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Interview with Charles W. Duncan
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Trask: This is an oral history interview with Charles W. Duncan, Jr., taking place in Houston, Texas, on May 17, 1996. Interviewers for the OSD Historical Office are Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask.

Mr. Duncan, I would like to ask you first if you would briefly summarize your background and professional career up to the time you became deputy secretary of defense, and then we will ask you about the circumstances of your appointment to that position.

Duncan: My family was in the coffee roasting business here in Houston for many years. I went to public schools in Houston, to Rice University, and did two years of graduate work in management at the University of Texas. After graduating from Rice with a Bachelor of Science in chemical engineering, I went to work for a short period of time for the Humble Oil and Refining Co., which is now a part of EXXON. After a brief period with Humble, I went into the family coffee business, which was owned by my uncle and my father. My uncle died in 1957 and the coffee business was sold to a California green coffee importing company; they sold green coffee to roasters who roasted the coffee and sold it. Then several years later those owners were going to sell the company, and I put together a group to buy it. We then expanded the company and acquired some other coffee companies around the nation. During that process I encountered some people with The Coca-Cola Company, who had an instant coffee plant at that time up in New Jersey. To my surprise, Coca-Cola began talking to us

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about merging what was then the Duncan Foods Company into The Coca-Cola Company. That happened in 1964. A year or so later, I was asked to run, in addition to the coffee business, the citrus business of Coca-Cola, which is the Minute Maid Company--frozen orange juice, Hi-C fruit drinks, and so forth. In 1967 I was asked by The Coca-Cola Company to move to Europe. I moved to London as the chairman of Coca-Cola Europe, which was all Coca-Cola activities in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Southwest Asia. The most interesting feature of that three-year period was that we introduced Coca-Cola behind the Iron Curtain. I think it was the first American consumer product to go behind the Iron Curtain--in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. That was during a period when it was rather unheard of for American consumer products to penetrate the Iron Curtain. I like to think that it built a bridge, because we would be working with people in those countries, seeing those people, and forming close relationships. I think it probably contributed to their saying that we weren't all that bad. I would hope that was one of the outcomes.

Then I went back to Atlanta as executive vice president of Coca-Cola; later I became president. While in Atlanta I met Jimmy Carter, not in a political way. He had just been elected governor of Georgia when I got there. When he was around the company, he was basically on civic or educational projects, and I would often be involved. He would come to see Mr. Woodruff about a Georgia State Park, for example, and Mr. Woodruff would have me with him when he talked with Governor Carter. That's the way I got to know Jimmy Carter. I had come back to Houston for a brief period, and Jimmy Carter was elected president and invited me to Plains to talk with him. That resulted in his inviting me to become the deputy secretary of defense.

After quickly thinking about it, I told him I would do that. I went to Washington, I believe the day after Christmas 1976, and was sworn in on January 31, 1977.

Goldberg: So it was that simple, in terms of being offered the position--it was simply directly from Carter to you?

Duncan: Yes. When I went to Plains, Georgia; Walter Mondale and Charles Kirbo were in the room with us, at Carter's home. In more detail, Carter told me that he had talked with Harold Brown, then president of Cal Tech. I had never met Brown, and we organized another visit to Plains; Harold Brown came through Houston and we went to Plains together. I felt that I needed to meet him. When we got to Plains, the president announced that Brown would be the secretary of defense and that I would be deputy secretary.

Goldberg: That was your second visit.

Duncan: I was there two times.

Goldberg: Was it your impression that the initiative came from the president himself?

Duncan: I cannot answer that. I had known Charles Kirbo, who was a close adviser to the president, and I had also known the president. Charles seemed to be working closely with the president on those appointments. I couldn't say specifically, but I feel comfortable that it came from one or the other.

Goldberg: Did you feel comfortable about taking that position?

Duncan: Yes. I felt very comfortable with the way he talked to me. He asked me to give him a resume of my experience, which was essentially corporate business experience. He said he was trying to get that in the Pentagon. Although I did not have the technical knowledge of someone like Harold Brown, who earlier had been DDR&E

and secretary of the air force in the Pentagon, I had confidence in my ability to manage it, particularly from a business perspective. Harold had a great foundation in the technical perspective. I might add that he and I had a very close and warm relationship.

Trask: When he came through Houston and you went to Plains with him, did he talk about defense issues, and give you some idea of what you might be doing?

Duncan: Very much so. I asked him a lot of questions about how the department was organized, how it worked, his vision of the secretary versus the deputy secretary, the relationship of the military services up through the Joint Chiefs to the service secretaries--questions that were in my mind on which I had no background. Harold took me through all of that very carefully.

Goldberg: Were you given the clear impression that your role was to be primarily that of manager?

Duncan: No. He signed an order shortly after I was there that I would have plenipotentiary powers.

Goldberg: But in terms of actual functioning, that he would leave a lot of the management of the department to you? This had been the traditional role of the deputy.

Duncan: That point wasn't emphasized. That's what actually happened, and it was what both of us anticipated. His conversations were more that we would work together through logical divisions of responsibility. Of course, Bill Perry, whom we recruited as DDR&E, did a superb job in that area, which we continue to benefit from, in my judgment.

Goldberg: You mentioned that you did have some connections with William Clements, presumably during the transition period?

Duncan: He's from Dallas, and I don't believe I'd ever met him before I met him in his office as deputy secretary of defense.

Goldberg: And you did see him a number of times to get some briefings from him, and he was very helpful?

Duncan: Yes, he tried every way he could to be helpful. He invited me down to his place in Virginia several times, things like that.

Goldberg: So you had a month or more of transition there.

Duncan: We got very comprehensive documentation on what the issues and positions were and what was going on. Studying those is tremendously helpful in bringing you up to speed, particularly someone like me, with little background in Defense. Carter said an interesting thing, back in Plains: he said, "I want you to know that I have not asked you what your political affiliation is; in State, Defense, and Treasury, I'm really going for the person, not the politics." So not only did he not ask me questions about it, he made a point of telling me that he had not asked me questions about it. I felt that was interesting.

Trask: Your experience in England and Europe probably helped you, didn't it?

Duncan: Being president of Coca-Cola gave me extensive experience in Asia and Africa, and I had spent a lot of time all over the world.

Goldberg: Did you become involved in a lot of the international affairs of the department, or did Brown handle that in the main?

Duncan: Brown attended NATO meetings. He handled by far the majority of that, but I was involved. I made trips to Iran, the Middle East, Korea, and Europe several times.

In the course of the two and a half years I made maybe six to eight trips, whereas Brown made many more.

Trask: What kinds of things were you concerned with on these trips?

Duncan: In Korea it was Team Spirit. In Iran it was seeing the Shah. The time was about the first week in December, 1978. He left around 15 January 1979. I felt I had been poorly briefed, intelligence-wise. There was continuous gunfire all night. We went down to Isfahan; there was a gun battle that erupted on the street with continuous machine-gun fire. Iranian soldiers came to the front door of the hotel. I got a phone call from Harold Brown in the middle of all that. My wife was with me. We went out to a function that evening, after the streets were calm. The commanding Iranian general at the base came out and said everything was clear and he would come personally to the function. Major General Phil Gast, Air Force, was with us. He was in charge of the MAAG, the military assistance group, in Iran at that time. I got in the first car, a Chevrolet Blazer, with two Defense Department security people in the rear. In the second car were my wife and General Gast. When we got on the base, I asked Colin Powell, my military assistant, where my wife was. It turns out they had been stopped by an Iranian soldier. He leveled his automatic weapon at them. The Defense Department people jumped out of the car. Gast told them to get back in the car, he didn't want anyone to get hurt. Their view was that something had happened at the military base, since the gun battle had been fierce downtown within the past several hours. An Iranian army colonel in civilian clothes was driving the Blazer, and he got out and talked to the soldier in Farsi, and there was radio communication. It's an experience my wife has never forgotten. Then we went down to Shiraz after that. One other interesting thing

was that there was only one secure telephone line between Teheran and Washington, and I felt very cautious about what I said on the phone. One of the things was that the empress told my wife that it was all over, the first week in December. The Shah didn't say it that way, but inferred the same thing. All of that I communicated to Harold Brown as quickly as I could.

Goldberg: Was General Huyser there yet?

Duncan: Huyser had been in Iran working on command and control in the summer of 1978. I told Harold I thought it was imperative that the president indicate some support immediately, and I noticed the next day that happened. Harold will have to tell you whether or not there was any correlation between my phone call to him and President Carter doing that. I talked to David Jones; Harold wasn't there for some reason. You, in talking with Jones, will probably tie this together better, but David Jones and I met in the White House with the president and Brzezinski and the group and we recommended that Huyser, who had ingratiated himself to the military in working on command and control, seemed to be about the only person to go to Iran. He was then deputy to Haig in Europe. He stayed in Iran a few weeks and he would call every day at noon and generally would talk to me at the Military Command Center. There was a T-39 at the airport all the time waiting for him to leave if he had to. He told us one day that he had spent the night in a bunker in tough conditions. The Iranian military had told him that they could no longer assure his safety. So we told him to go. He left just in advance of Khomeini, who came the day after Huyser left.

Goldberg: Is there anything else you would like to say about your relationship with Brown during this period?

Duncan: Only that it was very positive. I still keep behind my desk what he gave me when I moved to Energy.

There was a fellow named Jack Stempler, in legislative liaison, and we had a LAPA meeting early every morning. Harold would say, "I was here until 10:00 last night and I didn't get through," moaning and groaning, and Stempler would tell him, "You will never get through, Harold; if you stay here every night you will never go home." Then he would smile and laugh. We had a relationship with him where we could say things like that.

Goldberg: But you were one of the people that had a talking relationship with him. The reputation he had was that he read all the time, but didn't engage in dialogue.

Duncan: He'd retain everything he read. He'd read a twelve-page document and remember page and line. We had a very good relationship and I felt very comfortable talking with him about anything I wanted to talk about.

Goldberg: And there wasn't any problem getting to see him?

Duncan: There was one meeting in the Middle East, and I said, "You have to go." He said, "I'm not invited." I said, "It doesn't matter, get yourself invited." He made a phone call to the president and got himself invited. We had that kind of relationship.

Trask: Were you familiar with the relationship between Clements and the secretaries that he worked with--Schlesinger and Rumsfeld?

Duncan: I am. My source is Bill Clements. I have heard about it.

Goldberg: There was quite a change.

Duncan: What I've heard is that it wasn't always the case. I think it's so important that the deputy secretary and the secretary get along harmoniously and work together. The

price of that not happening has the potential of being severe. That's why I wanted to meet Harold before I said I would go.

Trask: After we talked to Clements yesterday, we wondered how Defense operated at the top during those years, based on his description of the relationship.

Goldberg: That experience was an exception. In most instances the deputy secretary and the secretary have hit it off and managed well.

Duncan: Harold and I both knew that it had to work that way, not that there was ever cause for it not to. The end result was good.

Trask: One of the things Secretary Brown did fairly early in his term was to undertake a study and reorganization of the Defense Department. As a result, the second deputy secretary position was dropped, and the number of assistant secretaries was reduced.

Duncan: That second secretary position was dropped before Brown ever got there (under Rumsfeld there had been a deputy secretary of defense for intelligence purposes, Robert Ellsworth), and that was principally, I was told by then president-elect Carter, because of Bill Clements's involvement in Iran and his company, SEDCO. I was told very specifically by both Carter and Brown that there would be one deputy secretary. The dropping of the second deputy secretary might not have technically happened, but it was totally agreed on before I ever got there.

Goldberg: Ellsworth wasn't in the job for much more than a year. Actually, it had been authorized several years before but had never been filled. Laird hadn't filled it. Schlesinger hadn't filled it, either. It was Rumsfeld who elevated Ellsworth to that position.

Duncan: That was one of the first things Carter said, that there would be a single position.

Trask: Did you have any role in the rest of the reorganization?

Duncan: I talked to Senator Abraham Ribicoff, the head of the study commission, at some length on several occasions about the reorganization. For example, about the under secretary of policy, and the under secretary of defense for research and engineering. What is Anita Jones, now?

Goldberg: She's under the under secretary for acquisition. It's at a lower statutory level than it was.

Duncan: Then the under secretary for policy, and the under secretary for research and engineering, Bill Perry, those were the changes.

Goldberg: The position was originally under secretary for research and engineering and was ultimately designated [1986] under secretary for acquisition.

Trask: I think one of the objectives in that reorganization, at least in theory, was to simplify the organization and cut down the number of people who reported directly to the secretary.

Duncan: That was the intent.

Trask: Did that mean that some of those people reported to you thereafter? How did it work?

Duncan: I interfaced with all of them all the time. One thing I had a lot to do with was intelligence. Harold said that he wanted me to focus on intelligence. I had a lot to do with acquisition.

Goldberg: Did you think the reorganization was a success? Did it work out the way you wanted it to?

Duncan: My sense of it was that it was. I was around till mid-summer 1979, when I went to Energy. That may not be long enough to evaluate it.

Trask: Actually there was some reorganization legislation as early as April 1977.

Duncan: I don't have any negative comments about the reorganization.

Trask: Was Brown satisfied with the results of that reorganization?

Duncan: As far as I am aware, yes. I don't have any memory of his saying he was satisfied with it, but if he wasn't, I'm not aware of it. Did he say he was not?

Trask: No.

Goldberg: There were some problems on the policy side, weren't there? Stanley Resor left after a year or so on the job.

Trask: Is that when Robert Komer came in?

Goldberg: He was already there, but he moved from special assistant for NATO affairs.

Duncan: He used to help Harold and me on things like writing speeches. He worked very hard.

Goldberg: But there were problems in policy. We were given to understand that Resor left because he couldn't get control of the organization. People were going around him all the time.

Duncan: Dave McGiffert, assistant secretary of defense for ISA, that was part of it.

Goldberg: Komer told us he had the same problem with McGiffert, but he solved it. He said McGiffert would outwait Resor, and when Resor was gone he could go around Resor to Brown or to you. When Komer came in he stayed until McGiffert left, so that

McGiffert would not be able to go around him. That's Komer's explanation of how he got control of policy.

Trask: I assume that you had a significant role in developing the defense budget.

Duncan: I worked closely with Brown on that. We established what was called the Defense Resources Board, is that still in existence?

Goldberg: It has a different name now.

Duncan: It was an effort to get the very top of the military services and the top OSD people together to agree on things. I found it partially successful; it never will be totally successful. People in the military services have to be a bit parochial.

Trask: During the campaign and when Carter came in he talked about defense budget cuts and there was a \$5 to 7 billion amount discussed.

Duncan: What actually happened was a strong effort to get a three percent real growth, get NATO committed to it. I believe that was taken up at the first NATO meeting.

Brown pushed it very hard at NATO meetings. He used to say, "We can't protect your independence more than you want to protect it yourselves. You have to work with us." He spent a lot of time on things that would make it more efficient, expenditures for things like interoperability.

Goldberg: That was a big problem.

Duncan: Apparently it still is. I'm told the Marines in Grenada had to use the telephones to communicate.

Trask: In the middle of the Brown period, about the time you left, there was a movement to increase the defense budget, partly reflecting the international situation. That movement started, I presume, before you left.

Duncan: Afghanistan in 1979 had a huge negative impact on the president. He was very displeased.

Trask: He made some statement that got a lot of publicity about his surprise at the Soviets, or something like that.

Duncan: We lost an ambassador in Afghanistan. One night Brown was out of town and I was on watch. I got a phone call from the Pentagon National Military Command Center that Iranis had gone into the embassy in Teheran, and I would be kept posted. Several hours later we got another call that our ambassador had been kidnapped in Afghanistan and was being held on the second floor of a hotel, and there were people believed to be Soviet agents in the vicinity. Then I got another phone call that the ambassador had been assassinated. This was all within a few hours. I talked on the phone with Cy Vance, David Aaron, and someone from the NSC. Bernie Rogers was the acting chief and he was involved in the conversations. About 3:00 a.m. Bernie and I went to the National Military Command Center--I remember that coincidence of events.

Trask: Did you do any testifying on the defense budget? Did Brown do that, or were you with him?

Duncan: I did some with him and some without him. I'd go down on a lot of the inquiries on budget. I remember testifying before Jack Brooks, chairman of the House Government Operations Committee, and testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Trask: Was there much behind the scenes negotiation on budget or other issues that involved you, other than testifying before Congress?

Duncan: Some, I think. I did a lot of testifying on things like Navy shipbuilding claims; base closures; some on the budgeting; a wide variety of other things--drugs in the military, etc.

Trask: So that congressional relationships in general constituted a significant part of your work?

Duncan: Part of it; probably less than Brown. There were many others in the Pentagon that did it, too. I was down there reasonably often. I would say less so than at Energy, when I was down there a whole lot.

Goldberg: Did you find in general that relationships with congressional committees and the department were pretty good during this period?

Duncan: I guess pretty good. I don't have any relativity. Some of the dealings with Congress were less pleasant than others. The military services would often want to do an end run on a particular aircraft or weapon system. We crossed things out of the budget every year and Congress reinserted them. Base closures were very sensitive issues. No senator or congressman can permit a base to close in his or her area without finding a reason. The way they handle that now is to have the commission do it and fall back on what the commission recommends. You have to give the secretary cover. You can't just do it.

Goldberg: It has been done. McNamara did it in the early 1960s.

Duncan: Let me give you an example--the consolidation of helicopter pilot training. Senator Barry Goldwater was very keen on that. In my confirmation hearing he asked me how I felt about that. I felt it ought to be studied. We did study it and concluded there would be very significant savings if we were to consolidate Fort Rucker, Alabama,

a newer facility than Whiting, which the Navy had in Florida. The Air Force was agreeable to go to Fort Rucker, Alabama; the Navy was very unwilling. When I signed an order about that, Congressman Robert Sykes from Florida was on the telephone within ten minutes. I complimented him on the speed of his communications.

Trask: Were these the Navy people that did this?

Duncan: Yes. Sykes said we would have a hearing on it, and George Mahon, from Texas, the chairman of House appropriations, called the hearing. I think he was almost embarrassed. The Navy was training about 75 helicopter pilots and the Army had the fleet of helicopters. He said the committee agreed to send the whole thing to the Congressional Budget Office. CBO came back with the report that the Pentagon had badly underestimated the savings, that they would be much higher.

We also tried to close the Army Veterinary Corps. In view of the fact that the Army had no horses or animals we thought it would not be inappropriate to consider discontinuing the Veterinary Corps. I got a call from Senator Melcher of Montana, who said he was the only veterinarian in the U.S. Senate, and he understood we were trying to close the Army Veterinary Corps. We said we were looking for savings, and there was no need for it, and we thought it was legitimate. But we never closed it.

Carter told me he wanted to close 25 military bases, and it was part of my assignment. I broke my pick on that, and we closed five. So I disagree with Clements. I think if you don't give them some cover, the process is very difficult. The Army base at Fort Dix--the Army said they only needed one basic training center in the eastern U.S. We had Fort Dix, N.J., and Fort Jackson, South Carolina. The Army did a study and said that given the amount of space for training, weather conditions and everything, they

wanted to keep Jackson open and close the others. We tried to do that. That created an uproar. I don't know how many times I was down there testifying before every New Jersey congressman and senator. They praised Fort Dix. Fort Dix had done a wonderful job, but that wasn't the issue. The issue was that they had two and they needed one, and those were the facts that indicated why we should keep Jackson open.

Goldberg: You can appreciate the most recent round of all this, and the uproar that was created all across the country. In general, Mahon was supportive, wasn't he?

Duncan: He was, in my judgment, one of the finer people in Congress.

Goldberg: He had that reputation.

Trask: You have made some allusions to weapon systems and weapon systems decisions--did you pay much attention to that, and play much of a role in terms of decisions such as whether to produce the B-1, and on the Stealth bomber business?

Duncan: I think history will reflect that the decision to go ahead with the B-1 bomber was not a good decision. As I understand it, the B-1 cannot, and has never, performed its mission. What I felt at the time was that a cruise missile carrier could orbit somewhere; the B-1 would have to penetrate Soviet air defenses--launch SRAAM, or something like that. What did the B-1s finally cost us?

Goldberg: About 250 million dollars or more.

Duncan: To take that amount of money and put it in the B-1 when the Stealth was there, we felt was an enormous mistake.

Goldberg: To what do you attribute the fact that we did go ahead with the B-1?

Duncan: Because the U.S. Air Force wanted it badly.

Goldberg: How about Jones, was he pushing it?

Duncan: I don't know. You've talked to Jones, I haven't.

Goldberg: The story is that a lot of people in the Air Force were very annoyed with Jones because he wasn't pushing it hard enough.

Duncan: It was an OSD decision not to do it, much stronger than an Air Force decision. Jones, as chairman, went along with it. George Brown, initially, was chairman.

Goldberg: The feeling of the Air Force, apparently, was that Jones was no longer an Air Force man, and that he was making OSD decisions instead of making decisions that were good for the Air Force.

Duncan: What he should have been is someone who was not parochial and someone who looked at the total needs of the military services. I think he tried to do that. That did not always please everybody.

Trask: Why did the Air Force want the B-1 so badly? The B-2 was on the horizon.

Duncan: It was a macho deal. As I said, I think history has vindicated the Carter decision not to go along with it. I think that's an empirical fact.

Goldberg: Of course, there were other pressures for it from other sources--industry, the R&D people.

Trask: Also places where it was manufactured. What about, for example, the MX missile? That came up in your period, too.

Duncan: And the mobile basing thereof. The Soviets had the SS-20, which was mobile, and they seemed to be moving very aggressively with it. The SALT negotiations had not resulted in any change in their SS-18, which with ten MIRVs was an enormously powerful weapon. We called the MX the Peacekeeper, didn't we? I

think to let the Soviets know that we were going to have an offset to the SS-18 and the mobile 20 was good strategy. I remember talking about that to Congress. The Soviets had such throw-weight, something like the SS-18, that initially they did not have the accuracy that we had on our MIRVs. In order to make sure you hit the target you had to hit somewhere in the area around it. And you had to have an explosion powerful enough, with a lot of throw-weight, to crack the target. Whereas, with Minuteman I and Minuteman III with only three MIRVs, we could hit the target square. We didn't need all the throw-weight, because we had accuracy. As they improved their accuracy, particularly of the MIRVing, independently targeted warheads, it seemed to me to be good strategy to work towards the MX.

Goldberg: They developed those huge missiles, warheads with enormous throw-weight, because they didn't have the accuracy. We never developed anything on the scale that they did.

Duncan: Exactly. You are making the same point. And we never did. It's interesting, speaking of the Air Force, that when you go into the Minuteman silos, you have seat belts on the chairs.

Trask: What about the placing of the MX? You mentioned the multiple protective shelters. Does that appear to you to be the best way to handle it?

That argument went on a long time.

Duncan: And after I was gone. The panel was formed by President Reagan. Bill Perry may have been on it. John Deutch was on it, as to the basing. That was legitimate so long as the Soviets were able to move the SS-18s. The SS-18 was a missile of only two stages.

Trask: They moved those around.

Duncan: Yes. We had talked about trucks, rail cars, and all kinds of things.

Goldberg: Did you get involved in the neutron bomb controversy?

Duncan: That was severely criticized, but whether enhanced radiation was a less explosive or destructive power, there were people on both sides of that issue.

Goldberg: Did you have any position on it?

Duncan: No. Brown became persuaded, as I remember, that the neutron bomb was the less evil of the two, and I think I was probably persuaded by his position. Of course, Brown had a real technical understanding of it. I remember meeting in the tank once a week with the chiefs and having discussions about that.

Trask: Brown paid a lot of attention to strategic planning doctrine and targeting, things of that sort. Did you have any involvement in that with him?

Duncan: Not to the extent that he did. I wasn't excluded from it. I don't think Brown deliberately excluded me from anything, but he obviously spent a lot more time on it.

Goldberg: It was a matter of division of effort, wasn't it?

Duncan: Yes.

Trask: Do you think there were any significant changes in strategic doctrine during that time? It seemed that every administration would come up with different terms. Brown used "essential equivalent" and "countervailing strategy." Previous and later administrations had different words. But were there significant changes?

Duncan: It has all been mutually assured destruction. Reagan's initiative on the SDI was an effort to move away from that. There are those, including Brown, who had

questions about whether or not SDI could be truly effective, because there would still be some penetration.

Trask: The technical feasibility of it.

Duncan: I have chatted a few times since with David Jones on that subject. He and I were on the White House Security Review Panel. People were shooting at the White House or flying airplanes into it. This commission consisted of a few people, two of whom were Davey Jones and myself.

Trask: This is very recently?

Duncan: Yes. Bill Webster was on it, and Judith Rodin, who is now the president of the University of Pennsylvania, was on it; Bill Coleman, who had been a secretary of transportation, was on it. So I spent some time with David Jones recently, and we talked about SDI, and he told me how some of that got started when they had a meeting with Reagan and Teller. They were mentioning some things to Reagan and Edward Teller got involved. It got out of control a little bit from that time forward.

Goldberg: People in Defense didn't know much about it and Weinberger didn't hear about it until it had already been decided on.

Trask: Did you have any involvement in the arms control efforts that were going on? The SALT II treaty was signed in June 1979.

Duncan: I attended all of the meetings in the Situation Room with Brown, and the meetings in the Pentagon prior to those meetings, working with the people involved, like Lynn Davis, Saltzman, Browning from the Army, and others. When Brown or I were in town we would be there, so more often than not both of us were there. There would be times when I was there without Brown, so I was involved to that extent. I remember

the discussions; Defense and State often had varying positions on that. Paul Warnke was then head of ACDA. Generally we were a bit on the conservative side. State and Warnke would be a bit on the other side, so some of those discussions were rather vigorous at times.

Goldberg: Were you supportive of those efforts?

Duncan: Of the Defense position.

Trask: Brown was fairly strong on arms control, wasn't he? Probably more than some previous secretaries.

Duncan: He was. I don't mean to suggest that he was a hawk, or anything like that. He had worked on SALT when he was at Cal Tech and he felt it very important that it be worked out. I think he was very realistic and more practical in some of his approaches than some of the people at State or ACDA were. I think what finally happened was close to our position. Brown was by no means unreasonable or too hawkish, or anything like that. He was for a treaty, but he wanted it to be the right treaty.

Goldberg: Didn't he bring in Herb York to work on that?

Duncan: Herb York was on it some. Ed Rowney, with whom I had a great relationship, would come to me with some frequency and we would talk about his views on it.

Goldberg: He was pretty far over.

Duncan: Yes. That's what I mean.

Goldberg: He was very tough-minded on the issue, and remained that way over the years.

Trask: You mentioned Brown's interest in strengthening NATO and increasing the NATO countries' contribution in defense spending to take over some of the burden in

that area. He also tried to do that with allies like Japan and Korea, which were outside of NATO. What is your judgment about the degree of success of that effort?

Duncan: I guess they made some quasi-commitments in NATO for three percent real increase during my time there. I don't think that was ever actually realized. There was limited success in other issues, such as to improve efficiency in command and control. I remember particularly the gun on the tank, where the Germans had the 120 mm smooth bore and we had a 105. We felt that with common treads on the tank, common ammunition, and common guns, things like that, it would greatly improve interoperability. We could never get that through the Congress; I doubt if it's through the Congress today. There may be less need for it now than there was then, but when I was in the Pentagon that was the Brezhnev era and things were quite different from what they are today, vis-a-vis the current Russia versus the old Soviet Union. I would say that in terms of increasing their budgeted expenditures and improved efficiency as well, for what money they were spending, there was only limited success. Did Brown feel it was more successful?

Goldberg: No. He knew it was waging an uphill fight.

Duncan: There was some progress; it was worth the candle to make the effort, but was it truly successful, you would have to say no.

Goldberg: It was an effort that had been going on for 20-25 years before that.

Duncan: You mentioned Japan. In that case, what they were spending on their self-defense forces, it's my view that our attitude was more towards getting more support for the Americans there and in helping to pay for the cost of the naval base, etc., but not a

really hard push on expenditures. They did go with the F-15; was that during our time, or a little after?

Goldberg: I think it was towards the end of your time.

Duncan: We supported the F-15, which was going over then. My sense is that we were more understanding than the political rhetoric, certainly, than a lot of people in Congress felt about the fact that the Japanese being the Japanese, we had to manage that issue carefully. Get more help, but get it in the right way.

Trask: In January 1979 Carter recognized the People's Republic of China. Was that issue discussed in the Defense Department, or did you have any involvement in that? What was the Defense attitude?

Duncan: It was very positive, in my judgment. I remember when Deng came to Washington. There was a dinner and Brown and I attended. For example, China invaded Vietnam during that period. China advised us as to what was going to happen. In the response going back, when I was in a meeting in the Situation Room, I personally changed some of the language. I still have that somewhere.

Goldberg: What are you going to do with your papers?

Duncan: I don't have any papers to speak of, really.

Goldberg: Most officials send them to a presidential library.

Duncan: We have out at Rice the James A. Baker III Institute. Jimmy Baker and his family have had a long term involvement in Rice. I'm the chairman of the board of Rice University, and have been for 14 years. Jimmy Baker has sent all of his papers out to Rice. There are a lot of others; for instance, Jefferson Davis, interestingly, the president of the confederacy--his papers are at Rice.

Goldberg: They are publishing his papers there. They've put out about a dozen volumes already.

Duncan: Baker was the secretary of the treasury, White House chief of staff, secretary of state; all those papers are at Rice. If I do anything with my papers they will be given to the Baker Institute at Rice.

Goldberg: Clements said he was giving his to Texas A&M.

Duncan: He was the chairman at SMU.

Trask: We were wondering what his connection was with A&M. We didn't ask him.

Goldberg: It's more military inclined.

Duncan: That's where the Bush library is. He had a bit of a problem at SMU when he was chairman, when they were caught paying athletes. A lot of his memories of SMU may not be the most pleasant, because he caught a lot of flak over that.

Goldberg: He went to school there.

Trask: Was the SMU problem when he was governor?

Duncan: Just after the election all of this surfaced. He specifically had condoned that, and it was very much in the newspapers.

Trask: There are two or three incidents that we want to ask you about; for instance, the Panama Canal treaties were signed in the fall of 1977.

Duncan: I went down to Panama with President Carter, representing the Pentagon, when they were signed. I did a lot of testimony on the Panama Canal treaties.

Goldberg: You were fully supportive?

Duncan: Yes, as was the military, as was Bill Clements, when he was deputy secretary.

Goldberg: It's interesting--the opposition came from where?

Duncan: I'll tell you a story about that. Bill Clements was opposed to the Panama Canal treaties. George Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the military, supported the treaties. George Brown took Bill Clements to Panama and they visited around. Bill Clements was converted. He came back to the Pentagon and supported the Panama Canal treaties. He left the Pentagon and ran for governor of Texas. He campaigned all over Texas negatively on the Panama Canal treaties, a big political issue. He was up in Washington when I was coming back to Houston and we flew back on the airplane together. I asked him to explain his speeches. I told him what George Brown told me about Clements changing his view of the issue. I asked him if I misunderstood. He didn't say a word, and his wife said, "Charles, that's politics." I will never forget that.

I supported the treaties, I thought it was the thing to do. Every other president, beginning back with Johnson, had supported it. Ellsworth Bunker worked hard on it. Sol Linowitz at the end. That had been a strong bipartisan and military-supported issue.

Trask: But it was touch and go.

Duncan: It was politically charged. Political rhetoric can follow lots of courses.

Trask: When they were being debated I was teaching at one of the Florida universities. I was on a public affairs TV program one day. We were discussing these treaties and I was strongly in support of them. One of my interests has been Latin America. On the same TV panel was the county agricultural agent, and he got so mad at me on this program his face turned red. He was terribly irate that I was in favor of those treaties;

because; as he put it, "it was our canal, we took it, we owned it and we shouldn't give it up."

Duncan: As I used to hear sometimes, we stole it fair and square.

Trask: That's exactly what he said.

Goldberg: On the other hand it's been looking good ever since. Now we are reaching the point where the Panamanians don't want us to leave militarily; they would like us to stay.

Duncan: It's interesting when you look at it in retrospect, and consider what has generally happened in Latin America, which with the exception of Cuba has moved towards democratically-oriented philosophies, to the marketing system in business. Latin America has had problems, as in the Mexican devaluation recently, but essentially Chile is one of the garden spots of the world. I think the Panama Canal treaty made its contribution to very good things happening, with Latin America moving our way politically and ideologically, with the exception of Cuba. It may have not have come at the same pace if we had been obstinate about the canal.

Goldberg: It played well in Latin America, there's no question about it.

Duncan: I would be surprised if any real historian were to say that it has worked out badly in the total context.

Goldberg: All the historians I knew were in favor of it at the time, and had been before then.

Duncan: Now you've got the benefit of a few years of history and perspective, which you didn't have at that time.

Goldberg: It's almost twenty years now.

Trask: In the same period, while you were deputy secretary of defense, there was another important issue relating to the Middle East--the Israeli/Egyptian relationships, the Camp David Accords, and the Egyptian/Israeli peace treaty, which was three or four months before you left.

Duncan: I was involved in some of those discussions. I remember the Egyptian minister of defense was Gamassi , and I think the Israeli minister of defense was Ezer Weitzman. Both of them were quite impressive. Harold Brown and I met with them, and I told a lot of my friends at the time that if you could work with those two, you could work with anyone. We had tough conversations; I remember the Negev air bases, working that out with the Air Force and both parties. We worried about the Israeli concerns about their energy supplies, they were giving up some oil production in the Negev. The Israeli minister of energy was leaving Cy Vance's office to come to my office and I needed to talk to Vance first. The minister told me what Vance had said to him, and since I had talked to Vance first, I knew what had really occurred. I was involved in one of the most memorable events--when Sadat and Begin were at the White House. After I left the Pentagon and Energy, Sadat invited me to Egypt and I took the family. Sadat was killed right after that. When he was killed, it had a real effect on my children. The photographer who took the picture of us in Egypt was one of the two people killed when Sadat was assassinated.

Trask: Let me ask you about your relationships with some people in other offices, first, with the White House and the NSC. Did you have much contact with the president, and what was your involvement with the NSC?

Duncan: I went to a lot of the National Security Council meetings. I normally went with Brown. It was the exceptional meeting that I did not attend. I guess the deputy secretary is not officially a member of the NSC, but I went to most of the meetings.

Goldberg: With Brown or as his representative?

Duncan: Brown more often than not wanted me to go with him.

Goldberg: This is interesting, because often this was not the case. A lot of secretaries would not take their deputies with them. Did you continue to have a close relationship with the president? Did you see him on occasion?

Duncan: Not a lot. Brown and Vance and Brzezinski had breakfast with him every Friday morning. I was not a part of that, nor was the deputy of state nor the deputy anywhere else. I think some pretty heavy conversations were held at those breakfasts. Brown would normally brief me.

Goldberg: What was your relationship with Brzezinski?

Duncan: He was all right. I remember when I went out and saw the Stealth fighter, which was then top secret, I came back and told Brzezinski about it. He didn't really believe it. I took him back out there. I spent a lot of time with him. In his book [Power and Principle, 1983] he said that I had been "extraordinarily helpful." I agreed with him a lot and disagreed with him a lot but on balance we had a good relationship.

Goldberg: With both you and Brown, your relationship with the White House was often through Brzezinski, wasn't it?

Duncan: Correct. The only way to accurately describe my contact with Carter was that it was infrequent.

Goldberg: You would see him at meetings.

Duncan: Yes. I'd have one-to-one on occasion, but not often.

Goldberg: At his instance, or yours, usually?

Duncan: It would be an issue that he would call about. He would worry about shipbuilding claims. I was handling them, and he called me over to discuss them. One time he wanted to send a message to King Hassan of Morocco, who had just been appointed head of the Jerusalem committee. He asked me to carry that message, which I did. Colin Powell and I went to Morocco.

Goldberg: It has been alleged by a number of people that Carter involved himself in too many things. He tried to master all the major issues that arose, and it was just not possible to do so. Was that your impression, too?

Duncan: That is my impression; to an extent, with Brown, as well. I remember one OMB budget discussion in the White House with the president, where the president and Brown got into a discussion of the speed of an infantry fighting vehicle, the IFV. When we got back to the Pentagon I told Brown that it disturbed me that the secretary of defense and the president of the United States were in a debate with an analyst from OMB on the speed of the IFV. I said he needed to wean himself away from that, that neither of them had any business spending that amount of time on that issue.

Goldberg: How did he respond to that?

Duncan: He would get brought into a lot of detail. The president was exactly the same way, so I don't want to suggest that I know it all. But that's how I feel.

Goldberg: There was more rationale for Brown to know that and be involved in that than for the president. His was a narrower focus than the president.

Duncan: But there were a lot of other big issues that we should have moved to. He should have said, we will find out what it is and not argue about it.

Goldberg: Brown was that kind of person. He had to master everything that there was. Frank Carlucci, who knew him very well and worked with him, told us several times that Brown was an authentic genius.

Duncan: He is. He got a Ph.D. when he was 20, from Columbia.

Trask: What about relationships with the service secretaries and contacts with them-- Alexander of Army, Claytor of Navy, Stetson of the Air Force?

Duncan: I would say it was mixed. I had an excellent relationship with Graham Claytor. I had been on his board when he was chairman of Southern Railway. I was instrumental in getting him to come in as secretary of the navy. Cliff Alexander--the relationship was warm, but I'm not going to brag on it. I had difficulty at times with John Stetson, secretary of the Air Force. He had run the Houston Post here in Houston before he went there. Of the three, I think Graham Claytor was the strongest.

Goldberg: I found him very impressive.

Duncan: Yes. Unfortunately, he's passed away now. He was a strong Navy man who had a marvelous WWII combat record. One thing that everyone said to me--the president, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee John Stennis--was to get the Navy claims settled. Graham was very helpful and supportive. He understood heavy capital procurement. He was a very effective navy secretary. That's why I wanted him to be the deputy secretary when I went to Energy.

Goldberg: Did you recommend him to Brown for that?

Duncan: Very strongly. I don't think it was necessary; I think Brown would have picked him had I not recommended him.

Goldberg: Brown did consider Perry for the job.

Duncan: I didn't know that.

Goldberg: He decided against it because he and Perry were too much alike, both technical people.

Duncan: I was recommending Claytor very strongly at that time.

Trask: What's your general impression of the role of the secretaries of the services? Sometimes they are more important than at other times.

Duncan: I think one of my amazements was how unimportant they were. Before I went to the Pentagon I had felt that it was really something to be a service secretary, but the more I learned the more I became less convinced that was the proper view.

Goldberg: I have the impression that Claytor was the most effective of the lot, and I would like you to comment on one of his attitudes; namely, that OSD was centralizing too much and that more should be left to the services, that the service secretaries and secretariat had been downgraded too much.

Duncan: If every service secretary was Graham Claytor, I wouldn't have much of a problem with that, except it would hurt coordination and cooperation between the services. In fact, very few service secretaries, in my opinion, specifically including those that have come since, to the extent I am knowledgeable, were Graham Claytors.

Goldberg: I think John Lehman thought he was.

Duncan: Well, I don't think he was, so I don't exclude him from my comments. John Lehman was making speeches on subjects like nuclear weapons, etc., which I felt were

not his province. Looking at the content of his speeches, I doubted what his background might be, sometimes, to make the speeches. The fact is, in my case we had John Stetson, Clifford Alexander, and Graham Claytor. When I first went into the deputy secretary's office, they objected to something and had written me a jointly signed letter about it. We had a meeting in my office and discussed that letter. At the conclusion of that meeting I said, "Let me say one thing; this is the last time we will have a meeting on a jointly signed letter. You talk to me individually, you do not get together as a group to get these issues together and bring them to me. I will work on them with you on a one-to-one basis and not as a troika of service secretaries." That's the last time that ever happened.

Goldberg: It's interesting that it did happen, because on most issues they are not necessarily at one.

Duncan: I can't remember what the issue was, but I remember vividly my reaction to it.

Goldberg: Let me bring up another person who was close to you, Colin Powell. What was your view of him at the time he worked for you?

Duncan: It was very strong, that's why I asked for him. He was a colonel in OSD at the time. He was extremely helpful to me and extremely bright. He had a way of working with the military that was very helpful to me. He had good political sensitivities. As you know, your senior military assistant is with you all day every day, and I had a very good relationship with him. I am pleased that he wrote about that in a positive way in his book. I took him with me on things like the Iranian trip, and to Europe. When I went to the Department of Energy I asked him to go with me, with the approval of Bernie Rogers, then chief of staff of the army. I went to Bernie and asked if I could take Colin

Powell with me, since I had been told by the president and Jim Schlesinger that I would have to completely reorganize DOE, including replacing more than half of the assistant secretaries of energy, and needed someone with me that I had worked with before. I didn't want to hurt Colin's career in the Army, and it doesn't look like I did. Powell went and stayed a few months with me at DOE and was tremendously helpful to me there. Have you interviewed him?

Goldberg: No, but we have talked with him. He is very polite, answers promptly, and I have talked with his assistant. He is giving too many lectures and is too busy, but he will do it.

Duncan: On that DOE subject, back to Brown for a minute. I went to Brown also and told him I was going to have to replace many people and had been warned that I would have many top personnel problems. The only people I knew were Pentagon people. I wanted to select some people to take with me and wanted Brown's approval. He said to select anyone I wanted and to talk to him about individuals before asking them. Everyone I wanted to take with me he approved, he never had any questions.

Trask: Did these people go into assistant secretary jobs?

Duncan: Some did, and some didn't. I took Bill Lewis, deputy in PA&E; one of Bill Perry's deputies in USDRE, Ruth Davis; Deanne Siemer, who had been general counsel.

Goldberg: Hadn't she already left as general counsel?

Duncan: That was at Energy, and there were newspaper articles about that. I took Powell, of course.

Goldberg: Everybody speaks well of Powell.

Duncan: We had a good relationship. David Jones and I liked to play racquetball. We would get a game in on most late afternoons, and Powell would more often than not play in those games. Dave would get somebody young to play.

Goldberg: Powell was remarkably self-assured and relaxed in dealing with people.

How about Perry?

Duncan: I had a good relationship with Bill Perry. Everyone had a lot of respect for his ability, particularly his technical knowledge. I would say that Brown worked more directly with Perry than I did.

Goldberg: Brown was dealing with weapons a great deal at that time. We interviewed Perry, also, before he left office in 1981. I was very impressed with him--his grasp, knowledge, and detail.

Duncan: I think he's doing a very good job now. Sometimes his statements are not political, but he didn't go in there as a politician.

Goldberg: He's been an effective secretary.

Trask: I'm surprised at how active he is; he is all over the place all the time.

Goldberg: Do you know that he has traveled more than any other secretary, to more countries, and made more trips in less than two and a half years than Weinberger made in almost seven years? Weinberger traveled an enormous amount, more than McNamara, who had seven years in the job. Perry has surpassed all of them, already.

Trask: What about your relationships with the JCS?

Duncan: I think they were all right. I've told you about David Jones. The same thing with Brown. Bernie Rogers talked with me when he was not appointed chairman. And there was Lew Allen, chief of staff of the Air Force.

Goldberg: Do you think he got it because he was a technical man?

Duncan: He's a physicist as well. He was at NSA when he came, but he had run the systems command before that. It was a surprise appointment.

Goldberg: I guess it was Brown's doing.

Trask: When you went to Energy your Defense experience must have been very valuable for you, not only being a government organization of that type, but in the sense that Energy had a lot to do with nuclear weapons.

Duncan: Stockpiling and the manufacture of the weapons. There was a good man running that, who had been there a long time. Unfortunately he did not continue when I left. The Reagan administration, more so than any, changed people on a political basis. I told my successor at Energy, Jim Edwards, that there were two people I would recommend; number one was the man in charge of the nuclear program. He had been in the government 20 years and was apolitical; the second was Bill Lewis, who has had a very distinguished career; got his Ph.D. at Oxford, a Rhodes scholar.

Goldberg: I think it's true of all of the Republican administrations that they were more political and would not have Democrats.

Duncan: Down to the third level.

Trask: We are at the end of our planned agenda.

Goldberg: We have a usual last question, which is how did you feel about your experience in the job of deputy secretary of defense?

Duncan: I feel good about it. I think it was very educational and it helped me a lot. I feel very comfortable with my performance when I was there. I had good relationships with the people involved, and when I didn't, and where I didn't, there was good cause. I

never would have been with President Sadat in Egypt, or done a lot of things I have done; my involvement in the Camp David accords, my involvement with Margaret Thatcher, and some of the top people. It's a heady atmosphere.

Goldberg: It's an opportunity to become part of history.

Duncan: I did it for four years, and I am glad I did it. My family and I enjoyed living in Washington. When I took the job a lot of people said they didn't know how I could do it. I said the issue was what do you say to the president of the United States when he asks you to do something. It has nothing to do with whether you want to go or not. I think I would have to have a very good reason to say no. I did two and one half years in the Pentagon, one and a half years in Energy. The Energy experience was intense. When I went over there the gasoline lines were long. The organization was chaotic, and we had to make total changes. All of that was seen to get much better, so I feel very comfortable.

Goldberg: Clements expressed the same view. He said it was the greatest experience of his life, no matter how unpleasant it was at times.

Duncan: Some of the congressional dealings were frustrating, as were some of the dealings with others in the administration, but on balance it was very positive.

Goldberg: What would you consider your outstanding accomplishments in the job? Things that pleased you the most.

Duncan: I remember thinking when I got there that the pace of decisionmaking was so quick. I wasn't used to having to make decisions without an adequate knowledge base. The Army came in one day and wanted to spend half a billion dollars on an ammunition plant in Alabama. They had to have a decision that afternoon. I told them we would

have a very short meeting, because I had just come out of The Coca-Cola Company and a half a billion dollars was our capital expenditures budget for a year. I could not make the decision in one afternoon without knowing more about it. If they wanted to come back and answer my questions I would consider it, but not that afternoon. I had to do some things like that. Another personal digression: I used to tell the military sometimes when I got irritated with them, like doing an end run on a weapon system, that I had come out of the corporate world, and what they needed was to be more like the corporate world, because you don't do certain things more than once in the corporate world or you are out of it; it's more militaristic than you can imagine.

Goldberg: They were only doing what came naturally to them, they had been end running for 40 years.