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NSPS-005 Bradley "Brad" Bunn

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Q: This is an oral history interview with Mr. Bradley "Brad" Bunn, currently the Program Executive Officer, National Security Personnel System, Department of Defense. The interviewer is Diane T. Putney. It's August 14, 2008, and the interview is taking place at the NSPS Office, Arlington, Virginia. The purpose of this interview is to record your experience, Mr. Bunn, with the evolution of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) at the Department of Defense (DoD). A transcript of the interview will be preserved as a permanent NSPS record and may be used as source material for a DoD history of the NSPS. So we're onto the first question, and it's an easy one. Please briefly describe your career and leadership experience up to the time when you first became involved with the design and implementation of the NSPS.

A: I started my career in the federal government with the Department of Defense, actually, with the Department of Navy, back in 1991. Right out of college, I was brought into the Human Resources (HR) office over at the Washington Navy Yard, did a number of different assignments there, was promoted a few times, ultimately to be a Full Performance

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HR Specialist for the Department of Navy at the operating level. Around 1997 I moved over to the Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS) as a GS-13 action officer working in the Classification Branch of the Field Advisory Services, doing classification advisory services and appeals adjudication. In 1999 I moved over and started working special projects in a new division in CPMS that worked on, primarily, response to a General Accounting Office (GAO) report on the delivery of personnel services and HR policy in the Department of Defense. I transitioned into more of a staff action officer working on that, doing research and writing studies. From there, I moved over to another division in CPMS and started working on HR automation initiatives, including the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS). I was there for a couple years; I was promoted into a supervisory position at that point. That's where I started doing more leadership work heading up one of the branches in that office. I had a fairly significant project that I was responsible for in migrating the enterprise automated HR system to a Web-based version. It involved the full range of dealing with all the components: project management, all the planning around that; working with contractors and vendors on planning; and implementing the change. That's where I got my feet wet in

change management and big enterprise projects and big enterprise initiatives. In 2002 I was promoted to the GS-15 level essentially as the deputy in that office for that program. My scope broadened in terms of managing the overall program. I was a deputy to an SES.

In late 2003 I was asked by the Deputy Under Secretary for Civilian Personnel Policy to come over and work for her specifically on the implementation of NSPS. We were in the final stages of getting the legislation, and they wanted to set up an implementation office to oversee the implementation. I was selected primarily because the focus at that time was implementation of the system. It was not heavily focused on design at that point because we essentially had an HR rule set that we were ready to implement with something called "Best Practices." I was selected based on my experience in doing large project management implementation. A lot of this relied heavily on automation and changes to the automation to support the new NSPS rules. I had that combination of HR background, information technology (IT), and project management expertise, so they asked me to come over and lead the effort. That's when I came into contact with NSPS for the first time. At first, I thought it was an IT system because I wasn't really paying a lot of attention to it.

Q: You've mentioned the Best Practices. Would you describe the DoD Human Resources Best Practices Initiative launched by Under Secretary David Chu in 2002, in terms of its purpose, leadership, organization, and methodology?

A: The original purpose of Best Practices was to catalogue, inventory, and leverage all the Best Practices from the various alternative personnel systems and personnel demonstration projects that were currently under way in the Department of Defense. That was primarily the reinvention laboratories, the demonstration projects in the labs, as well as the acquisition demonstration project. We had been experimenting with various personnel flexibilities for many years in the department, and Dr. Chu was interested in bringing them together. We had learned a lot from them. We had what we called a summative evaluation that OPM did that covered the entire waterfront of all of the different demos, all the different flexibilities, their effectiveness, some of the strengths and weaknesses. We learned all the lessons, the experiment was essentially done, and now we were ready to put into practice what we thought were the best features of the systems. It was going to bring together those things into a single Best Practices demonstration project that all of the alternative personnel systems, all the lab demos, were going to now

move into. Around the same time, we were pursuing legislation for a National Security Personnel System to really expand the department's authority for more flexible HR practices across the department. Best Practices and NSPS sort of merged in the 2003 time frame, and what we saw as a Best Practices package that would be good for our alternative personnel systems, we wanted to expand to the entire department, so that's when we brought together the two efforts into the National Security Personnel System.

Q: The DoD published the "Notice of Amendment of Demonstration Project Plans" in the *Federal Register* in April of 2003. Was that to bring approximately 150,000 DoD employees under the Best Practices? Is that too high?

A: I'm not sure about that number, but it was intended to cover all of the employees who were operating under a demonstration project in the Department of Defense. So that would have been all of the labs, the Acquisition Demonstration Project, and, I believe, China Lake as well. I don't know if that number is correct

Q: It seems high, because I've seen references that the demonstration projects covered about 30,000 employees, but then I've seen this 150,000 in terms of that *Federal Register* Notice, that it's going to cover that many.

A: It could be that eventually it was going to cover all the laboratories. Not all the laboratories are in demonstration projects or were in demonstration projects back then, so it may have grown to encompass that, but that 150 number sounds high. Generally when we referred to our lab demos, it's roughly 30,000 or so.

Q: Was this initiative controversial? You published in the *Federal Register* and then you were going to bring in maybe 30,000 more people under this new system.

A: It was no more or less controversial than any other major enterprise initiative that was going to cut across the department. It didn't start out as controversial necessarily. It was actually a great success of DoD leadership to bring together various components within the department to come up with a common strategy, a common plan for an alternative personnel system with personnel flexibilities. But the devil being in the details, once they started making some decisions around specific features that not everybody agreed with, it began to get a little more controversial. Like any rule-making or any policy-making initiative -- we were, effectively, trying to change things -- and like any organization that faces change, there's going to be some controversy around that. I think

the answer to your question is, yes, it was controversial within the context of the Department of Defense and how we do business. So yes.

Q: Could you give an example of a Best Practices feature that might not have been readily accepted by everybody?

A: Well, a good example is the lab demos. The commonality in the labs was that they had personnel flexibilities, and that's pretty much where it ended. The labs were very different in how they implemented their personnel flexibilities. They each had their own version of an alternative personnel system. So for example, you had one lab -- and I won't name it -- but we had one lab that used a contribution-based approach to pay for performance, whereas another lab used a pure performance-based approach, and those are terms of art in the personnel world. They're related but different approaches to how you determine a pay increase based on performance and contribution. That was a debate that was ongoing during the design of Best Practices. Ultimately, what the Best Practices *Federal Register* notice said was that we're going with a performance-based pay-for-performance system. I think some in part of the community saw that as a rejection of what they were doing, of something they thought was successful,

so that generated some of the controversy.

Q: OK. Which DoD personnel would have the firsthand knowledge of how the NSPS proposed legislation was debated and shaped as it was being incorporated into the draft National Defense Authorization Act of 2004 that DoD sent to Congress in April of 2003?

A: There are several people. I'm not one of them because I didn't join the party until really toward the end of that process. Certainly the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy at the time, Ginger Groeber, would be extremely knowledgeable. She was the department's point person in getting the legislation through. A gentleman by the name of Steve Ramp was on the Civilian Personnel Policy (CPP) staff but did the legislative and congressional affairs for CPP. He was intimately knowledgeable of what was going on at that point. The policy staff in general, Ellen Tunstall, was there as the principal director working for Ms. Groeber. Some folks here in Civilian Personnel Management Service were involved. The director at the time was Charlie Rogers, and some of the folks on the CPMS staff. You've seen the Naval Postgraduate School

Q: The draft? Yes.

A: There are a lot of names in there. Helen Sullivan is another one, she's the Office of General Counsel (OGC) attorney that handles civilian personnel, and she was extremely involved in drafting the legislation.

Q: Would you describe the role of Under Secretary of Defense David Chu in initiating and acquiring the NSPS legislation and designing the NSPS system?

A: Dr. Chu was certainly the lead political appointee in charge of getting the legislation through. He was also very much the intellectual power behind devising the strategy and implementing the strategy on the Hill. He was basically front and center in the congressional hearings on NSPS, on getting the legislation. As the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, he was the policy person in charge of all personnel programs for DoD, so he was seen publicly as the champion for getting the legislation. You mentioned the design of NSPS. The design of NSPS, I would argue, happened later. It happened after we got the legislation because the legislation essentially gives the department and OPM authority to design a system, so that happened after the legislation.

Q: The NSPS proposal that DoD sent to Capitol Hill in April 2003 stipulated that there would be "collaboration" and

"meet and confer" procedures to implement NSPS regarding the unions. Who participated in the discussions, and who decided that the implementation of NSPS would involve the collaboration and meet and confer procedures instead of collective bargaining?

A: All I can do at this point is speculate based on my understanding of what occurred. The meet and confer and the collaboration process that's laid out in the old NSPS statute was adopted from the Homeland Security Act that provided the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with authority to establish its own personnel system. It represented, I think, a compromise that said, "Roughly only half of the department is represented by unions, and we're trying to establish a system that is enterprisewide, it covers everybody." We wanted to do it in a way that was fairly standard and uniform and in a timely way. The collective bargaining process can often be fairly prolonged. The answer to that, what Congress ultimately passed, was a construct that had involvement by employee representatives in the collaboration process which is a little stronger than just consultation and "We'll let you know what we're doing," and "We'll get your input and let you know what happens on the back end." It actually mandated meetings and interaction and interchange and

dialogue. It was certainly a step back from actual bargaining, bargaining to agreement or impasse, which then would lead to a third party making the decision on what the final rule was going to be. I think Congress saw that that might be a step too far, but we needed to have involvement of employee representatives in the process for designing a new system without necessarily all of the normal features of full blown collective bargaining. That was the idea.

Q: It was a departure from the Best Practices because Best Practices just addressed human resources aspects?

A: Best Practices addressed human resources, staffing, compensation, what we call HR provisions. The labor relations flexibilities were not part of Best Practices. Best Practices cover the basic HR portion of the system. The labor relations provisions and statute really were reflective and adopted from the DHS statute that allowed DHS and, ultimately, the Department of Defense to deviate from the governmentwide rules on how labor management relations work. That was something that was not really discussed in Best Practices, but it was something that we were pursuing via the NSPS legislation.

Q: When and how were you asked to work on implementing the NSPS? Who called you, what were your duties and your chain

of command?

A: I was at home on a Saturday afternoon, and I was about to walk out the door when a phone rang. It changed my life, changed my career. Some days I think, "Boy, I should have just kept on walking out the door." At the other end of the phone was Charlie Rogers, who was the director of CPMS at the time. It was in my chain of command. It was basically my second line supervisor. Charlie said he and Ginger Groeber had been talking about NSPS, and they were looking for someone to lead the implementation. The way it was described was that we were pretty close to getting this legislation. The debate had been going on all summer, all spring and all summer. This was probably in late September, early October of 2003. We had just done a lot of big project work in the office in the regionalization, modernization shop in CPMS. I had some success there, and a lot of the things I was doing were fairly visible to the leadership in CPMS and CPP. So Charlie called me. I don't know how many other people turned it down, but he said, "Look, what we're looking for is somebody to lead the implementation, to stand up an office and really lead the deployment of this thing." As I mentioned before, my skill set and recent experience were leading deployments and projects of enterprise size, focused on HR automation, but

still big enterprise initiatives, not necessarily policy design. This wasn't really about policy design; this was about implementing a system that had already been designed, which was Best Practices. A part of it was designing a labor relations system -- that was fairly new. We had a pretty good idea of where we wanted to go, and we had a lot of intellectual horsepower on the labor-management relations. They didn't pick me because I was a policy guru; they picked me for my project management skills. I said, "Well, what's this really mean? How long of an assignment is this?" He said it would be a limited term SES position -- which was appealing -- that it probably wouldn't be for more than a couple, three years standing up an office, rolling out the system. We had a fairly ambitious timeline, as I learned later. I would be working directly for Deputy Under Secretary Groeber and leading a team of detailees from components to set up an office and roll this thing out. It was going to be a fairly aggressive project office that rolled it out and went away.

Q: What was the Implementation Office strategy and timetable for implementing the NSPS?

A: When I came on board, it was just before the legislation actually passed. We were in the final throes of the debate

on the Hill with the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2004. What I started doing was mapping out all of the different elements and the critical path for what I saw as the implementation of the system. The idea at the time was we would take Best Practices and implement that. Most of what was in Best Practices had been implemented in some form or fashion in one of the lab demos, so what we were going to do was work with those lab demos, work with those offices, and essentially leverage what they had done in terms of training, tools, automation, processes, and any implementing instructions and guidance and things like that. It was a matter of cataloguing those things and bringing them together as a Best Practices system, but it wasn't new creation. It was pulling together pieces, merging them together in a reasonable and sensible way and then implementing it. Once we got the legislation, I wasn't privy to these conversations but the words that came down from the Secretary of Defense was, "OK, we got it. Let's get it out there as quickly as we can." We were extremely aggressive in implementing it, and the initial timeline, what we thought was potentially doable -- famous last words -- June of '04 was the original target to implement the system. That was implementing the first chunk, which was going to be a fairly large chunk. The

landscape had changed somewhat because as in your question, the Best Practices started out as a way to combine the lab demonstration projects together. And lo and behold, the NSPS statute excluded the labs from NSPS. The focus shifted from bringing all the labs into it to setting them aside for now and to focus on the rest of the department. Now technically, we could have implemented Best Practices under another statutory provision for the demonstration projects in general, but that's a whole separate history. My focus was not on Best Practices in the labs, it was Best Practices as NSPS to the rest of the department, beginning with the implementation of the HR system. We had built project schedules that had us at implementation by June, which was taking the rules, starting the meet and confer process with the unions almost immediately, starting that interaction. We had set up working groups to look at the labor employee relations aspects of NSPS, which had not been designed; we had some pretty good ideas of what we wanted to do. I had built a schedule backing up from June of what would have to take place. It was physically possible to make that, but it was aggressive, what I call a success-oriented schedule. Things had to happen right on target. All the critical path items had to be met right on time. That was the original strategy.

Q: It was your understanding that it came from Secretary Rumsfeld or Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz or Mr. Chu, this quickness?

A: It was my understanding that it came from Secretary Rumsfeld directly. Not being privy to conversations or meetings, what was related to me was that it was Secretary Rumsfeld who was very interested in NSPS. Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz wasn't that engaged on NSPS. His portfolio was more external. Secretary Rumsfeld was very much engaged, and he basically said, "Let's get this out as quickly as possible." That was conveyed down through the chain via Dr. Chu down to Ms. Groeber.

Q: Was the year for when employees started in NSPS, the year for them doing work and then being evaluated, October through September? Or were you going start it in June till May? Do you recall what the year was?

A: You know, I don't recall what was the specific --

Q: Why June? Why not October? Because it eventually would start in October.

A: That's a good question. I think it had more to do with how quickly we could roll it out. Remember, at the time, the system was more than just the pay for performance aspect. It was other flexibilities in staffing, pay, and

classification and those kinds of things. The pay for performance aspect was just one element, so we didn't base the schedule based on the performance cycle, we based it on, "What is the quickest timeline that we can manage to roll this project out?"

Q: The NSPS statute did not require the publication of draft and final regulations in the *Federal Register*. What were the pros and cons of publishing in the *Federal Register*?

A: That was a great debate in the building, and it triggered the debate with the Office of Personnel Management on what the most appropriate path was to take. Our original plan was not to publish in the *Federal Register*. From our perspective, it wasn't required under the statute. We did implement these via internal DoD regulations, which would be jointly prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management, the Director of OPM, and the Secretary, but nothing in the law says you had to do it via the *Federal Register*. The "pro" of that approach was quickness. We could do that quickly, it was internal, we didn't have to go through the formal publication process, public comment period, and those kinds of things. It was schedule-driven. There was also the belief, the philosophy that this was a DoD system, and DoD should issue the regulations. They

should be DoD regulations, not federal regulations.

Publishing in the *Federal Register* -- there were a couple of drivers on that side of the debate. One said we have a precedent. The precedent was Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that for their personnel system had already issued jointly with OPM draft regulations in the *Federal Register*. There was that precedent, so if we did something different, we would have been deviating from that, from what they had already done. We also had the legal issue of the defensibility of our regulations, and there's a concept, in terms of precedent in law, called Chevron deference, which basically says courts will give more deference to agency regulations if they have gone through the Administrative Procedures Act process. If you do formal publication of draft regulations in the *Federal Register*, you then open to public comment, you go through that process and you get comments, you look at them, you analyze them and decide what to do with them, you describe why you're making changes or why you're not going to accept certain comments, and you go through that process that essentially adds credibility and weight to the agency regulations and how the agency interprets those regulations. The argument goes that we would be in a better position to defend our regulations in court if they

had gone through that process. Those were the two debates, basically the pro and con. We can do it quickly and recognize that NSPS is a DoD system, or we could do it via the *Federal Register* process, which might give us a bit more protection if the regulations were challenged.

Q: Did the representatives of the Implementation Office brief military service leaders and component managers on the NSPS and its implementation schedule? What was their reaction?

A: I'm trying to dredge up some memories. An important aspect of the history of NSPS is how leadership was engaged and who in leadership was engaged. Best Practices and the initial NSPS effort to implement were essentially led by the HR community. The people around the table who were making the decisions about Best Practices, and the people who were in charge of initially implementing NSPS came from the HR community. These were either the civilian personnel chiefs for the services and components, or at the higher level, assistant secretaries of the military departments for manpower and reserve affairs -- that's the political level. It was primarily the personnel community that was driving it -- successfully, in that we got the legislation through -- and obviously we had senior leader engagement at the OSD level. Secretary Rumsfeld was out there talking

about NSPS. He was testifying about NSPS. Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz was talking about NSPS. Conceptually, we had buy in and basic understanding from the senior levels, military department secretaries. They all were supportive and saw NSPS as a good thing. More flexibility. Faster hiring. More compensation. More flexibility. Performance based. Those were all concepts that everybody signed up to. When it came to the implementation, we continued on the path of leading this thing out of the personnel community. Now, I briefed those civilian personnel chiefs on a couple of occasions in the Civilian Personnel Policy Council venue. The Civilian Personnel Policy Council is a formally chartered body that's chaired by the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (CPP), and they chew on all the big civilian personnel policy issues. That was the venue that I used to communicate to leadership. The agreement we had was that while we were doing all this via the personnel leadership, HR leadership, communication was supposed to be happening within those components up the chain to the senior leaders to maintain awareness, and when it came to making policy decisions, policy would reflect the input of those senior leaders. My opinion is that that didn't happen all the time, so there was a lot of motion and activity within the

civilian personnel community that wasn't really being translated up the chain except for the big ticket items like the NSPS legislation -- "We got the statute, we're going to start implementing." The first letter that I got as the NSPS Program Implementation Office head was from the Secretary of the Navy, Gordon England, who said, "Great job in getting the legislation. Navy wants to be first out of the gate, so whatever we need to do, we'll do that." It started to become apparent that the senior leaders were excited about this. They were interested in getting it off the ground, but we did not regularly -- as far as from my level -- brief senior line leaders from the military departments and components. I know that Dr. Chu was keeping people informed that he needed to, and he was certainly at a high level -- people had awareness of it. When we started talking about the schedule, initially people said, "OK, let's get going, let's do this." Once we started seeing the size of this thing and all the moving parts and we started to engage with external stakeholders like the unions and OPM, that's when things started to get more attention and unravel a little bit.

Q: OK.

A: I could write a book on this subject.

Q: You should.

A: (Laughter.)

Q: It would be good to see. It would help others. It would be good to analyze such a historic attempt.

A: I think it's a fascinating study in organizational dynamics. Being a witness to that was fascinating.

Q: You have that firsthand experience which makes it valuable from the insider. If you could keep the objectivity and try to pull it all together into the comprehensive story, it'd be valuable.

A: The perspective I bring is somebody who, when it came to the Pentagon politics -- small "p" politics -- was green as the spring grass, seeing all this for the first time, and seeing how it all unfolded. For me, my degree is in political science, so it was fascinating to see how this stuff actually works.

Q: You were at William and Mary?

A: Yes. You can read stuff in books and understand theory, but then you see it actually happen, that combination of organizational dynamics, personalities. Everyone is trying to do the right thing, and they're trying to get the same goal line, but people have different ideas about how to get there.

Q: Complexity.

A: It's extremely complex.

Q: Interesting.

A: No one person can truly understand all the complexity, so it's really fascinating.

Q: Question, a little aside. Throughout your career and especially in your work with NSPS, did you notice differences -- and some people might call them cultural differences -- among the military services, Army, Navy, and Air Force, in their views and procedures regarding personnel matters?

A: Yes. (Laughter.)

Q: Is there a Navy way, and the Air Force does it this way, and the Army does it this way?

A: Yes. I think some of it is the stuff of urban legend. Some of it is truly an accurate depiction of the cultures of the different military services. My experience, at least up until this point, was really from the personnel side, from how they did things in personnel. To the extent that the overall culture filtered down through those communities, then yes, I saw differences in philosophy. The way they played out was in how authority for making personnel decisions was delegated. You have the Navy way,

which is every leader is the captain of his or her ship, so you should empower them with as much authority as you can to make decisions. The Navy tradition was to push as much of the personnel decisionmaking authority down to leaders at the lowest practical level so that they can make those decisions and ultimately be held accountable for those. You never saw any two Navy activities behave the same way when it came to personnel. I saw that firsthand as a service provider in the HR business, in a consolidated personnel office that had multiple customers. The way the Naval Observatory headquarters did business was very different from how Naval Facilities Engineering Command did business to how a Public Works Center did it. The commonality was that they were all empowered to do things their own way. Air Force is more known for its control, for being more conservative in how they delegate authorities and how they do things. In the world of classification, job grading and job classification, Air Force has a very centralized approach to that and has more of a control-oriented approach, whereas Navy, and to a lesser extent Army -- are OK with variation. They don't have to be completely standard. Yes, I have experienced that, I do see that.

Q: The Implementation Office is trying to implement an

enterprise system, and you do have to deal with the different services.

A: Right, and we certainly, to this day, crash into those cultures. I think at this point in our implementation -- we try to characterize it as still early implementation -- I am seeing NSPS begin to change the overall culture of how things are done. There are still remnants of those cultures that are certainly in play, and if you look at how the services in these organizations have implemented NSPS, you see it with how they've done it. They've certainly tailored it to their cultures, which sometimes is good, sometimes is not so good, depending on the organization and its particular culture.

Q: What was the Implementing Office's strategy for working with the unions?

A: The strategy -- certainly we set out to comply with the law -- was to present the unions with what we thought NSPS should look like; we had that in Best Practices. On the labor and employee relations side, we started forming ideas that were going to turn into essentially concept papers, things like that. The idea was to give them something to look at, comment on, confer over -- not bargain, but the meet and confer process. Our strategy was to attempt to

use the meet and confer process as that healthy interchange to see where the interests are and where we could possibly close some of those gaps. I will say that I don't think that we ever believed that we were going to get full agreement on the unions -- we knew that going in -- and we saw the way that the statute was constructed as a recognition of that.

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE A

Q: We were talking about the strategy for dealing with the unions.

A: Right. We did not believe that we were going to necessarily get consensus and agreement on this, and we saw the way the statute was constructed as a recognition of that. The idea for meet and confer was to put a proposal on the table that the union comments on, have interchange, have dialogue about it, see where there might be common interests that we can come to agreement on, but ultimately finalize a design or a set of rules that we thought was the best for the department, certainly with the input and the ideas from the employee representatives. The way the law read basically assumed that it could happen that the unions would not be agreeable. I don't know the exact words off the top of my head, but it basically said you will attempt

to meet and confer for at least 30 days. You can meet and confer for longer if you want, but ultimately, the Secretary and the Director can say, "OK, there's been enough talking, enough interchange. We're finalizing this." It actually provided for finalizing the system and submitting it to Congress for essentially another review period, for a 30-day review period. It assumed that there might not be total agreement on that, and then ultimately Congress could do something to either close those gaps or validate the system. Or do nothing so that it could go into place. Our strategy with the unions was to -- some of this was driven by an aggressive schedule -- bring them in, start talking about the specifics of the system, get their ideas, understand their concerns, and ultimately produce something that we thought was in the best interest of the department. That's where it all got really interesting.

Q: Right. According to the NSPS chronology, on January 14, 2004, at an Implementation Office staff meeting, there was a discussion about having the labor relations and appeals sections of NSPS in place before converting people to the human resources section of NSPS. What was the rationale for the final decision made on this issue?

A: The reason we wanted to do that was because we felt it was

necessary to have the new labor relations system in place in order to implement. The design of the system was meant to be a single system or one that works together, the labor relations system and the HR system working together. In order for us to implement the flexibilities and do it in the timely way that we had scheduled, we needed the labor relations flexibilities that were a deviation from Chapter 71 collective bargaining rules. We had to have those in place before we could begin to implement to bargaining unit employees. That was just a sequencing thing that said, "In order to implement, you've got to have these rules in place first," and labor rules were important to have in place first.

Q: DoD officials attended a meeting with union representatives on January 22, 2004 to discuss NSPS. So this is the first one. Do you recall attending this meeting?

A: Yes.

Q: Was this your first meeting?

A: It was my first meeting with the unions.

Q: Right. In January. Describe the meeting in terms of attendees, purpose, tone, results.

A: I don't remember how many union officials attended, but the purpose of that meeting was not to kick off the meet and

confer. It was really to bring them in and describe to them the process we were about to undertake and to really hear from them on their concerns over the process. We brought them in; Ms. Groeber was there, she led the meeting. Tim Curry, who was our senior labor relations person at the time was there as well. He arranged it, the logistics and the outreach to the folks. I was certainly there as the office chief for the implementation. I'm trying to recall how many folks were there -- at least 20, 25 or so. These were representatives from the national union Offices. I wouldn't call the tone of the meeting contentious. I think that meeting was essentially information transfer. We basically said, "OK, we've got this. Here's how we're going to do this process. We're going to do meet and confer; it's 30 days. Here's what the law says, here's how the law lays it out. What we're planning on doing is presenting you all with a proposal, and we'll have a series of meetings, talk it over, and then we'll go from there." It was laying out the overall process. I'm trying to remember if we actually talked about the timeline. I'm not sure we gave them any specific implementation date at that point other than we want to start as soon as possible and get moving on this.

Q: On February 11, 2004, Secretary Rumsfeld appointed Navy

Secretary Gordon England to serve as the interface with unions concerning the implementation of NSPS. Why was such an appointment necessary? Why, in particular, was Secretary England chosen as the point man?

A: I certainly can't comment on why he was chosen specifically. I do know that Secretary England was probably the most engaged of the military department heads. As I mentioned before, he was the most excited about getting NSPS off the ground. He comes from an industry background, business, and he's certainly a believer in personnel reform and flexibility. He saw the need for NSPS, so he was most interested in it. If I were to speculate, I would say that it was important for the department to have a senior political official that had good relationships with folks on the Hill and was well-respected to be seen as the leader of the initiative.

Q: Especially in dealing with the unions.

A: Yes.

Q: That was what initially he was appointed to be, the interface with the unions?

A: What was the timing again? February?

Q: Yes, it was February 11.

A: So that was before the first --

Q: Before the February...

A: I'd be speculating, but at that point, he didn't engage with the unions yet. He certainly had good relationships with the unions, particularly the ones that had large Navy contingents. Even from his private sector days, he was respected by the unions. That's probably why.

Q: According to the NSPS PEO chronology, you met with Secretary of the Navy Gordon England around February 18, so that's about a week after that appointment. Can you explain the guidance you received from Secretary England and the issues he wanted you to address? Was Deputy Under Secretary Ginger Groeber at the meeting, do you recall?

A: Yes, I think so. Yes, she was. She was definitely at the first couple of meetings with Secretary England, as was, I believe, Dr. Chu. This is where it gets to some head butting and some of the controversy around the leadership in NSPS and how that was going to move forward. Essentially, that was an information briefing that we provided to Secretary England, and I believe, if that was the first meeting we had with him, then it was Ms. Groeber who briefed, and I was sitting next to her. I had prepared the briefing, but Ms. Groeber briefed it, and I interjected here and there. Basically, it was, "Here is our plan for

how we're going to do this," including the timeline, including describing what we saw NSPS being rolled out as and what the Best Practices were. Some of the larger project elements, training, IT -- not change management, that came later. Then the process with the unions, how we were going to engage, and meet and confer -- what it was, what the law said it was supposed to be, and what our plan was for that. Secretary England was in a receive mode for most of it. We also had leaders from the services and components there as well, and if I recall, we had the civilian personnel chiefs and even a couple of the assistant secretary level folks. I'm not sure if Mr. Abell was there or not, but I believe Dr. Chu was there. The discussion at that first meeting was really about the process and what we were planning on doing. One thing that sticks with me in that first session with Secretary England is that he emphasized the importance of the process. He basically said, "Look, you know, this thing that you want to implement might be the best thing since sliced bread. But in this town, the process for implementing it is as important, if not more important, than the end product." In other words, if it's not seen as inclusive, if we're not seen as being thoughtful about people's input, reaching out and talking to stakeholders, hearing what people's concerns

are, hearing what people have to say, then it doesn't matter how good the system is, you'll lose people. That was his caution at that point, and there was some specific guidance about, "When is this meeting going to happen?" "When are you going to talk about the unions?" and that kind of thing. At that point, I was still leading the office, and Dr. Chu and Ms. Groeber were still in charge of the effort.

Q: Would you describe the famous or infamous meeting with the union representatives on February 26/27, 2004, at the Hyatt Hotel in Rosslyn? Who represented DoD and led the meeting, and were there repercussions from the meeting for the Implementation Office?

A: The meeting was actually held here, right across the street in the Hyatt. The meeting was led on the DoD side, by Ms. Groeber. I was at the table also. Mr. Curry was there as well. From OPM, I believe Mr. Nesterczuk was there by then. Possibly Ron Sanders, I think he was in that meeting as well. Mr. Nesterczuk had been appointed to be the point person from OPM for NSPS. It was Ms. Groeber who was the chair of the meeting basically. We had invited the union heads from all of the unions to participate. We had a huge ballroom, the table was set up in basically this giant

rectangle, so people were sitting on the outside of the rectangle with Ms. Groeber at the head, and I was to her right. The purpose of the meeting was to begin to talk about proposals. We had essentially boiled down the NSPS system into a series of policy proposal papers if you will. We'd given them out, and it took a while to get the meeting off the ground, if I recall. There was clearly a disconnect between the expectations of DoD, OPM, and those of the union attendees. NSPS had already started gaining steam in terms of controversy, mostly around labor relations and collective bargaining, but not about pay for performance or pay banding or any of those other things. It was the labor relations aspect of the system. The unions were concerned about things, and some public statements came from them. The unions were already sort of suspicious and skeptical. They did not receive well Ms. Groeber's approach. Ginger Groeber is an extremely smart person. She was the force behind getting NSPS. She doesn't get nearly the credit that she deserves in NSPS. She's a no-nonsense person, so she doesn't mince words; she doesn't butter people up with platitudes and things like that. She gets down to business. I think at some point, the unions respected that about her. Ultimately, the message she was conveying was, "The law says that DoD can

put in place an NSPS, and the means for your participation, unions, is this process. It is meet and confer; it is not bargaining."

That was not received well, and the union representatives continued to hammer that point, and Ms. Groeber continued to remind them that this was not bargaining, this was meet and confer. It became pretty contentious at that point. Lots of speeches were made. I think it was after the first day -- it was a two-day meeting -- they went out and had a press conference and began to criticize DoD and the NSPS effort. My role in that meeting was fairly limited. I hadn't had experience in engaging with unions, so I deferred to those who did. Ms. Groeber was certainly the leader at the table. She was the senior person at the table, and she sort of owned the project. I was the implementer, but NSPS was hers. We had Mr. Curry there as well, who was a seasoned labor relations professional. I didn't engage much. My role was to talk about implementation and how we were going to do it, and what the law had become. By that time, I was very well-versed in what the law said, and what it meant. I would engage in that, not much in the policy content. I was brought in to implement something, not to design the policy for it. I wasn't in a position and wasn't comfortable

engaging in debates over specific policies. That meeting was fairly contentious on both days. The first day probably the biggest debate we got into was the labor relations system that we were proposing, which was a fairly significant departure from the normal governmentwide collective bargaining rules. It was the argument that in the national security environment, the Department of Defense needs flexibility to be agile and to be quick in implementing things and implementing them in an enterprise way, hence the national-level bargaining and some of the other things we did in terms of scope of bargaining. Certain things that were negotiable before we were saying aren't going to be negotiable. It's what things are negotiable, what things are not.

The unions saw what we were doing as decreasing the scope of bargaining, as limiting what would be negotiable, as limiting their rights to bargain over certain policies or certain changes. And, in fact, we were. That was what we designed. We designed a system, a labor relations system that certainly had a role for collective bargaining and labor unions, but lessened the impact of that process on the department's ability to implement things, to move rapidly to implement a new policy or change that might impact employees. We had a construct in there, collective

bargaining was still there, but it looked more like consultation than actual bargaining.

The unions were immediately against that, and they were also suspicious of the independent third party that we were statutorily authorized to create to deal with DoD labor relations issues. There is a Federal Labor Relations Authority that handles disputes in labor relations in the federal sector. They're essentially the third party that breaks the tie when there's an impasse, or essentially settles disputes. Congress gave us the authority to create an independent labor relations authority to do that for the Department of Defense. We had some ideas about how that was going to work, and there was lots of discussion over who's going to sit on that, who gets to appoint the members of this independent board, and will unions be allowed to appoint a member? I think our initial answer to that was no, that we would accept ideas from unions but ultimately the Secretary will decide who sits on that board. That just fueled the fire of controversy. It really turned NSPS from an implementation of a new personnel system with flexibility to hire and fire and attract, retain, and pay people to a debate over collective bargaining. That's from my vantage point, that's really what it boiled down to. It was the institutional interest of organized labor and the

Department's interest in changing the culture of how civilians are managed in DoD. The flash point was collective bargaining, labor relations. That meeting was indeed infamous. To be totally honest with you, the unions by the end of that meeting, by the second day, were downright hostile and inflammatory. Often, some of the remarks were rather offensive, and Ms. Groeber took a lot from them in those two days, and at some point, she probably would have been justified in walking out because some of the behavior -- I won't say all the unions behaved this way -- but some of the individuals behaved fairly unprofessionally. That's how contentious it got. It turned some of them very hostile, and there were some attacks. Not physical obviously, but some attacks that used offensive language, things like that. It was a hearty, hearty debate.

Q: On February 22, 2004, George Nesterchuk was assigned as the OPM Senior Advisor to NSPS. On March 1, there was a meeting between NSPS and OPM representatives. Then on March 9, the OPM Director Kay Coles James sent a memo with a 40-page attachment to Secretary Rumsfeld. Would you just summarize or describe OPM's main concerns with NSPS and the impact of the OPM Director's memo to Secretary Rumsfeld?

A: OPM was concerned from the start that they did not perceive themselves as being an equal partner in implementing NSPS. They had not been involved in the design of Best Practices. They had just finished up or were in the process of working with DHS and their system, where they did play probably a leadership role in the design of their system. They went from, on the DHS side, being at the very least coauthors, co-leaders, equal partners, in dealing with the unions and the working groups to design the system, write the rules, etc. In DHS, they were just starting out, they deferred to OPM on a lot of that stuff. DoD took a very different approach. DOD is a very different organization. We have depth in HR expertise; we already have personnel demonstration projects. We know what we want to do. The thinking then was OPM would jointly prescribe this, but DoD's in the driver's seat. That was supported by leadership in the administration initially. When there were discussions at the OMB level, it was clear that, yes, OPM is your partner, but DoD, you're going to be driving this train. That thinking facilitated our approach to how we did this, so at the time, in my role, I didn't feel it necessary to run everything by OPM. Ms. Groeber didn't feel it was necessary to run everything by OPM. That was the way it was working. Clearly OPM had different thoughts

about that. They expressed some of those concerns at various levels below the Secretary, and those concerns weren't met with much sympathy, so it culminated in the letter, the famous letter, which laid out a lot of the concerns. Also, a lot of it was based on the whole idea of whether to publish in the *Federal Register* or not. One of the famous excerpts from that letter dealt with whether or not you should publish in the *Federal Register* and how much detail you should put into your regulations. The famous quote out of there that the unions continue to leverage is "What you do is you put enabling regulations out there in the *Federal Register* that give you a lot of flexibility to further write the rules at the DoD instruction level, and once you do that, then you can do all the things you want within your own rules, and you won't have to bargain over them." That's something that continues to be kind of a flash point. As I recall, Ms. James actually met with Mr. Wolfowitz at one point and expressed the concern. The result of that letter -- because the letter got out, got into the hands of some union folks if I recall correctly -- brought the issue to a head with respect to the OPM/DoD relationship, and then Mr. Nesterczuk was appointed to be the senior advisor. He was already on board, but when we came on board, we were still operating as, "DOD's in

charge; OPM, you're following along." I had a good relationship with Mr. Nesterczuk even from the beginning, but clearly there were two institutions that were not seeing eye to eye on how this thing was going to proceed, and we were doing it differently from DHS and that was not acceptable to OPM. Things were resolved the way they normally are resolved, at very high levels with very powerful people making choices.

Q: I noticed that she did send a courtesy copy to Mr. Wolfowitz and Mr. England and then Clay Johnson over at the Office of Management and Budget. I think that somewhere I saw that she was friendly with Wolfowitz -- whether they worked on a project together or something -- so I'm not surprised that she visited with him.

A: There were other episodes prior to even NSPS where the typical relationship between OPM and agencies is not always great and positive, just because of the role that OPM plays. There's usually a little bit of tension there, and that was exacerbated, amplified, magnified by how we were rolling it out.

Q: NSPS officials met on March 1, 2004, with representatives of the Office of Management and Budget. What were OMB's main concerns about the NSPS implementation or did they

have any that you can recall?

A: I'm fuzzy on the details of that meeting because I wasn't there. Do you know who was at that meeting?

Q: No.

A: I'll search my memory. The one meeting I recall was with Clay Johnson, and that meeting was, I think, attended by Director James, Dr. Chu, and Ms. Groeber, and I think that was the attempt by OMB to settle the matter. And again, I might be fuzzy on the date there. That might have occurred earlier, but that was the meeting where OMB basically said, "Look, DoD, this is your system. You're making the calls here. Obviously partner with OPM, they need to be part of this because the law says they need to be part of this, plus they should be part of this. But ultimately, it's a National Security Personnel System, DoD." So that's the one meeting I recall with OMB.

Q: In March 2004, Senator George Voinovich visited at the Pentagon with Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz and Deputy Under Secretary Charles Abell to discuss the NSPS. What was Senator Voinovich's main concern about the NSPS implementation, and did he suggest a change of course?

A: I don't know whether he suggested a change of course. His main concern was the controversy that was surrounding it at

that point. It was right after the two-day meeting with the unions, lots of ink, lots of media coverage, even the *Post* and all the local papers that cover federal issues. The unions were knocking on doors in Congress expressing their concerns rather vigorously that NSPS was off the rails, was terrible and a bad idea, and the way we were running it was bad. Some of it was directed at Ms. Groeber based on the meeting. Most of it was directed at the issues around collective bargaining and labor relations. I think that was Senator Voinovich's concern on this.

Senator Voinovich was someone held in high regard by folks in the Pentagon, particularly with respect to these kinds of issues because he's paid a lot of attention to them; he knows his way around civil service rules, and he was a supporter of NSPS. He wanted to see it succeed, so I think his desire was basically to go over and say, "Hey guys, you've got to get this thing back on track. It's too much of a stir. What's going on? You need to take care of this." I have no idea whether he suggested a course correction; I wasn't in there so I'm not sure whether he did that.

Q: On March 12, 2004, Secretary Rumsfeld directed that there be a strategic and comprehensive review of NSPS development, the strategic pause leading to the strategic

engagement. From your perspective, who were the key players talking to whom that led to the decision to have a Strategic Pause? What was Ginger Groeber's role in these discussions? What was your role?

A: Most of the discussions were held at higher levels than me. I know that as a result of the union meetings, as a result of the coverage we got in the media, the OPM letter, the Voinovich visit, the congressional interest that was starting to erupt, there were discussions, I believe, at the Secretary England, Secretary Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Dr. Chu, Mr. Abell level. I'm not quite sure how involved Ms. Groeber was. She typically was back-briefed after meetings by Mr. Abell or Dr. Chu. There were other folks within the department who were concerned about how we were doing this, so some of that was filtering up to the senior leaders and they were being influenced by the folks at the lower levels, folks who were in the civilian personnel community. There was some debate around that. What I would speculate is that things were just swirling, and there was a lot going on and there was this dissonant chorus from all over the place, external, internal. I think Secretary Rumsfeld, probably at the request of Secretary England, who had by then had some kind of a role, said, "OK, let's call an all stop, let's sit down and figure this out, and figure out

how we're going to go about this and who's going to lead it, what the schedule was going to be and all those sorts of things." It was an internal debate over philosophically how we were going to go about this, with one side saying the marching orders are to roll this thing out as quickly as possible, and the other side saying we can't take the political heat or we can't take the unions and what they're saying in public and those congressmen who are getting antsy about this. It was those two schools of thought that were kind of clashing. I was caught in the gears of this machine, and I think I was seen not as an innocent bystander, but someone who was kind of caught in the middle. I was providing information and briefing material to various folks; I was having discussions with Ms. Groeber basically on a daily basis about what was going on. This was leading up to the pause. It was a tough time, there was a lot of uncertainty, and of course I was uncertain, wondering whether I had just completely tanked my career and, thinking, "Boy, did I screw this one up!" To the point where I actually told Ms. Groeber that I would step down, that at this point they probably needed somebody who was a bit more of a heavyweight in the world of the Pentagon politics. I was brought on board to implement a system that I didn't understand or recognize all the

controversy that was surrounding it. I wasn't a babe in the woods, but I wasn't brought on to be a policy leader. I was brought on to be an implementer, which I certainly could have done, barring the environment we were in, no doubt about that. Ms. Groeber, to her great credit, said, "This is not about you, Brad, this is not about how you're doing. This is about the two philosophies and how they're coming together or not coming together." So those were pretty tough days. Then the strategic pause happened.

Q: Would you describe the strategic pause, the strategic engagement, in terms of participants, organizations, and the process? And then your role in the strategic engagement?

A: Basically at that point, Secretary England was pretty much in charge of things. The question was, is this whole effort going to stay within the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, in that chain, or is it going to be put under something different like Secretary of Navy? Is Navy going to take it over? At that point, Secretary England was clearly, clearly calling most of the shots so we had the strategic engagement that was essentially a coming together of senior leaders at the assistant secretary level and above, with some heavy hitters brought

in from their staffs and organizations from DoD that weren't necessarily personnel types or manpower/readiness types. They were line leaders who were either in alternative personnel systems or were well-respected or senior folks. Not necessarily political; lots of career folks were involved in it. The idea was, "OK, we need to divide this thing up and map out the strategy for the process we're going to use to design and implement NSPS, how we're going to organize around implementing NSPS." Various working groups eventually were stood up. We called them integrated product teams (IPTs); we used the acquisition terminology, so they were process IPTs. I don't know all of them off the top of my head, but they were working on things like process, timeline, engagement with the unions, labor relations issues, communications, and public relations and then there was an overarching, management level IPT and how this was going to be organized. Each of the IPTs had a designated chair, and then there was an overarching IPT, the overarching integrated product team (OIPT), that was gleaning information from all of them and eventually taking information to both Dr. Chu and to Secretary England at the time -- ultimately leading up to recommendations about how to move forward, how to move forward on the implementation strategy itself, decisions about whether we were going to

publish in the *Federal Register* or whether we were going to do internal regulations, how we were going to deal with the unions and who was going to deal with the unions, and the schedule and the organization of the program office. I was assigned to one or two of the IPTs. My staff at the time, and I had brought together a staff of six or ten people -- all detailees from components or from the Civilian Personnel Management Service -- were given opportunities to participate in these IPTs. Mr. Abell was designated the OIPT chair, so they maintained a P&R leadership presence where it was designated by name as Mr. Abell. The assistant secretaries were on the IPTs, and they were given basically two weeks to meet -- and by the way, OPM and OMB were also participants in these -- they were basically given two weeks to meet, churn over all the issues, and present recommendations in their various areas. A couple of leaders on the IPTs came from the personnel community. One of them was Dave Snyder from the Army, who was the Deputy G1 for Army. Roger Blanchard was the head of one of the IPTs. Pete Brown, who eventually became the interim Program Executive Officer (PEO), was the head of one of the IPTs as well, and he was the one who brought everything together. There were folks from various parts of the department. It involved a series of all day meetings with

specific deliverables; and I participated on as many of them as I could.

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE B

A: So I was talking about the strategic engagement and the various teams that were set up. My role on them -- I was kind of running around like a chicken with my head cut off trying to participate in as many of them as I could because even at that point, I was only in the NSPS world for four or five months or so, but I was a source of knowledge on a lot of the things. A lot of it was discussing the implementation strategy that we had, what we were planning on doing with the different long poles in the tent for putting the system into place. I had most of my staff on one or more of the IPTs. On a daily basis, I would back-brief Ms. Groeber. Ms. Groeber did not participate in the IPTs in the strategic engagement. She kind of understood what was going on with the program, probably wasn't -- definitely wasn't -- enthusiastic about it. That was not a good time for the Civilian Personnel Policy (CPP) office or for CPMS, the support organization. But we had folks participating. The strategic engagement culminated in a series of briefings to Secretary England and to Dr. Chu on recommendations on how to move forward to include standing

up a dedicated program office to oversee the design and implementation. One of the things that came out of it, one of the more important debates that was held during that time was the notion of how we were going to regulate NSPS. We were going to take BP, Best Practices, and then take the labor relations side and implement that as NSPS via internal Department of Defense regulations. The debate over whether we should publish in the *Federal Register* overarching, broad, enabling regulations was all hashed out in the strategic engagement. Ultimately, what was decided was that we were going to publish in the *Federal Register* broad, enabling regulations for the HR system, with fairly specific regulations for the labor relations system. That completely changed things. It obviously knocked the schedule sideways. The other main issue was Best Practices itself, and again, when I came in, and then the path we were on, the cake was baked. We were going to take Best Practices, the features, the pay bands were set, the staffing rules were set, the performance management system was already written. There was going to be a 100-point system versus a five level system that we have now under NSPS. All of those design features were already done, so the cake was baked prior to this whole strategic pause. That was scrapped. The idea was, OK, the Best Practices is

one way to do it, but we really need to design this system, so we need to stand up a design effort. That's what really changed, that was what really triggered the changing nature of what my role was going to be in pushing NSPS out. It culminated in a fairly long briefing to Secretary England and Dr. Chu, and ultimately the decision on moving forward and the way that we ended up moving forward was with Secretary Rumsfeld. I wasn't privy to these meetings, but my understanding is that he met with Secretary England and Dr. Chu together, and gave them the order to move forward.

Q: Who was doing most of the work and the organizing? Is there a leader of this strategic engagement beneath Chu and England, someone who's really . . .?

A: There was -- I'd probably say Pete Brown. He emerged as the heavy lifter for pulling things together, pulling briefings together. The OIPT itself, they were meeting every day, so Mr. Abell had a major role in that and was a player in that. The staffs of various organizations, the personnel folks. But ultimately, the producer of the materials when it got to the point where we were bringing it all together was Pete Brown and a few of his key folks that he had brought with him from Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) for the engagement.

Q: Speaking of Pete Brown, he was appointed, as you mentioned, the interim Program Executive Officer on April 27, 2004. What were your responsibilities under Pete Brown as the interim PEO, and what did Pete Brown as interim PEO accomplish?

A: After the strategic engagement, it was decided that they needed to appoint a Program Executive Officer, and they were going to use the PEO model, the acquisition model. They didn't have anybody ready to walk into the job, and there was a whole series of weeks when they were looking at potential candidates and interviewing potential candidates. In the meantime, I believe it was Secretary England who asked Pete Brown. "Let's not wait until we name somebody to get this thing going, so Pete, I need you to step in, on an interim basis, and stand up this office." So he was named interim PEO. By the way, even before he was initially named interim PEO, we started working. We had already -- under my office -- set up workspace over here in Rosslyn. We were already staffed with a relatively small staff, but a staff that covered various areas. We already had some contracts in place to support us, so what Pete was responsible for doing was coming in and implementing all of the approved recommendations from the strategic engagement, which was standing up a formal PEO with various functional

areas covered. There was an HR design team, there was a labor relations design team, congressional affairs, public affairs, implementation teams, all these various boxes on the organization chart had to be filled in. We shuffled the staff into the various boxes and then went and found some more people. His responsibility was essentially standing up the PEO organization and the initiation of the design process, which included bringing together working groups, appointing people. At that point, OPM was a full partner, so there was the formal structure with OPM being part of the team; they actually had people sitting at the PEO with us. He was also responsible for essentially managing the agenda of the OIPT meetings because the governance process that came out of the strategic engagement included naming a senior executive, who was Gordon England, and an overarching integrated product team, chaired by Mr. Abell which was basically a follow on from the OIPT from the strategic pause. Mr. Abell and the assistant secretaries literally met every day. I attended those meetings, Pete attended those meetings. It wasn't his venue, but he was the manpower, he was the person who was putting all of the issues on the table for the OIPT to chew on and decide. That was essentially the startup phase; there were all kinds of issues here and there. The

OIPT met every day at four o'clock, so part of the task was to have an agenda, have briefing charts, have whatever materials were necessary. At that point, Mr. Abell called me into his office along with Ms. Groeber and basically said that we were standing up this PEO office, Pete Brown was going to run it, and "Brad, I need you to go and support him." Mr. Abell was very clear with me that I was going to go over and work for the PEO, and the PEO worked for the Secretary of the Navy. I was no longer in the Personnel and Readiness (P&R) chain of command, so I shouldn't feel as if I was over there as the P&R rep, feel obligated to back brief them on what's going on. I was there to support them. I was not going to be in charge, but I needed to be over there and my staff was going to start out. I said OK, kind of rolled with the punches and said, "Yeah, I can do that." At that point, they hadn't named me as a deputy or interim deputy or anything, I was just over there as support. I basically walked in and started acting like the deputy; Pete treated me like a deputy, to his great credit. He is excellent; he was an outstanding leader. The short time I worked for him was one of the best short spans of my career. I'd work for him again in a heartbeat. That was an exciting time. We were standing up the office, we were getting job descriptions in

place, we were trying to figure out who was going to fill what box, we were bringing people in. We'd gone out and said, "OK, components, you got what you asked for, so now we need your help, so I need somebody who knows congressional and public affairs by Thursday afternoon, I want some names." Components coughed up people and got resources for us. We were briefing the OIPT on a daily basis. We started hacking out the design process and how many working groups and what the working groups were going to look like. We worked with OPM to set up office space in downtown D.C. to bring all these folks together and have fairly intense working group sessions. We started working how we were going to engage the unions. We started setting up meetings. We set up a lunch with the union leaders and Secretary England, obviously trying to build the bridges and get it back on track. Those were long days, and they were filled with something new every day and lots to do because even though there was this pause, there was still a recognition that we had to get moving, that we needed to maintain the momentum that we needed to get it back on track. That's where the term "event-driven" emerged. We're not going to force this into a schedule because that was one of the main criticisms of our initial effort, that we were driven by an arbitrary schedule. I would argue

that it wasn't necessarily arbitrary, it was extremely ambitious, and the assumptions underlying the schedule turned out to be faulty. Ultimately, the philosophy changed to event-driven, so we're not going to move to the next milestone until we complete the earlier milestones. It takes a little longer, and you always have a plan. You should lay out a plan, but ultimately it's got to be event-driven. You've got to get through this gate before you can start walking towards the next gate. Those were the roles of the interim PEO. Eventually, they publicly named me the interim deputy PEO, and I was given kind of that formal title. They didn't want to name me permanent deputy because they knew eventually there was going to be a permanent PEO that was going to be brought on board, and they didn't want to jump ahead of that person and name a deputy. We packed a lot of work in the short time that Pete Brown was there. We got things off the ground. We had at least one union meeting, if not two, and we got the design teams launched. It was off the ground by the time we left. It was an amazing month or two.

Q: The first chairmen of the overarching integrated product team were Charles Abell and George Nesterczuk. How extensively had Charles Abell been working with NSPS prior to this time?

A: Not all that much. He was certainly engaged, and he certainly helped with the legislation, but his focus was not so much on the civilian personnel issues in NSPS. He was working on other things in P&R. Mr. Abell was a very well-respected individual; he had a lot of credibility on the Hill. He came from the Senate staff. He was also well-respected among his colleagues within the building. For those reasons, I think they asked him to lead this OIPT. It maintained the P&R continuity in the leadership of the program. Even though the office itself and the project decisions weren't being made by Dr. Chu or Ms. Groeber, Mr. Abell was guiding a lot of them based on his leadership of the OIPT. Certainly he was immersed in NSPS during the strategic pause, but that's when he really engaged and that's when he essentially was completely engaged in that.

Q: How extensive was the role George Nesterczuk played in the design and implementation of NSPS? This is a broad question about Mr. Nesterczuk.

A: Deep and broad and every which way you can think of -- it was his full-time job. They brought him on board specifically to work NSPS from the OPM side. George was known around town based on some work he had done on the

Hill. He's got a background of working with personnel. He's not a personnel specialist, he's an engineer or a scientist by trade, but he's well-respected in that community. There was a little bit of controversy when they named Mr. Nesterczuk because of some of his views that he had expressed and some of his writings about labor unions and the federal government. But he was extremely engaged. He was in all the OIPTs; he was critical in terms of keeping OPM leadership informed. He definitely was able to speak for the Director of OPM in all the venues that we had. He actually was a contributor to the design itself. He had his own ideas about things, so he brought those to the table, but he was also very, very careful about respecting the department's role in tailoring the system to the department's needs. He was there to assist that process. He was also instrumental in shaping our strategy with the Hill. He had a lot of contacts over there, and he was a primary communicator to OMB, to the OMB staff, to Hill staff and various committees, certainly the committees that oversee OPM. And somewhat from a public standpoint. He would be interviewed in the media, things like that. He wasn't in a position to manage day-to-day things in the PEO, but from the OPM perspective he was certainly the OPM face for NSPS on all matters.

Q: Mary Lacey was announced as the PEO May 24, 2004, and then in June, you assumed responsibility as the Deputy PEO. Did you interview for the job? What were your initial duties? And then your duties throughout the summer of 2004?

A: I was probably maybe the third or fourth person to learn about Mary Lacey being named as the PEO. I didn't know Mary at all. Pete brought me in one day and said, "In a day or two, they're going to announce publicly that they've named a PEO. It's Mary Lacey, she's from NAVSEA, she's the technical director at the Naval Surface Warfare Center. Pete was very high on her; I think Pete was very instrumental in getting her, although I think Pete was motivated by wanting to go back to his day job, but he certainly played a role in that. I think the first time I met Mary, she came by. Before she officially came on board, she came by the office and met people. I did not interview for the job. The way it worked was I think Pete told her, "Hey, Brad's your guy." I think Pete recommended, "Take Brad," and Mary accepted that. It's my understanding she didn't blink an eye and said OK. She obviously respected Pete's opinion and almost immediately, even though there was that period of time before the announcement, it was pretty clear that she wasn't out searching for a deputy, that she was going to name me. I

kind of continued what I was doing under Pete. I was a full deputy, I was doing a lot of the basic legwork. I spent a lot of time getting Mary up to speed on what was going on because she wasn't in the strategic pause, she wasn't engaged in that. She was in a lab that was excluded from NSPS, so she wasn't paying a heck of a lot of attention. She was actually one of the lab directors that wanted to come under NSPS, and in fact, before the legislation came out, they were beginning, in her outfit, to make some modifications to the way they do their system to look more like what she thought NSPS was going to be. She was a supporter obviously of NSPS. She wasn't among the lab folks who were concerned about losing their demonstration project. I spent a good part of the first month or two of her tenure getting her up to speed, briefing her on things, going over budgets and manpower, the personnel, all the deputy kinds of things that I was responsible for. Also, all the other things - "Here's where the mines are in the mine field, here's who the important players are in this, here's who you need to go talk with, who you need to go meet." She knew a lot of that from her conversations with Pete, but I was there to add to that. I don't want to take too much credit for that. Part of that was I was responsible for educating her

on where we were at that point in NSPS. Then she sort of took it from there. She obviously had her own ideas. It didn't take long for her to trigger her program management skills and move out because she was hired personally by Gordon England. That's who she worked for, and she kept in touch with him and his special assistant on a regular basis.

That summer was essentially the summer of the working groups, of the design teams, where we did a series of focus groups, going around and talking with hundreds of employees, that led to the design teams coming together and bringing together all the various options. By this time, despite what some people thought was going to happen, Best Practices was pretty much in the rearview mirror. There were some who thought that we were going to spend the summer validating Best Practices, basically looking at Best Practices and tweaking it. Wasn't the case. We scrapped it. We started over. We went out and did the focus groups. The intent behind that was to do the outreach to employees and get their perspectives, get their feedback, get their input. We literally did hundreds of those. We were doing town hall meetings that summer. I was personally doing some of them, Mary was doing a lot of them. We were, from a resource management standpoint,

which is one of the roles I played as deputy, pulling together the people and the resources to do the design effort. Getting ready to do the modifications to the IT systems, getting those ducks in a row. Working the communications angle, the new Web page, working a lot of those things. I did the classic deputy work -- a lot of the grunt work -- and focused internally on the staff and the resources and made sure that we hit all our marks when we came to getting briefings done and OIPT meetings, those kinds of things. I was a little bit tentative early on but then participated in a lot of the policy discussions, but ultimately it was the summer of the design of NSPS.

Q: What role did the PEO want the Civilian Personnel Management Service, CPMS, to play in the NSPS design and implementation? How significant a role did it play?

A: That was an interesting, very interesting dynamic there. When I was the PIO, Program Implementation Office, initially, CPMS was essentially the organization I looked to pull resources from in addition to the components. Office space, CPMS. Getting contracts in place, we used the CPMS infrastructure. For e-mail, we used CPMS IT support. That continued, and it was a little bit awkward at first because CPMS is essentially an organization that

reports up through the CPP chain, and there were some folks in CPMS, from the leaders on down to a lot of the policy support folks, that were a little bit bruised after the whole strategic pause. My staff, they were busy standing up the PEO so they didn't have a lot of time to feel hurt and then have to heal. The folks in CPMS felt a little bit bruised because of that, or betrayed -- not betrayed, that's not a good word. But felt like a lot of their work had been dismissed. There was some bridge building that we had to do. The official relationship was that CPMS was going to host the PEO. So the PEO would stand up as an organization that reports directly to the Secretary of Navy, but hosted by the field activity, by CPMS. CPMS would provide all the basic personnel budget, contract, infrastructure support. At the same time, we were looking to CPMS to draw intellectual resources from. We depended on CPMS folks who were policy experts in the Best Practices effort. That needed to continue, so we pulled some folks in, detailed some folks from CPMS. Tim Curry was a CPMS employee at that point, and we moved him over here. After we got through the initial awkward stage, we got the people on base, and we relied heavily on the CPMS intellectual side. We also had to rely on CPMS for the IT piece, because CPMS owns the HR automation, and so we had to

develop a relationship to the point of actually designating them in the PEO structure as dual-hatted to the PEO for purposes of modifying the IT system to accommodate NSPS. I played a role there to bridge the two organizations.

Again, that was one of the areas where I was kind of caught in the middle and received some awkward, sideways looks from folks in the community where NSPS was just moved from. Now I was in this new PEO organization, but I was still from that other community. I had to play kind of an intermediary, I'm kind of proud of the fact that I was able to bridge the two organizations together for the most part. So, CPMS absolutely played a critical role, and not just as the infrastructure provider but also as a great resource, a great capability resource, that we drew on for expertise in all different functional areas.

Q: Did the PEO acquire the services of a public relations firm to help explain NSPS to the workforce? What was the firm's scope of work?

A: Did the PEO use a public relations firm? Initially, prior to the PEO, we had hired, as part of a communications contract, a public relations firm that was on board. Once the strategic pause happened and the PEO came on board we pretty much got rid of them. We hired or we got on detail

from the Air Force, Joyce Frank, who had a public affairs and congressional affairs background, and that's essentially who was in charge of the public affairs matters for us. We also partnered with the OSD public affairs folks, but we had an internal, organic public affairs capability in Joyce Frank.

Q: The PEO briefed veterans organizations in August and September 2004. What issues were of concern to the veterans?

A: Veterans preference was the issue they were concerned about. Part of the NSPS flexibilities is in the hiring, staffing arena, and veteran's preference is a cornerstone and a hallmark of federal hiring. We essentially had the flexibility to waive those rules and do something different. By that time, we hadn't decided exactly what we were going to do. Best Practices had some modifications to the veterans preference rules, but we hadn't said that's what was going to happen. They were very skeptical and suspicious about NSPS and what it might do to the veterans benefits for hiring and veterans preference under reduction of the force. That was a robust discussion that we had with the veterans' groups. It wasn't nearly as contentious as the union meeting we had, but that was their main

concern -- veterans preference.

Q: If we could jump ahead to after the public comment period. I think there's enough in the record about the draft regulations and then receiving the public comments. But then after that, then the meet and confer that starts formally.

A: Do we want to schedule another session of this so we're not -- it looks like you've got a lot more questions there.

Q: I do.

A: I'm willing to do that if we want to.

End - NSPS-005 Bradley "Brad" Bunn