

Goldberg: This is part IV of an oral history interview with Dr. Harold Brown in Washington, D.C., on March 1, 1993 at 10:00 a.m. This interview is being recorded on tape and a copy of the transcript will be sent to Dr. Brown. Representing the OSD Historical Office are Alfred Goldberg and Ronald Landa.

Last time we were discussing manpower and weapons systems issues. We talked about the nuclear triad. One of the questions we would like to ask is: Did the President generally follow the recommendations of the Defense Department with reference to weapons systems acquisition and deployment?

Brown: Usually, but there were exceptions. Let me begin in January of 1977. In connection with the Carter administration's revision of the budget that the Ford administration had left, I conducted an examination of the procurement programs and recommended cancellation of several, including the Apache, an armed helicopter, and some others. The President accepted those recommendations. We reduced the proposed budget, in terms of new obligational authority, by about \$3 billion, and sent it up to Congress. The Congress rejected the cancellations but then went ahead and reduced the budget by that same amount, taking the money out of spare parts, training, personnel, and other things that contribute to readiness. So there was a case where the President accepted the recommendations but the Congress didn't go along. Subsequently, the first big issue was the B-1. There, my recommendation was not to procure the B-1 in large quantities but to continue the program at a low production level while we looked at what I thought were better alternatives. The President concluded that we should cancel the production program, which we did. So I guess you might say in that case he half accepted and half rejected it.

Goldberg: With particular regard to the B-1, Carter in his diary for June '77 said "Harold Brown has been very courageous to recommend that the B-1 not be built."

Brown: I recommended that we not go ahead with full-scale production. So he accepted part of what I said, but not the rest. Another issue in the strategic area was what to do in terms of a land-based ICBM to succeed the Minuteman. We went back and forth on that one for a couple of years. In the end, I concluded that we should build the new missile, that it should not be the same size as the Trident II missile, which was somewhat smaller in diameter, but we should have a separate missile program. President Carter accepted that and with it the basing mode I proposed. The Reagan administration rejected the basing mode and was completely unable to find an acceptable one itself, so in the end few MXs got built. So there, I would say, yes, he accepted it. To repeat, in by far the majority of cases the President did go along; in a few cases, he did not.

Goldberg: So he went along on the MX, in spite of the severe budget constraints, largely on your recommendation?

Brown: Yes. The first couple of years, 1977-78, he got into considerable detail in the budget and in the programs. The last couple of years he and I together would come to some sort of conclusion on the level of the budget and then the Defense Department itself would, by and large, set the programs.

Goldberg: Did he do much dithering about these things?

Brown: He spent a lot of time thinking and worrying about them. The issue that made the greatest impact in foreign policy terms was not really a procurement issue (but it was one that made the most fuss), it was the neutron bomb issue. In that case Vance, Brzezinski, and I got out ahead of President Carter and assumed that we had his agreement on deploying enhanced radiation weapons in Europe. They had already been developed. In the end, over an Easter weekend, on the recommendation of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and perhaps with some advice from Andy Young and Rosalynn Carter, he decided to change the conditions under which we would agree to deploy them. Specifically, the Germans

would have to ask us publicly to do so. That was impossible for Helmut Schmidt. This caused a big fuss, with the Europeans especially, but it didn't change the decision to develop and produce the system. We merely never deployed it.

Goldberg: So it was not a question of having canceled it.

Brown: That's right.

Goldberg: Did these decisions of various sorts, affecting all of the services--for instance, the Bradley personnel carrier, the nuclear cruiser, the FB-111, etc.--affect your relations with the military and your influence with them?

Brown: We didn't cancel those, actually. We often produced fewer. The military in each service advocated maximum programs of their own, and the effect was what you would think. They were unhappy with such decisions. But I didn't see any enormous campaign to reverse them. I think what happened was a general discontent in the military about those decisions, which grew and in late 1979-80 expressed itself in congressional testimony as unhappiness with the size of the Defense budget. This produced a strong reaction in Congress and in the public, and the Reagan campaign of 1980 took very effective advantage of it. I should say, with respect to weapons systems, that in addition to the ones that were scaled back or canceled, several were begun. Those, I think, should be regarded as new initiatives, largely instituted by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, specifically by me and by Bill Perry, and a few people in the services. These included the stealth fighter (the F-117), the conventional cruise missile program, and the whole collection of precision-guided munitions. Those got fast-track treatment. We worked with just a few people in the services. In some cases these were special access programs, in other cases they were not, but each was specially managed by a special program office. It took some convincing of the service operational people to get them to accept that these could be significant additions to our military capability, perhaps more so than programs whose cancellation or, more usually, reduction in size, they found so

objectionable. I recall, for example, the meeting with Tom Hayward, the Chief of Naval Operations, in 1980 after the election, in which I told him "The present administration is leaving; whether the Navy has any significant conventional warhead cruise missile capability in the coming decade is going to be largely up to you; you haven't been too enthusiastic about it. The operational Navy people don't particularly like it because they see it as a threat to carrier-based aviation, but you ought to think about whether this isn't the better way to go." He was not very committal at the time, but in fact the Navy then proceeded with it and now glories in its conventional cruise missiles, which it uses as justification for battleships, cruisers, and submarines, but not aircraft carriers.

Goldberg: When Perry left office in 1981, we interviewed him and I had the impression that he had been on top of most of these weapon systems at that time.

Brown: He was responsible for the research and development--and the initial procurement--of all of these, and we worked very closely together on them, so I'm not surprised. They were run pretty closely from the office of the Secretary of Defense.

Goldberg: What lessons did you draw from the U.S. efforts to foster and carry out the NATO decision of December 1979 to deploy modernized theater nuclear forces?

Brown: I thought that was a great success at the time. We had brought along a disparate group of countries at the meeting to which you refer, which was the first that had been attended for a long time, perhaps a decade or more, by both the foreign and defense ministers of all the NATO countries that were participating on the military side. The French did not attend nor, for different reasons, did the Greeks. To get the Germans, the Dutch, and the Danes to go along with that response to the Soviet deployment of SS-20s was a very significant matter. To say the West would deploy intermediate range missiles, both ballistic and cruise, with nuclear warheads, in response to the SS-20 deployments but to leave open the

possibility of reductions in both sides--and even a small reference that indicated it could go to zero on both sides--was a very great success. There was very strong opinion in Western Europe that an acceptable arrangement would instead be for the Soviets not to deploy more than the many hundreds they had deployed if the West would deploy none at all. That meeting was a success, but only a paper success. It required actual implementation if it was to have its desired effect of persuading the Russians to accept an equal number on both sides at whatever level. That part of the drama took place in the Reagan administration, the early 1980s. In 1983 there was an actual deployment, accompanied by enormous demonstrations against it in Europe. The British, German, and Italian governments resisted that pressure and deployed the missiles. For that, I think the Reagan administration deserves some credit. Most of the credit belongs to the civil service and foreign service people in the Defense and State Departments, who had carried over from the previous administration and who were left to negotiate and carry this out on their own with the allies and the services. That turned out to be a big success, because in the end, much later, the Soviets agreed to zero on both sides. More important, it showed the Soviet leaders that the NATO alliance could not be broken by Soviet-stimulated protests and that the Alliance would respond to Soviet attempts to intimidate or to change the military balance.

Goldberg: How much of that initiative came from OSD and the Defense Department?

Brown: Quite a lot, although there was a significant amount in the National Security Council staff as well. On The NSC staff David Aaron, Reggie Bartholomew, and Jim Thomson were involved, and in the OSD staff Komer, McGiffert, and Lynn Davis were involved.

Goldberg: How did it get to the 572 figure?

Brown: I remember it was quite arbitrary. I think they began with a target set, but it was not just that. A significant element of it was political. They wanted to have a certain mixture of ballistic missiles and cruise missiles. Those come in squadron sizes, which quantizes it. Then they wanted to have some in Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium. When you put all that together, 572 turned out to be a logical figure, but only with those inputs.

Goldberg: On the subject of conventional warfare, how important did you estimate the need to enhance the allied capability?

Brown: My position on that was fairly consistent from the beginning. I thought that the Soviet conventional capability was such that we did need to enhance the allied conventional capability and response but that we could never have high assurance of being able to win a protracted conventional war. It therefore became a question of trying to lengthen the time at which you arrive at the nuclear threshold to a reasonable interval. The question is, "What's a reasonable length of time?" That involves a political judgment, and the political judgment that we made had two elements. One was what could we, in the U.S., afford, and what could we persuade the allies to buy, in the way of capability--that is, force size and sustainability? Our allies' willingness to buy was important because it made no sense for us to have the capability to fight for six months if the allies could only fight for three weeks. The other factor was a judgment as to what it took to deter the Soviets on the conventional side. In one way the deterrence was provided by the prospect of escalation to nuclear war. That, however, is like a game of "chicken" and it wasn't clear whether they thought that we would actually be willing to escalate to nuclear capability. It therefore became desirable in my mind to have the capability to fight long enough so that there would be some risk to the Soviets of a falling apart politically on their side. We didn't think that the Soviet state would fall apart in a time short enough so that we could expect to fight that long without their getting

all the way to the English Channel. But we did think that the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact forces--and their governments--might not last in a war which they did not win quickly, and that that prospect might well deter the Soviets themselves. Our understanding of the Soviet tactic was that they would get quite a few of the Warsaw Pact forces out in front as cannon fodder, although they themselves would also provide the main thrust of the armored attacks. When we thought about this, we concluded that if we could get up to a 60-day capability to maintain a battle line, that would be a very substantial deterrent. So we aimed at that, in terms of a force sufficient to preserve a fighting front for that long and to stock supplies long enough to do that. We never got there, but we did increase the capability. The studies that were done varied all over the map as to the outcome of a conventional war. Some showed that the Soviets could get all the way to the Channel in a couple of weeks; some showed that you might be able to hold on for 30 days; some showed longer. It depended a great deal, as you might expect, on the assumptions that you made, not only about the fighting capabilities of the sides, but also about the circumstances in which the war began--who got to do the first major air strike, for example. All that was background. In the end, you have to make some sort of arbitrary decision. We decided to aim for something like 60 days; we never got there, but we made substantial progress.

Goldberg: In this you were supported by the President and the NSC?

Brown: Very much so. There was the business of persuading the allies to increase their military expenditures by a real three percent a year, which we did during the first year. Then we did a certain amount of fooling around with the figures to try to show that we kept doing it. It lasted, essentially, through the administration.

Landa: When you were secretary, did you ever take part in any war gaming or crisis simulation?

Brown: I think I did go through one, but I don't remember the details.

Goldberg: Let's move on to some area crises that you dealt with. You were obviously very much involved with NATO, the policies, buildup and strategy, and you had obviously strong views on the matter of policies and strategy. You did launch a series of NATO initiatives shortly after taking office, presumably because you did see problems there, and you assigned a considerable role to Bob Komer in that connection. What was the long term defense program proposed by you and Komer for NATO--a compound of things, presumably?

Brown: Yes. It began with a certain percentage increase a year. There were also a series of initiatives, ten or so, including airborne warning and control, stocks, command and control, forward deployments, etc. We would review those every six months or so at a NATO meeting and urge the allies on. There was also one on infrastructure, and another on resupply that involved sea transport. On the U.S. side, we aimed at a reinforcement capability that would have ten divisions there in two weeks or so. We earmarked divisions from the U.S. for this purpose. That was that initiative, and again, I don't think we got nearly to the fulfillment of those plans. But there was a significant move forward.

Goldberg: Throughout most of NATO's history we have held that there was a problem of burdensharing, military integration, of whether the allies were pulling their weight; did you and the President view NATO as a permanent U.S. commitment?

Brown: Yes. I don't think there was ever any doubt of that. It was signaled by all of these initiatives and by a NATO heads of government meeting that took place in Washington in 1979 or '80, at which there was a reaffirmation of many of these.

Goldberg: What was your attitude and that of the President toward the reduction of U.S. troops in Europe, and the proposals in Congress in that direction, that had been going on for years?

Brown: I don't think there was big agitation to that effect. Certainly not while we were there, because during the period that we were in office apprehensions about Soviet buildup actually grew. This was reflected in public attitudes. Although there was some opposition in Congress, it never expressed itself in substantial legislative initiatives. Apprehensions about the Soviets grew, and this was part of the reason that President Carter lost the election.

Goldberg: How do you feel about the progress that you had made in connection with NATO during those four years?

Brown: I was quite satisfied with that. I thought then, and I believe now, that that was a substantial success, and that the December 1979 decision to deploy intermediate-range missiles and the 1983 action of actually doing it had a very significant effect on developments in the Soviet Union. I think that is what convinced them that they were not going to be able to crack the Western alliance.

Goldberg: How do you view the future of the alliance?

Brown: I think it rather remarkable that it survived the end of the Cold War and the unification of Germany. A good many thoughtful people believed that it would not be possible to unify Germany within the NATO alliance, that the Soviets wouldn't allow it, and that the Germans would rather be unified than in NATO. In the event, it didn't work out that way. The Germans, as part of the deal, although they accepted restrictions on NATO forces in Eastern Germany which now are of no significance, managed both to unify and to stay in NATO. After that it was still possible that NATO would dissolve, since there was essentially no enemy. But it turns out that having an organization in being with structures, procedures, and military forces under an existing command is a unique tool for international security. It is notable that NATO has offered and the UN Security Council, which surprisingly has become an effective body with the changed behavior of Russia and China, may respond with a call on NATO to act for the UN in Yugoslavia. So NATO, so far, turns

out to have at least a possible utility to fulfill a security function even in a situation where there is no enemy of the alliance. There has been an argument that common security is not feasible when there is no enemy. What you can have is collective security, which is allegedly a form of security that can be applied when there is no adversary. Collective security is hard to arrange for. It's hard to arrange a situation of military forces of command, control, etc. under those circumstances. So it turns out that NATO, at least in Europe, even beyond the geographical limits of its original construct, may well have a function. It is hard to believe that it will be as significant in the future as in the past, and I have thought that the Western European Union, which was somnolent for decades, could take over many of its functions. That's still possible, but I think it's all farther off than many analysts had thought, because you can't have a European military force without a unified European political structure, and that turns out to be much harder than people thought.

Goldberg: So, in general, your attitude toward alliances for U.S. national security is that they have been both necessary and desirable, most of them?

Brown: Not all of them have worked. NATO has worked very well. Other alliances have worked much more on a bilateral basis. The one with Japan has worked on a bilateral basis. SEATO and CENTO fell apart.

Goldberg: What led President Carter to seek normalization of relations with China?

Brown: A combination of things. I think that at least a piece of it was as a tool in U.S.-Soviet relations. Clearly that influenced Brzezinski, who influenced Carter in this. On the other hand, quite separately, I think there was a view held in the State Department by Vance that it was important to have good relations with one quarter of the human race and that since it had turned out that China was on bad terms both with the Soviet Union and with Vietnam, that made it more important for us to be on good terms with China. In the Defense Department, which didn't take the initiative in this but was involved toward the end, a principal motivation was the

recognition that if China turned away from the United States and toward the Soviet Union, that would release enormous Soviet military capability for use elsewhere in the world, so it was defensive from the Defense Department's view.

Goldberg: You visited China in 1980?

Brown: The beginning of January 1980. This had followed a series of visits by others. Vice President Mondale had visited in August 1979 and had broached the idea of a visit by me to institute military-to-military relations.

Goldberg: Were you satisfied with the extent of collaboration reached on that when you left office?

Brown: It was in the nature of dancing around. The Chinese had come with an enormous shopping list to our meetings in Beijing. I had been much more selective in what we were prepared to offer them. But we had, I think, begun the process. We had gone over the strategic situation together and exchanged views on that. We saw things rather similarly. We had made available to them some satellite ground stations, if I remember correctly. There had been some intelligence collaboration with U.S. intelligence sites set up to monitor Soviet missile development and space activities. These were set up in China. Plans were made for exchange of military personnel at the war colleges. And before the end of 1980 there had been a visit by a group of Chinese military people led by Liu Huaching, who is now a member of the Politburo, the one dealing with military matters. This is, of course, 13 years later. Later in 1980 he led a group which was hosted by Bill Perry in the United States. The foundations had been laid and some specific things had been done.

Goldberg: In reference to Japan, there was an effort late in the administration to press for a larger defense effort from the Japanese in which no doubt you were much involved, also. To what extent were you involved?

Brown: I was the principal person dealing with Japan on security matters. I would make, generally, a few trips a year there and would deal not only with the head of Japan's self-defense agency, which is not always a very influential post there, but with the foreign minister. At that time, and still today, the foreign ministry takes principal responsibility for security matters. I'd deal with the prime minister as well. What I was urging then was not only an increased Japanese defense budget, but fulfillment of a specific force structure and procurement plan emphasizing air capability, sea capability, and command and control. Also, I was emphasizing joint air and naval exercises between U.S. and Japanese forces. Indeed, in 1980 some actually took place for the first time. My belief was that to deter Soviet intimidation of Japan we would have to provide a credible capability between the U.S. and Japanese military to defend against conventional incursions or attack, and what we had was inadequate in my view in terms of command and control and joint exercises. The Japanese never thought there was a very big threat. I didn't think there was an enormous threat, either, but I thought that what we had was inadequate to provide the level of deterrence I thought we should have. So I pushed them along those lines. They came along grudgingly, but they came along to some degree.

Goldberg: With reference to Korea, on the initial plan for a phased withdrawal of U.S. ground forces, where did you stand on that issue?

Brown: I defended the President's position established during the campaign.

Goldberg: Were you in agreement with it?

Brown: No, I didn't think it was a very good idea. Indeed, during the decision to announce it in 1977, in the National Security Council meetings the two people who were negative about it were Stan Turner and me. But when the President decided to do it, I found myself the principal defender of it in public and before the Congress. I thought that a colorable argument could be made for it. Things had seemed fairly quiet, and it seemed the right time to do it, rather than in a situation where there

seemed an imminent threat. The South Koreans had clearly gotten much stronger, and economically they were pulling away from the North even then. They were weaker in terms of artillery, tanks, and especially in the air and sea, but we could provide the air and sea without having two divisions on the ground. The Koreans, it seemed to us, didn't need all that. So I made the defense, but that was not well received, not only by the Koreans, which you would expect, but also by the Japanese. The policy proved, in my judgment, to have been a mistake for that reason. There had been inadequate consultation with the Japanese beforehand, and it sent some shock through East Asia. But what really undermined it in the end was an intelligence assessment, the validity of which I still have some uncertainty about, that showed a substantial North Korean buildup. I'm sure there was some; I'm not sure how big and how new it was. It caused the Congress to take action to prevent the full withdrawal. We withdrew a small element of forces. In the end I would say that was not a successful policy.

Goldberg: I'd like to move on to the Middle East and the Camp David accords in particular. What was your role in that?

Brown: My role was peripheral. I was involved in some of the negotiations about what we would provide to the Israelis and the Egyptians, both in the way of military sales on easy credit terms and in monitoring the zone between Israeli and Egyptian forces in the Sinai. This involved having U.S. teams there and providing equipment that would enable each side, but principally the Israelis, to assure themselves that the zone of separation didn't have military forces in it. I happened actually to be in Aspen Lodge, the President's cabin in Camp David, talking with President Carter about the defense budget when Cy Vance came in in a state of extreme agitation. He said that Sadat was planning to leave, having given up trying to reach an agreement. The President reacted in a successful way to keep Sadat from going. So I

was there, and involved in many of the discussions, but at the negotiation on autonomy for the Palestinians, etc., I was only a spectator.

Goldberg: You presumably regarded this as an important accommodation between Egypt and Israel for U.S. security interests, also?

Brown: It was the most successful foreign policy action of the Carter administration, both because it was the first peace agreement between Israel and an Arab state, and therefore opened up the prospect of no further wars in the Mid-East, that is, between Israel and the Arabs. It also signaled something else, which is that it was only the United States that could serve an effective function there.

Goldberg: Brzezinski quotes the President as saying at one point in the negotiations that he did not want "Harold Brown wandering around the desert trying to figure out where to put the airfields for the Israelis, with us having to foot the bill."

Brown: The Israelis had air bases in the Sinai. They had to relocate them. We had made a commitment to help pay for that. Carter tried to keep the cost down, which was very proper to do. I had nothing to do with picking the places for the Israelis. I negotiated with Ezer Weizman the size of the aid package that the U.S. would provide in conjunction with building the new air fields. I must have been successful at keeping the figure down, because afterwards Carter congratulated me.

Goldberg: This is the kind of language used sometimes after the event which may or may not be completely accurate.

Brown: Carter did not want us to have to pay more than the minimum necessary to assure what we thought were Israeli needs, not what they thought were Israeli needs.

Goldberg: Was there any problem with the JCS on the Camp David accords?

Brown: No.

Goldberg: Now we get to Iran, the fall of the Shah, and the political effect of all that on the Carter administration. In retrospect, I suppose one can see that we might perhaps have done somewhat more to avoid the bad consequences.

Brown: If Camp David was the greatest success, the Iranian debacle was the worst failure of the Carter foreign policy. I think it can be argued, and in fact I believe, that the Shah was lost before the Carter administration took office, but the nature of his fall and the repercussions on the U.S. did not reflect credit on the Carter administration or anybody in it.

Goldberg: Had we been paying enough attention, do you think, before?

Brown: We paid at least quite a lot of rhetorical attention. Brzezinski and the President were in Tehran on New Years Eve [December 31, 1977] saying two things. One, that Iran was a "regional influential," as Brzezinski called it, and could therefore act as a strong bulwark of security for the region. If I remember correctly, the President, in a toast, was talking about the great progress and effectiveness of the Shah. The riots began a couple of weeks after that. There was clearly a misperception there of the strength of the dynasty.

Goldberg: Brzezinski says in his memoirs that until the crisis became very serious the attention of the top decisionmakers, including him, was riveted on other issues.

Brown: There may not have been a great deal of attention, but there was a position with respect to Iran. Again, I am pretty sure it was January first of 1978 when that incident happened. The Shah came over to the United States during 1978 and I met with him. He, of course, was interested mostly in buying equipment. He wanted the most advanced equipment, and he had all the royal money with which to buy it. He was interested also in command and control and communications equipment, and wanted to buy some of that. I told him how we organized our command and control, with unified and specified commanders. He made clear that that wasn't the way it was going to work in Iran. It would be spokes on a wheel, with him at the

hub. He was going to have command and control over every element; there were to be no intermediaries. When I heard that, I was quite upset, because it struck me that he could not operate a military that way without a Napoleon at the center, and he did not strike me as a Napoleon. I was worried, but I didn't have any conception of how shaky he really was in his authority. Subsequently, Charles Duncan, the Deputy Secretary, went over later in 1978, and I called him in his hotel in Isfahan, when he was scheduled to go out to dinner. He said he couldn't get out because there was a howling mob of demonstrators occupying the streets. So it became clearer and clearer that they were in trouble.

Goldberg: What about American intelligence during this period?

Brown: Very poor, because there was an agreement, I believe, with the Shah that we would not have independent intelligence there; we would rely on Savak.

Therefore, the signs and claims of dissolution of the regime and of opposition to it came largely from academics who were discounted by the administration.

Goldberg: What was the purpose of General Huyser's mission?

Brown: That took place in late 1978 when things were starting to come apart. He was Haig's deputy at SACEUR and was sent to shore up the Iranian Joint Chiefs, to stiffen them and get them to support the Shah as necessary. This created a dual system of reporting, because Ambassador Sullivan was reporting back to Vance and Huyser was reporting back to me and to Dave Jones. They were saying different things and felt they had different orders. In the end, again, even perfect coordination in a U.S. position of absolute complete wisdom would not have saved the Shah, but would have made us look less stupid and perhaps have produced less animosity toward the United States after the Shah fell.

Goldberg: Was consideration given to a military coup?

Brown: Yes, but the question was who would carry it out? Perhaps because the Shah had failed to establish a strong and well-organized military command at the

top, there seemed to be no inclination on the part of the senior military to carry out such a coup. From what Huyser was telling us, they were dithering around without any great confidence that they would be obeyed by the troops. Khomeini and the Islamic fundamentalists had won over the bulk of the population and were beginning to have the same effect among the non-commissioned officer corps in the Iranian army. So, although there was some talk of a coup among American policymakers, there wasn't very much in Tehran.

Goldberg: So you and OSD were very much involved in all that was going on during this period?

Brown: We were a source of information and a channel of communication and we were in on the policy process. But no U.S. military action to save the Shah was contemplated.

Goldberg: Who were the advisers to the President who had the most influence during this period?

Brown: I think Brzezinski, myself, Schlesinger--who was involved because oil was very important--and Vance.

Landa: When was this?

Brown: We're now talking about January-February 1979. Vance was involved. His position was beginning to reflect a concern that the Shah couldn't survive and that we ought to think about what would happen afterwards. George Ball volunteered to advise, and he gave advice which later on would enable him to say, "I told you so," because he had said the Shah was going to fall and that we should make the best arrangements we could with those who were about to overthrow him.

Goldberg: Sounds like Ball's general role. With reference to the hostage crisis, 1979-81, what led to President Carter's decision to try to rescue the hostages by force, and on whose advice?

Brown: The pressure clearly had been building from news media and the public. It drowned out every other issue and program and was clearly a strong political threat. It had happened in a very unfortunate way. We went from the Shah to Bakhtiar, who then was thrown out after Khomeini returned in the spring of 1979. Khomeini first installed a government of reformers, who were Islamic but not radicals. Then Brzezinski attended a meeting in North Africa at which the foreign minister of Iran was also present, and they were seen together. That helped overthrow that government and a more extreme government was installed, with Bani Sadr, if I remember correctly. In the fall the Shah's illness became known and there was a big push to get him admitted to the United States, which the President strongly resisted for a long time. David Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger were constantly pushing to have the Shah admitted. Finally he was, and shortly thereafter the embassy was occupied. In retrospect, we should have pulled all our diplomatic and military people out when we admitted the Shah. The President and the rest of us felt responsible for the safety of these people. We looked at various options. There were all sorts of punitive options that we could take, and we considered a large number, along with a possible rescue attempt. For months the Chiefs wrestled with possible ways to do it. It seemed very difficult. The hostages were six hundred miles inside a foreign country ten thousand miles from the United States. It was about as difficult a place as you could find.

Goldberg: We ruled out things like blockade, etc?

Brown: We talked about air attacks, blockades, mining, and considered all those measures. Blockade and mining would have been feasible, but would clearly have been acts of war, and that led us to wonder if they wouldn't have led to trials and executions of the hostages. In fact, the Iranians were constantly threatening that--the hostages were, after all, accused of being spies. The families were constantly talking with us. Understandably, they were distraught. That created on the part of

all of us a great deal of sympathy. Had we not attempted to rescue the hostages, I think we would have been forced to an act of war. The one that I would have favored was the least offensive, namely, a mining campaign. I favored that over the other belligerent actions, because if you mine, then the person who takes the last step is the one who gets blown up. If you blockade, you might have to sink a ship yourself by positive action. If you mine an area and a ship ventures into a mined area and gets blown up, it is their own action that did it, in the end. But we concluded that even that would start down a path toward war, and that if we could mount a rescue attempt, that would be best. Finally, the Joint Chiefs and the staff came up with something that looked as if it might be plausible. We spent a day at Camp David with the President early in 1980 looking at it. There were some changes. An original plan called for seizing an air base, actually. That one, we concluded, was too risky, because in seizing it, a warning might be given. So they came up with the other one of rendezvousing at night in the desert to refuel helicopters which would have flown about 600 miles to get there, and then the next day moving helicopters with the Delta force from that rendezvous point to a place near Tehran and making the rescue from there. That's the plan they came up with, and we talked ourselves into its plausibility. In fact, it remains a plausible plan. We reconnoitred the site. We sent a light plane in to the site to see what it was like and it came back out. The forces were assembled in great secrecy--too great secrecy, in retrospect--and the attempt was carried out and failed in ways that are now rather public knowledge. As I think back on it, we made two large mistakes. One, we were so eager to keep it secret that we didn't rehearse it. There should have been a full-scale rehearsal conducted in the United States in equivalent circumstances. The second was that the Chiefs, something I should have overruled them on, were too eager to have every service in on the act, which made the coordination less likely to work. You had to do it from the decks of ships. There was no alternative to that. On the other hand,

mixing Marines and Air Force people on the air side was a mistake. We probably should have had Air Force helicopters do the whole thing, because they are used to working with the Air Force C-130s. Still, it wouldn't have been easy, and it might not have come off.

Goldberg: Who, in addition to Vance, was opposed?

Brown: The State Department people in general were uncomfortable with it. But Vance's opposition was not based on an expectation of failure; it was based on an expectation of success. He said, "If this works, there are lots of Americans still there, and the Iranians will scarf them up and you will still have the same situation." I had two responses to that. One was that if it worked, it would shock them, perhaps into sanity. But aside from that, it's one thing to surround a place where your potential hostages are together already, which is what they had done in November 1979; it is another to go out and round them up. It would be very much harder for the Iranian government to claim no responsibility for what happened. The other, somewhat cynical, point I made was that most of the other Americans still there were newsmen, and I wouldn't worry too much about it.

Goldberg: They were in Iraq, too.

Brown: I don't want to be flip about this. We had a responsibility for the people in the embassy. They were U.S. government employees who had been sent over there by the government. We hadn't sent any of the other people.

Goldberg: Presumably you were involved in this from the beginning to the end?

Brown: Yes, right up to the point of going out there the morning after and facing the press, after it had not worked.

Goldberg: Did you draw any conclusions or lessons from the experience?

Brown: Don't get into this kind of situation in the first place; don't become so preoccupied with American hostages that it distorts your foreign policy and damages your administration. Unfortunately, the next administration didn't learn

that lesson. From their point of view, the events of 1979 and 1980 were a great success.

Landa: How much did the presidential campaign year influence decisions?

Brown: It may have influenced the rescue decision, but I don't think it determined it. The Reagan administration's Iranian fiasco came when it was not about to run for reelection.

Goldberg: What, in your view, led to the final release of the hostages?

Brown: It seems to me that they had gotten what they could out of it essentially. They had humiliated and helped to defeat an American president. You will recall that they had been damaged by the freezing of their assets and the boycott of their oil; although the latter only moderately. It was a general boycott. They were having some trouble getting their oil wells going again; their assets were frozen; this was an attempt to start working their way out of that, as well as hoping to get a better attitude on the part of the incoming administration, although their own attitude toward the United States didn't improve much.

Goldberg: Let's move on to Afghanistan, your reaction to the Soviet invasion, and your view of its impact on U.S. security policy.

Brown: It was a surprise to us, of course. Intelligence was actually fairly good as to the actual events, the move of the Soviet airborne forces into Kabul airport, the killing of the Afghan president, etc. We saw that as it happened, but I do not believe that our intelligence people expected it a month before. Indeed, it was a decision taken by just a few people in the Politburo, so that that's not surprising. It was something of a surprise to a good many of the Soviet diplomats and military people. It had several effects. It was December of 1979; it killed the SALT ratification, which otherwise I think would have gone forward, I think. If SALT II hadn't been delayed by the Cuban brigade affair, it might have been approved by the Senate before the Afghan invasion. The invasion increased the congressional pressure for higher

defense budgets. As President Carter said, it somewhat changed his view of the Soviets. So it had all of those effects. We reacted by increasing the Defense budget. We reacted by sending equipment to the Afghan resistance on a very modest scale, greatly amplified during the Reagan administration, and successfully so, in terms of doing to the Russians what Vietnam had done to the United States. It also influenced our attitude toward China. I went to China the following month, in fact, just a few days later, and it influenced the tack that we took with the Chinese.

Goldberg: It influenced the Chinese, also.

Brown: Yes.

Goldberg: The Panama Canal--

Brown: That goes back to 1977.

Goldberg: Defense played a major role in all of that.

Brown: Yes, George Brown and I came up with a formula, the details of which I don't remember, for U.S. military responsibility for the Canal to be exercised after it gets turned over. The Defense Department played a large role in evaluating the security effects. We pointed out that a hostile government in Panama would make its defense much more difficult--perhaps impossible--than the defense of the Canal would be if Panama had sovereignty and most American forces were out. So we made the argument from a security point of view. We also pointed out where the Canal was important militarily and where it wasn't. It is true, if I remember correctly, that we can't bring our biggest carriers through the Canal, anyway, so it does not provide for rapid transfer of the main part of the Navy between the Atlantic and the Pacific, but it is an important commercial artery.

Goldberg: Did you have any trouble persuading the JCS on turning it over to Panama by 2000?

Brown: Almost none, I would say. Much of this, actually had been done before the Carter administration came in, that is, much of the analysis and exploration of the

position. It was mostly a matter of having an administration with the determination and courage to try to do something about it. The Ford administration really had the same position, they just didn't feel able to do it.

Goldberg: Did you have a lot to do with bringing about the Senate confirmation?

Brown: We testified, and it was an important part of the testimony. I think George Brown and I both testified together on this.

Goldberg: In the light of Carter's experience, did you regard the War Powers Act as a help or a hindrance in dealing with international incidents and crises?

Brown: A nuisance, without changing the situation. It didn't prevent the President from doing what he felt he had to do, but it meant that you had to bring in lawyers to tell you how to do it.

Goldberg: An additional complication.

Brown: That's right.

Goldberg: We are presently engaged in doing a study on the role of the Secretary of Defense in foreign policy and foreign affairs, and I would like to ask how you would evaluate your experience, on balance, in the area of foreign policy during your tenure?

Brown: I'd begin by saying that most secretaries of defense are amateur secretaries of state, and are more or less driven to try to exercise a big role in it. On balance, I was not one of those who carried this to extremes. I would say that I did it considerably less than McNamara or Weinberger. On the other hand, I always felt that foreign policy was the central issue and that military policy exists to serve foreign policy. I believed that I had to be involved and felt it important that I be present at foreign policy discussions among the principals, for example. Inevitably, the policy side that we set up in Defense, which amplified the former role of ISA, increased the infrastructure devoted to the foreign policy activities of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. So I would say that although I did not thrust myself

forward, the office actually played as large a role as it did under the direction of secretaries who personally thrust themselves forward in the foreign policy role. On specific issues--arms control; U.S.-Japan relations; NATO, which is as much foreign policy as a military activity, I played a substantial role. The Japanese probably saw more of me--this means the foreign minister and the prime minister--than they did of any of the other principals. On arms control I was the point man for the administration. On specific things, I may have played a leading role, but I didn't regard myself as an alternative to the Secretary of State.

Goldberg: I presume you have seen the proposal of the current secretary for the reorganization of the policy organization under him.

Brown: Yes.

Goldberg: It would indicate a very strong interest on his part.

Brown: Yes. And I think that you could change the organization and change the names of the offices. But new elements are being introduced there, such as democratization and economic policy. I think the Defense Department has a role to play, but it can't be the preeminent role, no matter what you call the elements of the organization. I think that with the people he's bringing into the policy cluster, although they are very capable, his problem is going to be a little different. They don't agree among themselves, and that is going to tend to reduce their effectiveness somewhat.

Goldberg: Could we spend a little time talking about the Cold War policies--Your view of containment as a realistic policy and its assumptions; your view of detente as perhaps being a more realistic policy?

Brown: It's easy now to say that what we did worked, because it clearly did. This doesn't apply especially to the Carter administration; it applies to forty-odd years of U.S. policy, which was remarkably consistent, although the rhetoric changed and the mixture between so-called containment and detente changed. My view was that we

needed to outlast the Soviets. I didn't expect the denouement to come during my lifetime. But I was reasonably convinced that it would come. I can't claim the prescience that President Truman showed in his final address in which he addressed this subject with almost uncanny foresight. It appears in McCullough's biography. A few years after I left office, when I wrote about national security, I expressed my own view, and it was the same view I had while in office. In effect, my view was that we had to avoid a nuclear war, and if we could do that, and if we could avoid a conventional war, at some time the Soviets would turn inward and try to improve their own situation. I did not foresee a collapse as suddenly or as early as happened.

Goldberg: You had lots of company.

Brown: It happened as quickly as it did because Gorbachev came to power on the basis that something different had to be done. This book says what I think--I talk about the goals of the Soviet leaders: "The first of these goals is maintaining their power at home. They have a good thing going for themselves--the end of the Stalinist terror and the improvement in the economic output over the past few decades has made it better. Their other main goal is to maintain their power along the periphery of the Soviet Union and to extend that power, if possible, to more remote regions as well. But the U.S. and the Soviet Union have some common interests. The first is avoiding a nuclear war. They would prefer to gain their ends without a nuclear war, and we have as our most important goal its avoidance. Not to say that nuclear war will never happen, but it provides an important basis for pursuing joint policies. That is the idea of detente. Examples are arms limitations, hot-line communications, and nonproliferation arms policies. U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union must keep Soviets from gaining dominion in the areas that are critical to U.S. security--specifically, Western Europe, Southwest Asia, the Middle East, and the Far East. The U.S., with its friends and allies, should be strong enough militarily to prevent a successful Soviet military attack or major political intimidation in those

areas and to maintain a dominant military position in the Western Hemisphere. Such an approach is inevitably a temporizing one. The goal of the United States should be to contain Soviet expansionist tendencies and at the same time to outlast them, hoping for, but not assuming, an eventual evolution of the Soviet political system or its acceptance of an international order that seeks stability and relative freedom for each country to find its own destiny. The existence of internal contradictions in Soviet policy suggests that over time Soviet motivations and behavior may change for the better."

Goldberg: You're turning their own language against them.

Brown: That's why I use "internal contradiction." "Such a change is rather unlikely in this century," that's where I made a mistake, "but U.S. attitudes, words and actions may be able to encourage such a shift in coming decades." That was my view, and it was the view of U.S. foreign policy for 40 years.

Goldberg: How effective did you consider military aid as a tool for political leverage in the Cold War?

Brown: Where? In the third world?

Goldberg: Everywhere.

Brown: We didn't give military aid in the first world, except to Turkey.

Goldberg: In the earlier years we did. I'm talking about the third world.

Brown: It was an instrument or tool in a rather limited tool kit. There weren't many things that we could do. Economic aid, military aid, security guarantees--we used all of them. As I may have indicated earlier, we wanted to reduce military arms transfers, and in general we did. But whenever it came to a specific case, the strictures of PD-13 would often give way to a desire to affect the given situation, whether it was Korea, Israel, Egypt, or the Philippines. We had pretty well gotten out of military assistance to Latin American countries during the Johnson administration.

Goldberg: That never amounted to much, anyhow.

Brown: What happened was that they wound up getting it elsewhere.

Goldberg: From your perspective, did President Carter have a detailed plan for managing U.S.-Soviet relations when he came into the White House?

Brown: He had a detailed plan for everything. Some of them worked very well. I think his intention was to concentrate on arms control and to see whether he couldn't get the Soviets to lay off expansion and get their cooperation in the Middle East, for example. Some of it worked and some of it didn't. I think that he thought he had things going fairly well, but he found the Soviets more difficult to deal with than he expected. That's why Afghanistan was something of a shock to him.

Goldberg: What is your view on the summit conferences with the Soviets?

Brown: We only had one, in June 1979. I think they were important as a way of giving a real sense of the person that you are dealing with, and they also give a sense of the system that you don't get by reading about it. When we met with Brezhnev and the people around him, he was pretty well gone. I sat next to him at dinner one night and he could hardly keep from drooling into his food. Chernenko, who was also there, came across as a gofer, an errand boy, a flunky. Ustinov, whom I hadn't met, came across as a tough manager type--the kind of person that you would see as the authoritarian CEO of an American company. Ogarkov was chief of the general staff. I had known him eight or nine years before on the SALT delegation. He impressed me again as a very intelligent military thinker and planner. The summit meetings also gave President Carter, I think, a chance to hammer out details that can only be settled at the top, depending upon how much freedom of action his Soviet opposite number has and how much he has, himself. I am for summits. They have to be timed right, because they can turn things very sour, as the Kennedy-Khrushchev one did in 1961, when it gave Khrushchev the wrong impression. You have to prepare them very well. I'm not surprised that senior officials are afraid of leaving

the principals alone together, because nobody knows what they will do, and it may not always make sense. The Reagan-Gorbachev meeting in Reykjavik is a perfect example. It went down the path of abolition of nuclear weapons in a way that frightened a lot of people. So they have to be handled right, but I think they are desirable.

Goldberg: Presidents didn't usually take their Secretaries of Defense to these meetings. Yours was an exception.

Brown: Not before; since, they have, occasionally. SALT was a big issue. Carter took the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, too. I urged him to do that, because we needed to bring the Chiefs along. After all, the big event was going to be the signing of the SALT agreement, and it was clear that I was going to have to be the point man to defend it.

Goldberg: That brings us to arms control and disarmament and your attitude toward that and the relationship to U.S. national security policy.

Brown: It's an element in U.S. national security policy. There is no substitute for military capability, but arms control is a way of trying to reach the same or a higher level of security with the same or a lesser expenditure and to limit dangers either by reducing or limiting armament or by putting constraints on various kinds of operations. I think in general it has been constructive. There is a school that says it is responsible for all our troubles, but I think that is nonsense. It causes trouble when you expect too much of it.

Goldberg: Was there consensus among the leadership on this?

Brown: On general principles there would be consensus; when it came down to specifics there would be lots of arguments. The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, for example, because of its charter and because of the people that these Democratic administrations put into it, tended to see any arms control agreement as good, no matter what it says. Some Republican administrations, on the other hand,

have people in the agency who have been more negative about arms control than the Joint Chiefs, for example. That happened both in the second Nixon administration and in the Reagan administration.

Goldberg: With reference to the specifics, such as SALT II, MBFR, comprehensive test ban, etc., who were the people who were most influential with the President?

Brown: I think the principal people were myself, Vance, Warnke, and Brzezinski. Zbig was interested in some of these issues but not in others. But his office had to take a position on all of these issues. Dave Aaron was more likely to be involved in details because he had more background in it and was more interested. Brzezinski was not ignorant, but it just was not one of his principal preoccupations. He was more interested in the political effect, that is, in the foreign policy effects, of arms control, than he was in the details.

Goldberg: Did the President consult you in advance about handling the early 1977 SALT initiative?

Brown: I was in on that, and I urged that we make two parallel proposals, including a far-reaching one which caused considerable trouble because the Soviets were unhappy with it. The big problem there was that it was leaked to the press before it was presented to the Soviets, which was an unfortunate thing to do.

Goldberg: With reference to SALT II, you played an important role in the administration's efforts to get Senate ratification, and presumably you brought the JCS along with you?

Brown: Yes. They characterized it as modest but useful, which is a favorable but not overwhelming endorsement. They went along; that was not a problem.

Goldberg: So it was withdrawn for reasons we have already discussed.

Brown: It wasn't actually withdrawn; it was taken off the Senate calendar at the President's request after the invasion of Afghanistan.

Goldberg: Have your views on arms control and disarmament changed since you were Secretary of Defense?

Brown: Not especially. Some of them are good; some of them are symbolic; some of them aren't very useful.

Goldberg: Let's turn then to some more personal things. What was a typical work day, if there was one?

Brown: Generally we would start off with an 8:00 or 8:30 meeting.

Goldberg: When did you usually get in?

Brown: I usually got in at 6:30. We would meet at 8:00, usually--myself, my deputy, our executive assistants, the special assistant, his executive assistant, the legislative affairs person, and the public affairs person. We would look at what the Congress would be interested in and what the media were interested in that day. We would lay out what my own and my deputy's principal preoccupations were. After that meeting anything could happen. I met periodically one-on-one with service secretaries--not very often, but a couple of times a month. There was an Armed Forces Policy Council meeting every Monday at which we would look at the week's agenda. I would meet with the Chairman or the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs every day, privately, one-on-one with my military assistant, for a half hour or an hour to look at operational questions and to discuss any other issues. Those were regular things.

Goldberg: How much time do you think you spent on congressional matters?

Brown: Fifteen to twenty percent.

Goldberg: That's interesting, most secretaries say more. Forrestal, who was the first, estimated it at fourteen percent. How he arrived at that, I don't know. How about your personal regimen? Did you exercise?

Brown: I would usually swim and take a steam bath every day, sometimes first thing in the morning, often at a quiet time at 3:00 or thereabouts; and shave again,

because I would work late in the office or go out to some function in the evening. I generally got home at 9:00 or so.

Goldberg: Do you think a Secretary of Defense should serve more than 48 months if he can avoid it?

Brown: Generally it has been a mistake when they have. I can conceive of staying a fifth year, but even that I think is dangerous, because as the saying goes, "Friends come and go, but enemies accumulate." More important than that, you get into trouble because you think you have seen all the problems and know all the answers, and that is a mistake.

Goldberg: How would you rate your degree of success with the Joint Chiefs, the services, Congress, and the President?

Brown: I would say only so-so. There are lots of external circumstances that influenced this, but some of it is my own failures. I actually got along quite well with the Joint Chiefs, because I leveled with them, brought them into my confidence. I am generally not very devious. I thought well of them, of their intelligence and capabilities. They, of course--except for the Chairman--always worried that the secretary of defense would try to take authority away from them. Now that has been done legislatively, and that should make life a lot easier for current secretaries of defense. They may have to worry more about the Chairman. But if the Chairman is not a buccaneer, which at least one has been, that should be manageable as well. As for the services, a lot of people in them regarded me as a former McNamara "whiz kid," but the ones I dealt with didn't have a great problem in that regard. Congress--again, mixed. I certainly got along, I think, very well with Senators Stennis and Nunn. With Stennis, because I respected his seniority and he was very much a gentleman; with Nunn, because we respected each other's intelligence. I had a problem with Scoop Jackson, whom I had known since the mid-1950s and thought very highly of, and wanted him to become President. Either he or I changed, and we

had different agendas. He was bitter at not having been made Kennedy's vice president, at not getting enough attention from Johnson and Carter; and, partly out of honest conviction about the need for a very strong assertive foreign policy and military capability. He was always beating on Democratic presidents. He was a lot kinder to Republicans. So, he and I had a somewhat uncomfortable relationship. On the House side, the House Chairmen weren't any problem, because Mel Price was a fine gentleman. He and I had known each other for over 20 years. But he couldn't control his committee. On the Appropriations side, while George Mahon was there, that was an ideal relationship. We had also known each other for almost 20 years--since 1961. He had a good committee, he controlled it well, and they were capable people. Jack Edwards was a fine person. On the Senate side it was all right, because Stennis was the Chairman. Originally McClellan was the Chairman, but that was only for a year. I think I had good relations with the chairmen of all the committees, but congressional committees are anarchic. They became increasingly so with the reforms of the Watergate generation.

Goldberg: Did you brief Caspar Weinberger?

Brown: Yes, on one occasion. I told him about four programs to which he ought to pay special attention. They were all very important. A couple I can't mention even now. As far as I can tell, he never paid much attention to any of them; his interests were in foreign policy and in increasing defense budgets.

Goldberg: That leads us to the next question, what qualities do you think the Secretary of Defense should have?

Brown: That might be the right quality, not paying attention. Every Secretary does it differently. What you don't know, yourself, you can get from other people, if you bring in the right people.

Goldberg: Is it a primary role, or is it a series of things that the Secretary has to do, roles he has to play--politician, strategist, fundraiser, manager, etc.?

Brown: He has to do all of those things. Which takes precedence depends upon his or her own qualities and it depends also on the circumstances. In my time, and in my circumstances, I had to bring along a rather reluctant administration and Democratic majority in the Congress to the importance of military capability at a time when domestic concerns were beginning to predominate, although nothing like now, and planned peace with the Soviets seemed feasible. I think I was able to do less than I wanted, but actually did something along those lines.

Goldberg: As a result of your experience, which of the Secretaries of Defense would you rate the highest?

Brown: On what grounds? Actually, the one who managed to do more of what he wanted than any of the others is Mel Laird.

Goldberg: But he was limited in what he proposed to do.

Brown: That's right. But he got out after four years without either being fired or disgraced. McNamara made the biggest changes in the department and was the greatest intellectual force in the history of the department. But he essentially got fired, and by the time he left, the Congress didn't like him at all and he was at odds with the military. He shouldn't have stayed that long. Cap Weinberger, I think, accomplished a lot of what he wanted to do, but I think a good deal of it was wrong. He had the great advantage of knowing that whatever he said, the President would very likely agree with, not just because Weinberger said it, but because they thought alike on these things. That, of course, was a great advantage. He had unlimited funds, which to an extent, I think, actually damaged the Department of Defense, because it led to very bad habits. He put in a lot of good programs, because he had all that money, and a lot of very bad ones.

Goldberg: Once again, he stayed too long.

Brown: Yes.

Goldberg: I'd like to spend some time on perspectives.