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Interview with Robert W. Komer

Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (1974-1981)

March 25, 1981

Goldberg: This is an interview with Robert W. Komer, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 1979 to 1981, in Room 5C328, the Pentagon, on March 25, 1981. Mr. Komer has a set of questions which we have previously submitted and he will speak to such of them as interest him.

Komer: Bear in mind that I played two roles from 1977 to 1981. From the beginning of the Carter administration until October 1979, I was the advisor to the secretary on NATO affairs, a unique role created especially for me by the secretary of defense. I suspect, looking back, that what I got started then may have more lasting value and importance than what I was able to do in 16 months as under secretary. At any rate we can explore that proposition.

Let me start out with question 7 (and not bother with how important NATO is to the United States, because that's self-evident). Do Europeans support NATO to the extent necessary? Obviously not, or

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we wouldn't have generated all our U.S. initiatives. The significant thing, it seems to me, about the Brown tenure in the Defense Department is that the first major initiatives launched by the Carter administration in the broad field of foreign and security policy were the so-called "NATO initiatives" in May 1977 at the London summit. They were almost entirely generated in this building, with me as the chief architect and Harold Brown himself as the chief builder. Let me also cite the key roles played by Bill Perry, the first DDRE to make NATO armaments cooperation one of his major efforts, and my own colleagues Larry Legere in Brussels and MG Dick Bowman here in ISA. Their help was indispensable.

DoD dominated our NATO Policy from the beginning to the end of the Carter administration, partly because we got off to such a quick start. I had done three major studies at Rand -- all highly classified. I was motivated by a simple proposition, that during our long entanglement in Vietnam we had badly neglected our European flank. As a matter of fact we robbed our NATO contribution blind to run the Vietnam War. Then in the Vietnam aftermath, real

defense spending declined so much there wasn't a great deal we could do. Schlesinger and Rumsfeld (who had been a NATO ambassador) understood this, and they started a turnaround.

But the real turnaround came with Harold Brown. The second or third day that he was in office he called me up and said, "Bob, I want you to help me figure out what we ought to do about NATO." I was about to tell him, "Harold, I've already written three major studies on the subject which you can read plus a position paper for Carter when he was down at Plains as a candidate, a second paper when he became the candidate, and finally a third one after he won the election when the transition team called me and asked what to do about NATO." So I was about to tell Harold to go read all that, since the studies were very action oriented, when he added those fabulous words which I can never resist -- "and help me push it through the bureaucracy." Now there was a chore worth doing.

To get the personalia out of the way, my original coming on board was very unstructured. I came in almost full time immediately as a consultant

but stayed on the Rand payroll because we didn't know how long the job was going to last, and I had some Rand work to finish up. I made only one boundary condition when I came on board. I said, "I will only do this working for you directly. I must report directly to the secretary." It has been my operational experience, as a long time unbureaucratic bureaucrat, that if your role is to give advice, the most effective way to do so is to give it to the top, if you want to have any impact. Having given advice to two presidents and a couple of secretaries of state I thought I knew how the game was played. By the way Harold didn't blink an eye at that. The only thing he cautioned me to remember was that I was going to be a staff officer and not a line manager. "Therefore on anything you think needs to be done you ask me and if I agree with you I will decree it, but you are not to give directives to the chiefs or orders to the building. An advisor is not a manager." I understood that. As a matter of fact, it turned out to be a glorious deal because I would write the directives and Harold would modify them, unsplit a few infinitives, and sometimes take out the last paragraph if it went too far (I usually stuck it in

as a loss leader). Then he would sign these things out. It didn't take the building very long to figure out that Bob Komer was drafting them.

Nonetheless, I have always understood that the decision maker is the guy who has to carry the heavy load. It is easy to advise. It is easy for a staff officer to propose things, although it is rather more difficult to propose them in operationally useful terms. But my experience with Harold was splendid. Carl Smith, his military assistant, says I probably batted about .950 with the secretary. I think that's a little high, maybe more like .900. But even batting .900 will get me into Cooperstown any day of the week.

Being an operationally-oriented fellow and feeling strongly that we had to get off to a running start as fast as possible, I wrote something called the "Komer Report." Between the end of February and the beginning of April, really only about a month, I turned out a detailed operationally oriented study on what we needed to do to get NATO moving again to meet the continuing growth of Soviet power and other changes such as our loss of strategic superiority, etc.

The Komer Report was really the blueprint for the Carter administration's NATO initiatives, and was treated as such by Secretary Brown. I wrote a short basic report and later fleshed it out with annexes, but they are not just analytical and descriptive. We already had that in the Rand studies. This report was very operational. As a result, when the president decided he would call a London summit in May 1977, he decided, on the advice of Harold Brown in particular (and of Henry Owen, who was then at the White House with Brzezinski) that it should be a NATO-type summit. Of course the Komer Report permitted us to move quickly to dominate the agenda. We in this building, I in particular, designed the three major initiatives that Carter launched at the 19 May 1977 NATO summit. The first was a set of what were frankly quick fixes to give NATO a short-term shot in the arm -- some modest increases on the part of each ally. These would show that we were all starting out immediately to improve NATO's defense posture. The second was to propose that we all see if we could not design a longer term defense program to strengthen the alliance on a systematic basis. The third was the president's initiative for greater

inter-allied armaments collaboration, including his acknowledgment that there would have to be more of a "two-way street" between Europe and America in arms procurement and R&D. So we were off to a very quick start. This was before Camp David even began moving. It was Carter's first major foreign policy initiative.

Right after the summit came the defense ministers' meeting at which Harold had to flesh out the very brief discussions that had taken place at the summit. When the great men get together at the summit there's often so much ceremony they don't have much chance for substance. So we planned a prompt follow-through at the May NATO ministerial meeting which came right after the Summit. There Harold laid out our proposals on what should be included in the long-term defense program. I recommended a selective approach. The LTDP, as it later became known, was not designed to be a comprehensive defense plan. It selected nine prime priority areas where a long-term carefully calculated joint effort was required. Now you can guess what the nine areas were. We proposed nine and the allies added a tenth (as I recall, on reserve mobilization).

Our ninth was of course long-range theater nuclear forces. It had been a vigorous contention of the Komer Report that if we designed a long-term defense program around only the priority measures needed to strengthen conventional forces, it simply wouldn't fly with the Europeans. Therefore we had to propose, pari passu, strengthening NATO's theater nuclear posture, particularly given the decline of U.S. strategic superiority and the advent of the Soviet SS-20. That led to creation of the High Level Group which eventually developed the LRTNF proposals that the allies accepted December 1979.

On the plane coming back from the May ministerial, Harold said to me, "Bob, now that we've got all these initiatives launched, I really would like to have you stay around and work them through; our collaboration has been splendid up to this point." I replied that I was planning on turning in my suit, since I'd really done everything he'd asked me to do. He said, "that's right, but I have the grim feeling that if you don't stay around to follow up on it, not much is really going to happen." "Well,"

I said, "I agree with you, but we'll have to change the terms if I leave Rand and come on the Defense Department payroll." To provide the clout needed to do the job he wanted I felt he'd have to make me an under secretary or something like that. He wasn't willing to go that far, but he did promise to get me a presidential appointment. I thought at the time that Harold was probably cautious because the Mondale wing of the White House would be concerned about the Viet Nam millstone around my neck.

At any rate, that's the only reason I can offer for why Harold did not make me his under secretary for policy then. I know I was recommended to him practically right off the bat by Bill Perry and Russ Murray. Indeed I gather that I was the unanimous choice of the insiders in the building to be the under secretary for policy. But Harold went through a great rigamarole, finally bringing in Stan Resor; then when Stan left, he tried to get a few others, lastly Lloyd Cutler, before he finally said to me, "Look, if Lloyd doesn't take it, I'm going to give it to you." Incidentally, Lloyd, after looking into the job, told me that he wouldn't "touch it with a

ten foot pole" and was instead going to tell Harold that he already had the ideal candidate right there in the building -- myself. But that's getting ahead of the story.

When I did come aboard permanently in May 1977, I asked for a small staff of six or seven people to extend my reach. I didn't need a big staff, because my policy has always been to work closely with the military. But I wanted a three star deputy whom I would handpick to help me in this. I got him -- Ken Cooper, an Army engineer, an outstandingly able guy who had just been Vice-CINC USAREUR. I brought in three or four young hotshots from the services, and that was it. I think the proof of that pudding is in the eating.

By May 1978 we had managed to get a long-term defense program agreed to at working level by all the allies. It was officially accepted at the May 1978 Washington summit as the Alliance's defense program. We Americans also picked up the 3% real growth pledge which had been mandated by NATO as a goal (not by the Americans) and got this too endorsed by the summit

heads of government as part of our initiative, because at least 3% real growth would be necessary to fund the LTDP. Perhaps the biggest new departure in the LTDP, the part of it to which I contributed the most personally, was the "rapid reinforcement program." I regard this as one of my greatest accomplishments in four years in DoD. For years the United States model of how we would fight a NATO war was that the Europeans and our forward deployed forces would have to take care of themselves for the first 30 to 60 days, while the United States mobilized slowly and then began moving massive forces overseas. This had been feasible in World Wars I and II, because our allies were holding the ring. But as I perceived the NATO-Warsaw Pact balance in the 70s, it was clear that the allies would get cold-cocked and the war could go nuclear long before the American reinforcements ever began arriving. Besides, the European allies have never agreed to stockpile more than 30 days munitions. So if they run out of ammunition long before we begin to arrive on the 40th or 50th day, it makes no sense to send such reinforcements. Deterrence being the name of the game, I argued that we must greatly accelerate the process of U.S. ground and air

reinforcement of NATO. And that to do so we couldn't sail across the ocean, because the Soviet submarine and air threat to the sea lanes would be at its maximum during the first thirty days.

I also thought that another basic principle on which the military did contingency plans was wrong with respect to the NATO scenario. They've always assumed that M equals D, in other words that they could not rely on the civilian policymakers ever to allow them to do anything to prepare before the very last minute. Therefore, they argued that you can't assume in your war plans that you can use strategic warning. As you know, the intelligence people contend that with this enormous intelligence warning apparatus, for which we pay billions every year, we are quite likely to get a substantial period of warning -- at least four days and more likely 8 to 14 days. It's a complicated issue; I used to be an expert on it.

Anyway, I argued that we should plan to double our ground forces in Europe within a week. In the case of the Air Force that is quite feasible because they've already got the forces available in the

active and ready reserve category right here in the United States today. The gut problem was bed down limits on the other side. There just were not enough airfields available. So I revived Dave Jones' splendid Air Force COB (co-located operating base) concept that we should bed down on allied airfields if they would build sufficient facilities to receive us.

The ground force problem was much more difficult. How do you get five division equivalents to Europe in ten days? There is no way you can do it within reasonable cost parameters without prepositioning the equipment over there. So we argued for a five to seven-division prepositioning program (including the existing REFORGER and "2+10"). PA&E worked out that this was clearly the most cost-effective way, the Army agreed, etc. I developed this and worked it out personally with Shy Meyer, who at that time was the Army DCS/OPS (I knew you had to work with the lead service on this thing or it never was going to fly). In fact I asked Shy, "How many divisions do you think we can get to Europe, let's say by D-Day, if its no later than D plus 14?" He picked the ten division figure; in fact, he thought we might be able to get eleven over.

Unfortunately the Army is only the demandeur on rapid reinforcement. The guys who have to deliver them are the Air Force and the Navy, and they have never really come through on lifting the rapid reinforcement program the way they ought to. Since the Air Force gets first priority on air/sea lifts, and its tonnage requirements are modest compared to the Army's, the Air Force had no problem at all with air part of the RRP. Ergo, this initiative of ours (which really is a major program initiative) runs all through our fiscal '77, '78, to '81 and '82 budget proposals. It is one of the biggest NATO-oriented program initiatives we've ever launched. But the Army is still struggling with how to provide equipment for even five RRP divisions, which by 1980 were competing with what the Army wanted to earmark instead for the Persian Gulf scenario. Moreover, SACEUR has further confused the issue by coming up with his own RRP, which diluted the focus on the crucial Center Region by earmarking some forces instead for the Southern Region (for essentially political reasons).

Now, let me emphasize another aspect of the RRP. It was perfectly clear to me that we could never deploy

so many troops to Europe rapidly (doubling the ground forces, tripling the air forces) and support them simultaneously. Forget it; there just wasn't enough left nor could you stockpile a lot of support stuff over there -- that was piling Pelion on Ossa. So I proposed what we called a "transatlantic bargain" to be consecrated in the long term defense program. This transatlantic bargain was that the Americans would greatly speed up rapid reinforcement, ground and air, if the Europeans would aid in the transportation of these forces, their reception, and their support for at least the first 30 to 60 days. We sought Host Nation Support (HNS), greater infrastructure spending, co-located operating bases for the air, using some of their wide-bodied passenger aircraft for delivering the troops (why should we use strictly American airlines?), sea lift (they's now committed 600 ships), etc.

We stuffed the transatlantic bargain on rapid reinforcement into the LTDP, and the Europeans bought it as a good deal for them. Now why did they buy it? Because the Europeans had never believed in the

previous American reinforcement plans. All the allied general staffs knew that by the time American reinforcements got there after D + 30 the war would be over conventionally for them. Therefore they didn't ever count on American reinforcement. It wasn't interesting to them. It was an academic exercise. The Americans would arrive to succor them after they were already overrun by the Soviets. Second they saw (and we deliberately tried to make them see), that the out-of-pocket cost to them of their half of the transatlantic bargain would not be too great. We would be paying the enormous bulk of it for the forces and their equipment. They would be essentially earmarking existing civil assets and reservists to receive and support these forces. In other words if they allocated some of their airliners, that wouldn't entail added peacetime costs. If they allocated some of their ships during wartime that didn't cost them anything in peacetime either. The RRP would cost them a bit of construction money to upgrade air fields, build warehouses for the ground divisions, etc. But even there the United States paid the largest single percentage of the

NATO infrastructure bill because it was a collective NATO program. This was a major thing, and we have been pursuing it now for four years, but it has been like pulling teeth to get our allies to pay their share of the increased infrastructure spending required (though we've had limited success). We did better on HNS agreements, though the key German one is still hanging fire.

Goldberg: How much of an increase did you really bring about? You're putting more divisions in, they were going to require more support; did you go from 30 to 60 days? 90 days?

Komer: No, we stuck with the 30 days. That's a good question. If we had tried, and I did try once, to go beyond the first 30 days, we would have run right into the fundamental difference between the Europeans and the Americans over the interpretation of NATO strategy. MC14/3 of 1967, which mandates "flexible response," is deliberately ambiguous in what it says. The Europeans interpret it to mean a brief conventional pause lasting under no circumstances beyond 30 days and probably more like 5 to 10 days. The Americans interpret it as permitting indefinite

conventional defense. We've never reconciled that basic difference, since even the effort to do so could prove dangerously divisive. Even in the LTDP, when Task Force 9 on logistics discussed an American initiative to increase our joint stockpiles to 60 days -- I took this up at a meeting of the Executive Working Group in Brussels -- my British colleague turned to me and said, "But you are changing MC14/3." I knew exactly what he meant, and withdrew the proposal immediately. Instead I asked him, "does an additional seven days imply a change in strategy?" He said "no." Therefore I proposed going up from 30 to 37 days on my own authority, right there at the table with the allies, because I knew that if we ever opened the "Pandora's Box" of much more than a 30-day conventional defense, it would screw up the whole LTDP and all our other NATO initiatives, because the Europeans would have thought, "My God, the Americans are trying to shift to a conventional defense of Europe and withdraw the nuclear umbrella." That way lies madness or at any rate Finlandization or whatever.

This rapid reinforcement program and transatlantic bargain is big stuff, and we're still pursuing it. We pursued it yesterday with Hans Apel; the one big thing we got out of this meeting is that the Germans agreed in principle to wartime host nation support for our 10-division force, including the rapid reinforcements. That is going to save us 90,000 support spaces in the first thirty days of a war. That ain't hay with what U.S. spaces cost these days. But we haven't yet worked out the cost sharing. Moreover, the current administration has done nothing about this Brown/Komer initiative. In fact the Germans would have settled it with us, except they figured why not keep this goody to give to the new administration. They told me that in effect last December. I couldn't disagree with them. So much for the rich and complicated complex of NATO initiatives which DoD pressed in 1977-80. The LTDP is not just words.

Goldberg: But beyond 37 days we have no man's land. Is that right?

Komer: Yes. Do you know why? Because if you can't last 37 days, it's academic to talk about what happens afterward. I hope you don't want to hear my litany

on sustainability because one of the most moronic things the Army in particular keeps bringing up is that we civilians are "short war" theorists. My answer to them is that I'm all in favor of sustainability once you can survive until we have to sustain. The Air Force is the only American service that has sorted out its priorities in this respect. The Air Force is structured to shoot its wad in the first few weeks, because if they achieve air superiority they are in business. I'm a simple believer (and this was the cornerstone of the Korean Report) in first things first. If you and your allies can't survive the first 30 days in Europe, what's the point of structuring your forces to fight for 90 days? Much less the three years that the Army wants to structure to fight for. Its inane. We can't defend western Europe without the allies. So everything we put over there to give us sustainability is going to be a gift to Ivan after the Germans, the French, the Brits, and the Benelux countries collapse. So why put money into U.S. sustainability beyond what the allies do?

So in the last DPG I for the first time laid down

some clear priorities which the Secretary approved. First is readiness. Second is modernization. Third is sustainability, and only fourth comes force structure. So at least I agree that sustainability comes ahead of force structure. What's the point of having more force structure than you can sustain? As I said in my interview with the Washington Post, "What's the point of buying more air wings when we can't deploy, man, train, equip, fight, and sustain the air wings we've already got? It doesn't make any military sense at all." You see what I'm talking about?

Goldberg: The only caveat I'd raise is whether we really can foresee the nature of the conventional conflict that would take place. We are making big assumptions, 30 days or 37 days or any other number that we pick. Obviously it's a whole lot easier to support 30 days than 37 days or 60 or 90 or 120. That's a powerful argument in itself.

Komer: It is a conclusive argument. I happen to think its silly to do what the Europeans do, which is to buy very sizeable forces, equip them with Leopard IIs

or Tornados, and then only give them 10-20 days of ammunition, not even 30. It's sort of dumb. You've made the capital investment, but you're not providing the carrying cost of it. But that's what they're doing, and they have always refused to go beyond 30 days. In fact, the 30 day goal for war reserve stocks has been there since about 1960, and they've never met it yet. Well, they meet it in a few categories, but you know its a moving train.

Hence its absolutely ridiculous for us to press for something that is politically unattainable. Hence my bargaining strategy was to get to 30 days, then we'll go to 37, then we'll go to 45 -- sort of incrementally build up stock levels. But if we go to the allies and say, "It's stupid not to have an extended conventional capability," they'll say, "you guys don't want to defend us with your nuclear weapons -- that means the American nuclear umbrella's worth nothing. So we're all going neutralist." I saw no point in getting into a debate like that. Well, our services keep talking sustainability. Until we've got to the point where we're really capable of rapid deployment, where our active forces are up to snuff

and can get over there in time, what's the point of worrying about sustainability? All I'm arguing is first things first.

I'm not arguing short war versus long war. All the service theologians used to get after me as a short war man. "No, no, no," I would say. "If you can't survive the short war the question of long war is academic. That's what I'm trying to get across to you clowns." I got really angry with Shy Meyer on this once, because he's one of the brightest senior types. There's this school in the Army that wants to buy three years worth of ammunition. Why buy three years worth of ammunition until we know we'll be around to shoot it? Otherwise, if its over in Europe, the Russians get it free. As it happened, the secretary of defense and I saw eye to eye on this, and he ended up cutting WRS levels whenever we had a budget squeeze.

Rochester: How about the standardization/interoperability?

Komer: That too has been a big initiative I've plugged. The underlying philosophic basis of all the things I tried to do in DoD is what I call the coalition approach.

It has been my argument that we misunderstand the nature of warfare. Go back and study conflict experience all the way back to the Romans, Babylonians, Assyrians, etc. Rarely does one country fight another country; much more likely is one alliance fighting another alliance. Take even Athens versus Sparta. It was the Delian League (a whole series of island city states) supporting Athens versus the Spartans and their allies. The War of the Spanish Succession, Napoleonic wars, WWI, WWII. Seldom is there a war like our Civil War or the Franco-Prussian War, one country against another. Yet though alliances are the norm rather than the exception in the history of conflict, we have no philosophy, concept, practice of alliance relationships in peacetime. Alliances are looked at as almost exclusively political in peacetime. Until NATO no one ever developed what I call the coalition approach. Then Eisenhower himself and Ismay, looking at how we could defend Western Europe against the Slav back in 1949-50, concluded that we would have to develop some kind of collective security force. Eisenhower talked about a single logistics system with standardized

equipment. Go back and read the new doctrine that was being advanced by the first SACEUR and the first secretary general; it's very different. But we never carried it out.

I argued in my three major Rand studies on NATO that collective approaches were the only cost effective answer. Everything I have seen since convinces me all the more that we have to develop a true coalition approach. The Americans cannot go it alone, without major European, Japanese, and Chinese contributions. Therefore the number one problem we confronted in DoD was how to manage a coalition buildup, not just a U.S. buildup. I have always railed against what Dave Jones and I call the sin of unilateralism: Each nation programs and postures as if it were going to fight the next war alone. It's easy to understand why they do this -- nationalism, institutional pride, commercial considerations, the whole works.

Incidentally, Harold Brown bought this coalition philosophy and approach so fast that it must have been going around in his mind, too. I want to add another fellow: General Jones has long been the most farseeing exponent of the coalition approach

among the uniformed military. So here you had a secretary of defense and a JCS chairman who thought like I did, even though I was sort of the initiator (it was my job to come up with usable ideas), and their job was to decide and take action.

I came by the mid-1970s to believe that there was far too much waste, overlap, and duplication in the various national defense postures in NATO. The lack of RSI (another term I invented) was wasteful as well, and dangerous to boot. For example, we and the Germans fight along side each other in the Central Region of NATO. The Germans run out of ammunition after 20 days, so they come over and ask us for ammunition. The only trouble is, our ammunition won't fit in their guns. Can you imagine anything sillier? Our radios aren't compatible. Our C³ isn't compatible. Our ordnance isn't compatible. Even our fuels aren't compatible, though we've been accomplishing something on all these scores. So I urged what I called RSI (rationalization, standardization, interoperability) which means in the last analysis you've got to design equipment not only to common standards but jointly, as part of our overall set of

NATO initiatives. Fortunately, we had someone like Dick Bowman, the Director of NATO affairs in OSD/ISA, who had been a passionate advocate of this approach. Bowman is a very determined fellow and has had more influence on U.S. defense policy than I suspect most four stars have had. We made RSI an integral part of the LTDP and of the third Center 1977 initiatives -- the international collaboration on armaments development and procurement.

Rochester: Did you coin the terms or were they already in use?

Komer: The terms were already in use, although I coined the RSI acronym as useful shorthand. But there were great differences over definitions.

Rochester: From our standpoint I think we have fully addressed NATO. Is there anything you wanted to add on NATO?

Komer: Yes, a bit about two more aspects. One is the LRTNF; I told you that TNF modernization was proposed in the Komer report. We did mount a major effort. The High Level Group did reach a NATO consensus, and I think that that was one of the most significant NATO initiatives of the Carter years.

Goldberg: What is LRTNF?

Komer: Long range theater nuclear forces -- the 572 GLCMS and Pershing IIs (108 P2s, and the rest GLCMS). That was a major achievement. It was really a part of the LTDP.

The last of Carter's 1977 NATO initiatives was armaments collaboration and more of a two way street in reciprocal arms purchased. I was enormously pleased to acquire here yet another ally who is one of my favorite people. Probably the most brilliant recruit that Harold Brown brought in to the Pentagon was Bill Perry. I'm told that Harold didn't even know Perry more than slightly when he came here. But Perry is the only guy I've met in this Defense Department who I would say unhesitatingly is secdef material himself, an amazingly broad gauge guy, immensely articulate, as outgoing as Harold is indrawn, and brilliant. Annex C or D of the Komer Report dealt with the business of arms collaboration, the two way street, RSI and all of that. Bill Perry picked all that up and did things with it that all the previous DDR&Es put together had never even dreamed of doing. I did much of the original

missionary selling, including with the allies, but Perry picked this up too, including such ideas of mine as weapon families. Indeed he made this one of his crusades. And of course Harold was totally with us all the way.

We put an enormous amount of effort into developing bilateral, trilateral, and multinational armaments initiatives. For the first two years it was extremely tough going. We agreed with the Germans on the 120 MM tank gun, which turns out, in hindsight, to have been a brilliant decision. The Army still doesn't like it but they won't acknowledge the growing threat. We got the NATO AWACs force settled, when the Allies finally realized that this was important and that the U.S. administration was dedicated to it. We've also gotten agreement on two weapon families and we went ahead on the multiple rocket launcher system. We even generated a four-power R&D program for MLRS with the French involved (there are only four big arms producers in NATO -- the Americans, the British, the Germans and the French). MLRS is an excellent system. It was my favorite because I favor rocket artillery instead of tube artillery. It's cheaper for high volume area fires.

Trask: I would like to ask a question about the long-range theater nuclear forces. Is that going to hold up? I noticed yesterday that the Belgians, for example, threatened to pull out. What's your projection on that?

Komer: It's a strategic imperative and it's going to work. In fact the British parliamentary defense committee asked me the same thing yesterday. There may be some zigs and zags. But basically LRTNF is a strategic imperative, recognized as such, so I have the feeling one way or the other we're going to end up with what we want.

Trask: Sooner or later the Belgians and the Dutch and the rest of them are all going to come around?

Komer: We don't need the Belgians and the Dutch for other than political reasons. As long as the Germans, British, Italians, and Americans go along that really is ninety percent of it. Bringing along the BENELUX is because of this magic thing of NATO solidarity. The more allies you have in the better; but we could do without the Belgians and Dutch, unless the Italians winkle out in which case we've got to have the

Belgians or Dutch in. But you know the French are going along. The French will develop their own LRTNF systems, wastefully but nonetheless usefully. Yes, I'm convinced that this one will go. There may be some delays. It may get changed, and remember there is no magic in 572 missiles. My policy judgment was to go for the maximum number we could get the Allies signed on to. In fact I don't care much if it is 250 or even 112 instead of 572, because the first step is the most important step. Once they've agreed to any LRTNF force, we can expand it as we need. The JCS and SACEUR were getting all whomped up that anything less than 655 missiles is militarily unacceptable. I told Al Haig, "What's militarily unacceptable is if we don't have any of these things at all. So let's open the damn door, get our foot in it, and not argue about the numbers because numbers can be increased later. But if you don't get the program in the first place, you aren't going to have any numbers at all. You ought to ask Perry more about the multinational arms collaboration initiatives because he has been a true believer, and increasingly in the last two years I've phased this over to him.

Rochester: He did address it and his recollection was very similar. He received his inspiration from you and then he carried it.

Komer: Yes, and he carried it farther than I ever would have thought possible. I was the first optimist, he was only the second. But it turned out that both of us, being native optimists, were right. Now I'm very worried that there's going to be a hiatus because the new crowd doesn't understand this initiative. It'll take them a year or two to get up to speed. They'll eventually have to go in this direction but then we will have lost two years we can ill afford. This is the problem in all transitions.

Goldberg: Do you think it'll only be two years?

Komer: Yes. I think all things considered they are a pretty good crowd. My criticism of them (I criticize some individuals more than others) is they have a lot of people who are illiterate; they will have to learn. There aren't many Richard Perles around who already know something about this game. My judgment is that they are excellent people. I would rather have had a better mixture of the old and the new. I would

love to have seen Paul Nitze in here somewhere, and I myself offered to stay on under the same terms I offered Harold.

Let me now switch to my role as under secretary for policy. Bear in mind that this was a new job. Rumsfeld had been forced by the White House to take a second deputy secretary of defense, Bob Ellsworth. Though Bob was in my judgment a very good man, he had obviously been shunted off to one side, I presume primarily by Clements. But Bob's mission as second deputy was strictly intelligence. Moreover, each new administration tries to change the cosmetics. The Carter administration was no different than most, I daresay a little more serious than most. At least it set up a reorganization project in OMB, though the project didn't really amount to much. Anyway, Harold Brown, who is no dummy, was told to reorganize the Department of Defense, but he made only some modest changes. Some good, and some not so good. I'll get to that later. One was to abolish the second deputy and create a new under secretary for policy and simultaneously upgrade the DDR&E to an under secretary, which I thought was long overdue.

The new policy job was held by only two people. The first incumbent, my friend Stan Resor, really didn't do much with the job, in which I think Stan was miscast. In addition he ran into something I later dubbed "the McGiffert problem," in that his chief subordinate (also his former subordinate when he was secretary of the army) didn't give him the time of day. McGiffert ran ISA insofar as it was run at all, and that was that. Stan really worked mostly on MBFR. I don't mean this in a derogatory sense, because the job was as tailor-made for me as it was not tailor-made for Stan, who is a manager and administrator and not a policy thinker primarily, though he's no slouch.

I guess I was the first real under secretary for policy. When I agreed to take the job I began thinking. I was told that the job would be mine about 3 months before I actually became the under secretary. First I was told by Harold on a contingent basis. Then he told me that he was going to appoint me, but another month elapsed before the paper work, etc., with the White House could be done. Let me say parenthetically that any fears about the Vietnam

millstone around my neck proved to be absolute nonsense. I was not asked a single Vietnam question. No question was raised even in the media about my background, and my confirmation hearing was one sustained minor panegyric. As a matter of fact, only my Republican friends showed up, and they all thought that I was a redoubtable cold warrior.

Goldberg: It wasn't true?

Komer: It happens to be true, but I was nonplussed that, except for Chairman Stennis, only Republicans showed up for a Democratic nominee. Stennis was very nice but the valedictories were given by John Tower, Strom Thurmond, Bill Cohen, and my Virginia sponsor, Jack Warner; they were the only ones who came. You would have thought I was a right wing Republican. Here I am, just a right wing Democrat.

Anyway, my thinking about how to handle the new under secretary's job was based on my two and a half years experience in Defense, and 35 years experience elsewhere in the government, including working in the White House for two presidents.

Do you remember that Rand study where Rand went around conducting interviews with a series of senior OSD level managers? They asked each, what does the next ten years hold in your field, logistics, manpower management, etc.? Almost invariably these guys said, "if we could just get the other services to do what the Air Force is doing." It's a fantastic Rand report. True, the Air Force satellites on the Army; forty percent of Air Force logistics is performed by the Army. But they're the only modern service we've got. That means they're post-WWII.

I concluded, as I thought about my job, that I was not going to be just another layer of management between the secretary, ISA, policy planning, net assessment, policy review, and C³. Instead I felt there was a big gap that had not been filled. This will be of particular interest to you, Al; I concluded on the basis of experience that we just don't do long-range or even strategic planning in DoD. There's nobody who sits back and says, "what should the overall policy be?" Nobody analyzes strategy. The secretary and deputy secretary don't have time because they're usually the busiest people in the

building. Harold Brown does the work of ten men. Graham Clayton is a big league manager, a better manager than Harold, but he doesn't have Harold's genius for assimilating detail. Harold's not an innovator, but he's super at decision-making. He can add up the pros and cons so fast it makes my head swim. He usually gave me the answers before I finished propounding the question (which I hate). This is what Mac Bundy also did to me. I once complained to Bundy, "Mac, why do you keep interrupting me before I finish my spiel?" He said, "Do I give you the answers you want?" I said, "Yes, I'm not complaining about what the answers are, I'm just complaining that I didn't get to finish propounding the question." He said, "Be grateful. If I give you the right answer, what do you care if you finish propounding the question?" Harold is like that. After a few minutes, he'd shuffle his feet, etc., and I would know I'd better get out of there, and so I'd say "alright, is this the way we do it?" "Yes." Good, I'd run. Their minds just ran that fast.

Goldberg: You'd have liked Gertrude Stein. Because she kept asking, "What is the question, what is the question?"

Komer: I have some gift for relatively clear and brief exposition. Bundy and then Brown could tell the direction I was taking. They would jump ahead in their minds the next four or five spaces, conclude what it was I was going to end up asking for and give it to me. And when it wasn't what I wanted, you could depend on it, I would reclama. I'm the only guy in this building who ever went back to the President of the United States three times on the Iceland civil airport. Three times. The State and DoD bureaucrats couldn't believe that anybody would propose going back to the President three times. But I said, "He made a bum decision." So each time I massaged the decision a little bit so we could say we were coming back with a variant. We finally got the money. Do you know why? Because Jimmie Carter said (and I got this straight from Brzezinski), "By God, if Defense and State keep coming back for this thing, they must really be serious about it, and despite my feeling that the Icelanders can afford this themselves, I'm going to give it to them." It was only \$23 million (now it will be \$60 million because of the delays). A very interesting point.

Let me say that on the general subject of security in the Carter years, most of the initiatives were from the Defense Department, not the State Department or NSC. Harold Brown was the strong man of the Carter cabinet. His team was much stronger than the Secretary of State's team and of course much stronger than Brzezinski's team. Hence the initiatives, such as they were, came very largely out of DoD. DoD's role in the security field is comparable to its role under McNamara and Nitze in the early 60's, when Defense really forged out ahead of State. Wouldn't you say so, Al?

Goldberg: Yes.

Komer: It was again a period like that. This point is obscured, because Harold Brown is such a careful and apparently colorless human being. He is not colorless. Harold is not a McNamara. He doesn't have the McNamara mannerisms. He's even more indrawn than McNamara. He had been through the McNamara years, and he knew all the things not to do. Don't get mad at those idiots sitting up there in that bank of chairs interrogating you in the subcommittee on military construction. I used to go crazy up there

with the silly questions. Harold handled them beautifully. Defense under Harold Brown was king of the hill.

To prove it to you, no one understood that more clearly than Edmund Muskie. Those leaks about Muskie taking off not just against Brzezinski but also against the Defense Department, many of them called it guilt by association, but they were wrong. Muskie and his boys knew that Harold Brown was a more formidable opponent than Zbig. They really did feel that too much of State's role had devolved on Defense (and you remember the only guy they mentioned in that connection by name was one R. W. Komer). I know Ed Muskie and he knew me, and they were very unhappy with our powerhouse over here in Defense; I mean a powerhouse in interagency terms.

Which leads me to another digression: what ate away our defense budget increases and limited the impact of our initiatives was essentially the energy squeeze and associated economic downturns. Inflation got out of control, again among other reasons because of continued increases in energy prices, decline in

productivity, etc. The NATO three percent formula worked initially. We had aimed it primarily at our allies, but in the event it worked most effectively on OMB and the President. We did go for three percent-four percent real growth, as you know, but every year inflation got out of control and ate much of it up. Or you can say that we underestimated inflation, if you want to make a bureaucratic point. But every administration underestimates inflation. Reagan is starting out making such miscalculations just as Carter did.

I think its terribly important in an overall appraisal of the four years of Defense under Harold Brown to understand that we were defeated mostly by factors beyond DoD's control, particularly the economic downturn in the industrialized western world, and the long-term economic difficulties that began to crowd in on us, especially inflation. This is what made what we had hoped would be a gradual but nonetheless steady increase in defense spending become a series of cliffhangers. Only in our last year did we get 5% because of two factors -- one the widespread popular perception that we had a big

problem in the Persian Gulf because of the hostages, and second, the SALT II debate in which the Carter administration tried to buy off the moderate opposition (Sam Nunn, Henry Kissinger, and those guys) by giving them a big increase in the Defense budget. So SALT II plus the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan really took the wraps off the Defense buildup in the last Carter year. But it was too late. We lost the election. Now Reagan's going up like that. More power to him.

I think its important to state that Harold Brown, in my judgment, planned better, programmed better, managed better than he will ever be given credit for. He put togther a better management team, far better than the present one, although its very unfair to compare the Weinberger team in the first month to the Brown team at the end of four years, although that's human nature. You know, Fred Ikle would be a hell of a lot more knowledgeable than I am if I were coming in at the beginning and he were going out at the end of four years. So its very unfair. Nonetheless, as an old analyst and manager I just think we had a better team. I think that will be proven. I hope not.

Let me get back to the role of under secretary for policy. It was my 1979 perception that there was no senior official or group of officials in the entire Pentagon, in fact in the entire US government, who were seriously thinking strategically about where we were going. By this time, the middle of the third year of the Carter administration, we were so busy putting out fires all over the place, that it increased the normal tendency of all top management to deal with the stuff in the in-box. This government spent more time on the Iranian hostage crisis than it had on NATO for four years. This administration also spent more time arguing with the Congress in 1980 over SALT than it spent on the entire defense budget debate for four years. This is real life. Hence it was all the more important to try to figure out where the hell we're going and what broad policy and priority should be. This is not done by PA&E because PA&E is too programmatic. PA&E makes a better stab at it than anybody else, and PA&E had, all things considered, the highest quality staff in the Pentagon. By that I mean the staff guys up through deputy assistant secretary, and Russell Murray. I am a great admirer of Russ. I did not see my job as being

to add a new layer of management by taking over from McGiffert and Slocombe and Dan Murphy except to supervise them. They seemed to me to be pretty well in charge of their shops (remember this was late in the administration). Instead I thought the important thing was for me to put my imprint on DoD by doing something that they had not done. That was to deal with high policy and military strategy.

Let me add that it had become patently clear to me that what I have always suspected about the military was true. The JCS and Joint Staff do not handle strategy. If there is any strategic thinking, it's in the individual services. The chairman may have some strategic ideas, but unless they're in agreement with those of the chiefs there's no place that he can go. The JCS do not think or develop strategy as I conceive of it. Instead they are busy adjudicating among the services, fighting with OSD, and fighting among themselves over two gut issues: One, how to divide up the pie, and two, how to divide up the command relationships. In short, they log roll. The chief contribution of the JCS over the last 15 months on the RDF and the Persian Gulf has been to

argue to the point of total frustration about command relationships. My reaction was that until we got something to command, I didn't give a damn about the command relationships. That's what I told Harold. He said, "should I do something about this?" and I said, "Why? Let P.X. and Volney Warner argue about it. We haven't got enough troops yet. To the extent we do have troops, we can't get them out there. So why argue prematurely about who commands what?" Harold said, "Let's leave it to the next guy."

Goldberg: Do you know that the services for the last 15 or 20 years, and the JCS, have spent so much of the time trying to find out what national policy is? They're always asking and looking at all the documents; they try to find it in presidential messages, speeches, whatever; there's nothing of the kind that emerged. You remember we had that during the Eisenhower administration -- the NSC papers and the OCB business. Ever since, they've been trying to find out what policy is, and that's one of their excuses for not coming up with any strategic plans or thinking.

Komer: And it is a cop-out. You know it is and I know it

is, and I have told the chiefs that it is; there is no compendium of national strategy. NSC/68 was sui generis. It was one of a kind -- a brilliant pulling together of what we really needed to do in the Cold War. NSC 68 had such an impact on the establishment, particularly since it was proved right after being written by the Korean War and NATO and all sorts of things. The military have ever since been looking for another NSC 68. I'm a veteran of this battle because I've been involved with the NSC since 1957, and they used to try to get me to work on drafting basic national security policy (BNSP). In 1961 I told Mac Bundy and he told President Kennedy that it was a waste of time to try to develop a BNSP. When Walt Rostow disagreed, Mac had one of his magnificent inspirations. He said, "Walt, you develop a BNSP." Walt worked for nine months on it. He couldn't get any help from me or anybody else in the NSC staff. We were all busy worrying about the Shah and Cuba and missiles. Finally, after Walt got sent over to State's Policy Planning Staff in "the night of the long knives," he had time to work on this problem. He finally developed his draft of a new BNSP and sent it out for concurrence. The chiefs, his strongest

supporters, had been clamoring for a new BNSP (they had been for ten years). Two months later they sent the draft back. The chiefs didn't even bother to say that Walt's draft was super and in general they liked it. They came back with about 200 corrections and changes. At this, I said to Bundy, "Mac, Walt's going to go ape when he sees it; here he's tried really to do what the chiefs wanted -- for his friend Bus Wheeler, etc." Walt just about tore his hair out. At that point Bundy said, "I'm not going to have an argument over 200 piddling changes with the JCS, scratch the exercise." That was the end of BNSP.

Goldberg: They weren't necessarily piddling changes.

Komer: Well, some of them were a lot more than piddling. I didn't mean that.

Goldberg: I watched that procedure for years in the 50s and early 60s until it was cut out, and do you know what they were always doing? Each service was trying to get the language in that would give it the most flexibility and elbow room for the future; a kind of interpretation they wanted to give it. They often got it.

Komer: Let me return to my theme. The chiefs weren't doing strategic thinking. The NSC wasn't doing strategic thinking. DoD's policy cluster wasn't doing strategic thinking. So I thought I would try my hand at it, and as luck would have it, we acquired a crisis before I had been in office as under secretary for two months. The Afghan crisis on top of the Iranian revolution created a new power vacuum which required us to develop the strategic concept for dealing with the threats in the Persian Gulf. I must have spent as much as half my time in 1980-81 dealing with the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area from a broad strategic point of view at the beginning, then all the way down to the most specific program initiatives because the services didn't put any money in to fund the RDF or MILCON or anything else. They "gold watched" it. In other words, if you guys up there in OSD and the president want this stuff, give it to us as an add-on. We aren't going to put it into the program unless he forces it in. So I had to help force it in and probably did more of that than anybody else. This got me full tilt into the strategic business. We had to have some kind of a concept for what it

was we were going to do out there. You can't just create an RDF for nothing. What size RDF, how should it be equipped? Where should we plan to send it? Is the Navy idea that you can defend the Persian Gulf oil from the rear, from the Arabian Sea, a valid one? Of course it isn't. The only way to credibly defend the oil is from in front of it, not behind it. If the Russians dominate the oil and we dominate the oil routes, it seems to me we have lost. What's the point of controlling the oil routes if they've got the oil? Then you want to close the oil routes so they can't export. Ridiculous. Or take the Air Force solution. Air Force had a rational strategy. Air interdiction on the land routes through Azerbaijan would really screw up the Russians and prevent them from getting the Persian Gulf oil. It would validate any "thin red line" farther south. But I had to point out that they planned to base 90 percent of the Tacair needed in Turkey. I will tell you as a former ambassador to Turkey and an old Turk, they will not let you do it. I talked to the Turkish defense minister, he said "Nyet." Dave Jones went over and talked to Evran even more

authoritatively, and Evran said "Nyet." Yet the Air Force is still working out how we are going to defend Persian Gulf oil through air power using Turkish air space.

Moreover, the fact that we now had to deal with one full and 2 half wars rather than one and 1/2 wars (the extra half war being the Persian Gulf) made me want to rethink NATO strategy, Pacific strategy, and everything else. I didn't see how we could handle a 3-front problem with available forces. Even if I wasn't too clear on what needed to be done when I first took office, by 60 days later I had to deal not only with what we do in the Persian Gulf but with the impact that has on everything else. It's enormous. I would say that this was my main real-life job in USD/P. First, we faced the issue in our FY 81-85 and FY82-86 Defense Policy Guidance. Stan Resor wrote the first one, I wrote the second two. I put an enormous amount of personal effort into writing the DPG. Russ Murray paid no attention to it whatsoever for two years running. So the third year I wrote the secretary, "I'm not going to

do this unless you tell me you will force it down Russ's throat." Then we lost the election and it all became irrelevant.

It has always seemed to me that we ought to start with policy and strategy and then derive the program. To base policy and strategy on program is to me putting the cart before the horse. It has to be done this way in the short term, but shouldn't be done in the longer term, or nothing will ever change. But the way this building is structured, this is no easy job. Nonetheless I am a different animal, and I was damn well going to make strategy and policy have some impact upon the program; I think I did. I am the one who articulated the best rationale for readiness. And I think you will agree that both the last Carter budget and the first Reagan budget had readiness in priority number one. We are putting a lot of money into what could be legitimately called readiness. What was my strategic rationale for that? Look at the new DPG, which probably nobody has looked at since the 20th of January. It wasn't even approved till the 22nd of December; I didn't get Harold's signature on it until then. It says

the rationale for giving the first priority to readiness is that the likelihood of major conflict over the next decade is significantly greater than the last decade. It's the reverse of the old British ten year cabinet rule. Brilliant, when first put in in 1920, as I recall. Inane when it was renewed unchanged each year right through 1932. I think it was in 1932 that the British cabinet finally abrogated the ten year rule, which in effect said, if you come up with any money for readiness we're going to knock it out of the British budget because there's not going to be a war for the next ten years. We told you to plan on the assumption that there won't be except a few little skirmishes here and there in Aden or on the Northwest frontier. So the last DPG-- the one I am most proud of--set clear functional as well as regional priorities. I tried to distill in there the strategy and the policy essential for coping with the world of the 80's as I saw it and Harold saw it. I looked at global strategy, I looked at global policy, and I looked at each of the major components of it. This was a solid accomplishment in the case of the Persian Gulf, because they're going to end up following my strategy. Because there's

no other one. The Navy - Marine strategy won't work. It doesn't defend the oil, it defends behind the oil and that doesn't solve the strategic problem.

The second big thing I got involved in arose from Bill Brehm's study on military contingency planning, which was associated with his study on mobilization. Brehm said, "somehow, we've got to do something about the military's contingency plans," which you remember are the last set of crown jewels that the civilians in the Pentagon don't get into. If the secretary of defense wants to review a contingency plan, the chairman will come up with a little briefing team and lay it out. I have sat in on some of those. They really tell you everything except what the real plan is. What are you going to do? Somehow that gets fuzzed over. They have the troop list, they're going to send out this many troops, M equals D, this, that and the other thing. But, they fuzz over what they are going to do. Is the Navy going to concentrate on the Mediterranean first, the North Atlantic first, or the Norwegian Sea? Is your main NATO effort going to be to defend in the Meiningen gap or on the Hanover/Berlin axis -- all the important

stuff. That's the province of the CINC, they say. We don't get into that. Damn it, they do get into it, but they don't tell you.

Brehm said that we had to relate defense programming better to contingency planning. Strategic planning was being done totally disconnected from program planning. I felt this a reasonable point. At any rate, I supported Bill and asked him to come up with a proposed directive on policy guidance for contingency planning. He discussed with the chairman and other chiefs whether something like that would be acceptable to them. It was so carefully written that he sold it to them. I talked to the Secretary about it. He agreed. The upshot was that I prepared from Bill Brehm's original a modified draft which stressed other regions besides the NATO theater. I was more interested in new possibilities of third area conflict like the Persian Gulf than I was in telling the military how to plan for the NATO scenario.

The secretary issued in June 1980 the first ever annual policy guidance for contingency planning. It had two key parts. The under secretary for policy

will review for the secretary proposals for new or modified contingency plans before they are transmitted by the JCS to the overseas command. Second, when the plans come in and have been reviewed by the chiefs, they will be reviewed by the under secretary for policy, on behalf of the secretary, for consistency with overall DoD policy. Now that might seem innocuous, but Al will tell you, that is a big breakthrough. I prenegotiated the PGCP with my good friends Dick Lawson and Paul Gorman. I think Lawson and Gorman are the outstanding military thinkers of their two services. I could not have accomplished what I did in this field both in NATO and in strategic planning as under secretary without the closest relationship with them and their boss, Dave Jones. I didn't see Jones every day (I did see him at least two or three times a week) but I worked with his principal planning subordinate -- the J-5. Secretary Brown approved the PGCP after the chiefs had given it their blessing. I told him, "I intend to carry out this mission in close cooperation with the JCS," who were afraid their contingency plans would get out all over the place. Therefore, the other important thing I did was to put together a

primarily military staff to review contingency plans on my behalf. I took my best Air Force major general, Dick Boverie, and said, "you on my behalf are the guy who will interface with the one-star, two-star level in the Joint Staff on the PGCP because I want people in uniform dealing with the people in uniform down there." Send a civilian down there and they won't even talk to him, even though they like him. The combination of having an unusually able and flexible group of senior military people to work with and having military people on my own staff work with their staff got us started very well on this innovative and, I think, pioneering effort to give DoD's civilian leadership an insight into what the military are doing in the way of actual war planning. It was a revelation. Bill Brehm sort of started the whole thing. He made a real contribution. Brehm got me interested in another big problem area -- that of mobilization. I became head of the Steering Group set up after NIFTY NUGGET in 1977-78 to follow through. Here I'm proudest of pushing through legislation to increase our authority to call up reserves without declaring a state of national emergency, from 50,000 to 100,000 men. That took

two years. Then I played a key role in Exercise PROUD SPIRIT in 1980. I'm as pleased with having picked that up as I am in having produced an overall defense policy guidance which I think is about as good as can be done. It's only 18 pages long, because Harold Brown said, "You will produce it in 18 pages." Both the DCPG and the defense policy guidance were of course reviewed and approved by Harold. If he approves something, it means that he has read it and understood it and almost invariably questioned at least one part of it. My rapport with Harold has been based on my producing staff work that he thought was pretty good but even the stuff he thought was pretty damn good he would modify on occasion.

I tried to do a lot of other things as USD/P. I did not wait for business to come to me. I would say that in my 4 years in the Defense Department 95 percent of what I sent to Harold was initiated by me and my staff. And of that I initiated the bulk. In other words, I formulated propositions, strategic precepts, policy initiatives, program initiatives, got them staffed, and then recommended them to the

Secretary of defense. It was almost entirely a one-way street. Harold was too busy to sit up there and think of all sorts of things he wanted the staff to do, and then fire out requests and directives. I thought out what I wanted to propose, got it staffed, coordinated it, and then sent it to him. I think he was very pleased with that.

Rochester: Didn't you have to referee or orchestrate responses coming back? Doesn't the under secretary for policy inevitably end up spending more time managing or massaging or orchestrating rather than conceiving?

Komer: No. Normally --

Goldberg: The ordinary one might.

Komer: Yes, I think your word was "inevitable." Let me tell you that I spent more time conceiving than I did coordinating or pulling together, but that was because I was an old hand and I have a different style. For example, I rarely had meetings. I was chairman of a considerable number of boards and committees but I just didn't call a meeting unless I could be convinced it would be productive. I did not have a Friday staff meeting. I did not go to

meetings, except where I had to. I called meetings only when it would serve a particular purpose, and I insisted on not letting my calendar be cluttered up with everyone and his brother wanting to come in and embrace the under secretary. I modelled myself consciously on Harold Brown. You know how Harold could turn out that enormous amount of work? How Harold could read everything? He saw very few people. You look at Harold's appointment schedule for a day, and there are these enormous gaps. He's sitting in there, with all his in-boxes, reading papers. He could speed-read them. Harold Brown favored written communication, and one of the secrets of my success was I communicated with him 90 percent in writing. He hated to have someone come in and want to talk to him. Some people have to talk. I do not have to talk. I think that its better to submit yourself to the discipline of writing. So I turned around and did the same to my people.

True, I'm much more garrulous and approachable than Harold. Even so I'd throw people out of the office. I'd refuse to see them. I avoided the ambassadorial luncheon circuit like the plagues. That's a 2-1/2

hour chunk out of the middle of the day. Ambassadors' luncheons start out with drinks, then four courses, then cognac and cigars and coffee. The State Department gets paid to do that. I wouldn't even go to dinners. Back when I was the White House man on the Middle East, Africa and South Asia in the 60s, we went out about 7 times a week. That was when I was 15 years younger. I won't go out at all any more unless its important. Harold would go to the Chinese embassy only. I think he once went to the French, he once went to the British, etc. The word got out: "Harold does not accept social invitations." I did the same thing.

I created time to personally draft memos to the secretary or letters or directives from him to the JCS, the services, State, NSC, etc. Much of the best stuff (this is a little self-serving) that came, memos from the secretary of defense or myself, to the chairman or the secretary, I wrote. I have a simple view. If the president of the United States or the secretary of state or the secretary of defense is to take time to read and sign something, their chief subordinates ought to take time to write it. We were sending briefs over to the president (I

wrote them personally). I had a staff do a draft sometime, unless there wasn't time. But it usually didn't satisfy me. It was easier for me to write what I wanted to say and check it with the staff, which I always did, than to have some poor colonel stay up all night to do a draft that he knows I am going to throw in the waste basket because it ain't what Komer wanted to say or ain't said the right way. It's easier for me to do it myself.

Rochester: Was the position conceived for that purpose?

Komer: I doubt it. The position was created to replace the second deputy secretary, whatever he did. Judging from the directive creating the job, nobody had really thought through what the under secretary for policy should do. Resor hadn't thought it through (only McGiffert had very clearly thought it through; the USD/P was just supposed to sit around while McGiffert ran everything).

Rochester: How did you avoid a McGiffert problem? Did you just ignore it?

Komer: McGiffert tried to do exactly the same thing to me that he did to Stan Resor. The only difference was

that he did it successfully to Stan, and he did it with total lack of success to me because I had the benefit of knowing from the start that there was a McGiffert problem. Guess who told me? Stan Resor. He said, "Bob, you're going to have a hell of a problem."

Goldberg: You didn't have to be told.

Komer: But it was nice to be able to tell Dave that Stan told me that before he left. I did two things. First of all, since I felt that we were not doing enough about strategy and policy, I divided ISA in two the day I arrived. I carved out of ISA all of the policy planning -- strategic nuclear planning, contingency planning, policy planning, MBFR, arms control -- and created a separate office for it under Slocombe. In other words I made Slocombe, who was the principal ISA deputy, deputy under secretary, reporting directly to me. This was because of my feeling that McGiffert, like most ASD(ISA)'s, was far too busy on day-to-day political-military matters to have time for forward planning. Dave McGiffert and most of his predecessors, most of whom I have known all the way back to Frank Nash, were so busy on the political-military that they didn't get time

to do strategy. So I wanted to have the policy and strategy guys reporting directly to me. I didn't want to have them go through a McGiffert problem on the main issues I wanted to tackle personally. McGiffert was unhappy, but swallowed this -- perhaps because he had hopes that I would get so busy on the policy planning side that I would not bother him on the political-military side. He proved to be wrong, but that's all right. You see, I had been in the business for 30 years and Dave had been in the business for 2 years, and there is no competition there anyway.

Goldberg: That division is being continued and formalized even more now, isn't it?

Komer: I gather with some modification. Perle gets NATO and arms control and Bing West get the rest of the world.

Goldberg: Bing gets the McGiffert job and Perle gets the Slocombe job.

Komer: Except that Perle will have some political-military and Bing will have some policy. It's not clear to me. But basically the split I made is formalized. Now the second thing I did to McGiffert was simply

to decree that every piece of paper that went to the secretary from anywhere in the policy cluster would go through me formally, in other words, it wouldn't go unless it had my initials and said "through USD/P." I told my three deputies that in 95 percent of the cases I'll just put a K on them; in some cases I won't even have time to read them. But I want to be sure any advice from the policy cluster to the secretary or deputy secretary or the chairman comes from the under secretary for policy. That one really hit them.

Now let me take a stab at your first and second questions. By and large I think that the present organization of DoD is about as good as you're going to get. I would suggest two or three changes. These are recommendations I made to the secretary and to Graham Claytor in commenting on Bill Brehm's 1980 study. First of all I think it ridiculous to have an ASD(MRA&L) handling 70 percent of the defense budget. Both the manpower and increasingly the logistic function are of such magnitude that they really should be handled by a third under secretary, in my judgment. Either John White or Robin Pirie

would have been a splendid third under secretary. So I would upgrade that job and divide the manpower and logistic functions again, under him.

Goldberg: Well, why did Brown do it?

Komer: I think Bill Brehm recommended it. You'll have to ask Harold why he did it. I thought it was dumb at the time. Poor Robin and Dick Danzig were going crazy, and one of the consequences was that they were so busy they never got a chance to overhaul and retool that lousy old shop they had. All those old crocks in it, etc.

I also feel very strongly that one of DoD's worst flaws lies in the JCS organization and not in OSD. For 15 years I have been very much a believer that we should split the JCS off from the services. The JCS should be full-time senior people who have already been service chiefs, or at any rate four stars, who spend all their time on strategic planning, strategic policy, and advising the secretary. The primary purpose would be to get away from service parochialism. Today a member of the JCS is also a service chief, and I would estimate spends 90 to 95 percent of his time on service matters and only 5 to

10 percent on JCS matters. I don't think you would find a member of the JCS who would disagree with that allocation. The chairman of course is in a quite different situation. I just don't think that service chiefs who can only spend 5 or 10 percent of their time on the sort of issues the JCS ought to be struggling with can do the kind of job that needs to be done. This is one of the reasons why the JCS don't get involved enough in strategy and policy or why, when they do, they take positions which reflect the lowest common denominator of interservice agreement.

Goldberg: Don't you think your percentages are too low there?

Komer: As I said it, I was thinking of it. It may even be too low. Maybe 98 percent.

Goldberg: Oh no, I mean your 5 or 10 percent.

Komer: No! When you say low I just don't think so. It would be interesting to ask Shy Meyer. Or ask Dave Jones because he was a service chief, of course. There is another thing that I feel very strongly should not be changed. I have been involved with systems analysis since it was created by McNamara in the early 60s. I emphatically believe that the

systems analysis shop must report directly to the secretary and work only for him. Otherwise, it is not going to be able to do its job. That's the same principle which led me to say to Harold Brown that I'd be happy to work for him even without pay, but my one boundary condition was that I would work only for him. You can't put PA&E, as its called now, under the under secretary for policy when there's another guy who is the equivalent to the under secretary for policy called the under secretary for research, development, and acquisition, who has more money to play with than the policy guy does and the ASD(MRA&L) controls the other 70% of the Pentagon budget. USD/P doesn't have any money. He's just rhetoric. Nor should you put systems analysis under the comptroller, which was the way it began, with Charlie Hitch as Assistant Secretary (Comptroller).

Goldberg: Isn't that what's being considered now?

Komer: I heard it was being considered. I just don't think you ought to do it. I think that PA&E gives a service to the secretary and I might add to the under secretaries. I presume Bill Perry says the same. PA&E gives absolutely invaluable advice. I

cannot abide those who argue over the baneful influence of PA&E. It has influence only if the policy makers accept its advice. But I certainly want their analysis and advice. I'm a big boy; I have no hesitation in telling PA&E when I disagree with them. It's an abdication of responsibility if I don't. They say the systems analysts make policy or programs. They only make it by default.

Now my working relationships with the secretary, etc.: 90 percent in writing. It's the way Harold preferred it, and I was perfectly happy with it, because it worked extremely well. This is not because Harold didn't like me, or didn't want to see me. It's because Harold found talking much less efficient than reading. He much preferred to sit there with his hi-fi playing and read all the papers. I wrote articulate papers, very short, very well argued; I would rewrite them sometimes seven or eight times (used to drive my secretaries crazy). If it was a very important paper, I was going to carve it like a sculpture. And it really paid off. Harold could tell what came from me. Also I have a very informal style, which he doesn't admire but which he finds very useful. I'm a great believer in

saying: "I think it would be dumb to do that. Here's why." It's not elegant, not bureaucratic, but does it save time!

Goldberg: Do you get "pari passu" into any of them?

Komer Yes, yes. Harold loved Latin, Greek, French, German, Russian history, astronomy, it doesn't matter -- that Renaissance man seemed to know it all. My relationship with Bill Perry on the other hand was very warm. He would call me all the time on stuff and I would call him. We worked very closely together, and I think it was just two congenial personalities who had respect for each other. With Graham, I didn't have that much business, but what little business I had I thoroughly enjoyed. With Harold, other people rarely got to say anything at meetings, etc. I was one of the few who ever dared to speak up, but I can assure you only on those things where I felt I knew more about the subject than he did. Graham, on the other hand, had absolutely no side. He had total self confidence; it would not bother Graham at all to go to an NSC meeting or an SCC meeting and say, "Bob will handle this issue because he knows more about

it than I do." Didn't bother him one damn bit. He was perfectly secure.

Goldberg: He was a manager.

Komer: Harold would rarely acknowledge that anybody else knew anything or that he himself didn't know it. Perhaps it bothered him to say Komer is a big expert on this or I'm speaking Komer's brief. If he's at a meeting, he's going to be the guy who does the wheeling and dealing. And he did it beautifully, I must say.

Rochester: Were meetings of the top staff held regularly?

Komer: No, there were very few staff meetings. The only reason we had the AFPC was so that all the top OSD management could see Harold Brown in the flesh at least once a week. AFPC meetings were strictly dramatic monologues on the part of Harold Brown, who addressed every issue, did 99.9 percent of the talking and got up and left when he was through with the agenda. The meetings were "morale building." They were also a way for Harold to communicate various broad views about the defense budget and

other things to all of his top management down through assistant secretary and all the assistants and assistants to the assistants. He would frequently give a little debriefing about what happened at the cabinet meeting or Friday White House policy sessions, though never on sensitive matters. No, there was no system of meetings. The only important operative meeting that Harold held regularly was LA/PA in the morning, and that was strictly with his personal staff plus Ross and Stempler. Plus the Tuesday meeting with the JCS (I attended), which also tended to be Brown's dramatic monologue.

Goldberg: Legislative affairs and public affairs?

Komer: Yes. At one point I was asked if I thought I ought to come, and I said, "God, No." They had them at 8 o'clock in the morning, mostly on the Defense Department vs. the outside world, Congress and the media.

I've dealt with question #2, I think. Yes, I've had great difficulty in getting the Pentagon bureaucracy to agree on basic policy. Therefore, I chose to operate quite differently than Stan Resor. Stan went right down to the wire trying to negotiate with

everybody else in the Pentagon -- with the three services, factions within the services, with other offices. Instead I basically wrote the key parts of my DPG, sent it out, got their comments back, reviewed all of them, and proceeded to ignore 65-75 percent of them. I modified the 10% where we had been unclear, and went back only on maybe 10 percent where I thought the critics had legitimate cases. Then after I heard argument and proposed compromises as far as I could, I decided the matter.

In the 1981 DPG case, I also thought that Harold and I, particularly after we had lost the election, did not want another consensus document. We needed rather a document that laid out cogently and coherently what we thought the defense policy and strategy of the U.S. ought to be -- a legacy if you will. Even then I had to make some compromises because even after we lost the election the damn State Department kept moaning. I will get to that in a moment.

Rochester: Which service gave you the toughest time, tended to be the most obstructionist?

Komer: The Navy, almost invariably. The Navy lives in a different world. I'm not sure the Navy's accepted OSD yet.

Goldberg: OSD doesn't recognize Neptune.

Komer: Yes we do, we just don't want to give them all the nymphs.

Goldberg: Neptune is God and Mahan is his prophet.

Komer: Should the undersecretary be basically a manager or an analyst? I think he should try to be both, and I was both. I was one of the best managers in the building, in my judgment. I've had a lot of managerial experience, but I hope I was also the premier civilian strategic thinker in the building -- partly by default, because there just weren't any others at top levels. They were too busy being managers.

Goldberg: Well, you can throw the military in too for that matter.

Komer: Yes, including the military, although on a man-for-man basis a top military mind is probably better on military strategy than a civilian one because the military at least have some experience with the nuts and bolts and most of the civilians don't.

As for the question on the military-industrial complex, I'll finesse it. I doubt that such a complex really exists, and I don't know why Eisenhower was playing games. Question number 4 is not my bag

though I have views on it. On number 5, I see no major change in U.S. strategic policy during the last four years. But there have been a number of significant modifications going in the direction already laid out by Schlesinger and Rumsfeld, such as the further elaboration of a countervailing nuclear strategy in NUWEP, and, over our DoD objections, in PD 59. The two major changes in strategic nuclear strategy were, first, the much greater emphasis in strategic connectivity (to wit, C³) to give the necessary capability to actually fight the force if worst came to worst. We funded that more under the Brown administration than we ever had before. Second, was the issuance of PD 59, which formalized and expanded upon the more informal changes that had been made earlier (under Schlesinger in particular). It codified our strategic nuclear policy and strategy in a very constructive way.

More important than PD 59 in this connection was the Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy, which we decided not to put out to any other agency. This is the secretary of defense's guidance to the chiefs and through the chiefs to CINCSAC. In the 1980 NUWEP we developed the building block approach and the

idea of flexible alternatives. Walt Slocombe and his team did all the staff work on this, but I too am a great believer in the trend of thinking which culminated in PD 59 and the current NUWEP. I have always favored the idea that you will have a better deterrent capability if you were actually prepared to use nukes, than to have something which is unusable because you don't have the C³, etc. If you don't have a strategy, if you haven't figured anything out, and the other side perceives this, it's a great way to get yourself in nuclear war.

On question #6, about SALT II: I was and am a strong supporter of the SALT II Treaty on basically the same grounds as the joint chiefs of staff. In the absence of a reasonable (and by reasonable I also mean reasonably verifiable) set of limits, an unrestricted strategic arms race would be an enormous diversion of scarce resources from higher priority defense needs. In other words, I would not want to spend the marginal two to four hundred billion of defense investment over the next decade on strategic nuclear modernization as opposed to conventional force modernization. I also heartily agree on thinking the unthinkable. If we ever, God forbid, had

to cross the nuclear threshold, we'd damn well better do so carefully and cautiously, not commit mutual suicide. I fear that in the absence of SALT II or something like it we are going to end up (because the Russians will) diverting much too much into a competitive strategic nuclear buildup which will not alter "essential equivalence" for stalemate (as I like to call it) but will drain off a hell of a lot of resources. That is essentially why I favor putting some kind of even porous lid on the strategic nuclear race. I think what I have described is essentially why the JCS unanimously agreed to SALT II.

Question #8: I had limited though cordial relationships with the service secretaries. They are not really in the policy or the strategic business. They are supposed to be the managers of their services. The kinds of issues they invariably got involved in (people issues, personnel issues), really were not my business. I dealt far more with the service chiefs than with the service secretaries, and far

more with the uniformed military in the services than with the civilian hierarchy.

Has interservice rivalry and competition been a serious problem for me? And how! The services remained in my Pentagon years a great deal more parochial than they ought to be. This is because of a fundamental institutional characteristic. Every institution has its institutional repertoire, and the more hierarchial the institution, the more firmly it adheres to it. Here it is hardly surprising that the navy sees maritime war as the most important thing and wants to put most of our money into it. It's not amazing at all that the air force is big-bomber oriented, nor is it amazing that the tankers have tended to dominate the army hierarchy, that they are Europe-oriented as opposed to anything else, or that they want big expensive tanks because that's the best way to defeat big expensive Russian tanks. But I am depressed by the inability of the services to rise above parochialism.

This leads me to wonder whether we should not do a lot more than we have done already to encourage interservice thinking and to promote people who will not think so much in parochial service terms. One device to that end is my proposal to disconnect the JCS from the service chiefs. I don't know if a Tom Hayward on a terminal assignment after having been CNO would be more flexible as a member of the JCS. I know a Max Taylor would.

Goldberg: What about their staffs?

Komer: That is a very big problem. If you just have as these chiefs guys without an interservice purple suit staff, you've got a problem. But you look at the Joint Staff and you say, if these guys are true purple suiters, they risk ruining themselves with their services. Therefore, the argument is you would have to put these guys permanently on a separate promotion list. That isn't such a good idea, I have to admit.

However, we used to have a thing called the JSSC. Those JSSC guys were deliberately deprived of staff because the chiefs wanted them, as two and three stars, to do a little thinking themselves. You remember the army three star chairman, Paul Caraway. Anyway, the JSSC lasted until about 1960 or something like that. Five senior military men who did a lot of thinking on their own. I read some of their papers. They wrote some very good ones without any staff at all. They just had a secretary, a long-term colonel, and a couple of sergeants. That was it. If you want to take some unusual military people, and put them in a job like that, it will work. If you put a Paul Gorman in a job like that, he doesn't need any staff, because he's so far ahead of any staff. Dick Lawson doesn't need that much of a staff. If you want staffs, give them each a staff officer or something. Give them lots of secretaries. Give them a little technical staff, because those guys won't cause so much trouble.

Goldberg: But they still have to go to the services for information. And that's tough to get around. Its

tough for them to avoid being influenced by the services.

Komer: It's not impossible if you dig. If I want to find out about the navy, I go to the air force. If I want to find out about the air force I go to the navy. If I want to find out about the marines, I go to the army, and vice versa.

Goldberg: For an army manual you're going to go to the navy?

Komer: You can get manuals. If I want to know what's wrong with a carrier --

Goldberg: I'm talking about JSSC. They go to their own services normally.

Komer: I didn't say it would be perfect, Al. I just say it would be better than we have now. So much for military advice. Take the example of the rapid deployment force. I was disappointed in the caliber of service thinking about the Persian Gulf. I think this is partly because it was such a new problem to them. The American services have never really thought seriously about the Persian Gulf-Indian

Ocean area. It has not been a primary area of American concern. But it was to me as the old CIA Middle East estimator, and then the White House action officer on all ME/South Asian matters, 1961-66. So I had learned a lot more about the Indian Ocean-Persian Gulf than the secretary, the deputy secretary, and the JCS put together. Not because I'm smarter than they are, but because this area happened to be my parish for six years in the 60s, when I was head of the Middle East section of the national estimate staff in the 50s, and when I was out there as ambassador to Turkey. I was even our CENTO representative for a short while.

I am even the "godfather" of Diego Garcia. It was I who went to President Kennedy and said, "We've got to have a base in the Indian Ocean because the British are gradually pulling out east of Suez. In ten years they're going to be gone, and only the Americans can fill the gap. The best way to fill the gap is to have a base out there, and the best way to get a base is to work a deal with the Brits for joint use of an island. Don't put any base on the mainland, we'll get kicked out. But if we can

find an island before the British leave we can freeze that island in perpetuity." Kennedy said, "you're right, go talk to McNamara." I had never heard of Diego Garcia, by the way. First the British offered the island of Aldabra. You know the story, we ended up with Diego Garcia.

Goldberg: Would Aldabra have been better?

Komer: Oh much! Right on the Mozambique channel. It's closer to the Persian Gulf. It has a lot of advantages. Bigger island, more attractive. The only reason we got Diego is because there was no other damn use for it. Now it's worth its weight in gold. Building it up is going to be very expensive, however. I insisted on at least a billion dollars for Diego in the FY 82-86 FYDP.

Goldberg: There wasn't anything on Aldabra except that it was a kind of a nature preserve with a lot of naturalists.

Komer: We were defeated by the pink-footed booby. As to your question on the Department of State, I already knew at least half of the senior professional

officials in the State Department. My great and good friend Dave Newsom was my opposite number as under secretary of state for policy. Hence I feel that my personal relations with State and my ability to get things done over there were excellent. By and large, it was the secretary of state and his deputy who were the major opponents of half the initiatives the Defense Department thought needed to be taken. There was a basic philosophical difference between Brown and Brzezinski on the one hand and the secretary of state on the other, whether it was Vance or Muskie. Harold favored a greater security effort and a more aggressive attempt to develop alliance relationships, work things out, acquire real estate, etc. Brzezinski and Brown were usually natural allies against State. I had to help smooth a lot of this over and to help try to get State to come along with us. My personal relationships helped a great deal, but I would say we had more trouble with the Department of State than with any other part of government throughout my tenure. I was one of the few people even peripherally involved in the initiation of the hostage rescue effort. I said at the time that it was a very high

risk and dubious proposition. When it got put on the back burner and I was frozen out, I should have been more suspicious than I was. But I was never briefed on what actually took place. There was a standdown and I think they were right to freeze me out. There was very little I could contribute by that time. While I always thought it was high risk, I am not prepared to say that we made a mistake. I think we were the victims of fell circumstance. I think we showed the damn plan to the secretary of state, deputy secretary of state, and Brzezinski and that was about all.

I think I've covered most of the prepared questions, but let me go back to the last question -- my accomplishments and failures -- because I really romped too quickly over some of the specifics of my NATO stewardship and various facets of what I call the coalition approach. I'd like to mention a few. One is the concept of Host Nation Support -- asking the allies to provide resources which they can provide more readily than we can for the backup of our forces. We pioneered this concept with NATO. It's been around a long time, but was only made a

major thrust of defense policy by Harold Brown as part of our NATO initiatives. Having made it a major thrust of defense policy, someone had to follow through on it. Since I was the one who persuaded the secretary of defense to make it a major defense thrust, I volunteered to follow through on it. I tried to devolve some of the burden on MRA&L, but they were just unable to handle it. I feel we'll have to rely more and more on HNS because in past wars we could not only deploy overseas in relatively leisurely fashion but had time to take our tail with us. In WWI the Americans had to take most of their support with them to Europe and set up a big COMMZ because the British and French were already at the end of their tether supporting their own forces.

Goldberg: WWI?

Komer: WWI. We brought locomotives --

Goldberg: They supplied us with most of our weapons.

Komer: If we bought them for money they then used to turn around and buy supplies from us.

Goldberg: But most of our artillery and aircraft came from the French and British.

Komer: And originally tanks too. But that's major item procurement. I'm talking about logistics. We built our own damn railroads across France. We had our own damn truck lines across France. And we did the same thing in WWII. We took this enormous logistics tail with us. There was plenty of time to build it up. The allies bought us the time. Our force projection strategy dictates that we fight our battles overseas. We like to fight our wars over someone else's real estate. As an American chauvinist I'm all in favor of that. While it might be hard on the French and Germans and the Japanese, tough.

But now we face a crucial problem of time compression. Today we not only have to project our forces overseas, we have to do so if possible before the war starts so we can deter it. We need rapid deployment. The word rapid is the key. Obviously, as I said earlier, if you're going to have to deploy sizeable forces very rapidly, five divisions and a thousand aircraft to NATO or three divisions to the Persian Gulf, that's an enormous undertaking. In that case, we cannot simultaneously deploy adequate levels of support. Therefore, ipso facto, there is an imperative

strategic requirement for at least initially drawing the maximum amount of supply and support from the locals, whether in the Persian Gulf, in Japan, Korea or in NATO. We have carried HNS analysis and initiatives based on it well beyond what had been even thought about before 1977. We included in the LTDP at my suggestion a "transatlantic bargain" whereby our U.S. Rapid Reinforcement Program would be tied to European agreement to provide numerous kinds of transport and other support. Since it involved mostly wartime allocation of existing civil assets, we were confident our allies would find it a good bargain. I am particularly pleased with our negotiations with the German MOD to carry out this HNS bargain. My own staff and I conducted them, and now that I'm gone, my last NATO deputy, LTG Dick Groves, is carrying them through. We're agreed in principle on German support that will save us 90,000 wartime support spaces. All that remains to be settled are a few details on peacetime cost sharing.

Goldberg: What could you get in the Persian Gulf by way of support?

Komer: Let me just give you one example. Isn't it paradoxical

that we should carry POL to the Persian Gulf to defend our most important source of POL? Aren't there lots of refineries and stockpiles out there? It's like carrying coals to Newcastle. So, I got Harold in July or September of 1980 to enunciate a policy that we would depend on our allies worldwide to provide our initial POL requirements from their stockpiles. The military can calculate what we need. My idea was very simply that we'd then go to the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, the Omanis, Qatar, and Bahrain, and say that if you want to enable us to come to your rescue, "we want you to build the following hardened storage and distribution facilities and to stock them with the following amounts of avgas, mogas, diesel, etc." The cost to them would not be terribly great, just for the facilities. The gain to them is that the Americans will come and protect them. Moreover, the POL stocks they held for us would be like money in the bank -- better than money in the bank. Oil is more valuable than inflating dollars.

I promoted the same concept for NATO. Harold told the NATO defense ministers that we expected the NATO

allies to provide us out of their civil stockpiles (which they intend to use to support their own forces) whatever POL we don't already have available for the first 30 to 60 days of war. Why shouldn't we raid German civil stocks the same way the Bundeswehr plans to raid German civil stocks? We can do the same in Japan. The second thing I wanted from the locals in the Persian Gulf is water. They're building these big desalting plants. Can you imagine hauling water from Charleston, S.C. to Abadan?

Goldberg: Is that what we're planning to do?

Komer: Yes, we actually have a water tanker in Diego Garcia, can you imagine that? The locals can provide the water. We'll provide the guns and ammo. They can provide port facilities -- stevedores, repair installations. Very fortunately the Saudis are in the process of buying 18 battalion sets of Hawks. Raytheon sold them in addition a very good little Hawk maintenance facility, manned by contract employees working for Raytheon. If we deploy to the Persian Gulf, how many Hawks are we going to have to take with us? Oh, 6 or 7 battalions at least, but we can get them repaired out there in

that Saudi facility. Maybe the Saudis ought to overbuild that facility so that instead of being able to process and rework 10 Hawk missiles a day they can do 20. The Saudis will pay for that like a shot as long as it flies the Saudi flag, and is a Saudi installation, not American, but it'll still be run by the same people, Raytheon. The U.S. taxpayer will not have to pay a penny for it, directly. Indirectly of course, he's paying for it through what we pay for gasoline. I have no hesitation about asking host nation support from these rich bastards who are screwing us. What the hell!

Next HNS idea: Air defense. A few days after I left office we signed an MOU with the British which I think has great potential. The deal, which took two years to work, and which I invented, was that the United States Air Force would buy six squadrons worth of Rapier antiaircraft missiles to defend our airfields in the U.K. -- point defense -- if the RAF would man them. It did not take a lot of pen and pencil work to figure out that the one-time capital cost of buying the damn missiles and launchers was a lot cheaper than the regular recurring people cost

of manning them. So I proposed a deal. You man them and we'll buy them. It worked. Oh boy, did I run into roles and missions squabbles with the army and air force. So I simply said, "Wait a second, I refuse to accept the roles and mission argument here. I won't even take it to Harold. The roles and mission argument is between the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force. What I am proposing is that the RAF man these things, and gentlemen, the RAF solved the roles and missions issue in 1919." Lew Allen and Shy Meyer got together and agreed to work on roles and missions. I said, "Don't bother." What did I have in mind? Buying \$300,000,000 worth of Rapiers to protect U.S. air fields which are a long way from the Russians? Yes, because new Russian tactical aircraft can reach there now. We intend to put about 48 percent of the Tacair that deploys to Europe in the U.K., because it's farther back and we have longer-legged airplanes than the Russians. But my main objective was to set up a precedent for doing the same on the continent. The ultimate rationality in the defense of NATO is for us to buy the equipment and provide it as the arsenal of

democracy and the allies to provide the manpower. You can't say that publicly but its the way we ought to do it.

Goldberg: It happened in World War II?

Komer: It happened even in WWI to an extent. If we ever had had the campaign in 1919 we were going to use all those Liberty engines, DeHavilland 4's, new tanks, and new Lewisite gas. We were building enough Lewisite shells to have gassed half the world. I'm glad we never had the offensive in 1919. It would have been like dropping the atom bomb. At a conference at Princeton recently, I chided the Germans for cancelling Roland to defend Luftwaffe airfields. I said, "Wait a second, fellows, you shouldn't have taken that decision unilaterally because the Americans are going to fly in to those airfields under our war plans, as you well know, and fly off those bases, and you're saying you're not going to provide a SAM defense for bases that the Americans are going to use. I think it's unacceptable that you made a unilateral decision on that." Bowman raised it with Jurgen Brandt, the German Inspector General, yesterday, and I'm going to put it in print. It's going to appear

in Die Zeit within a week. I made an offer to the Germans. I said, "we'll buy the missiles, if you're too chintzy to buy the missiles, as long as the Luftwaffe will man them." They have conscripts. And I think we can get something there. Now there is a form of a mix of host nation support and division of labor. Why should we have to maintain these very expensive missile batteries on somebody else's soil when they can man them locally, largely with reservists? All our NIKES in the U.S. were handled by Army National Guard and reserves. I've been arguing this with the Germans and so have Shy and Jack Vessey and others. We've been trying to tell them, "man your missiles and SAM units with a mix of active duty cadre and reservists." Can't seem to get through.

Look at what it would do to the defense of the West if the forward deployed countries provided the manpower and we provided a lot of the equipment. That's in fact what we're doing with Turkey today. That's in fact what we'll do with Pakistan tomorrow. It's in fact what we have done with Korea for the past 30 years. It makes all the sense in the world, and when a country like Korea gets to the point where

it can pay for most of it, we'll charge them. In fact my idea is to get the Japanese to take on the bill, and I've already discussed that with the Japanese at the defense minister level.

The coalition approach is the wave of the future, in my judgment. The coalition approach is the only viable road to credible deterrence or defense at a cost politically acceptable to free society. In theory we can spend 40 percent of GNP on defense like we did in WWII. We can probably do that more comfortably, though not politically more easily, than the Russians. The Russians can do it much more easily than we can politically. But I don't want to think in terms of spending 20 percent of GNP on defense, much less 40%. I want to think in terms of a strategy, a policy, a force posture, which we can sustain at something like 7 or 8 percent of GNP, which is the most that we can politically get away with in peacetime. How do you do that? There's only one way. It's to get the Allies to do more alongside us. If we have to carry the Japanese and Europeans, in addition to carrying the defense of the Persian Gulf for the wealthiest people in the world who are sitting out there on all that oil, I don't know how

we're going to do it. But we can do it if we do it together. Get the allies to invest more in the common security. Nobody has worked that problem harder than I. My basic premise has been that, fortunately, we have rich allies and the Soviets have only poor ones. We need to take advantage of this fact. We've got the Japanese, we've got the Saudis and the Germans. Hence our problem is to devise a strategy and policy to get those guys to pull their weight. I'm not talking equity, I'm talking deterrence.

Second, since we are not going to get them to do too much more (we couldn't even get the Allies up to 3 percent, although as I say external factors took over), how are we going to make 7 percent? No ally spends 7 percent of GNP on defense except maybe Turkey, and of course what they get for it isn't much. So we've got to improve the effectiveness of outputs, too. We are wasting a lot of money. Do you know that NATO spends more on defense than the Warsaw Pact? But we get a lot less for our money because of the wasteful overlap and duplication between our programs. We simply must seek more

efficient collective burden sharing, which is why I pushed RSI initiatives so hard.

I'm going to write a book on the subject. I've been the great protagonist of coalition defense. I guess I have been the great practitioner of it, too, for four solid years. All those Rand studies -- I've followed them out. In fact, I told Harry Rowen, "You know, Harry, the Rand work that had the greatest and most direct and immediate impact on U.S. policy was not your damn SAC basing study, it was my NATO studies." Anything else or can I go home?

Goldberg: May we ask you one more question? What are your views on the volunteer army?

Komer: The volunteer army in my view was a political imperative because of the post-Vietnam syndrome. There was no way we could have sustained the draft in the anti-military mood engendered by the Vietnam war. There is little doubt in my mind that a draft is a more efficient way to generate manpower, particularly if we are willing to pay draftees less than a living wage, which is what most other forces do -- the Russians, the Germans, the French, etc.

But, if, as Harold Brown told me we might have to do, we had to pay draftees as much as we're paying volunteers, then you do not get the same degree of efficiency. You get a richer slice of American society; that's what it comes down to. I've always worried about the inequity of drafting (out of let's say a class of 1981 of 2 million) only 400,000 people or something like that, in which one out of every four goes. But universal military services in fact are big make-work programs, and I don't think we ought to waste money that way just in order to satisfy the one out of four who get picked. But if you're going to pick only one out of 4 or 5, or even one out of 3, then you can't pay them only \$100 a month. That would really be unfair. The 3 or 4 people who don't get picked get to go out into the market place and make \$10 an hour, but the 25 percent who do get picked get called up and they don't make a living to boot? There are other ways and means of giving them lump sums when they leave, above all giving them the GI bill, etc. In any case, the big problem is retention of professionals. We can solve this by revising the incentive structure and really paying these electronic

technicians, missileers, submarine torpedomen, or nuclear engineers what they're worth. Lastly, even if a draft would solve our manpower problems I would oppose it at this time. My reason is that the very act of going for it would create an enormous political issue in this country, an issue so divisive that wrangling over it would dilute our focus on more pressing defense buildup issues. It would be a great red herring, and might destroy the consensus of a stronger defense to boot. Only if we get in a crisis and are willing to significantly increase the size of our forces, would I favor the draft.

Goldberg: How about the combat people?

Komer: I would give combat people the best treatment I could. If you've ever looked at the casualty statistics, it's the poor infantry men who take it in the neck. So by God we really ought to give combat pay to those guys and give it in peacetime, because in wartime they might get snuffed out like that. In other words, I'm for a much more selective incentive structure. Unfortunately, the present incentive structure is geared just the wrong way. I

was reading some statistics the other day -- it used to be that a top sergeant made seven times as much as a private. Now he makes three times as much. Who is going to stay and be a top sergeant? Especially when seven times is a lot less than they can make by going out and joining an airline or trucking company.

Well, let me end as I began, by emphasizing a couple of key points. The Brown Defense Department saw an unusually fertile period of initiative and dynamism in defense planning, defense programming, and defense spending. That we did not perform in the end as well as we hoped was I think, more than anything else due to adverse economic circumstances: The 78-79 energy crunch, inflation, the decline in economic growth, etc. This phenomenon was the same with respect to the rest of the free world. The reasons why we're having big 3 percent arguments with the Germans, why the Japanese are unwilling to go up, are mostly economic. But in my view, Harold Brown ran one of the best defense departments that I can recall. I think Harold was another McNamara. In some respects Harold was more successful than McNamara, leaving aside Vietnam, partly because

Harold was a veteran of the McNamara years, had obviously studied carefully what McNamara did right and wrong, and had consciously tried to handle himself differently than Bob McNamara had.

Goldberg: One more thing. He did it under more adverse circumstances.

Komer: I would agree; he had less White House support.

Goldberg: Not only less White House support but a much more difficult time in general.

Komer: I agree with that, very well put. I am also satisfied with my own contribution. I believe that I justified Harold's confidence in me. I was the first real under secretary for policy we ever had, and filled a very large gap in the department, not because I'm so great, but because there was an enormous lacuna there. At least I had the wit to try and fill it (and probably the experience to do so, too).

I see my main accomplishments as having been the NATO and PG initiatives. I regret that, primarily for the economic reasons I've described, the NATO initiatives (though we designed them on a 10 or 15 year time frame) did not achieve what we had hoped

for by the end of four years. But they were imaginative, far reaching, and were addressed really to a more effective coalition way of doing things.

The Persian Gulf came along in the last year of Harold's and my tenure, but probably we will be seen in perspective as having set the basic guidelines for American policy, strategy, and deterrent defense posture in the Persian Gulf, all in one year. People are talking now about the "rabid deployment farce" instead of the rapid deployment force. People are saying it's a bluff, etc. I will give you the perception of a 38-year professional who has been working ever since 1952 in the top echelons of the U.S. security apparatus, even if as a junior staff officer. I have never seen a faster or more comprehensive peacetime response generated than the response of the Carter administration after the invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979. What triggered it all was Afghanistan, which to my mind is a less serious problem than the revolution in Iran, because the road to Persian Gulf oil in my judgment is through Iran and not through Afghanistan.

We really accomplished enormous things in one year. I notice that the new Republican budget and Republican policy basically picks them up and continues them. As far as the RDF is concerned, the Reagan budget is 90% the last Carter budget plus many things that the Pentagon submitted but didn't get. You know when OMB drew the line at \$196.4 billion, we had about \$4 billion more up above the line we'd wanted badly but didn't get. The Republicans just took that and then went beyond it.

On the other hand the Carter administration was very slow to awaken to the realities of the strategic vacuum in the Persian Gulf. Carter's Iran policy was not very sensible, though that's a Monday morning quarterback speaking. But once the President and Harold saw that they were under the gun and had a lever to work with, to wit Afghanistan, we really made up for lost time. You can't build Rome in a day. I mean it was physically impossible to do so in the one year left after we really launched the RDF (Brzezinski can say he put it in PD 18 but there was only a line and nobody paid attention to it; that's ridiculous). No matter how seriously we took

it, if we started building a thousand CX aircraft, if we started building 20 new aircraft carriers, if we started developing a new 300,000 man force -- none of that would have been available by the time we turned over to the Reaganites on 20 January 1981. So all the usual instantaneous demand of the American press for miracles was unattainable. There is no such thing as this kind of a miracle. We have to be judged on what we got started.

We accomplished, in my judgment, almost as much as it was physically possible to accomplish in a year. And as I say, as an old pro who has been involved in everything since WWII, our gearing up was faster than anything else we've done in peacetime (obviously not faster than what we did in the Korean War or in the Manhattan project or something like that). Remember, the Persian Gulf was a strategic vacuum. The only people who ever paid any attention to it before were Bob Komer and a few others. I at least had gotten us a base out there. We will end up with a billion dollars worth of installations on Diego Garcia, I predict, within another two years. Almost a billion dollars of construction has already been

authorized or is underway. Would it have been there if back in the 60s I hadn't perceived the need and a solution, which was to buy a base from the British before they left? That was my real contribution. If I hadn't done that, we'd be naked. We wouldn't have anything. It would be another three years before we could build something, and we couldn't buy Diego Garcia today if we tried to.

So as I look back, I frankly feel that I'm not filing too much of a defensive brief. I am proud to have worked with people as capable as Brown and Jones and Claytor and Perry. I feel I too made a major contribution. It was my second career. I feel that in only four years I could hardly have done more than I did. It was mostly investment in things that have not yet come to pass but the NATO initiatives will work because they have to. The coalition approach will be increasingly the order of the day because it has to be. There's no other viable way. The things that we started in the Persian Gulf with the RDF and the base structure, etc., will be pursued because there is no better way to do it. The LTDP, host

nation support, the Transatlantic bargain, rapid reinforcement, all those things I think will become fixed elements of American strategy and defense policy. Could I ask for more?

Goldberg: Thank you very much, we appreciate it.



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

COMPTROLLER
(Administration)

26 JAN 1982

Mr. Robert W. Komer
214 Franklin St.
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear ^{Bob} ~~Mr. Komer~~:

You will recall that you were interviewed on March 25, 1981, by Roger R. Trask, Stuart Rochester and myself, representatives of the OSD Historical Office, as part of our oral history program. We are presently establishing an interview exchange system among the various historical offices within the Department of Defense (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, JCS, and OSD), all of which have oral history collections. Our purpose is to use each other's interviews when they are appropriate to our research for histories and special studies. At present we do not anticipate making these interviews available to anyone other than official historians attached to the above listed offices.

Utilization of interviews will be subject, of course, to security classifications where they exist. In regard to access, we want to respect the wishes of the persons interviewed. Interviews might be closed, open with permission of the subject, open with permission required to cite or quote, or open without restriction. Interviews in the last category, of course, will be most useful for research purposes.

I am writing to ask you to indicate your preference in regard to our interview with you. If you would like to establish restrictions or conditions, please let me know about them in writing. If you wish to impose no restrictions, also please so indicate in writing.

Thank you very much for your cooperation on this matter. I shall look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Al

Alfred Goldberg
OSD Historian

*OK on these terms, plus notifying me who each time who has used the interview.
RW Komer
2/10/82*