he does not get the credit he deserves for the job he did at CIA. I think he is one of the great patriots of our time. He took over the FBI in 1978 when it was in trouble at Jimmy Carter's behest when he was preparing to retire from the bureau in '87 and he wanted to retire in '87 so that the choice of an FBI director would not take place in an election year.

When I withdrew I had recommended Bill as my replacement. A couple of other people felt the same way.

Naftali: Why did you recommend him? He had no foreign policy experience.

Gates: Well, first of all, I had worked with him quite a bit when he was director of the FBI. He was smart. I also believed that at that particular juncture, the Agency needed a man who in Washington whose integrity was beyond reproach, someone who would not be controversial in a confirmation process. Somebody who could be confirmed quickly, and someone who knew how to run a large organization and somebody who had the confidence of the President.

In any event, so Webster takes over another agency that's in trouble, CIA, and ran it, I think effectively, for four years and made a number of very useful reforms. As far as I was concerned, one of the downsides about leaving to go to the White House was that I really had enjoyed working with Bill and enjoyed our partnership. In essence, one of the reasons I recommended Bill was that I had offered to stay as the deputy and, so I figured that between the two of us, between my intimate knowledge of foreign affairs, and his reputation on the Hill and in Washington and his good management skills of large organizations, that the two of us would make a pretty effective pair. And I think it worked out pretty well.

So I knew he was getting tired of it. I also knew, or he had told me, that when he retired he hoped I'd replace him. And I basically dismissed it, pooh-poohed it and said that kind of thing just doesn't happen in Washington a second time.

Naftali: When do you get a sense that you're going to be his replacement?

Gates: Well, I had a feeling that when he retired there was a pretty good chance of it. I knew Bush wanted to put a professional in the Agency and there was only one around.

Naftali: Well there was some talk of Lilly getting it, no?

Gates: Not really ever seriously. I don't think that was ever a real possibility.

Naftali: I remember seeing, reading.

Gates: There was press speculation.

Naftali: So I guess the resignation was in May '91?

Gates: Yes.

Naftali: So from that point on you're preparing for confirmation. You mentioned that one of the bonding experiences, perhaps the initial bonding experience of George Bush for you, was your conversations with him when he was vice President and he had given you some advice. I assume there was a similar conversation in '91.

Gates: No, not really. Just when we were coming back, he had delivered the commencement address at Princeton, when we were on the way back he called me up to his cabin and offered me the job and we talked about it a little bit and that was the point at which I said, "Well, Mr. President, this is going to work out but if you want to go ahead, you need to understand that this is going to be like adding a room on to your house. It is going to take longer, cost more and be more painful than you can predict and we'll both be lucky if at the end of the day some subcontractor doesn't run off with the money and materials." I think I had a more realistic appreciation of the difficulty of the confirmation process than probably anybody. And, as I wrote in my book, I also knew something nobody else could know, and that there would be no turning back this time. I had withdrawn once, I thought, for the good of my President and the country and the Agency, and I was not going to back down again. So it was going to go to the end, win, lose or draw.

Naftali: Did you make that clear to the President?

Gates: No, I didn't feel I needed to do that. It just wouldn't have been an appropriate thing to say. I also had some historical background or perspective that I don't think many people had. First of all, I was the first professional nominated to be the Director of CIA in almost 20 years and out of the 18 directors of CIA to date, only three of us have been professional intelligence officers. Furthermore, I was the first career officer with uninterrupted service in government to be nominated to run a major agency of the government, in at least 40 years. I was very mindful of the notion, of the old line in Washington that "friends may come and go but enemies accumulate". I'd also worked for some of the most controversial people in Washington. I'd worked for Nixon, I'd worked for Carter, I'd worked for Brzezinski, I'd worked for Kissinger, I'd worked for Casey, I'd worked for Stansfield Turner. I had a regular rogues gallery in the eyes of both conservatives and liberals in Washington so I knew that this was not going to be a walk in the park. I'd also been on the periphery of virtually every scandal in Washington, beginning with Watergate.

You guys were talking about the taping system earlier. My first deposition in an investigation was during Watergate when they thought I was the new Alex Butterfield in the White House, sent down by CIA, the new spy in the White House. Right up through Iran-Contra and everything else. Korea-gate, Billy-Gate with Carter, Billy Carter in Libya. I mean, the list went on and on of places where I'd had to give depositions or been interviewed and so on, so I knew all of this was lurking out there in addition to the fact that there were undoubtedly—let's just say I would not have been the favored candidate of the

clandestine service. I had seen how they had effectively destroyed several people, Max Hugel when he was selected DDO (Deputy Director for Operations), how they stymied Stan Turner, how they basically destroyed Admiral Rayburn. So those guys can play a pretty rough game. As it turned out the DDO really played no role at all in my confirmation, they were neither negative nor positive. So I knew all this, I had this perspective and I knew this was not going to be easy but I thought it would work. And one of the reasons I thought it would work was that I knew Dave Boren was very much on my side, and so was Bill Cohen.

Naftali: You'd had a good relationship with Boren for some time?

Gates: No, not really, only for a few months. No, that's not true, yes, I had for some time, because I became acting director when Casey became ill in December 1986 and that's when, as a result of the Democrats taking control of the Senate, Boren became chairman of the intelligence committee. I created a whole new approach to dealing with the intelligence committees, including private meetings between myself and the chairman and ranking minority members of the committees, every three weeks or so. A long laundry list of things the directors never talked to them about before. And Webster continued that practice and I went along. And that's, by the way, where I first met George Tenet. And I think, one of the things about which I am most proud is from the day I became Acting Director of Central Intelligence on December 15, 1986 to this date, there has never again been a major flap between the Congress and the Central Intelligence Agency.

But anyway, I had a very good relationship with Boren and Cohen and they trusted me and there were some other things in the background. I had gotten a call from a number of senators after I withdrew in '87 saying that they thought I had been screwed and it was unfair and it was from left to right. One of the people who called me in '87 was Alan Cranston and Alan Cranston said, "You've really been shafted, this is very unfair and I want you to know that if you ever come up here again for confirmation I will be in your corner because I admire the way you've handled yourself." And, sure enough, in '91, very quietly, nobody really knew it but Alan Cranston made it very clear from the beginning that he would vote for me and he was on the committee, still on the committee. So there were a lot of things like that that weighed in the balance.

One of the considerations in '87 that made things difficult, was that I was the first nomination sent to the Hill after the Democrats took control of the Senate in November of '86 and because I was at the Agency and it was right after—and the Congress had been in recess when Iran-Contra had broken, so this firestorm broke when Congress reconvened and I was the first target from the Reagan administration that they had. So, as they say, it was not very good timing .

But anyway, Boren and I had a very good relationship and there was some concern on the part of the White House, on the part of Brent and the White House about how strong David would be, but he was very consistent and his strategy was to not even begin the hearings until every conceivable allegation and charge had been dealt with and investigated so there would be no surprises in the hearings. And, as I write about it in the book, people started coming—Iran-Contra got taken care of reasonably early in the process but then people started coming out of the woodwork saying they'd seen me walking through Miami airport carrying suitcases full of cash, that I'd been in Paris with Bush in October of 1980 for the October surprise and that I was selling weapons to Brazil and to Iraq. I mean, all this stuff kept coming in over the transom, and of course, they had to investigate every single one of these things. I'd been sitting there. Fortunately Scowcroft helped me keep a sense of perspective.

Naftali: What would you do? The process was delayed because of the Special Investigator's report, Walsh's report wasn't done, right?

Gates: No, the process was delayed because the Congress was going out in July for their summer recess, early July and by the time all the paper work got done and the FBI investigation got done and everything else and all these things were swirling around, there was just no time to accomplish David's objective to have all of these things nailed down and then having hearings and acting. David didn't want to have hearings and then 6-8 weeks for the press or potential enemies to play games before the actual vote was taken, so he wanted to have the hearings and then the vote and move on. So his strategy was that if we couldn't get it all done before July recess better to wait until September. So that was really what motivated it. So, as I write in my book, I didn't want to be embarrassed, or I didn't want the President to be embarrassed if Walsh had me in his crosshairs, so one of the first conditions that I actually placed on this thing with the President and with Brent was that Brent was to use an intermediary of some kind and find out from Walsh whether I was in fact in his crosshairs and he got word back that my status had not changed from the beginning of the investigation, that I was regarded as somebody who had been there but they weren't pursuing it. I think, as I write in the book, my worst moment was really the day of Alan Fiers' plea bargain announcement because I had gotten a couple of phone calls from people who said that Fiers was going to implicate me and then it would all be over and more than that besides. In terms of confirmation that would have been the least of my worries. When Alan didn't implicate me at all then I basically felt I was home free. Because if Walsh could have implicated me he certainly would have since I was the senior surviving officer of CIA who had been around at the time of Iran-Contra.

Masoud: Who handled your nomination? Was it Andy Card who shepherded it?

Gates: No. Sort of the number two guy in congressional affairs, Jim Dyer.

Naftali: By all accounts, you gave a stirring presentation. Tell us how you wrote that, or why you wrote it.

Gates: One of the other low points for me was on my birthday, and it was the one surprise in the hearings, the one thing Boren hadn't anticipated and that was that somebody who had been a friend of mine for 25 years,

Naftali: Harold Ford?

Gates: No, Melvin Goodman. Our families had been close, we had been close friends since I first started working at the Agency and Mel went up to the committee and in closed session basically accused me of having suborned the intelligence process and undermine the integrity of the intelligence product. He basically said that I had exaggerated the strength of the Soviet Union, I had distorted the analysis to make it look like the Soviet Union was stronger than it was. Then Harold "Hal" Ford who had been up to testify on my behalf, did a 180 and also testified that he had heard about my doing this to the process. The problem was, as it later became apparent under questioning, especially from Warren Rudman, neither one of them had direct knowledge of any of the incidents they were pointing to. They had heard these things indirectly and once the hearings got underway it was clear there were a number of other analysts who testified and did depositions, that took an opposite point of view. That I was hard to work for and I had very strong views, but that I also encouraged alternative points of view and that I authorized publication of a lot of things with which I violently disagreed and that in fact the integrity of the process had been protected.

In any event, this all dissolved into what I called in the book what on a day-to-day basis at CIA was the give and take between analysts ended up being sort of an intellectual and bureaucratic food fight in front of the television cameras and the Senate Intelligence Committee because you had some analysts saying one thing and you had other analysts saying something else. So where does that leave you. I was really, I

must say, there are very few points in my life when I can say I was ever stunned by anything, but this, this action on the part of Mel was one of them and I really felt betrayed by an old friend. I don't know what the motives were. My reaction, he basically was saying I had corrupted the entire analytical side of CIA. So then, that made a lot of people mad because he was in fact impugning their integrity as well as mine and I made a comment at one point in a private session, I said, "You know, it beats me how someone can live in a whore house for 25 years and come out a virgin." But, in any event, I really finally got mad. I called the Agency and I ordered up maybe 300 documents.

One of the things I had done—I had done several things that the analysts didn't like. One is I reviewed every single paper published by CIA. Nobody had ever done that before. But I felt if we were going to put our stamp on it, if we were going to publish it, then I was going to defend it and I had to understand it and I had to read it in order to do that.

Second, I did something that nobody had ever done before. I directed that the offices start keeping files of what analysts had published and that what they had published should be reviewed and evaluated when it came time for promotion and that whether or not they were right most of the time actually mattered and that we had a right if we were going to pay them and promote them to expect that they'd be right more often than you could get by flipping a coin. Nobody ever had done that before and it was not popular and the idea was that—no analyst would be evaluated on the basis of one paper or one assessment, everyone is going to be wrong some of the time. But I basically wanted them evaluated on the body of their work.

Third, I directed that no one could be promoted to a division level management job in the analytical directorate without having served at least a year on a rotation in a policy agency. My view was if you don't, that CIA people knew how foreign policy was made in every country in the world except one, ours. And, that if you're going to write for a policymaker, if you're going to supervise people writing for policymakers, then you better go understand how the process works, and so we did a lot of that.

So there were a lot of things that I had done—anyway, having reviewed all these papers over the years, I knew, I had a good idea of what papers I wanted and what was needed and I identified about three hundred that they gave to me and it came in two huge boxes and the President was going down to St. Simon's island, he and Mrs. Bush, for a private long week-end to celebrate their anniversary and I went along and I basically closeted myself in the resort, in my room, pulled the drapes and sort of straight through for 48 or 60 hours, went through these documents and wrote responses to each of the twenty or so allegations I had identified from the transcripts and then just read my handwritten response in front of the committee and it did the job.

Naftali: It's a shame you couldn't have brought your mustang in to show them.

Gates: Well, one thing that I was very careful about. I knew that whatever I said would be really torn apart. So I was very cautious in summarizing the documents in an effort to ensure that I was even-handed and that I didn't overstate what I wanted to say. The thing that to this day troubles me the most about my confirmation hearings, was that a side consequence of importance is that it is where I believe in this intellectual food fight and thanks to the interventions of Bill Bradley and Pat Moynihan, that's where the notion got about that CIA essentially had missed the collapse of the Soviet Union. It really dates from my hearings where in essence, what had been a hearing about me until September, in the first part of September, in late September became a hearing which re-fought how we had waged the Cold War and whether the security elements of the government had overstated Soviet strengths and whether we had spent way too much money on defense given the nature of the threat we faced.

That's really what the whole context, if you read the context in the transcripts of the second part of the hearings on these issues, that's really what it ended up being about, whether, my role and by extension, CIA's role, with defense in exaggerating the Soviet threat, whether the Soviet threat had been exaggerated. By the time it was over, by the committee's own count, in the hearings themselves, I had answered over 900 questions. That didn't include the written questions they had given me.

Naftali: By the end of this process did you begin to wonder whether you really wanted the job after all?

Gates: I had known that for a long time. I had told Stan Turner, when I was his exec, one of the benefits of having served as his exec was I now knew I never wanted to be DCI and I have told countless people since then who think what an incredible job—anybody who really understands this job wouldn't want it.

Naftali: Let's be more precise, why?

Gates: Well, the truth is, whether you're in a university or you're a doctor, or in the intelligence business, the more senior you become, the further you are removed from that which it was which got you into the business in the first place. You become a university President instead of being in the classroom. You become the administrator of the hospital instead of a doctor treating children or patients. You become a DCI instead of an analyst or an operations officer, where the action is. The last fun job I had in CIA was DDI, where I ran the analytical side. Because after that it is all Washington politics, budgets, the Hill, inter-agency conflict, the press, and trying to manage very large and very complex bureaucratic entities with a limited set of tools. And, it is like I said about the President, the President only gets terrible decisions to make. He gets to choose among the least bad options when a decision is brought to him. Because, if there were a good option, you can rest assured, somebody at a lower level would have made that decision, so only the bad ones go, and that's true of agency heads as well.

And CIA has a very peculiar place in America and in a way its worst critics and its best friends all believe the same thing about it and they're both wrong. So you have to deal with a lot of misperceptions about the Agency and a lot of mythology which frankly the heads of other agencies don't have to deal with. So there are, I think, relatively few satisfactions that you can take out of it. Now, the satisfactions that I took out of it were the changes and reforms that I put in place at the end of the Cold War which I think put the Agency on a path toward dealing with a post Cold War world. And I take some satisfaction from that and I think the task forces did a great job and I think I made good decisions. But, day in and day out it's no fun because you spend a huge amount of time on things like the budget, negotiating with the Hill and so on. You invest a tremendous amount of time and then in conference the two chairs of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and the ranking minority members will go into a closet and everything you've worked out over the past six months with members of Congress and everybody else goes out the window as they make their deals. So, it is a challenging thing. It is interesting, I loved doing it—I won't say I loved doing it, I had the opportunity to run an agency that I cared a great deal about and had spent my life in where I never dreamed I would become director, but it was not a fun job.

In contrast, and I guess part of the reason is, I had left the most fun job I had ever had. Running the inter-agency process, being at George Bush's elbow during the historic events from '89 through '91, never having to deal with the press, never having to deal with the Congress, never having to deal with a budget of any consequence, but being able to focus purely on substance and policy, that was the best job I ever had.

Naftali: Was it hard, you know the debate over the role the DCI should or should not play in policy making, was it difficult after having been their presenter to move away to a position where one isn't expected to make any policy?

Gates: No, I'd done that all my life and was sort of returning to form if you will, so it didn't give me any trouble.

Edwards: Let's go back to a point you just made about changes you were able to bring to the Agency at the time you were DCI. Could you talk about those?

Gates: Well, I think there were already changes being made. I think one of the things that annoys me about Washington is that nobody ever seems willing to give credit to their predecessors. One of the reasons I wrote my book was that having served in fairly senior positions under five successive Presidents, I think I had a unique perspective on how much continuity there was among them even though at every election it was all the differences that were emphasized. It was kind of a joke I made on the book tour that I thought both the Carterites and the Reaganites would hate me and the book. When asked why I said, "Well the Reaganites will hate me because the idea that Jimmy Carter ever did anything useful will be anathema to them, much less lay the foundations for much of what Ronald Reagan did. And the Carterites will—Jimmy Carter will hate me because I've spoiled his campaign for sainthood."

But I and then Bill Webster and Dick Kerr had already been making changes to adjust CIA to a different kind of world. And I think that much of what I had done, what I did, has endured and evolved. Putting in a senior military officer in the clandestine service to improve support for military operations, there's now a deputy DCI for military support. Restructuring the intelligence community's staff to give it a much more powerful and important role in budgeting for the community as a whole. The declassification of the estimates and a variety of other activities to improve agency communications, both externally and internally. I got a letter from somebody the other day that publications, CIA had never had any kind of internal publication talking about what was going on at the Agency, personnel things and so on, and they started one when I was director, I fostered the creation of one and it's still going. Proposal to create NIMA, which I failed at because Colin and—above all, Colin—didn't want to undertake the creation of a new 7000 person agency toward the end of an administration. And so I created the Central Imagery office as a half-way step believing that the next half step would be taken later, and it was, under John Deutsch.

Restructuring the NRO (National Reconnaissance Office) and getting rid of the competition between programs A and B and just structuring a SIGINT program and an imagery program. There were about 25 task forces altogether and one of the things that I tried to do was make the community and the Agency feel a part of the process. Every one of the task force reports in draft was available to everyone in the Agency who wanted to read it. I sent copies to all of the different offices where people could go and read them and comment on them. I then made the recommendations of the task forces available to everybody in the community or in the Agency. I then made my draft decision memos available to everybody. I said, "This is how I would implement this recommendation, but what do you people who are going to have to go out there and administer it think?" And I got a lot of useful comments. I think I probably changed every single decision memo because of some input from an individual sitting, somewhere down in the bowels who said, "This would be an easier way to do this."

But, what I tried to do, I had watched Stan Turner and others in the government, and any large organization, try and impose change from above, and everything they tried to do walked out the door right behind them, because the Agency and the organization had never bought into it. So what I wanted was a sense of ownership on the part of the career professionals so that when I left, they would see the decisions that had been made, really recommendations and proposals they had made and worked through and so they would take a sense of ownership and it would become assimilated. And, I think,

based on everything that I've heard since, that happened to most of the things that I tried to do through these task forces and so on.

Edwards: What were your relations, or your interaction with President Bush?

Gates: My own view is that there have only been four DCIs who were close to the Presidents they worked for. One was Allen Dulles, one was Dick Helms under Lyndon Johnson, not Nixon, George Bush and Ford, and Bush and me. Not Casey. I've always believed that Casey's closeness to Reagan has been exaggerated. I think they were fairly close for the first several months after the election, when Reagan still had some sense of obligation to Casey for having helped get him elected. But the truth is Mrs. Reagan couldn't stand Casey. And, Bill Webster, in the first year he was Director of CIA, was in the White House socially more often than Bill Casey had been in the entire five and a half years he had been director. Casey could see the President whenever he wanted, but Reagan really had a hard time understanding Casey and the relationship really wasn't that close in my view.

Edwards: He mumbled?

Gates: The relationship between Schultz and Reagan became much closer, although I would say, it was my view, that there was no one in the administration to whom Reagan was really close. That Reagan was a much more aloof and cold person than anybody imagined on the outside because he was so affable in his day-to-day bearing. But there was no one in his administration other than Nancy that he felt was indispensable and he had no trouble losing any of them at any point in time. He didn't shed a tear for any of those people along the way. And I think he felt the same way about Casey. Casey was an instrument.

So I think, I saw, first of all, because I was so close to Bush and I didn't feel the need to see him very often and to go to the morning briefings very often—I would go maybe once or twice a week—but mainly to talk to Brent before hand and then I'd just drop in and sit with the President and leave with the PDB briefer. And it kind of depended on whether I was down in the old EOB (Executive Office Building) office and that sort of thing. So I'm obviously in meetings, a lot of meetings, and I saw him. We would be invited to things in the Residence from time to time, upstairs, but, it was only a few months after I became director that he got immersed in the campaign. So he wasn't really paying much attention to other things at that point.

But, let me give you an example of where my closeness to the President had a huge impact on people equally close to him. I wanted to declassify the existence of the NRO. Cheney and Scowcroft both were opposed to it. In a meeting with the two of them I said, "Look, I really care about this and I don't think you do. I'm prepared to go to the President and make my case." Well, the bottom line is nobody went to the President and I declassified the existence of the NRO. And those kinds of things send enormous signals to the government, to our government, to the executive branch, to the Hill, to foreign governments. It is one of the reasons I decided to retire when Bush lost the election.

I believe that the most important thing that a DCI brings to the table is his relationship with the President. You can have a deputy who knows intelligence. You can have a deputy who knows all the ins and outs and knows all of the foreign policy issues and so on, but if the DCI can't get in to see the President, everybody in the world knows it and it has a huge impact on the effectiveness of the Agency. Woolsey made the comment, I mean, the joke that Woolsey tells on himself, because he couldn't get in to see Clinton, is when the light plane crashed on the South Lawn of the White House, Jim jokes that the story going around Washington was that was Woolsey trying to get in to see Clinton.

Let me give you another example. Most of the most important foreign policy decisions in the Carter administration were made in the Friday morning breakfast. Carter, Mondale, Brzezinski, Brown, Vance, and then Muskie. Stan Turner was not invited to attend one of those breakfasts in four years. Interestingly, he thought Brzezinski was keeping him out, but in reality, I know for a fact Zbig went to Carter several times encouraging him to invite Stan to the breakfast and Carter rejected it out of hand, very rudely in fact, and told, finally told Zbig never to bring it up again. So, access to the President plays a huge role and it is why I think each President needs the freedom to be able to appoint his own DCI and—

I know President Bush would like to take the appointment out of the election cycle.

Naftali: He wanted to stay on under Carter, didn't he?

Gates: Yes, and would have, if they'd have let him. And I've used that as an example. Wouldn't that be fascinating. How would you re-write political history if Bush had stayed on as DCI under Jimmy Carter? So I just think, I sympathize with that and I have gone on record in the last few weeks in response to the press, that I would like to see—I got a call from Vernon Loeb of the Washington Post a couple of weeks ago, he said, "The buzz around town is that if Bush is elected that you'll be asked to come take CIA back." I said, "Oh God, no, been there, done that, no interest, no desire but I would like—" "Well, what would you like to see happen?" I said, "I think in this case I'd like to see George Tenet kept on to take the job and the Agency out of the election cycle." But, in truth, the Agency's effectiveness at home, in the policy environment and overseas, depends enormously on the perception of the DCI's relationship with the President and for that reason, fundamentally, I believe each President ought to have the freedom to choose his own and that's why I've opposed a term for the DCI.

Naftali: So, I guess you found that in interacting with your opposite numbers in allied services, and the Russians, that the fact that it was known that you came from the White House, that you had this close relationship with Bush, mattered.

Gates: Absolutely, absolutely.

Naftali: Lets, I think we have time before we wrap up—

Gates: I'll give you an example of the difference it makes. When Casey would travel abroad he was given an old C141 with something about the size of a large container shoved in the rear which was configured into a little apartment with three sections: a galley, then a place for staff, and then a kind of a bedroom/office for the director. No windows. It was like being FedExed someplace. And he'd land quietly behind the scenes someplace. When I traveled, the President had me take one of the Presidential jets. You know, you land in a foreign capital with the United State of America on one of those blue and white airplanes, it gets their attention.

[stopped here]

Naftali: Hard to have a secret visit though, isn't it?

Gates: Yeah, but very few of Casey's visits ended up being secret.

Naftali: That's his fault.

Gates: Second, by the time I was doing it there was not much need for that.

Naftali: When you went back to Russia as DCI, it was with a different set of opportunities. Did you notice a shift in the behavior of the Russian intelligence services in 1992?

Gates: No. I was under a lot of pressure from State, Baker and company, to build a more constructive relationship with the KGB or the SVRR (Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation) and what I couldn't get them to understand, was that unlike Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, where the intelligence services had all been purged after 1989, the same guys ran the Russian intelligence service that ran the Soviet intelligence service. So the only two areas in which I was willing to contemplate, or discuss cooperation with them, was on narcotics and organized crime. I figured in those areas we probably could agree on what they were and what they were about and where there was a mutual interest in doing something about it.

We tried to cooperate on proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and, you know, it is funny, CIA folks often make fun of the State Department for sort of preemptive concessions and so on and for not being tough enough in negotiations, but I was determined that if we were going to do this—we always were the ones that put information on the table. Intelligence people love to give sensitive information to foreigners, US intelligence people, because it shows them how smart we are, makes us look good. In this case, I was determined that if we were going to share intelligence with the Russians on weapons of mass destruction, they were going to start. So I said, "Alright, we would cooperate on proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the Russians will make the first presentation and I want it to be on North Korean weapons of mass destruction." The Russians came back and said, "No, you start, and we'll talk about Pakistan. And our guys said, "Let's go ahead and do that." I said, "Bullshit, we're going to talk about North Korea." And we went back and forth for probably four months and our guys kept wanting me to give in, and I wouldn't. Because I thought it was a matter of principle. I mean, we'd run the whole SALT negotiations on US intelligence data because we wouldn't force the Soviets to spring their own data, so I was determined. And, as it turned out, they made a presentation on North Korea.

Naftali: Any good?

Gates: It was not very good on nuclear and I was persuaded they didn't know much about the nuclear, but we got a fair amount of information from them on North Korean chemical and biological programs, and then we didn't brief on Pakistan.

Naftali: Oh, you didn't? How were they on organized crime and—

Gates: Fairly useless.

Naftali: I guess we were hoping that we'd get some stuff on the Cubans, right?

Gates: Not really. No, I was more interested in the Golden Crescent and drugs flowing through Russia and the connection between the narcotics cartels and the crime syndicates in Russia and Europe. But they just didn't know much.

Naftali: Your old friend Primakov—

Gates: Was my host.

Naftali: So did he get a chance to get you back?

Gates: It was a little awkward. It was all right, it was friendly enough. We both put on a good show.

Naftali: I'm not sure exactly what I was going to ask.

Gates: Although it was a little disconcerting. Two things were disconcerting. One was Russian traffic cops stopping all the traffic so that the American CIA director could race through the streets of Moscow to the Kremlin. That was a little bizarre for somebody with my background and the long history of dealing with the Soviets. The other was driving out to the headquarters of what had been the first chief

directorate and then became the SVRR, foreign intelligence service at Yesenevo and having thousands of faces plastered against the windows as sort of the arch enemy drives up, fender flags flying, that was bizarre.

Naftali: Did this direct experience alter any of your assumptions about the efficiency or strength of their intelligence service?

Gates: Well, I have always believed that they were pretty good at covert operations and at running agents, small audio operations, as we were talking earlier, essentially useless when it came to analysis and the integration of information, whatever that was valuable they had I thought probably came through the GRU (Russian Military Intelligence). So, I mean, it was a service with substantial strengths and weakness on both sides and nothing that I saw in my visit changed that perception.

Naftali: We talked about Primakov, how about meeting with (Fedor) Ladygin? The head of the GRU? He must have been even more closed minded.

Gates: What would you do? Let's do our imitation of a meeting of the Director of CIA and the Director of GRU and both sides just sit there and look at each other, that's pretty much what it was. But, you know, we basically talked about a variety of things happening around the world and so on, but it was kind of cocktail party chit-chat, nothing very serious. No secrets shared. Actually, the most useful meeting that I had was the meeting with (Victor) Barannikov, who was then the minister of security and he actually got into some details about who they were catching on the Soviet military side—Russian military side, trying to smuggle HEU (Highly Enriched Uranium) out of Russia. Telling me they just arrested a major and telling me something about that and talking a little bit about organized crime. So I got more out of that meeting, more substance, than either of the meetings with Primakov or Ladygin.

One of my most vivid memories, they have this wonderful guest house at KGB headquarters where they have their dinners and so on, and we had lunch there and all I can remember is that this is the former KGB, this is you know this power center, all this. We sit down and I ate the worst piece of beef I've ever had in my entire life. It was like the reject from an American butcher shop. It wasn't that it was tough, it was all fatty. I mean, it was just a lousy piece of meat. I thought, if the director of the KGB can't get a better steak than this, they're in worse trouble than I thought.

Naftali: You have a question?

Masoud: Well, there were a couple of questions I wanted to ask. One was, here you are, appointed to be Director of CIA by a President who himself has been DCI. Did he take you aside and give you any pearls of wisdom about how to run the Agency?

Gates: No.

Masoud: Did you go in with an agenda, a sense of the things you wanted to accomplish?

Gates: Well, I noticed that you all had something in these materials, the questions about NSR 29 (National Security Review #29). Well, NSR 29 is an interesting exercise in bureaucratic legerdemain because I wrote it while I was still on the NSC. I wrote, in effect, my own tasker as Deputy National Security Advisor, and got it signed by the President before I was actually DCI.

Naftali: During the confirmation process?

Gates: During the confirmation process, towards the end of the confirmation process. Because I didn't want the NSC to do it after I left, because there were some specific things I wanted in there First of all, I wanted the President personally to direct that the policy parts of the agencies conduct this review, that it

not be assigned to their intelligence units. Because if I hadn't put that in there, Baker would have given it to INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research), Treasury would have given theirs to their little intelligence cell to staff. It would have happened all through the government and it would have happened in the Defense Department and everything. It's intelligence? Send it to the intelligence guys. And I absolutely wanted the review of priorities to be done by the policy people. I had watched this effort fail, year after year after year in successive administrations because it was always staffed to the intelligence guys and they basically re-wrote their own stuff.

So I had the President explicitly tell these cabinet officers that their policy minions had to do this and it would be conducted by the Deputies Committee not by some intelligence organization. Then, I also had in it that I wanted to identify things that would be dropped. Subjects that no longer needed to be covered by the intelligence community. Then the third and hardest thing I wanted them to do was to prioritize their requirements. What's most important to you and sort of rate them one to five. It was a mammoth effort by the bureaucracy. They really did a good job. And I think very few people knew that I had in fact drafted the thing before I left the White House.

Naftali: Probably helped its implementation.

Gates: Yes. I would add, what was interesting to me was that, first of all, not one agency dropped one requirement. And I used that to very good effect up on the Hill, and with the policy agencies. I said, "You guys think our resources are limitless here?" Second, 40% of the requirements were in one way or another economically related.

Naftali: A discussion we'll get to tomorrow.

Masoud: You and Tim were talking about your relations with Primakov and the head of the GRU. What about relations with other heads of intelligence agencies?

Gates: I always had a good relationship with the Israelis, both military and Mossad.

Masoud: But, were relations still strained after the Pollard affair? Had they ever been strained between CIA and Mossad before Pollard?

Gates: Not really, we're grown ups. It's like the bumper sticker says, "Shit Happens." No, you just, you can't let things like that get in the way of good liaison relationships. We had good relations with the head of Shin Bet, good relations with the Brits, respectful relations with the Germans.

Naftali: How about the French?

Gates: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Every now and then they would do something useful. They were very important in some important breakthroughs in technology transfer with the Soviets and what the Soviets were stealing and how they were organized to steal it. [REDACTED] You know, we worked productively from time to time on specific issues like tech transfer,

Naftali: [REDACTED]

Gates: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Australians were

very good, and the New Zealanders for their size were very good and we had very good relationships with them.

Naftali: They had a tough relationship with the French, the New Zealanders. James?

McCall: The things I want to get into probably should wait until tomorrow, like asset tasking and budgetary issues.

Naftali: That's it for now, thanks a lot.

Thursday, July 24, 2000

Naftali: Let's begin. Good morning, Dr. Gates. We're beginning the next session of the Bush Oral History Project interview with Robert Gates. I'd like George to kick off.

Edwards: Let's go to your time as DCI and particularly focusing on your process of paper flow to you and your making decisions and if you could describe that to us, explain that to us and then ask you to relate that to your time in the White House and looking at the impact of that experience on your being DCI.

Gates: DCI has responsibility for 13 agencies. When I was there, there was a total of about 100,000 people and a budget of about 29 billion dollars. I basically divided my time into three parts. People don't realize the demands on heads of large organizations, especially in the national security arena. I spent roughly, and this was not my choice, this was really just the way circumstances required—I spent about a third of my time in meetings in the White House and in the executive branch, about a third of my time with the Congress, and about a third of my time managing the intelligence community.

The DCI has, I think, a somewhat different situation than the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense in that the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense get to spend a very large proportion of their time on substantive issues and on strategic issues and not managing their departments. That's a role that traditionally has fallen to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Deputy Secretary of State. Because, at least at the time I was DCI, the DCI and the Deputy DCI were the only confirmed officials and the Deputy DCI was a military officer, I ended up getting much more involved in the management of the Agency and my predecessors did than, I think, our counterparts in other agencies.

Also, I think, I ended spending more time on it because there were a number of fairly significant structural and managerial changes that I wanted to make, to put the Agency more firmly on a post Cold War path. You spend a huge amount of time in meetings, everyone wants to meet with you, and the truth is, the dirty little secret of the bureaucracy, is that if they can keep you in meetings all the time then you won't do anything that bothers them. And so they work very hard to book you from morning until night so that you have no time to mess around in their affairs. Having been one of those people I was on to this game from very early. And so, beginning when I was Deputy Director for Intelligence, and this is advice that I have given to both government and corporate leaders in the years since, but twenty years ago I began a process of telling my secretary to block two hours every day and that I would put in roughly a 12-14 hour day, and I would have her block two hours. And that was my time. My time to pursue my agenda for change inside an organization, whether it was the analytical side of CIA or as DDCI or DCI or even as Deputy National Security Advisor.

Now, there were many more demands on me that I couldn't control when I was Deputy National Security Advisor, so I didn't have that luxury, but I would say several times a week I had at least an hour blocked where I could just think or pursue, as I say, my agenda. But as DCI I had more control and I was pretty disciplined about using it and it was during that period that I set up the task forces, that I drafted tasking memos, that I reviewed the task force reports and drafted decision memos and decided where I wanted to go. So most of my time as director, when it wasn't spent on the Hill working on the budget—and it was primarily on the budget that I was spending time on the Hill—or at meetings at the White House, I was pursuing two parallel agendas for change, one within CIA and one within the intelligence community, and we talked a little bit about that yesterday.

But when I was at the Agency, a very high percentage of my time during the time I was DCI was devoted to these two agendas. Inside the Agency, I talked yesterday about the declassification process and greater openness, greater communication even within the Agency. We made some structural changes in the directorate of intelligence and in keeping with some pledges I had made to the intelligence committee when I was confirmed about politicization, including the appointment of an ombudsman and creating a process that would give analysts greater comfort that they were protected. One of the major changes that I got underway in the clandestine service was that all through the Cold War many of the people we had wanted to recruit, we could access on the diplomatic circuit. East Germans, East Europeans, the Soviets and others. And there were many opportunities in a lot of countries, particularly Third World countries where our case officers would end up playing tennis with a Soviet officer of some kind and those presented opportunities to develop and recruit agents and so on. But, in the post Cold War period, increasingly it seemed to me, that our highest priority targets were not the kind of people we were going to meet in embassy cocktail receptions. That people involved in terrorism, in narcotics, in organized crime, in proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and so on, that these were people we would have to meet in a very different kind of way. Therefore, I wanted to radically change the nature of the DO away from its dependence on cover of embassies and into nonofficial cover. Now, this has huge implications for the Agency, for the Congress, for everybody and for the individuals involved.

First of all, they no longer have diplomatic immunity. So if they're caught, they're likely to get killed. This means they have to be compensated in a different way. We have to have a different kind of insurance program for their families should something happen to them that is way outside the bounds of anything the federal government has for its employees. It requires in essence one support person in headquarters for every nonofficial cover officer overseas, so it's a very support intensive operation because they have to be so thoroughly backstopped should anybody begin checking into their background. To a considerable degree it requires a different kind of person than the person who is on the diplomatic circuit. We could look for the same kind of people that the State Department had when we were putting people in embassies and so on, but if we were going to send somebody into a bar in Beirut or some such, then it requires a different sort of person with a different set of skills and a lot of street smarts. So there were a lot of very broad implications for the clandestine service and a move away from official cover. And I spent a lot of time working that issue, both inside the Agency and on the Hill. And, I have to say, I think both the clandestine service and the Congress tended to put the problem in the "too hard" box and it took a lot of pressure from me on both sides, and I think they've made some progress but I don't think they're anywhere near the goal I had set for them in terms of the number of NOCs that they would have within three or four years. But I felt that was very important. I spent a lot of time on that.

As I indicated yesterday, I had a very intensive process for making these changes. As I indicated, I have been around too long to see too many bureaucracies outlast a change-oriented leader, whether it is a secretary or a director. So it seemed to me that the best way to try and make these changes and make them stick would be to involve the broadest number of people, both in the Agency and in the intelligence community in putting together the recommendations for change and then figuring out how best to implement them. It took longer and it was more difficult in some respects, but I also think it was worth all the effort because I think to a considerable extent, most of the changes that I put in have survived in one form or another and have been built on by my successors.

For example, we talked about Desert Storm yesterday and I talked about military commanders complaining about the quality of military support. Well the truth is, for cultural and other reasons, after Vietnam, CIA and the military grew farther apart, and they came not to understand one another's culture after having worked so closely together in Vietnam. And the military was dependent on us for a lot of support. So I created this number three position in the clandestine service for an associate deputy director for operations for military support. There's an interesting story about how that job was first filled.

I called Colin Powell and I said, "I want a real snake eater. I want somebody that combat commanders will respect. I don't want some bureaucrat in uniform and I don't want some guy who is on his final tour before retiring. I want somebody who is regarded as a real hard charger and who understands what military operations are all about." Well, sure enough, the Army's first candidate was a guy who would have been on his retirement tour. And I called Colin up and I said, "Colin this won't do." We had this conversation. He said, "Well I let the Army deal with it and that's what you get. Let me take it on." So he called me back a few days later and he said, "I want my nominee to be Roland Lejoie." Now, Roland Lejoie was a two star. I had known Roland and he was basically an arms control guy. And, he ran the new onsite inspection agency within the Department of Defense, an agency created, I might add, in a little plot by Colin and I when he was Deputy National Security Advisor and I was DDCI, to keep it out of the hands of the State Department which would screw it up and didn't have the logistical capacity to do it. And this was the organization to monitor all these arms control agreements. So Roland Lejoie was the head of that.

I said, "Colin, Colin, that's not the right kind of guy. I like Roland but he's not the right guy, he's not a combat guy and everybody in the Pentagon knows it." And he said, "Bob, let me tell you this. Would you rather have some snake eater like you characterized it, who most of the people in this building (the Pentagon) probably don't know and don't care about, or would you rather have a guy that everybody in this building knows is an old friend of mine and can walk in my door any day he wants?" I said, "Colin, I think you've got one." And so Roland Lejoie became the first Associate Deputy Director of the Clandestine Service in uniform. But that's basically how I organized my time and what my focus and my agenda was during the time that I was director because I was really consumed during most of that period with this restructuring process.

Edwards: Now, was this restructuring your agenda as DCI affected by your previous experience in the White House? Or was it more affected by your previous experience in the CIA?

Gates: Well, I think there were 24 or 25 different task forces on different subjects for change and I would guess that the vast majority were more the product of my experience as an intelligence officer. For example, what I wanted to do, I talked yesterday about the background for creating the National Imagery and Mapping Agency. What I wanted to do was create vertical stovepipes of the collection disciplines, SIGINT that was vertically integrated top to bottom from the biggest national satellites to

some guy with a pair of headphones sitting out in the field. Imagery from national satellites to a guy with a Kodak. And we had other things like MASINT (Measurement and Signature Intelligence) and the other collection disciplines. But I also wanted to create what I called the gateway into the intelligence community, the open source gateway. I mentioned when we talked yesterday about NSR 29 or whatever it was that laid out the requirements and I mentioned that about 40% of those requirements were economic in some respect.

It was apparent that a significant portion of each of those requirements probably could be answered through openly available materials so the way I envisioned the open source gateway was that every new requirement coming into the intelligence community would go to the gateway and there through a set of computer programs and so on, we would be able, by accessing the national library systems, by accessing the Library of Congress, accessing the internet, all those kinds of things, we could figure out how much of each of those requirements we could answer without ever tasking a satellite or a clandestine service officer. So let's say, on an economic issue, you might be able to answer all of the question, or three-quarters of the question, from open source. So all of a sudden you've reduced the commitment of very expensive resources to a fraction of what it would have been before.

On the other hand, on North Korean nuclear weapons, it might be 100% that would have to come from clandestine services or from intelligence sources. So the idea was that everything would come through this gateway. We would respond, we would figure out how much of the requirement could be satisfied and then, in effect, the manager of the process, of the requirements process, would then assign responsibility for collection against the remaining part of that requirement to either several of the collection disciplines or whichever one seemed best able to respond.

One of the other pipelines that I established was a human source stovepipe that included not only CIA's clandestine service officers but attaches, foreign service officers and so on. And this is one place where my relationship with Eagleburger and my relationship with Cheney and Powell made all the difference in the world. Because the idea of trying to coordinate the collection efforts of foreign service officers or attaches from CIA would have been anathema under any other set of personal circumstances. But I was able to persuade these guys why this made sense so that we would at least be maximizing the value of each of these different kinds of collectors so that we weren't engaged in risky operations to collect things that were obviously available to a foreign service officer or to an attaché or something.

So there was a great deal of cooperation in these things. My suspicion is, and I've really stayed away from it, this architecture where I was headed, I suspect has not come to fruition because it would have required not only continued very close relationships with the leaders at State and Defense and the National Security Advisor, but also a lot of continuing pressure within the intelligence community to organize itself that way. But anyway, I spent a lot of time developing that architecture, putting people in place, getting the proposals and the task forces put together on how this would operate, building the kinds of collection committees that gave comfort to other agencies, that CIA wasn't just going to take over and task a foreign service officer or something like that. So I spent a lot of time on that stuff.

Brands: How was your job made easier and how was it made harder by working for a former DCI?

Gates: I would say, Bill, that the only real impact that it had was that, as I suggested yesterday, that Bush, more than any other President that I worked for, had a clear understanding of both the abilities and the limitations of intelligence. Every other President often initially had vastly exaggerated expectations of what CIA could do and then they would swing between the poles: "Well these dopes don't know anything and can't do anything" or "Why can't you develop a covert action in ten minutes to help me out of this jam I've gotten myself into?" I just never had to deal with that with Bush. And I think it was

kind of unspoken, but I think, certainly within Washington, there was a sense that there was a special political protection of CIA because of the President's affection for it. I have never seen George Bush give a speech at CIA in which he did not lose his composure. In the year he was there he developed an extraordinary affection for the place and to this day remains, not just because he was President, but remains by far the most popular director in the Agency's history. I think partly it was that he took over in the beginning of '76 when morale was absolutely in the basement because of the Pike and Church committee investigations and the firing of Colby and all kinds of things and basically he made these people feel needed and wanted again and that they were doing valuable work.

So anyway, I think between my personal relationship with Bush and his relationship with CIA, I think that in terms of dealing with other bureaucracies around town, that certainly made life a little easier. But I had an approach also as DCI that I think in one respect at least was unique that also helped my relationships with people, for example, like Baker. I think I'm probably the only DCI in history that has actually gone to a Secretary of State and said, "We have an opportunity to recruit an agent, and it's an agent in a friendly country, in a friendly government. Here's the information we think that this agent can deliver. If he gets caught there will be a terrible flap. You're the recipient of the information potentially, is it worth it to you? You make the call. It's your risk to deal with if it falls apart. I'm doing it for you. You tell me whether it's worth the risk."

Well, nobody had ever done that to a Secretary of State. I give Baker credit, he said, "Do it." But I have always felt that too often intelligence people, and military people as well, and I think maybe some scholars, get so caught up in the elegance of their operation that they sort of lose perspective on its value. One of the things that I always tried to do as DDI, DDCI and as DCI, was ask is this information really worth the risk we're taking to get it? And particularly when you're collecting against a neutral country or even a friendly country, especially a friendly country. And I pretty much stopped most of the collection of political and economic intelligence on many of our allies. Not in terms of policy things, but in terms of recruiting clandestine agents within governments to deliver that. I said the ambassador and chief of station can tell us all we want to know about the politics of that country. We don't need to go recruit an agent to tell us something we can read about in the newspaper.

On the other hand, if you can recruit an agent that can give us counter intelligence information on what they're doing to us, go for it. If you can collect information on their military programs, go for it, but I just think that we're, we sometimes get too caught up in the elegance of the operations.

Naftali: We talked yesterday about how the end of the Cold War opened new opportunities for liaison with countries that had hitherto been targets. Did the end of the Cold War worsen our liaison relations with any countries?

Gates: No, not really. And as I write in my book, Scowcroft and I were actually a little worried that CIA was working too fast to establish liaison relationships with some of the former Soviet states, before their services had been purged and so on. I think we actually slowed them down a little bit in a couple of cases. But they got some incredible stuff. I mean, when it came to KGB codes and everything like that, I mean we were hauling that stuff in by the truck load after the collapse of the Soviet Union. And it was mainly through these relationships. It was sort of like they wanted to prove their bona fides by giving us the best stuff they had. They also wanted from us communications capabilities that the KGB couldn't read. So there was a kind of a quid pro quo there. But I don't think it worsened our liaison relationships with anybody.

Naftali: Yesterday we passed over a period of great change in the Soviet Union because at that point you were concerned about your nomination. But now you've been confirmed and the coup attempt has

occurred, come and gone. Did you learn anything about that coup attempt afterwards that changed its meaning for you? There were some puzzles about it, questions certainly in the secondary literature.

Gates: Well, I think the biggest puzzle for all of us at the time and afterward, was just how incompetently it had been carried out. There was a general sense when it was announced what had happened, that it was a *fait accompli*, that nothing could be done and in fact, I think President Mitterrand made a public statement, accepting the new government. Scowcroft's first comment the morning of the coup up in Kennebunkport was very querulous, it was the kind of wishy-washy comment you'd make about a coup that you wished hadn't taken place but a government you might have to deal with and, really this is one of those places where CIA had a huge influence during the course of the day. I was down in Washington. Scowcroft and I had just switched in Kennebunkport on that Sunday and Brent called me at 11:30 that night, Sunday night: "What's this I'm hearing about a coup in the Soviet Union?" I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "I've just been watching CNN. Call the Agency and find out if they know anything."

Well, the Agency, I think, was watching CNN too. Anyway, the Deputies Committee met first thing the next morning. Dick Kerr was talking about what hadn't happened in terms of the alerting of military forces or movement of military forces, in terms of the fact that telephone lines, telexes, faxes, were all still up and available and many of the dissidents and potential oppositionists to the coup had not been arrested or taken into custody. So Dick sort of went through this litany. He said, "This thing may not work." And that was really the first indication that we had gotten that this thing was maybe not a done deal.

So I called Brent and told him and he then went back to the plane. They were on their way down from Kennebunkport. He went to the back of the plane and made a little tougher statement about the coup. Meantime, about the same time, Yeltsin sent a letter to the President and I got it in the White House. I guess it must have come in by fax or something, I don't remember, and it was asking for help. I read that to Brent while he was on the plane. It was clear that Yeltsin was going to stand up to these guys, so all of a sudden we had a little different situation, or a substantially different situation.

So the deputies met pretty much through the afternoon and we were drafting a statement that the President would make that afternoon and as we went through the successive drafts, the drafts got tougher and tougher and tougher as Dick kept reporting things that weren't happening and the fact that Yeltsin was now barricaded in the White House, there was no attack being made on the White House and so on. And that was the deputies meeting where the President and Cheney and Scowcroft ended up being backbenchers in the Roosevelt room. But just in the iteration, in the next to the last draft that we were discussing in that meeting with them present, we had drafted a very strong statement and I've got this anecdote in my book. Steve Hadley of Defense came to my office after we broke and he said, "The problem with the statement is that it doesn't condemn the coup." Steve and I had started working together in the Nixon NSC, he's a lawyer at Shea, Gardner, a very quiet kind of guy, but very determined. I said, "Well, good God Steve, everybody will read it that way. Look at the text, it's very tough." He said, "It still doesn't explicitly condemn the coup."

I looked at it and I said, "Well, you're right." And so Steve and I added a sentence, specifically condemning the coup. I called Scowcroft and got his clearance on it. We then settled on the statement at the deputies meeting at which the President and company were present. The President went out and read the statement, or we issued the statement, and sure enough, the thing that led all the networks was that we had condemned the coup. But I think that intelligence played a big role that day in making us more

cautious in buying into the notion that just because the KGB, the Army, and the party had decided to launch a coup in the Soviet Union, in this day and age, didn't necessarily mean that it would work.

Now, the interesting thing is—and it is a measure of how timing plays a role—if that coup had been launched two years earlier, it probably would have worked. Just like I believe if Andropov had become Secretary when he was twenty years younger, there'd still be a Soviet Union. Still muddling down but still there. So I'm very much into the role of individuals in making decisive impact on history.

Naftali: To shift to a different topic where intelligence may or may not have mattered, the administration decided not to get involved militarily in Yugoslavia. The CIA had been predicting for some time instability in Yugoslavia.

Gates: For a decade.

Naftali: What role did intelligence play while you were DCI in shaping US policy towards the former Yugoslavia?

Gates: Well, I think that this is a place where, I mean—One of the roles of intelligence that is often overlooked, we were talking yesterday, or I was talking about the absence of historical memory on the part of policymakers. Ironically, at the same time the CIA is looked upon to provide mountains of current intelligence and estimative intelligence, it also often falls to CIA to provide historical perspective and that's what CIA had been doing throughout the '80s and before Tito died, in essence saying, "When he goes, this whole thing is likely to come apart." And it is a tremendous success story because CIA was absolutely on the mark. They had exactly the right perspective.

I believe the caution of the Bush administration in getting involved in Yugoslavia, again is based in no small part on individuals. You had three people in the administration who were very familiar with Yugoslavia and the history of the south Slavs. Eagleburger had been ambassador to Yugoslavia, Scowcroft had been Air Force attaché in Belgrade, and I had done all of my Master's work on Eastern Europe and especially the south Slavs and all three of us had studied Serbo-Croatian. Theirs was better than mine and in fact, throughout the administration, when Scowcroft and Eagleburger wanted to have a conversation that nobody could understand, they would speak to each other in Serbo-Croatian. We saw the historical roots of this conflict and the near nonexistent potential for solving it, for us fixing it. So I think that that counsel weighed very heavily in the administration and frankly was supported by a lot of the materials that were coming in from the Agency about the intractability of some of these problems and the ancient roots of some of them. I think all of that, and more the experience that Brent and Larry had had in Yugoslavia, played an important role in the Bush administration's caution. Had he been re-elected, I suspect that caution would have continued.

Naftali: You don't recall any specific incidents where intelligence played a role?

Gates: No, not really. I don't think so. There very likely were but I don't remember.

Naftali: When historians look at the Bush administration in its final phase—

Gates: Excuse me for interrupting, but one thing that the Bush administration, I mean Bush really had deep respect and affection for Helmut Kohl. But it was our view that Germany's recognition of Croatia turned an internal problem into an international problem before the international community was prepared to deal with it. There was a lot of resentment against the Germans for that. And there was a deep-seated feeling on the part of several of us that this was a unified Germany's first baby step in showing that "we have an independent foreign policy as a unified country and we will do what we want to do and the hell with you."

Brands: How much effort did the administration make to prevent Germany—

Gates: They surprised us. We didn't know they were going to do it. We would have made a significant effort had we known that they were going to do it, for just the reasons that I said. Because all of a sudden just made the situation infinitely more complex to deal with as an international problem.

Naftali: Historians will contrast the Bush administration's caution towards Yugoslavia with the Bush administration's decision to get involved with Somalia. In the summer of 1992, the issue first arose that perhaps the United States could do something in Somalia and the administration decided not to, but by the end of 1992 the administration goes in. I don't doubt that the CIA did not have great assets in Somalia, it had not been a major target of the United States. What role again did you play as DCI to shape policy towards Somalia?

Gates: I think first of all the Bush administration's intervention in Somalia to try to deal with the famine is probably as good a case study in foreign policy by CNN as any I can think of. The public outcry and the pressure from the Congress as a result of the televised pictures of starvation and anarchy in Somalia were, but above all the starvation, just became a huge force to deal with. And I believe, because it was in the context, in the same time frame as an election campaign—I think the decision was made they had to respond to this public pressure. I don't think that if it been a non-election year and if there had been no CNN pictures, that we would have ever gone into Somalia. But, having gone in and given Colin Powell's strong views about limiting the mission and the strong views that Cheney had about limiting the mission, and frankly the strong views we all had about limiting the mission, by the end of the Bush administration, or toward the end of the Bush administration there were plans in place to begin withdrawing the US forces and having them replaced by UN people who would basically continue the anti-famine effort.

There was never any illusion, I think, in the Bush administration, and we probably helped from CIA, about nation building in Somalia, because we knew there was no nation there at that point. And so, I think there was an understanding that we had accomplished the mission we set out to do and we were looking to hand over the effort to the UN. I think if Bush had been re-elected, that that withdrawal would have taken place and I suppose that the major contribution of intelligence in this arena was simply reporting on the tribal nature of the society in Somalia and the difficulty in building any kind of unity, in any kind of time frame, and with any kind of resources that we were prepared to develop.

Naftali: Did you have anyone there with historical understanding of Somalia?

Gates: Well again, I think this was an area where CIA was providing a lot of help in providing some of the background about Somalia's history and the tribal nature of the society and the clans and so on and that the nation of Somalia was quite an artificial construct, as so many African states were. So CIA was basically I think providing that.

Naftali: Were there any lessons learned from this that CIA could make use of later because there will be other—there's more temptation to participate in humanitarian operations with the end of the Cold War.

Gates: I suspect that, based on what I hear, the agency has provided a lot of good intelligence on Somalia, on Haiti, on several of these other situations that at the end of the day the the current administration has ignored. The more you do that kind of work and the more you see it ignored, the less likely you are to do the work in the future. So I think that if they have the sense that they're not being paid attention to, they're not going to expend the resources. I mean, what's the point?

Naftali: There might also be pressure from Congress for information, even if the executive branch doesn't—

Gates: They'll provide the information, they'll get the information together, but, do you take risks, do you devote special resources and so on, those are the kind of decisions that tend to be made quietly.

Edwards: Let's talk about another topic that we talked a little bit at various times and that's the reunification of Germany. You just mentioned the importance of the individual in history and the reunification of Germany is often seen as one of the fundamental changes that took place during the Bush administration which we could attribute to the United States in addition to broad forces in the world such as the collapse of the Soviet Union. We talked about the President establishing a policy in Montana I think it was. Could you elaborate on the actual implementation of that policy?

Gates: I mean, it is a very special achievement of George Bush in my view because every other leader, East and West, was against it. The French were against it, the British were against it, the Soviets were against it, the Poles were against it, the Czechs were against it, the Hungarians were against it, the Italians were against it. We were totally isolated. And it was by, just by sheer force of personality and determination that I think Bush finally got all these people on board. He had an ally in the Soviet Union in Shevardnadze. German reunification really ripped it for Shevardnadze. He finally ran out his string at home on German reunification. Then, the Gulf War, and that was kind of the end for Shevardnadze. Those two things, that amounted to three strikes for him.

But, it took a lot of effort on Bush's part, a lot of time on the telephone, a lot of time in personal meetings, to begin bringing around, above all, our European allies who did not have the same kind of faith in Germany that Bush did. And he just flat believed that the Germans had changed. I think the title of my chapter on this subject in the book is "By Faith Alone" because it was really Bush who pushed it. And the irony is, on reunification, we can talk about the speed of events and so on, just months before it happens Kohl says, "Well, maybe in five years we'll get there." So just the pace of change, and I think Bush rode that wave and in some ways directed it.

And it was an extraordinary joint effort between the NSC staff and the State Department and above all Bob Blackwell, Zelikow, Condi, Zoellick, and Ross who played the key roles in helping to bring it about and they came up with the approach to SNF (Strategic Nuclear Forces), they came up with the approach on the 4 plus 2, and it took on a very interesting arcana of its own, like all things German, from Berlin on. It was 4 plus 2, not 2 plus 4. And for a reason. And how do you give the Russians a feeling that they're a participant in this and it's not being done over their heads, that you're having to roll them? But the same with the French and the British also. One of these personal things that plays such an important role is that Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl did not like each other. I mean, it was not just policy differences, Kohl detested Margaret Thatcher. And in the private sessions, in meetings of the four, they would say the most insulting things about each other and their respective countries. I mean, they had forgotten nothing in the twentieth century, no part of it. But it was a massive effort by the American bureaucracy supporting the President and led intellectually by this handful of sort of third level staffers, that I think played a key role in all of this.

Brands: Was there anybody that George Bush actively disliked?

Gates: Shamir. But I will say this. Every President I worked for, at some point in his presidency, would get so pissed off at the Israelis that he couldn't speak. It didn't matter whether it was Jimmy Carter or Gerry Ford or Ronald Reagan or George Bush. Something would happen and they would just absolutely go screw themselves right into the ceiling they were so angry and they'd sort of rant and rave around the Oval Office. I think it was their frustration about knowing that there was so little they could do about it because of domestic politics and everything else that was so frustrating to them. But, he did not, I think, care very much for Shamir. I'm trying to think about others, but I can't think of any others.

Brands: How important is it to have a President that easy going?

Gates: I think that in the, I think in all of the events of the Bush administration from the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, liberation of Eastern Europe, reunification of Germany to the Gulf War, that Bush's personal diplomacy played a huge role in all of them in many ways and with greater or lesser importance in specific circumstances. But, he had an unerring instinct for when it was time to reach out to somebody and talk to them on the phone. No President, I think, has ever engaged in the kind of telephone diplomacy that Bush did. And, actually he and I had several conversations about it because I worried about the telephone diplomacy knowing how many nations were listening in. Because virtually all of these calls were on open telephone lines. There are no, at least then, there were no secure telephones. We tried to create one with the Soviets but it ended up if we were going to do it we had to use ours and we didn't want to give them that. So we were trying to develop a unique one where in effect we wouldn't give them any of our existing codes but one just for us, for the two nations, but, in terms of a voice link, the hot line is secure but not the voice link.

But I talked to him about the risks of other nations. I mean, we knew the French were listening in, we knew the British were listening in. We knew the Soviets were listening in. In some respects probably the Germans were listening in, possibly the Japanese and so on. I would just remind him occasionally, "If you hear a click, you're not alone, and you may not hear the click." But his attitude toward dealing with foreign leaders and his willingness to do it and to invest the time in it, just like in the Gulf War, I mean, the French are so difficult to get along with. And every time we would about reach the breaking point with the French, the President would pick up the phone and call Mitterrand and it would all be better, it would all of a sudden be sweetness and light again for a while.

Bush's invitation to Mitterrand to come to Kennebunkport in May of 1989 was an inspired instinct because it changed Mitterrand's attitude toward the United States and towards Bush for the entirety of Bush's presidency. The two of them, the very formal Mitterrand, in the very informal setting of Kennebunkport, of Walker's Point, developed a bond that lasted throughout the entire administration and I don't think the United States has had a better relationship at the top with the French in living memory. The relationship between the two leaders was so smooth and without rancor. In fact, one of my favorite anecdotes about Mitterrand is that Mitterrand did not want to begin the ground war. He wanted to delay and he called President Bush and the two of them were talking about it and I walked in on Bush with a note that Saddam had set the oil wells on fire. Bush read the note to Mitterrand and Mitterrand said, "It's time to go."

So, I think that those relationships played an important part in many of the foreign policy successes of the Bush administration. And I think the fact that the President was also in each of these instances really knowledgeable about these individuals, about the international situation. He had a lot of detail at his command and he really was a substantive, expert is too strong, but he was substantively very well grounded. So he could discuss things including issues in their own country with most of these people as part of the small talk around these conversations that I think very few Presidents could do. Clinton could probably do it. Nixon could probably do it. Carter might have if he'd wanted to.

Brands: Were there special briefings then if the President knew he would be telephoning Mitterrand or somebody else?

Gates: About half the time, well, maybe a little more than half the time, we would do some talking points for him for the telephone calls. And there would be a little bit of background but never more than a page and a half. But, for the most part, on a sort of atmospheric, he drew on his own knowledge. As I said yesterday, he met a lot of these people when he was at the UN and when he was vice President,

particularly in the Third World. And he paid attention to those people in a way that most Presidents have not.

Naftali: Can you remember some examples of leaders that he remembered that he'd met in the—

Gates: Well, I think that there were several Latin American leaders that he had met when he was at the UN and they were ambassadors. I know that there were a number in the Middle East and in Africa. They tended to be more from the Third World countries than from the First World. Not so much from the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. Clearly the Chinese, some of the Koreans and Japanese. Pretty broad. But people who might be foreign ministers whom he had known when they were ambassadors.

Naftali: That's very helpful. Let's switch to a CIA related question for a moment. During the time you were DCI, the Agency was investigating possibility of there being a mole. I think you had set up something called the Skylight team in the Agency to track down evidence. This was a very difficult thing to do, largely because you had had a difficult experience with James Angleton and his mole hunts in the late '60s and early '70s and there was a desire not to repeat those errors. Can you reflect on that for a moment and what you recall?

Gates: Well, this was a problem that Webster and I knew we had as early as '87, and I don't remember, we didn't give any name to anything. So I don't remember whether we had a name for it. But, at that point, we knew that we had a leak in the Agency and there were three possibilities that we looked at or we were investigating. The first had to do with the arrest of the Marine guard, Clayton Lonetree and his friend Arnold Bracy at the embassy in Moscow. Bracy at one point had confessed that they had let the KGB into the CIA station spaces and so one possibility was that the Soviets had cracked the safes and so on in Moscow and knew what we had there and that that was the source of the information. The problem was that operations were being wrapped up that Edward Lee Howard had not known about, so we knew we had a different kind of problem.

The second possibility was that our communications, that our codes had been broken, and that our communications were being compromised. And the third possibility was that there was a mole. It took about six or eight months to reach a firm conclusion that the Soviets had not gotten anything because of Lonetree and Bracy. It took about another two years to prove to ourselves, to convince ourselves that our communications were still secure and had not been broken. So then we knew we had a mole. The problem was that there was a pool of about 200 people who were potential candidates for this role and I think that that's where some of the lingering aftereffects of Angleton played a role. Only a couple of years before this all broke, the US government had finally settled with two CIA officers whose careers had been ruined by Angleton unfairly and they both received settlements of hundreds of thousands of dollars from the government for what had been done to them. There was also this concern, associated with that of the importance of not wrecking the careers of innocent people. So it was just a huge problem, and as the post mortems in the investigations and everything has shown, there were mistakes made as well as part of that investigation, leads not followed up and that sort of thing.

One of the sources—I have very few things about which I have regrets or that make me angry about my time in the Agency, but one of them is the fact that I learned after I had retired and after Ames was arrested that in fact the counterintelligence people had reached the conclusion several months before I retired, in the fall of '92, that Ames was probably their man. They were still building the court case against him but they were pretty sure he was the guy and they never told me. And, as I told one journalist, had I still been director, there would have been people looking for work.

Naftali: Had you known Ted Price for a long time?

Gates: Yes.

Masoud: If they had told you that Ames was the man, what would you have done?

Gates: I probably would have told the President in private. I might have told the chairmen of the two intelligence committees in private but I wouldn't have done anything else. Because what they were then engaged in was building the court case. It's the idea that pissed me off.

Naftali: No doubt. Let's take a break.

[Break]

Gates: One of the people that I brought back into the Agency who was originally brought into the Agency by Jim Schlesinger was Fritz Ermarth. Fritz gave me a description of our business that I have used very often and I think captures the challenge of our business very effectively. He divided all of the things that we wanted to know into two categories, secrets and mysteries. The secrets were those things that were knowable, where there was a document that could be stolen, a conversation that could be taped, a research and development program that could be discovered and so on. And the other category, mysteries, are those things that are unknowable but the policymakers want to know. What is Gorbachev going to do next? Will there be a coup? Will Saddam cross the border? Will Saddam go on into Saudi Arabia. The problem with mysteries is that very often, the focus of your attention, the person that you're focused on doesn't know himself what he is going to do because he hasn't made up his mind yet. So it is not a secret, even if you could strap him to a table and torture him or give him a truth serum, you still wouldn't know the answer because he doesn't know the answer yet. Gorbachev himself never knew what he was going to do practically one day to the next, so trying to predict what he was going to do became very difficult.

So I think this categorization of secrets and mysteries is frankly, if a new President were to ask me to lunch and just to talk about intelligence, I think one of the things that I would tell him is that the first thing he needs to understand about intelligence and about the world is that what he wants to know is divided into these two categories, and CIA can give him his secrets and they can provide some insight into the possible mysteries, but they can't solve the mysteries for them.

Naftali: Let's talk a little bit about your experiences as DCI and put it into historical context. You knew a lot of your predecessors. What lessons, positive and negative did you learn from them that you implemented when you were DCI?

Gates: Well, let me just go back through. Bill Webster actually was one of the few senior managers in government from whom I learned by positive example, not only in the way he conducted himself personally, but also it was really Bill that cemented for me the importance of involving the institution in decision making if you wished to make change. It was an approach that he had taken at the FBI and that he took in some limited ways at the Agency and I can't remember the specific instance where the kind of a light bulb came on, but it was Bill whose style persuaded me that the best way to bring lasting change to a bureaucracy that can always outwait you is first to get the bureaucracy to agree that change is needed and then to make bureaucracy your partner in bringing about the change.

Casey was a fascinating person, but Bill Casey's time in office showed me for sure the dangers of trying to operate three or four different agendas at once and of operating outside the institutional constraints. I have always been somebody who believed in congressional oversight, in no small part, because I believe that congressional oversight protects the Agency against Presidents, against people who have strange ideas and aspirations and so on. There were an awful lot of times that some policymaker would come up with a really goofy idea in the situation room and you could put the kibosh on it simply by saying, "You

want to do that, that's fine with me, but of course I have to go up and brief the two congressional committees within 48 hours," and all of a sudden it didn't seem like such a hot idea.

And Bill's disdain for the Congress imposed a very high price on the Agency. He accomplished a lot of things at the Agency. I think he re-energized the clandestine service after the Carter years. I think analysis improved significantly during his tenure, but, as I wrote in my book, he imposed a very high overhead cost, because of his disregard for the Congress and his willingness to play outside of the institutional guidelines and to play at the very baseline and maybe cross it occasionally.

Stan Turner, in a way, showed me the opposite of what Webster showed me. That change imposed from above by fiat will never last in a bureaucracy. Everything that Stan tried to do in essence walked out the door behind him when he left in January of 1981. Stan also was deeply suspicious of the clandestine service. He couldn't understand, he thought it was immoral for the clandestine service to try and recruit a foreign military officer because he thought that violated the military officer's code. You tried to say, "Well Stan, that's the military and this is intelligence and these are different worlds." He never got past that. I don't think he was ever comfortably morally and ethically with intelligence, and particularly with human operations. So his relationships with the clandestine service were always terrible. He was very creative, had a lot of ideas and in some ways he was like Carter himself in the respect that he tried to change too many things all at once without establishing priorities and trying to accomplish two or three really important things and then moving on and devoting the resources and time to implementing them. So most of my lessons from Stan were negative ones in that respect.

And, also, an example of the constraints, or the difficulty of somebody who is outside an institution in trying to bring change to it, especially an institution like CIA that's as closed as it is and as unique a culture that it is.

I wasn't at the Agency during Bush's tenure, so, as we talked, I didn't know him until after his time there. But I think Bush's lesson for me was not to neglect the importance of making people understand and feel that what they do is important, and paying attention to morale. Bush's lasting legacy I think is that he really played a big part in restoring morale in the Agency people by making them understand that what they did was useful and valued by the policymakers and that they were very important.

Colby was a deceptive kind of guy in respect, I mean, here was a guy who had run the Phoenix program in –

Naftali: Vietnam.

Gates: Vietnam. Had parachuted into Norway with the OSS (Office of Strategic Services), and he looked like an accountant, and his personal manner was of an accountant. He was very quiet spoken, he had these clear rimmed glasses, plastic rimmed glasses, and he was always fiddling with a couple of pencils. But, as somebody who had come up from the clandestine service, he immersed himself in the analytical side interestingly. He really liked the analysis and would meet with people doing the estimates and so on. I always thought—one of the ideas that he gave me was that he would have lunches in his office fairly regularly, with very junior people in the Agency, with several at a time, to get to know them and get their take on what was going on in the Agency, and I would continue to do that when I became DDI and then in all my jobs I would continue to do that.

Schlesinger, sort of a pro and con. Schlesinger really hammered the lesson at the Agency that it had to be involved in the policy process, that it had to understand that it had to focus its collection and its analysis on issues that mattered to policymakers. The agency has a temptation in its arrogance to believe that anything it says or addresses itself to is intrinsically important and therefore they ought to just be

able to throw it over the transom and people will scramble to pick it up, a view that I quickly learned was wrong when I went to the NSC. So Schlesinger I remember to this day, and this was 17 years ago—I remember Schlesinger turning to all his senior officials in a staff meeting at one point and saying, “God damn it, what you people don’t understand is that you work for the United States government.” and I always thought that that was a fairly telling thing, that the director had to tell the senior officials.

On the negative side, Schlesinger treated people very badly. He was very disrespectful, he used very harsh language, very crude language in dealing with senior officials. He fired about 7% of the clandestine service, I always was amused at the attacks on the Carter administration for dismantling CIA’s covert action capability and so on when in reality it was Richard Nixon that had done that, beginning with Schlesinger in 1973, because that was the first place he turned to dismantle.

Trying to think who was before Schlesinger.

Naftali: Helms?

Gates: I guess it was Helms. Helms was very aloof as director. I think in the entire time Helms was director, I saw him once. The idea of Dick Helms going down and eating in the cafeteria was just unthinkable. But Helms gave me one useful—he gave me a lot of useful advice when I became DDCI and I started seeing him fairly regularly when I became DDI. And I really hadn’t had any exposure to him before then. But I’ll never forget when I was nominated in ’87 I asked him to come out and have lunch with me when I was Acting Director. And I’ll never forget, this was in ’87, and his parting words at the end of the lunch were, “When you’re confirmed in director, never go home at night without wondering where the mole is.” In other words, the director should always assume that there is a mole, whether or not there is, he should assume that there is one.

I did not know Rayborn. I met McCone several times when I was DDI. I always felt sorry for him. This was a guy who reminded me of Voltaire’s comment when he was very old and really beginning his final days, somebody asked him, “How is Voltaire today?” Voltaire responded, “Voltaire is fine but the house he inhabits is collapsing around him.” And that’s the way McCone was when I met him. He was nearly blind, he was virtually deaf, very frail. But his mind was just as sharp as a tack and I had been told that I really had to shout at him for him to hear me. As we were sitting on the sofa in my office when I was DDI and I was shouting at him, I was thinking in the back of my mind, “What if he’s not really deaf at all and he’s probably sitting there wondering why is this young man screaming at me, have I annoyed him in some way?” But McCone was always very wise and he offered me a lot of suggestions in terms of analysis and dealing with Presidents and things like that.

So I learned things both positive and negative from all these people. I learned a lot from everybody I dealt with. It was one of the benefits that I had. I was toting up, when I was doing my book, and I think I worked for, worked with, nine Secretaries of State, eight Secretaries of Defense, ten National Security Advisors, seven Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, eight DCIs and more admirals and generals than I can count. One of you asked me earlier if Bush had any of these foreign leaders he didn’t really like. The truth is, I found something to respect or like about virtually all these people that I worked with. Very few of them, well, they all had warts like we all do, but I always found something I could respect. In fact, one of the reviewers of my book wrote that Mr. Gates clearly has never met a President he didn’t like, because I just absolutely didn’t trash one or the other of them. But anyway—

Naftali: Can I ask you to move to a subject involving people you didn’t like? You were well aware that as a result of the Cold War a certain conspiracy mentality developed among some people in the United States, feared that the tentacles of the CIA reached into places where of course it did not. What did you

do as DCI to try to change the public understanding of CIA and did that involve interacting with journalists and how does a DCI interact with journalists?

Gates: Well there were three general approaches that I took. The first was, and the most institutional was, to accelerate and broaden the declassification of historical documents, beginning with declassifying all of the national intelligence estimates on the Soviet Union and I promised also that we would begin declassifying even information on covert actions, beginning with Guatemala, Iran and the Bay of Pigs. That was not greeted with a great deal of enthusiasm by the clandestine service, but I felt it was necessary. Second, I announced a number of major initiatives in terms of greater openness on the part of the Agency. Traditionally only the director and the deputy director of central intelligence ever talked to the press and I, as part of a number of initiatives, decided that we would make virtually all of the senior officers of the Agency available to journalists, except for the head of the clandestine service. I did protect him. But the inspector general, the general counsel, the executive director, the head of congressional affairs, the head of the analytical section, the head of science and technology, the head of administration, all of you people are going to have to learn to deal with the press and sit down and talk about what we do. It actually garnered some very favorable publicity for the Agency.

Our general counsel was a very smart woman, Elizabeth Rindskopf. We had some very good people and they made a very good impression. I talked about internal communications in the Agency and so on. So there were a number of these efforts to—and it was all, as I said, with respect to the declassification yesterday, premised on the notion that if we didn't begin to educate the American people about what intelligence really is, then support for the Agency would dissipate after the end of the Cold War.

One of the things that I found curious is that of all the novelists and the movies and everything else, no one really writes about intelligence the way it really is. Nobody writes about the intelligence world that I occupied for 27 years in terms of the role intelligence plays in the government. The only one who captures any piece of it is Clancy in the respect that he writes about a military and an intelligence world staffed by people of competence and integrity who use instruments that work; beyond that it is pretty outlandish.

And so how do you correct that? And it seemed to me the kind of things I've been talking about. I was also very bothered about the way the Agency is always portrayed in movies. So I asked Jack Valenti, the movie industry's chief lobbyist in Washington, to come to lunch, and I got him talking about this. And I said, "You know, would it do any good for me to go out to Los Angeles and sit down and have lunch or dinner with a Lou Wasserman and some of these other moguls out there that really are the movers and shakers in Hollywood?" He was very blunt, he said it wouldn't do any good at all, he said, "Your problem is in the screenwriters, and there are 4 to 5,000 of them, and they all think the same thing, and you will never change their minds, so you just have to live with it." It was sad news but I thought a useful dose of realism in that respect. So those were among the initiatives that I took to try changing the perceptions of the Agency.

I also encouraged the Hill, working with various committees, to hold more open hearings involving intelligence. I was the only director to ever appear before Jack Brook's Judiciary Committee. I was the only director to ever appear before Henry Gonzalez' Banking Committee. And these guys were so flabbergasted, I mean, they'd been asking directors to come for years and no one had ever come. And when I spoke to Gonzalez' committee, the BNL scandal was right in the forefront and he had some real fire eaters among the liberals on his committee and he and I reached an agreement that we would focus the discussion, I think it was money laundering or something to do like that, but it was organized crime that he wanted me to testify on. And we made an agreement that that was what I was going to testify on

and that's all I would testify on. And one of his firebrands, I think it was young Joe Kennedy from Massachusetts started hammering me on BNL, and Gonzalez gaveled him down and told him he was out of order and wouldn't let him continue.

So these guys responded very well to my willingness to come up and appear in an open session in front of their committees. So I think those kinds of efforts helped as well, and I was happy to have our other people go up and brief on military capabilities around the world and things like that.

Naftali: You mentioned that you made a special point of trying to turn up and seek declassification of all documents related to the Kennedy assassination knowing the interest of the public in that issue.

Gates: Well, I tried to. It seemed to me that for years the Agency had taken it on the chin about the Kennedy thing and we fed the conspiratorially minded by withholding all of these documents. A substantial portion of the documents were in fact documents in our custodial care from the House Select Committee on Assassinations. They weren't even our documents. There were, I guess, 300- to 400,000 pages of these things all together. The irony is that the file of information that the Agency had on Lee Harvey Oswald, before November 22, 1963, was about an eighth of an inch thick. Then we had a roomful of stuff after that date. I remember one congressman saying, "Well Mr. Gates, you're the director, what's in those documents? What do you know? And when did you know it?" I said, "Well, Mr. so-and-so, the fact is, I was a sophomore in college at the time, so I don't really know what's in there."

So I ordered the declassification of all these documents and I wrote to Tom Foley, the Speaker of the House and asked for permission to declassify the House Assassination Committee documents and he did not give me that permission. He indicated that they were working on legislation and it would be covered by that legislation. I wasn't sure that they would pass that legislation and so—this was one of those instances where I testified in public before the government operations committee that was addressing the issue of declassifying all of the government's documents on the Kennedy assassination. I said, I'm going to do it whether you pass your law or not, and if you don't pass your law and I find that there are some documents that we think should not be declassified, my intent would be to, in consultation with intelligence committees and probably the Justice Department, to ask three retired federal judges to impanel themselves and look at these documents and offer assurance that none of them have to do with the Agency having any involvement in the assassination.

These guys fell all over themselves they were so happy. So the right attitude of trying to be forthcoming and cooperative, of not trying to hide things that don't make any sense to hide or keep secret, there is no need for an adversarial relationship on the Hill with most of these people. Most of these people were some of the worst curmudgeons on the Hill, Gonzalez, Jack Brooks, so on. These were people that executive branch people shuddered over the idea of having to go before their committees. And I walk into Jack Brook's committee and he walks over and gives me a plate of chocolate chip cookies his wife had baked. So there is no need, I think that too many in the executive branch needlessly antagonize these people. You need to reserve your ammunition. It's like bringing up kids, you have to pick your fights carefully, and too many fights are fought on the wrong issues.

Naftali: Your meeting with Jack Valenti, did that come after the screening of JFK the movie?

Gates: I think so.

Naftali: What did you think of that movie?

Gates: I never saw it.

Naftali: How about the press?

Gates: And I have to tell you, I have a very low threshold when it comes to movies. I see a lot.

Naftali: You've seen most of the Jack Ryan movies.

Gates: Oh yes. In fact, right after "The Hunt for Red October" came out, I invited Tom Clancy to the Agency. I was then DDI. So I had the job that in the movie version was played by James Earl Jones. I invited Clancy out to the director's dining room for lunch and after lunch I said, "You're probably going to write another book or two"—this must have been in '85—"so why don't you come down and see the office for verisimilitude? First, you'll notice there's no wood paneling, second, there's no fireplace, third, there's no Turkish coffee maker and fourth, there's no admiral, but other than that you got it just right."

Then, at the screening of, President Bush showed, I think, "Patriot Games," at the White House. James Earl Jones was there and I sat next to James Earl Jones and I said, "You know, you do the job better than I do." Clancy once told me, we were both invited to speak to a number of bright high school seniors and we were on a bus going out to dinner some place and he said, "You know, for the first several novels, I pretty much modeled Ryan's career on yours."

Naftali: You didn't know Ian Fleming though.

Gates: No, and I was not the cause of Love Story or what ever it was.

Naftali: So did you read LaCarre?

Gates: Yes, I read them all.

Naftali: What did you think of LaCarre?

Gates: Too cynical. That gray, agnostic, cynical world that he portrays is not the world I know, and not the world of any of the clandestine service officers I knew.

Masoud: Did you read any of William F. Buckley's spy novels?

Gates: Yes.

Masoud: Because his criticism of LaCarre is precisely the same as yours.

Gates: Yes, and Ludlum. The world that I knew wasn't as complex as Ludlum's. Just couldn't keep it straight if it were.

Naftali: What about some spy flicks? If kids wanted to, if scholars wanted to get a sense of the world, what's a good spy film to go and see?

Gates: The one that CIA showed for many, many years in its training courses, "Our Man in Havana." There is no modern one.

Naftali: Let's shift to the press. You mentioned that when you were deputy national security advisor, you had a regular meeting with a few representatives of American news magazines. Did you do the same as DCI? Was that a regular—

Gates: No regular meetings. I talked to a lot of journalists but I had no regular meetings. You know, there were a couple of initiatives that I thought about, one of which I would have done had I stayed on and one of which I probably wouldn't have. One was to create a press room at CIA and have maybe monthly briefings or something like that. Because CIA for decades has provided off-the-record substantive briefings to journalists who are preparing to travel abroad. We've done it with everybody

you can name, our analysts do those, but to have a place where that could happen. I thought, just the imagery of it would be interesting.

The other thing that I would have done is create a reading room at CIA for declassified intelligence materials where everything was computerized and easily accessible and indexed in a way materials would be easily available for scholars, and I would have done that if I stayed.

Naftali: Which foreign correspondents did you read, that did a good job? I assume you read the New York Times in the morning. Which newspapers did you read?

Gates: The Post, the Times, the Wall Street Journal, usually the Economist.

Masoud: Who were the best journalists covering intelligence at that time?

Gates: Well, there were only two journalists that I really respected that wrote on international affairs, well, three. Tom Friedman, Gerry Seib, and Robin Wright. I think Robin was the L.A. Times, Freedman was at the New York Times and Seib was at the Wall Street Journal. And they were the only ones I really felt—I had long talks with, I had some interesting dialogues with various journalists, some of them on the record, including one with Frank Sesno of CNN on the role of CNN in making foreign policy and using Somalia as a case study. But I also have talked to these guys over the years and said “You in journalism have the same problem that we in the Agency had, but you haven’t fixed your problem. And that is, the only way that you can get ahead as a journalist is to stop doing what you’re really good at and start doing what you’re only so-so at.” I told Friedman, “You’re probably the best foreign correspondent on the Middle East writing anywhere and as a columnist you’re so-so. When you write on foreign affairs you’re pretty good, but when you write on domestic stuff you don’t really know what you’re talking about.”

The problem is, I mean, I’m old enough that I can remember the Arthur Krocks and the Harrison Salisburys, the Hanson Baldwins and people like that. I mean, Hanson Baldwin knew more about the Defense Department than the defense department knew and Arthur Crock the same about diplomacy, and they knew everybody and they were wonderful. They weren’t always right by any means but they brought a perspective and historical understanding to it that was so valuable and the only guy as far as I’m concerned who brings that kind of perspective any more is Johnny Apple of the New York Times.

Naftali: No question.

Gates: Johnny Apple wrote a piece with the liberation of, with the downing of the wall, one of the most moving journalistic pieces I’ve ever seen and he ends it, I can’t quote it exactly, but he quoted Churchill’s line that the lights are going out all over Europe and the last line of his piece was that the lights were coming back on. I mean, it just made the hair on the back of your neck stand up. Most of these kids writing today don’t know who Churchill is.

Part of the problem that I found in dealing with journalists, particularly in the intelligence world, is not one of agenda or bias, but one of incompetence. I mean, they just don’t know what they’re doing. When Elaine Sciolino was covering the intelligence community, she had no background in it and no interest in getting any background in it. So the stuff she wrote was paper thin in terms of its superficiality. And the result is, they become a prisoner of any source who wants to give them a story and have no context into which they can place it.

Brands: On a related topic, let me ask you about the caliber of recruits in the CIA over the years that you were there.

Gates: Well, the last full year I was director, CIA had five hundred openings and we had 150,000 applications and people interested in joining. And I would get a sampling, both as DDCI and as DCI, every couple of months I would ask for a sampling of the folders, the personnel folders of the kids we were recruiting and my overwhelming reaction on looking at them was I was sure as hell glad I didn't have to compete with them. Because they were so much more broadly educated and had so many more experiences, and so many more skills than I had when I came to the Agency. I think they're pretty formidable and I think frankly that it is probably as good a group of people in terms of their intellectual skills that the Agency has ever had.

My worry is, and particularly true of the clandestine service, but it is true of the whole place, there is a temptation in setting the criteria by which you will hire, that you end up trying to replicate yourself, and so it becomes self limiting and each generation becomes a little less sophisticated, or a little less broadly experienced. In other words, I would love to go back to that first generation of CIA people, many of whom were first and second generation Americans and who were of German, or French or Austrian backgrounds and only a generation away, or less than a generation away, who spoke the languages fluently because they were spoken in their home. I tried all through the '80s to get the Agency to be much more aggressive in going to the Arab-American community around Detroit, the Asian community in San Francisco, community leaders and sitting down and saying, "We want to recruit your sons and daughters and here's what our expectations are and can you help us?" Because I think they would. I was never able to do that. Of course, it had absolutely nothing to do with affirmative action and everything to do with having people who could walk into Tripoli without looking like they were born in Wichita, Kansas. But I was very impressed by the caliber of the people.

Masoud: If Bush had won in '92, would you have stayed on at CIA? Is that what you would have wanted to do?

Gates: Yes, in exchange for his support through the confirmation process, I would have owed him that, I would have felt moral obligation. Although I have to admit, from a personal standpoint, I was relieved to have the opportunity to retire. I mean, I had been through six Presidents. From the time I had first gone to the NSC in '74, I had in essence spent 16 years, 17 years, or 18 years, working incredible hours, every week-end, one crisis after another, training or participating in training new Presidents and new administrations. In fact, I was just out of energy. I really felt like I had, with the exception of a few minor things like the reading room for declassified stuff and so on—all the major initiatives that I felt I had to contribute, in changing the direction of the intelligence community—Another one I didn't talk about was changing the whole thrust of the budget. I mean, the last budget I submitted, only 13% of the budget was going to the former Soviet Union. So the notion that we hadn't changed or priorities or figured out what to do was just crazy.

But I felt I had launched everything that I wanted to and one of the things I was not looking forward to was, the future was just going to be maintenance, just implementing things that had already been started and making sure that they headed in the right direction, and the budget. And I knew there was going to be huge pressure on the budget in the aftermath of the Cold War, and already had been at that point. So all of the least attractive aspects of the job were the ones that were left. So I was not very enthusiastic about it. In fact, an important threshold happened for me during my confirmation hearings, that changed my whole attitude about the process.

Very, very few people knew about it but on August 29, 1991, I became eligible to retire. Let me tell you, there were a few times during the hearings when I just sort of, the temptation to just, by—was very strong. But I certainly would have stayed if Bush had been re-elected. I owed him that.

Naftali: You were at the CIA in a remarkable period, because not since 1946, and it wasn't the CIA, but it was an interim organization, the intelligence community of the United States had many, many significant targets, and had a hard time narrowing the focus. It was a lot easier during the Cold War when you had just a few hard targets. What lessons did you learn in the period you were DCI about sharpening the focus in a time when it is very difficult to predict what a target might be five years from now?

Gates: Well I think, first of all there's a little bit of a misimpression. At the height of the Cold War, in terms of a percentage of spending in the intelligence community, about 58% of the budget went to the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact, and that was in 1980, interestingly enough, the last year under Jimmy Carter. But again, as a percentage of our budget. But that meant that 42% of what we were doing, even at the height of the Cold War, had nothing to do with the Soviet Union and had to do with economic intelligence, it had to do with proliferation, counter terrorism, regional conflicts. We spent an awful lot of resources on regional conflicts. You know, if you were putting together, just to take two crises from the Reagan administration. If you're putting together a list of priorities for the expenditure of intelligence resources, Granada and Suriname would not have been near the top of the list and they ended up consuming a lot of effort and a lot of time.

So we didn't have to wait for the end of the Cold War to face the reality that when any place in the world can become a hot spot, how do you structure the organization in a way to be able to deal with that? How do you assure in the first place, that you collect the basic data that is required: roads, dams, electrical systems, water works, the whole infrastructure kinds of things, and how do you create a surge capability, of fungible resources that can be moved from one problem to another? And we were dealing with that problem long before the end of the Cold War, because of this diversity of challenges that we faced. The Falklands, our satellites couldn't point there. They were in the wrong orbit. Nobody ever thought there'd be a damn war in the Falklands for God's sake.

So we were dealing with a lot of these problems long before the end of the Cold War. I believe, and I take responsibility for this, I think that the Agency and the community took too many resources away from the former Soviet Union. Too soon. Because now they've had to go back and reapply those resources to those 15 or 16 countries that have to be monitored for a different set of reasons, but they still have to know where the nuclear weapons are and what kind of condition the missiles are in and whether the submarines will collapse or not, blow up. Those are all critical issues still and they have to go back and do that. So this management of assets has been a big problem for a long time.

Edwards: Perhaps in the time left, we might take the broad picture of the Bush administration foreign policy and obviously President Bush wasn't re-elected in 1992 so one way to look at this is what opportunities were lost do you think as a result?

Gates: By him not being re-elected?

Edwards: Yes.

Gates: Well, I think this falls into the category of the books like if the South had won the war and stuff like that, so let me just mention a few things that I think would have been different. First of all, although the current administration came into office talking multilateralism, it is now perceived by the rest of the world as acting almost entirely unilaterally on anything that matters to us. We have gone from a situation where in 1992 and early 1993, most of the nations of the world had a very positive and productive relationship with the United States and where Russia or China for example were either abstaining or voting with us consistently in the United Nations and so on, to a position now where most

of the nations of the world, they don't like us very much. They may respect us and they may fear us, but I think we have squandered a good deal of goodwill by our hectoring policies toward Russia. A number of countries around the world have the sense that we are telling them that if you don't organize your political and economic systems just like ours, than you're deficient. I think President Bush's approach to dealing with other leaders and other countries, the same guy who said he wouldn't dance on the wall, the same guy who treated people going out of power in Eastern Europe with some respect, his more self-effacing approach to dealing with other countries, I think that the overall tenor of the relationship between the United States and many of the rest of the countries of the world would not have become as negative as it is now.

The goodwill generated by our victory in the Cold War, and the awe inspired by Desert Storm, would naturally have dissipated and there will always be a growing resentment at a single, overweeningly powerful country, that will produce countries looking for alternatives to balance and to counter. We've seen that throughout history. But I still think that in terms at least of atmospherics, that the relationships between the United States and many other countries would be much more cordial today and much more cooperative than is the case. I think you would have seen a much more—I think you would have seen much less interventionism in other countries. We've been in 40 combat situations since the beginning of 1993. The Bush administration, I am fairly confident, would not have gone into the Balkans. I think that they would not have gone into Haiti, and I think there are some of these other places where I think we would have been much more cautious about involving U.S. military forces and dissipating, spreading ourselves too thinly militarily. And frankly, I think at some point people will begin to realize the toll that these operations, for example in the Balkans, have taken on our military.

Edwards: Were there initiatives that President Bush would have taken, talking about things that wouldn't have happened, or atmospherics that would have been maintained, were there important strategic initiatives?

Gates: I think that you would have seen a much more consistent push for, in the whole realm of free trade, in terms of trade agreements. I think that NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) for example ended up being a near run thing, but I think that's partly because the President didn't get interested in it until almost too late, and it would have been much easier if he had gotten involved earlier. I just think you would have seen a much more consistent approach like that.

I think in some ways, a lot would depend on who controlled the Congress. If the Democrats had continued to control the House, in some respects our relationship with China may have been more complicated under Bush than under Clinton. In some ways Clinton's willingness to extend MFN (Most Favored Nation status) and to finally do the WTO (World Trade Organization) thing with China politically may have been easier for him to do than Bush. I don't know, that's just pure speculation. I'm not sure. I think we would have, and again, it's just speculation, I think we would have had a more realistic policy towards Russia in terms of understanding where the money was going and in terms of understanding the magnitude of the corruption and in trying to be helpful.

I think you can't underestimate the importance of disciplined, sustained attention to these issues by the President. I think one of the real problems in the Clinton administration has been the President wants these problems off his desk as soon as possible and to be kept off his desk for as long as possible and I think that's had an impact as well. But I think in terms of further arms reductions with the Russians, I don't know if there would have been more initiatives. I mean, to a large extent, that's been inhibited by the domestic situation in the Duma in Russia, more than it has been up to the US. I certainly would not say that the world would be a wonderful place today if George Bush had been re-elected, because I think

there would still be a number of these difficult problems. But I think at a minimum, the atmospherics surrounding our efforts with respect to other countries would be better.

Naftali: What do you think would have been the politics around the NATO expansion with a Bush administration?

Gates: That would have been a tough fight within the administration. I'm not sure where people would have come down, but I think that the Bush administration would have, at the end of the day, kept our focus on our priorities, which in my view are, if you don't get it right with Russia and China, none of the rest matters. And at a time of a special humiliation and difficulty for Russia, pressing ahead with expansion of NATO eastward, when Gorbachev and others were led to believe that wouldn't happen, at least in no time soon, I think probably has not only aggravated the relationship between the United States and Russia but made it much more difficult to do constructive business with them. I think between that and the bombing of Belgrade we have really antagonized the Russians in a major way and I think those are two things that the Bush administration would not have done, when all is said and done.

We would have tried to find, I think, some kind of bridge, or holding action that wouldn't be satisfactory to the East Europeans, but it would have given them a little something, but not full membership in NATO. We'd probably have tried to build more on the liaison missions in NATO that became part of the restructuring of NATO in the summer of '90.

Naftali: Was there some push from them for bilateral treaties or agreements, security agreements?

Gates: The East Europeans?

Naftali: The East Europeans.

Gates: No, not so much, they really wanted to be in NATO. See, that was part of, what I thought was disguised in all of this. I said, this is a pejorative way to put it, but I kind of think NATO was regarded by some in the Clinton administration as a sort of an international renaissance weekend. The reason that the Poles and the Czechs and the Hungarians wanted into NATO was precisely because it was a military alliance and I thought that the debate—in the Senate and in the press—never got down to the heart of it which was, for this country, are Americans prepared to send our children to fight for Poland, or Czechoslovakia or Hungary? That's what it's all about, because that's why they wanted in the alliance. They've got a long experience with the Russians, and they know the Russians will come again some day and they want us there when it happens and I don't think there was enough focus on that and again, I think it was the lack of historical perspective in terms of what it was all about.

Edwards: Commentators on the Bush foreign policy, including President Bush himself, frequently refer to the Bush foreign policy team. So, thinking as a member of that team, how would you like it to be remembered?

Gates: Well, I think that it should be remembered as a group of serious, experienced people who had their differences of perspective and differences of views on a lot of the issues, but when all was said and done, worked together collaboratively and with discipline and focus in conducting a very capable and effective American foreign policy during a period of enormous change. I don't know of any instance in modern history when a great empire has collapsed and there hasn't been a war associated with it in some respect and yet there was no war associated with the collapse of the most heavily armed empire in history and I think George Bush deserves some credit for it. Gorbachev deserves a lot, Yeltsin deserves a lot, but George Bush deserves a lot. And I think that the way foreign policy was conducted had a lot to do with managing that process.

And one of the points that I made in your conference last November in a session on the deputies and it really is a point I'd like to leave here, and having worked for all these different administrations, and it drives the political scientists nuts, but you can have all the structure in the world, but at the end of the day, policy is made by human beings and governments are effective or not effective in substantial measure because of the quality of the individuals in it and their ability to work with one another. It really does matter when the secretary of state and the secretary of defense aren't speaking to one another, or hate each other's guts, as I have seen, or when nobody trusts the national security advisor, or when nobody trusts the director of central intelligence. These things matter, and if everybody does trust each other and works productively together, then that has beneficial results and the only administration in my adult life where that has happened was in the Bush administration.

If I had any advice for a new President, for any new President, it would be—I think all of our President's appoint their cabinets in terms of single individuals for single departments, and I think that they ought to sit back and think, in terms of their appointments, not only in terms of the quality of the individual, but in terms of a team, how are these people going to interact with one another, how are they going to work together, will they work together? And I think most Presidents don't start with that perspective when they start thinking about putting together their cabinets or their senior officers.

Edwards: We mentioned one of the great accomplishments of the Bush administration, the collapse of the Soviet Union, but if you wanted to remember three other times, what would they be, substantively?

Gates: Well, I think you would have to include in that stopping the first aggression after the end of the Cold War in the Gulf by a dictator. I think you would have to include the Madrid conference and really getting something going again in the Middle East. I think that the embrace of change in Europe and the willingness to participate in that and, in fact, to help lead it, would be an important one. And I think the negotiation of NAFTA was very important.

Edwards: Let me turn it to the individual, what do you want to be remembered for?

Gates: Well, I think as DCI it would be the—putting the Agency on the path of being an effective instrument of American foreign policy in a post Cold War world—both the Agency and the intelligence community. And I think, based on a career standpoint, I think that the one contribution that I brought that was unique, was that I don't think there's ever been an intelligence officer who had a better understanding of how policymakers use intelligence and try to structure the intelligence community and CIA in a way to maximize their value and their utility to the decision makers.

I think from the NSC experience, probably the most effective and most harmonious management of the inter-agency process in modern times.

Edwards: Not bad.

Naftali: Bill?

McCall: Let me add this one thing, you talked about what your own agenda was as DCI and what you accomplished, that at the end of the day you felt you accomplished pretty much what you wanted to.

Gates: At least had it underway.

McCall: Had it underway. Are there some challenges out there that the Agency is facing that you might have some comments about? I'm thinking of problems in tasking assets, about how, coordination aspects of intelligence, or what you're responsible for in a budgetary way that you're not responsible for in managing the assets?

Gates: I think that if there's one thing that I had as part of my agenda or my vision that has not happened, and that frankly others have not been able to pull off, it would be this simplification of the entire requirements and collection structure, and creation of the open source gateway, figuring out effectively how to use the vast openly available resources and integrating that so that you can minimize both the risk and cost of using unique intelligence resources. I think that has not been accomplished. If anything, I think it has gone backward. So that would be the biggest, I think, unfinished piece of business that exists. I don't believe that there should be a director of national intelligence sitting down at the White House, I think that'd be a catastrophe, he'd wind up like the drug czar. 85% of the intelligence community budget is in the Department of Defense. The only way a director of national intelligence, sitting at the White House, who is not the director of CIA, would have any power or any authority at all would be if the secretary of defense were to hand over the management of that—not the management, but the ownership of that 85% of the budget to the director of national intelligence, and that will never happen. Without that, the director of national intelligence is a figurehead. In Washington you have to have a bureaucratic power base and DCI's power base is CIA and nobody should ever forget it.

McCall: What about new sets of challenges, say, with technology or information?

Gates: Well there the biggest challenge is that for the last dozen years or so, the executive branch and the Congress have failed to make adequate resources available for the necessary R&D, particularly for the national security agency, but to some extent in the imagery world and above all, in the processing world, Bill asked me about the quality of the recruits, ten years ago our recruits were coming in and saying "I had a more sophisticated computer monitor on my desk as a grad student then I have here at CIA." So there hasn't been the investment in capabilities that there should have been, both in collection and in process.

Naftali: When you were DCI, what did you do to make yourself more the supervisor of intelligence? Were you able to build better relations with the other agency chiefs, other intelligence agency chiefs?

Gates: Yes, I had very good relationships with them, I had good people in those agencies, there were good people in those agencies. I did a lot to help them, in many cases I made more resources available to them, in a lot of cases I broke down some bureaucratic barriers, particularly that had existed at CIA for cooperation. Dealing with those people is like dealing with people at CIA. It is a matter of making them feel valued and useful and as partners in the process and not somebody that you're looking to screw. That was enough of a change of atmosphere for them that they welcomed that

Naftali: What is the DCI's relationship with them, were you just the—

Gates: No, you run their budget, you have control of their budget. But it has a lot to do with persuasion. The only tool you have is a nuclear bomb, the only way you can force them to do what you want them to do is to take money away from them and the consequences of that in terms of the Hill, the secretary of defense and everything like that are just huge, and I think it says something about the degree of cooperation and trust that I engendered in those folks, that I was able, with their support, to get legislation through, for one year only, that allowed the DCI to move money and people from one part of the intelligence program to another, as long as the other head of agency agreed. For example, I wanted to have a greater division of labor in the community. So I was going to take all of CIA's work on Third World order of battle and move that function and the slots to DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency), and I was going to take all the work that DIA did on international economics and move the function and the slots to CIA, and I got those people to agree with that. The Congress would only give it to me for one year, but that kind of authority is needed by the DCI on an enduring basis and frankly without the consent of the other agency heads if he is to really be able to manage this thing and priorities and so on.

But still, I think it says something that, a long time ago in effect, that these guys were willing to sign up to that and support it, because it was a radical change.

Naftali: Did you do anything to streamline the national intelligence estimate process to make it more suitable and useful for policy making?

Gates: If I had my way, I would eliminate the national intelligence estimates. They are basically an exercise that is of the greatest value to the intelligence community itself. We would probably do ourselves a lot of good by doing estimates and then not distributing them. Because it is an opportunity for the community to figure out where it is on an issue, figure out what gaps there are in our knowledge of this. One of the things that I changed about the estimates was that I required every estimate to be accompanied by a memorandum from the intelligence community saying, here are the important things that we needed to know that we don't know. So I used the estimates as a way of identifying gaps in our knowledge and intelligence. But policymakers don't pay much attention to them. They may find them interesting at best, but for the most part, they don't matter. And it's a huge investment of resources and time on the part of a lot of senior people. You mentioned that McGeorge Bundy said he never used the estimates. I would be hard pressed to point to a single estimate that ever made a significant difference in the assessment, in policy making.

Naftali: Let's be very optimistic and assume that 50 years from now, 60 years from now, a scholar will have access to intelligence that was useful to policymakers in the Bush period. What foreign policy issues should they look to if they are interested in areas where intelligence mattered for President Bush?

Gates: Oh, I think the growing crisis in the Soviet Union was above all the most important, and the evidence that started coming in, immediately, in January of '89, about how bad things were going. So he knew that he had a finite period of time. It was one of the things that accelerated the process and the administration of trying to do business with the Europeans and the Soviets, to lock things in while we still could, before the unknown happened. I think that that probably, above all, was important.

I think that an accurate assessment of the magnitude of change going on inside China would be a very important area. The American press does not adequately reflect the incredible dynamism inside China, including in the political arena, the local and regional levels that are going on and the weaknesses of the Beijing government in many respects and the growing separatist movements inside China. I think all of those things gave Bush and company an insight into the complicated problems facing the Chinese leadership which helped shape their view of China that is not available to the public.

Then you know, you have to look at the developments in the Gulf clearly as part of that. I would say those three areas.

Naftali: Also for the future scholar, are there areas where they should look for evidence that intelligence activities mattered in shaping—

Gates: Covert action?

Naftali: Yes.

Gates: I think that, not necessarily, well, first of all, in the areas of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics, I believe, and organized crime, I think that covert action offers real opportunity as an instrument of US policy and was used in those areas by the Bush administration and I believe continues. I think in terms of political covert action that had greatest value in the Cold War and in trying to deal with Soviet activities around the world and I think there's little stomach in the Congress or even in the executive branch, at the professional level, for political covert

action except in extraordinary circumstances, so I would say in those four functional areas, it's a fruitful area, but I think in others, I think only by exception.

Brands: Is there anything we should have asked you that we didn't.

Gates: I can't think of it.

Brands: Were you informed in advance who was going to be the last survivor?

Gates: I have—

Masoud: Do you think anybody will get that reference twenty years?

Gates: I hope not.

Naftali: With that pop cultural reference which will require a foot note, thank you very much Dr. Gates.