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Interview with General Colin L. Powell
February 11, 1998

Goldberg: This is an oral history interview with General Colin Powell in Alexandria, Virginia, on February 11, 1998. Interviewers from the OSD Historical Office are Drs. Alfred Goldberg and Stuart Rochester.

I know you have written, spoken, and discussed the Goldwater-Nichols Act ad nauseum, probably, but we are still very much interested in it. Jim Locher is writing a book on it. There are other writings on it and some very good material on the subject in the Joint Forces Quarterly, which you instituted. Incidentally, I think it is one of the best publications of its kind, very high-grade. I am very favorably impressed with it and I generally read it carefully.

Powell: Let me tell you why I did it. JFQ is a magazine for the armed forces and I am very proud of it. I consider myself the father of it. I asked that a concept and a proposal be brought to me. Admiral Jack Baldwin, president of the National Defense University, was the key player to do that. He was a close friend of mine. We had been military assistants together for Deputy Secretary of Defense Graham Claytor. The reason I wanted something like JFQ is that after Desert Storm I found there was a need for the joint team to have the same organs of communication to the forces that each service had. It sometimes drove me to distraction to watch the Navy get its very parochial point of view out in the Proceedings of the Naval Institute, one of the best magazines in the world. I think it is tremendous, but it had such a Navy bias to it. The Marines had the Marine Corps Gazette, which had their party line, as well as informed articles. The Air Force had its magazine, the Army had its

magazine, Surface Warfare had their magazine, Wings of Gold had their magazine; everyone had a magazine putting out their line except the “company”. So I said I needed a corporate magazine that at least gives a team perspective. I don’t want to get rid of any of them, they are all valuable, they are what you need to motivate the members of the various cultures, but there should be one for all of us. I wanted it to have the flashiness of the Proceedings, with the solidness of the Army War College’s Parameters. I wanted a photogravure style so that it would be glossy and read. I wanted it to be a premier publication. Jack and his folks came back with a variety of ideas and layouts. We sat around the table in my office and had a debate over what to call it. After a while The Joint Forces Quarterly stuck to the wall. One of the principal reasons I liked that title was that it had a nice acronym, JFQ, and it captured what I was trying to do. It was one of a number of initiatives, such as JCS Pub 1, which made the point that we were a team and we fought as a team--team warfare. I was not trying to take away from any of the service cultures. I wanted to make sure that there was a team culture as well. It seemed to me that was a reflection of what Goldwater-Nichols intended and what I thought the nation deserved.

Goldberg: When Goldwater-Nichols was being considered and when it was enacted, how did you feel about it? Were you in favor of it in general?

Powell: I was a two-star major general, working for Caspar Weinberger as a military assistant. I was somewhat torn, because on the one hand I always tried to support my secretary, and he was dead set against it, along with the chiefs. On the other hand, I watched how a chairman had to operate, coming in alone in late

afternoon to give the secretary his personal advice [that he held], having spent the earlier part of the afternoon in a tank meeting hammering out the corporate advice.

Goldberg: Are you talking about Admiral Crowe?

Powell: At this time, I guess it was Bill. But I also watched General Vessey do the same thing. The chairman had that challenge of providing personal and corporate recommendations to the secretary. The way it manifested itself in my world, as his senior military assistant, was that when I needed something from the Joint Staff or the chiefs, I had one of two ways to get it. If I wanted it immediately and couldn't wait for coordination, chopping, and for everybody to agree with it, I would go to the assistant to the chairman, who at that time was Vice Admiral Art Moreau. Admiral Moreau, not being a member, technically, of the Joint Staff, could blow in to the Joint Staff, get me the information, and I would have it in an hour. But if I needed to know what the corporate body thought, then I would go to the Director of the Joint Staff, General Jack Merritt at the time. Then it would take days, because he had to go to the services, get approval from the chiefs or their Operational Deputies, and I would get the answer in due course. It wasn't nimble enough and it was highly probable that any useful edges would have been sanded off. So I could see why there was a need for something like Goldwater-Nichols. At the same time, I was working for a man who had been persuaded that this was a terrible thing. I don't know why, except that the chiefs had persuaded him and he didn't like getting instructions from Congress in the first place. My own view was that I wasn't sure it was that terrible, but I was working for a man who did think so. Weinberger asked me about many

things, and we shared many thoughts. On this one, I don't think we had many conversations.

Goldberg: This brings up something I wanted to talk about, and that is the role of the military assistant, which is a very important one. Cheney told us that he thought it a very important role--and others have said so--more important than that of special assistant, because he is the conduit to the military services, the Joint Chiefs, and so on. Cheney paid special attention to the people he got, wanted them from the Joint Staff, and got them from the Joint Staff. From my own study and experience I'm inclined to agree that the military assistant can play an extremely important role in running the office of the secretary. I presume that was your experience. You were one of the military assistants who obviously played a significant role in influencing the secretary.

Powell: I think the military assistant does play an important role, and I certainly agree with Secretary Cheney. He got his from the Joint Staff.

Goldberg: He said the offers usually came from the services.

Powell: Yes, but he picked officers serving on the Joint Staff. At the end of the day, when he got all the candidates from the services, we would sit down and he would ask me about it. It was Dick's tremendously good judgment that he picked the right kind of person, who in almost every case was a member of the Joint Staff--Joe Lopez and John Jumper.

Goldberg: Bill Owens was a carry-over?

Powell: Owens was a carry-over, but Joe Lopez came from the Joint Staff. He and my Air Force Deputy J-5, Johnny Jumper, were both very close to me and both

came from the Joint Staff. They were put in contention because of my suggestion to the chiefs. This wasn't nefarious or anything, because Cheney knew both of them. He saw them in action. Joe was in J-3 working for Tom Kelly, so Cheney saw him during Desert Storm and Panama. Jumper he knew because Jumper had handled biological vaccines during Desert Storm. He was forever briefing us on that bloody horse that had the toxins that we needed. Johnny ran that. Cheney knew both of his military assistants after Owens, so the books were cooked when the nominees went in. Because Cheney knew them all it didn't take a hard sell. He was right, the military assistant is an important job, but no job is influential without examining who actually occupies it and what he is allowed to do in the secretary's name. The military assistant can be a nobody if the secretary has an exceptionally powerful group of other folks around him. The assistant was not that important to Les Aspin in his first few months. It was unfortunate that he didn't understand the value of a military assistant. It also wasn't quite as important in the days of civilian Special Assistant John Kester.

Goldberg: Kester was an exception.

Powell: Yes, but nevertheless there were Staser Holcomb, Thor Hansen, and ultimately Carl Smith. Carl got a lot of authority because he didn't try to fight Kester. The others tried to fight Kester, which was foolhardy on their part. A lot depends on who else is in that suite. A lot depends on who is living in the E-ring between the 8th and 10th corridors, as to what the power arrangements are and what a secretary finds. Some secretaries might not like the military assistant after they get one. I know the man who replaced me only stayed a short time with Weinberger before he

moved on to somewhere else. It didn't work as well as it might have. A lot depends on the personalities involved. A lot depends on the organizational structure that the secretary uses. I have always believed that there should be a special assistant and a military assistant. The military assistant sometimes gets over into things he shouldn't get into in the absence of a special assistant. I am of the Kesteronian model, which is also the testosterone model. In the old days there was always a powerful special assistant as well. Who was it for Laird?

Goldberg: Baroody, and Carl Wallace--

Powell: And somebody else in the days of Rumsfeld and Schlesinger. I think you need a political hit-man, a button-man, somewhere in the suite to fight off the White House, to take care of those political nuisances that come along, and it shouldn't be an active duty military officer. But when I got back to the Pentagon in 1983 as Weinberger's military assistant, for the most part the special assistant's job had been sucked dry by Carl Smith, very effectively. Carl had essentially blown them all away. So the military assistant had risen in positional authority. Carl was very close to Mr. Weinberger and I essentially flowed in behind and was close to Weinberger to begin with, so there wasn't so much of a start-up. I was brought in because I knew him. We became very close, and I think I took as much of the military position portfolio as one could.

Goldberg: Cheney said that he wanted somebody like people I've described as the military assistant because they gave him a direct pipeline into the Joint Staff and to the services. They could do things for him, get him information that he might not get otherwise.

Powell: He was absolutely right. A military assistant could do that. In fact, it was a source of one of my early chewing-outs by Mr. Cheney. Having been a military assistant, I knew what they could do and how effective they could be. But now I was the chairman, not the military assistant.

Goldberg: That leads to my next question--the relationship between the military assistant and the chairman.

Powell: It's always a little tricky. Let's start with when I was the military assistant to Weinberger. I would occasionally have difficulties with people downstairs in the chairman's office because I tried to get information for the secretary. Sometimes I would press them on things they didn't really want or weren't ready to send to the secretary. On one occasion I had one of the chairman's military assistants say to me, "Hey, remember, this is the chairman." I said, "Hey, remember, I work for the secretary." We had to have a "Come to Jesus" over this with this particular general, who shall be unnamed. I told him not to play that card with me because the day was coming when neither one of us would be military assistants. We would both be back in the Army and we had better be buddies. He agreed, and we never had another problem. Weinberger also empowered me. He would back me.

Goldberg: Cheney did this with his military assistant, too.

Powell: The problems came in with Bill Owens, I guess it was, when on a couple of occasions military information, almost advice, was getting in to the secretary that I was unaware of. On a couple of occasions he asked for military advice--from the Navy, in one case. He asked how many cruise missiles, what can they do, and how soon can they be ready--something like that. Cheney was my boss, but we were

also friends. We could be on an informal basis when we were alone. I said, "Dick, you can call anyone you wish, but first you have to get it from me, that's the law. You've got to have my perspective as a matter of law. Then you can talk to the night watchman, your friends on the Hill, the Psychic Friends Network, anyone you wish. But it is better if you let it come from those who are charged with the responsibility." He chafed in the early weeks, but it was a couple of weeks into my chairmanship when he sensed that the information flow had shifted and he was getting more from me. What he objected to was that he seemed to be getting everything from me and thought that I was choking off information going to him, and he called me to task for it. He said, "I sense that nobody gives me anything any more unless it comes from you." I said, "Good." He said, "No, not good." We got through that, and it happened one more time, and then there never was a problem again. He knew that I was a control freak, and that if something was going to my secretary about military operations it was the chairman's business.

Goldberg: What about other than military operations?

Powell: He could get that anywhere he wanted to. Frankly, what started out to be just a couple of little bumps turned out not to be a permanent situation because we got to know each other so well and, at least from my perspective, respected each other so much that it never became a working operational problem in the latter part of our service together. That's true even when there were opportunities for it, when proposed operational plans would come flying out of the policy cluster from Harry Rowen and go directly to Cheney. Cheney took this military proposal directly to the White House without my review. The plan didn't go anywhere, and that was the last

time that happened. With Goldwater-Nichols, a good secretary--and Cheney was a very good secretary--will find ways to get information from others besides the chairman. He'd be silly if he didn't.

Goldberg: Sometimes the secretary doesn't get information that he would like to have or ought to have, wouldn't you say?

Powell: Yes. Nobody should put himself at the mercy of one information flow, system, or person; but if I'm that person, I like it. Obviously, it's bureaucratic, and it's human. In Cheney's case he did several clever things. First of all, I think he learned over time that I would try to give him all the information he needed to make a decision, and not just the information he needed to make the decision I wanted him to make. So I think that over time he felt comfortable, even though it was all coming from me; it was all coming, and he wasn't lacking what he needed to make a decision. That comfort level rose, but he took out a couple of term insurance policies on me. One, he constantly bounced everything I was telling him off the policy cluster so that Paul Wolfowitz, Steve Hadley, Harry Rowen, the guys upstairs, and Dale Vesser especially, would do their own separate parallel thinking and planning. They would go directly to him and I wouldn't always know about it and that was fine. He had his own close personal advisers, the special assistants, the David Addingtons of the world. When it came time to bring all of this together for him to decide what to do he would essentially force us to run into each other and resolve it. I can't think of many issues on which Paul and I, Hadley, and Harry and company didn't ultimately come almost to the same conclusion, with perhaps a slight difference in perspective, and that served Dick Cheney very well.

Goldberg: You have served in both positions, military assistant and chairman. In general, has there been an effective and relatively comfortable working relationship most of the time between the military assistant and the chairman?

Powell: Yes. It was nice in Cheney's day because the two military assistants that were new had both worked for me, so there was no problem. They were good. I gave them the same freedom that I had been given when I was the military assistant--they worked for the secretary, not for me--but I worked for the secretary too. And to the extent that we could all keep the secretary happy and give him what he needed to do his job we were all in the same ballpark.

Goldberg: Did you have direct dealings with the chairman when you were the military assistant?

Powell: Yes, as appropriate. There was no reservation in me calling Vessey or Crowe. They both welcomed it.

One point I want to make is that when I was chairman I was the principal military adviser to the secretary, and to the secretary of state, the vice president, and the president, and therefore the Joint Staff worked for me, but it was also the secretary's staff. So we existed to support the secretary, not the chairman. The Joint Staff served me by law, but what did it serve me in doing? Being principal military adviser to the secretary. Therefore, the Joint Staff works for the secretary. I kept pushing that concept at Cheney, and he understood that he didn't have to fight us, we were his. He took a great interest in the Joint Staff. He knew most of the principals, particularly during the period of Panama and Desert Shield and Storm. He spent an enormous number of hours downstairs in our secure room being

briefed on every imaginable thing, but he was doing more than sucking it up. He was checking out the people who were going to have to “save the president.” It was a political thing he was doing as well. I knew that, I don’t think the guys knew it.

Goldberg: We got this impression from him. Actually, the longest interviews we had ever had were with him. He could go for four hours. We were the ones that would finally have to give up. We had several interviews with him, he was interested, and they were very good interviews.

Back to Goldwater-Nichols--was it your feeling that Goldwater-Nichols enhanced the powers of the secretary of defense?

Powell: Yes. The usual way that question is posed is whether it significantly enhanced the powers of the chairman. My answer to that is that the chairman has no power, or legal authority, but he has the ability to gain influence and power as a result of his relationship with the secretary of defense and the president. That is facilitated by Goldwater-Nichols, but it isn’t guaranteed by Goldwater-Nichols. Goldwater-Nichols doesn’t give him anything. He can be principal military adviser and walk around and fluff his wings all he wants, but if the secretary says, “Thank you very much, I’m not going to do anything you told me, please leave,” that’s it. So much for Goldwater-Nichols. “I’m going to listen to my military assistant, or throw some tea leaves out here,” that’s his authority. So Goldwater-Nichols increased his power because it gave him a focus for the military advice coming to him that was separated from parochial perspectives because it wasn’t the collective views of the chiefs. Although seldom did I go up there without the collective views of the chiefs. For the most part it was presented as my principal military advice and the chiefs

could either join with me in it or not. We were almost always together. Those who say civilian authority was broken down are those who argued about Goldwater-Nichols in the first place--the John Lehman wing of the defense establishment.

Goldberg: I've written on this subject to some extent, and I have looked at it very carefully from the standpoint of the chairman and the powers and influence he was able to establish. Going back to the 1950s, to Radford, and even Twining, their power came because they were consulted directly by the president without the other chiefs being present. They could give him their views completely apart from the other chiefs. This is documented in the NSC minutes and meetings that Eisenhower held with his chairman. There were others--Maxwell Taylor and Earle Wheeler had the same kind of relationship with the secretary and the president during the 1960s. They wielded far more power. The other chiefs were not in the same class with them in terms of influence. They could make their own personal views known to the very top level without the other chiefs being present. I would guess that they would inform the other chiefs, although I'm not sure of that with Radford. But the fundamental relationship was as you have pointed out.

Powell: But fundamentally doing it that way without it being codified in law was dysfunctional, because you had a chairman who was not designated in law as the principal military adviser but was acting as one. So he was whispering to the president, telling the president things and not telling the chiefs. But as the principal military adviser by law, I couldn't do it quietly, I had to tell the chiefs what I was telling the president and the secretary. I would be surprised if you were to interview all five sets of chiefs that I had in my four years, with each new chief creating a different set,

that you would get more than a ten percent level of disagreement with what I'm about to say. That is that they always knew what I was saying to my leaders and their leaders and that I was bringing back what I was instructed to do and what I was told. I didn't have to go around them and get around them. It wasn't necessary.

Goldberg: I don't know that they were going around all that much. I don't know the extent to which they informed the others.

Powell: I hope you wouldn't argue that in the Wheeler and Vietnam years that was a functional arrangement between chiefs, chairman, secretary, and president?

Goldberg: No, I wouldn't, obviously. McNamara wielded an influence that was out of proportion, obviously, and he had the chairman with him. Taylor and Wheeler were his men and remained his men during the whole period he was there.

Rochester: Were the chiefs committed to the spirit of Goldwater-Nichols themselves, or did you get along because essentially you and they shared a consensus view. Was there any resentment on their part, about three years into Goldwater-Nichols, when you became the chairman? Was there still an institutional resistance?

Powell: At the chiefs level I have to say no. What one or two of them might have done when they got back to their office late at night grumbling about what happened in the chairman's office, you will have to ask them. For the most part, I found them supportive of what Goldwater-Nichols was all about. What they saw happening through Panama, Desert Shield, and Desert Storm, was that all of them were being enhanced as a group, and the services were being enhanced as a group, and the success of those operations put Goldwater-Nichols to the test and it worked. The

was one part about Goldwater-Nichols that they moaned about most was the personnel piece, the training piece, the joint qualifications piece, because it was a serious management problem. But not the advice-providing piece. They saw the secretary often enough, and they saw the president as often as they did previously. I would be willing to bet they saw the chairman more than they ever had under previous administrations. I don't know what Larry Welch's thinking is right now, but at one time, shortly after he retired, he was in a seminar on the chiefs' advice and consent work on treaties. In that seminar they were asked whether with Goldwater-Nichols and a chairman, especially someone like Powell, who was so close to Cheney and the president from previous assignments, would the chiefs have the same ability to influence the ratification process and would their views be heard? They were yakking away and Larry came in and said, "I am the only one in the room who has worked with three chairmen, one pre-Goldwater-Nichols--Vessey, one transitioning--Crowe, and one after--Powell. My observation is that I got more information from Powell than the others." Not being critical of the others, but just saying that even in Goldwater-Nichols it was a matter of who was there, not what Goldwater-Nichols did. In later years, I think he soured a little on it, but you have interviewed him, I haven't.

Goldberg: We have had excellent interviews with him. I think he said essentially the same thing that he did before. He was very thoughtful and insightful, I thought, about what was happening, a very objective-minded man.

Powell: He certainly is that. The staffs of the chiefs might not be as favorably disposed toward this, because they saw power flowing and they didn't always know

what was going on. I took pains, sometimes, to make sure they didn't know what was going on.

Goldberg: They are more likely to be more partisan, aren't they?

Powell: Of course, but that's not evil, that's what they are supposed to do. But often I just didn't need the staffs of the services getting in the way of the work that the chiefs and I and the CINCs had to do.

Goldberg: It has been alleged, of course, by lots of people that Goldwater-Nichols brought about greater military influence and power in the civil-military relationships.

Powell: That's been alleged.

Goldberg: Do you agree with that?

Powell: I don't know what the evidence is for this point of view. The evidence seems to be that the service chiefs do not have as much input as they used to and they don't give their advice. I just don't accept that charge during the four years I was chairman. I had a constant stream of thoughts and advice from the chiefs who worked with me, on hot line phones and secure lines, constant meetings in my office, and I don't think any chief that I worked with during those years can say, "We didn't know what was going on, we were aced out, and we didn't have a seat at the table."

Goldberg: This is interesting. I put this question in a conversation with General Krulak, of the Marines, about what appeared to be a diminution in the power and the role of the services. He said he didn't buy that at all. On the contrary, he thought that the services still exercise a great deal of influence. The specific example he gave was the number of CINCs who came to him directly instead of going to the

chairman, the Joint Chiefs, or whatever. Of course, if the CINCs have a problem with a particular service, you would expect them to go to that particular service, wouldn't you? Maybe that's what he had in mind.

Powell: In all of the writings that have taken place in the last four or five years, especially in the last two years, the tenth anniversary period, you hear it from academics, the lunch bunch, and various authorities, but I haven't seen a single article by a chief that says he lost his power and influence or that it was a bad system. There may be one, but I haven't seen it.

Goldberg: What major changes took place in the role of chairman as a result of Goldwater-Nichols? You didn't think there was a great deal, but that it was a matter of exercise.

Powell: I essentially did business the way I had seen chairmen in the past do business--with a close direct relationship with the secretary. I did a number of things to change the operating style--more frequent meetings, more informality, outside of the tank, where I could separate the chiefs from their bureaucratic papers, files, and agendas. I wanted to separate them from their requirement to come up and defend their organization because the whole staff had given them the defense and was now waiting to see how they did. And they didn't complain, they liked the freedom of being a member of the Joint Chiefs. I concentrated on that.

Goldberg: And the staff couldn't second-guess them afterward.

Powell: Exactly, or they could just go back and tell the staff whatever they wanted--that it was already decided, or whatever. The enhancing of the qualifications and strength of the Joint Staff members was important because now I had people dying

to get into the Joint Staff because of the requirements of the law for promotion. A couple of things I did bureaucratically. One of the things I did was to get “head room” for three-star Joint Staff promotions directly from Congress to me. You will understand this. Previously, if I wanted a new J-3, a three-star, and I went out for nominations, each service would nominate if it felt like it. If I picked a service’s nominee, that service had to provide a three-star billet for that position, meaning it was a three-star billet no longer in their service, so that they couldn’t use it for a corps commander, or a fleet admiral. It would be charged against them. Sometimes a chief would say he would like to nominate for that billet, but he could not afford the “head room.” So I had an idea one day, and it took me a long time to sell it to the chiefs, because they were very suspicious of it. I asked Mr. Cheney if he would allow me to peddle it on the Hill, because it really didn’t affect him. He said yes, so I went to Sam Nunn and asked him to give three-star head room to the chairman under the secretary’s authority--I would do it, but he would approve it.

Goldberg: These would be additions?

Powell: No.

Goldberg: Take them out of the services?

Powell: I said to Nunn and Punaro that henceforth when I found a man I wanted to make a J-3, the services would lose a two-star, because I owned the three-star head room. So they would give me eight authorizations for head room for eight three-stars. No additional generals or admirals in the armed forces, but just enriching the mix, because the services would keep their head room and get

another three-star, not have one charged against them, because they would be in the chairman's allocation. I wanted a J-3, J-4, J-5, director, and assistant. I also asked for DLA, and all the three-star defense agencies as well. They came back and called me a greedy devil, and granted me the J's but not the agencies. Nunn got it through. He threw it in the appropriations bill, and took it to Aspin. The result was I could go to the chiefs and ask for a new J-3 and they would be anxious to give me the best candidate they had, because they no longer had to pay for it and then would have one more of their service members with three stars on his shoulder. It increased competition and everyone wanted every job that opened. I never did get the "head room" for the agencies.

Goldberg: But the services put three-star people in those jobs anyhow, didn't they?

Powell: Yes, but they no longer had to give a three-star billet to go with the candidate. But with the additional authority I had total control over it. Related to that, I got rid of service rotation. No longer did it have to be a Navy man followed by Army, followed by Air Force, it would be the best man for each job every time. The law requires a balance, but doesn't say how to achieve that balance. I did it informally in my own mind, but no longer had rotating positions. I don't know what they are doing now.

Goldberg: Did you make any increase in the size of the Joint Staff?

Powell: No, in fact, I was making it smaller.

Rochester: Did Weinberger change his view regarding the virtues of Goldwater-Nichols?

Powell: After he retired?

Goldberg: We interviewed Weinberger extensively. He was dead set against it; there was no need for it, it was a waste.

Powell: He still feels that way?

Goldberg: He did when we interviewed him, yes.

Rochester: He had a great interest in history, was always well-read, and interested in what historians did.

Goldberg: He did use those interviews for his book, I think. We made copies of the tapes for him also. There wasn't any question about the way he felt.

How about the role of the chairman, not being in the chain of command? Do you think he ought to be statutorily in the chain of command?

Powell: I didn't find any need for it.

Goldberg: Isn't it conceivable under other circumstances that it might happen?

Powell: I have no idea what he would do with that additional authority.

Goldberg: It could make for trouble, too, couldn't it?

Powell: Yes, and I don't know what would be gained. I was introduced at the Naval Academy last night by Admiral Larson and I spoke to the middies. As part of his introduction he made a little joke about when he became CINCPAC. He came to see me on his first visit and I made it clear to him that he worked for the secretary of defense and no one else and should feel free to go see the secretary any time he wanted to on any subject he wished. Adm. Larson said that he responded to me, "I can't imagine any issue that I would go to the secretary about that I would not tell you or see you about first." And Powell's response was, "That's a fine answer, you are going to be a great ."

Goldberg: What about the division of labor between the chairman and the vice chairman?

Powell: When I became chairman, Vice Chairman General Herres, a tremendous officer, had a memorandum of understanding with Bill Crowe that broke down the duties. When Bob left about five months later and Dave Jeremiah came in, I showed him the memo and asked him if he found it useful. A week or so later he came back and said he didn't think we needed it. I agreed with him, and we never had a formal breakdown of duties in writing. What actually happened as a matter of practice, which was a function of personality and our individual qualifications, was that Dave naturally focused on procurement matters, acquisition board matters, and that kind of thing. He represented me to interagency bodies across the river, acted as an alter ego--whenever I wasn't around he would go to meetings to brief the president. But I also, to an extent probably greater than Bill Crowe and maybe Jack Vessey, kept a closer watch on acquisition and budget matters, and Defense Resources Board issues. I didn't get into the intricacies of them, but I didn't say it was the vice chairman's business. Dave kept me very well informed. We were complementary to each other. The question would always come up as to who was the acting chairman. My answer, which wasn't satisfactory, was that there was no acting chairman. We didn't need one when I was away. If they needed to get something done when I was away, and they couldn't reach me, they should see the vice chairman. He operated with the same authority and influence that I did. Then I had a huge bureaucratic fight to get him made formally a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. You remember that history?

Goldberg: Vaguely.

Powell: The history is that Goldwater-Nichols said the Joint Chiefs of Staff consisted of the chairman and the service chiefs. There was to be a vice chairman, but as part of the compromise they didn't make the vice chairman in the law a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They went ahead and made him number two in seniority in the armed forces of the United States, but he wasn't a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I didn't see that it had any practical effect, but it used to rankle Dave that he would sometimes find himself not invited to things because he wasn't on the protocol list because he wasn't a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was this bit of untidiness there that I went to work on. I asked the chiefs if they had any problem with it and they said to go ahead with it. I had to fight it out with the Senate side, but the big problem was on the House side with Ike Skelton and his staff. Their reservation was that if there was a vice chairman we would have six. If we had Marines and the Navy, that's two naval votes, and all you would need was a vice chairman or chairman to be Navy and there would be three Navy, and then the Navy could stop everything. They kept coming up with this objection. I told them that there was no need for a balance because we hadn't ever voted on anything. There was no need to vote. I solicited opinions, and then I did what the law said, give my recommendation to the secretary, as the principal military adviser. The only thing we voted on were promotion nominations just to get the sense of the group, because the law said the JCS would provide recommendations on nominations. So the Navy could have five votes, and as long as the chairman is not Navy, there would be no problem. Finally, after two years, the law was changed and the vice chairman

was made a member of the Joint Chiefs. One of the things I identified for elimination was the chairman's staff group, a group of captains and colonels and the assistant to the chairman. That group existed to condense and provide summary sheets and do individual studies for the chairman. In effect, they were the chairman's real staff, as a way of getting him away from the Joint Staff so he could do stuff for the secretary. But the Goldwater-Nichols act said we didn't need that anymore. If the three-stars couldn't do their jobs, why have a bunch of colonels fixing them?

Goldberg: To do studies.

Powell: The Joint Staff could do studies. So I thought I got rid of the Joint Staff group. A year later it was still around in title and I had to throw a tantrum to finally abolish it. And they may have regrown it, for all I know. I'm not a believer in little assistants running around the principals. They tend to cause more trouble than they are worth. I believe in working in line organizations.

Goldberg: Has there really occurred a sea change in the Joint Staff? Is it really a purple or nearing a purple kind of staff rather than simply representatives of the services as they were for so many years?

Powell: I can't speak for now, but for the time I was chairman I think there was a sea change. They more and more identified themselves as on the Joint Staff. I would communicate to them that I expected them to remain Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine officers and to the extent possible represent their service interests. They became a far more competent staff because with the requirements of the law the best people were now coming. I think there was a sea change, but not so much in

the people as in the procedures that we followed. We got rid of so much of the old stuff--all of the old Book 5 of the JSOP, the J-this and J-that, that had battalions of officers writing this stuff all year long.

Goldberg: Were you getting better people, too?

Powell: Better people as well. But we put the better people in a better working environment. The base force was sold to the president of the United States without ever a paper going over on it. It was done by rapid turnaround analysis, 8x10 slides, oral presentations to the president, telling the members of the Joint Staff that I needed the material right away because it had to go to the president. The largest unilateral reduction in our nuclear weapons posture was done off 8x10 slides. So suddenly they found they just weren't creating these huge volumes full of wish lists. "We have a need for 240,000 Marines to handle . . . , we have a need for 29 divisions" They would land on the secretary's desk, and they were not relevant. The Joint Staff was not relevant and should have been. Then suddenly they were relevant. They saw they were supporting their chiefs and chairman with enhanced positional authority and influence, and they are now agile. They have a quick turning radius. They are moving much faster than the civilian staff. It enhanced the Joint Staff. Then along came a couple of nice conflicts to show what they could do, and yes, there was a sea change.

Goldberg: Had Crowe been moving in this direction?

Powell: Yes, he started moving in this direction, but he stood astride two worlds. He was a little more cautious than he might have otherwise been, but he was working his way through a bit of a minefield because he had chiefs who had

essentially fought against Goldwater-Nichols. I don't remember, did he support it outright, or did he move quietly?

Goldberg: He moved quietly.

Powell: Yes, because he was working for a secretary who was against it. For his first year or two he was working for a secretary who hated the new arrangement, so I think Bill did a lot in the quietude that was available to him.

Goldberg: He said that the other chiefs had been his peers before and he was careful about asserting authority or asserting himself too much. He didn't want to roil the waters in his relations with them.

Powell: The three-star officer who was assistant to the chairman had become a very powerful figure over time.

Goldberg: More so than the director?

Powell: Yes, closer to the chairman, and not bogged down running the Joint Staff; he could be more nimble, more agile, and get more done. In effect, he was the continuity in the front office. He was almost the acting chairman when the chairman wasn't around. If I had a vice chairman, why did I need the assistant chairman? About a year in I asked why I could just not fill the position when it emptied, because we were looking to cut three-stars. I went to Dave Jeremiah and asked if I needed the assistant chairman. I didn't see why we needed a chairman, a four-star, and a three-star. Dave told me to slow down and take a closer look. I did, and we decided to keep him, and that was the right answer. The reason was that the assistant essentially became the chairman's eyes and ears to that person the chairman had responsibility for providing military advice to but had to be delicate in

doing it, and that was the secretary of state. Whenever the secretary of state traveled, whenever there was a State Department section that needed insight from the chairman, it was the assistant to the chairman who provided the insight and performed that role. It was a given among the State Department bureaucrats, who tended not to like having anybody from Defense with them, that the chairman's man would always be in the airplane with them. I seldom saw the assistant to the chairman, because he was usually out flying around with the secretary of state.

Goldberg: Had that been the case before you?

Powell: A little less so. I don't think he traveled as much with the secretary of state because he had to do other things to help the chairman run the office.

Goldberg: Crowe tried to do some of that himself, including meeting with the secretary.

Powell: Every chairman has to do that. Crowe was a pol-mil figure, in his own right.

Goldberg: He had problems there because of Weinberger. And dealing with Shultz was a problem because Weinberger didn't like Shultz to begin with.

Powell: Yes, I was there.

Goldberg: A remarkable circumstance. You know that story that your friend Armitage tells about Shultz and Weinberger, don't you? Armitage was at a reception and got to talking to Shultz and told him he ought to go out in a rowboat with Weinberger and talk. Shultz said, "He wouldn't go." Sometime later Armitage put the same idea to Weinberger and said he had talked to Shultz, who said Weinberger wouldn't go. And Weinberger said, "He was right."

Powell: One of them wouldn't come back. I never understood why that was the case.

Goldberg: I don't think Weinberger liked being number two man to Shultz. Also, he may have wanted that State job to begin with, and didn't get it.

Powell: He was the right wing of the party, and Shultz, who wasn't, had to be watched.

Goldberg: What about the effect on the service secretaries and the CINCs?

Powell: I think the CINCs acquired more opportunity for access. They were invited to more meetings.

Goldberg: Weinberger claimed that they had it before.

Powell: Under Goldwater-Nichols they probably had more opportunity to let their wants and needs be known, so I think they were enhanced in that way and got to see the president and the secretary more. I always had to remind the secretary that when you allow ten more people in to make claims on your resources, don't expect them to help you in the allocation of your resources. They are just ten more people wanting something. So add to the ten CINCs the four chiefs, and you have fourteen people telling you how to divide the budget. And they always tended to see in the short-term--readiness problems, steaming problems, O&M problems, getting ready for war problems--and they now have responsibility for the future of the service, with an investment in R&D and capital infrastructure. So you have to take the CINCs' requests with a slight grain of salt; they are just some more cheeping robins wanting to be fed.

Goldberg: What about the service secretaries?

Powell: It didn't have an effect one way or another. They serve a valuable role in representational activities.

Goldberg: They got some more functions moved into their office, didn't they, from the services? Also, because of that acquisition act at the time.

Powell: That's Packard's mission reform, I think.

Goldberg: Yes. That probably had more of an effect than Goldwater-Nichols.

Powell: I'm not sure that proved anything, anyway.

Goldberg: What it did was enlarge their offices.

Powell: I don't think it improved the acquisition process, particularly.

Goldberg: No. There's not much evidence of that. Do you see a need for any further change in DoD organization, functions, and working relationships?

Powell: When I first entered DoD as a lieutenant colonel in 1974, there was a secretary, a deputy secretary, an assistant secretary for ISA, and the DDR&E, and that was the top leadership of the department. Then between acts of Congress and bureaucratic featherbedding and constantly creating functional areas requiring functional people, the place has become a mess. So now we have a secretary, a deputy secretary, and four undersecretaries, all of whom are doing the same job the assistant secretaries used to do but they are now doing it at level 2. They have more staff than they used to have, for a force that is 40 percent the size it used to be. We have ISP along with ISA, which might have been a sensible thing to do in the time of the Cold War to get Richard Perle on board. The Cold War's over, and we still have both positions and all kinds of functional deputy assistant secretaries for everything from putting portapotties into the woods and environmental activities

and economic growth, all kinds of things. We've encrusted the staff with lots of other functional things. We have a crisis management center belonging to OSD that I have never seen used for any useful purpose whatsoever. All that takes money, costs, infrastructure, and I think it would be the simplest thing in the world to cut all that by at least 20 percent in a month.

Goldberg: That's what Graham Claytor said back in 1981. We interviewed him before he left office.

Powell: He was a wonderful man. I miss him. I think he was perhaps the best deputy secretary I've ever seen, and one of the best service secretaries.

Goldberg: He was saying much of what you are saying, about overcentralization in OSD.

Powell: But Harold Brown and Kester loved overcentralization. I think it's gone to hell. Congress insisted on an assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, an assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, an assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low-intensity conflict, created an acquisition executive who was under secretary of defense for research and engineering. So Congress bears a lot of responsibility for shoving these positions into the department to satisfy their parochial interests, and the secretary was unable to stop it. Then Aspin came along and really roiled the waters with some of the most dysfunctional, bizarre policy offices. I argued against it at the time, but I was the last of the Mohicans from the Reagan-Bush days, so nobody was about to listen to me. Any time I said something you knew that was what they were not going to do. So I shut up and they created a monstrosity.

Goldberg: That's like the experience Jones had in the first year and a half of the Reagan administration.

Powell: Exactly. If he said it, it must be wrong.

Goldberg: They didn't let him say it.

Rochester: Was Aspin hampered by health problems early on, or was it temperament from the beginning?

Powell: It was temperament from the very beginning, quickly then followed by health problems. There were two heart events. He went down once, and he had bizarre work and personal habits that were not conducive to good health.

Goldberg: We had an appointment with him but he gave out before we got to him.

Powell: I was very close to Les, but he was a terrible choice to be secretary of defense.

Goldberg: I kept hearing that, that it was just a dysfunctional organization at the time.

Rochester: Did he have a sense of being out of his element, do you think?

Powell: Initially, no, but then it must have started to sink in to him that something was wrong. Les was fatalistic, I don't think he thought he would live very long. So this was an opportunity to have a great executive experience after all those years in Congress. He knew everything about the department, he had been the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, but he had never run a line organization or really been subjected to the discipline of the military.

Goldberg: He brought too many staff people.

Powell: Yes, all of whom thought they were smarter than God. And only one of them was. It was just a very difficult time--meetings that might or might not start; he might or might not get to work.

Goldberg: It's interesting to get reactions of people in the bureaucracy around the building who had to deal with his people and sometimes with him.

Powell: I documented it gently in my book, but I could have written a much harsher appraisal, but there was no purpose to be served. Foreign visitors would come and sit across the table wanting to hear what the Clinton administration had to say. And Les hated those meetings. We had a conference once and I told him it was part of his job. Those people traveled here from all over the world, they were ministers of defense, and Les had to see them. He hated it and would sit at the table hunched over in those awful poplin suits with those guys in tailored suits and say to them, "How's things going in your part of the world?" The other side would say something, and give a very wonderful presentation, but they had come to hear from us. They flew all the way here and wouldn't get anything. They would go away shaking their heads.

Goldberg: Cheney and Weinberger handled that well, I take it.

Powell: They were both very good at it.

Goldberg: And Carlucci, too.

Powell: Carlucci was a career foreign service officer, so he knew it. Weinberger loved it.

Rochester: Crowe would probably have been more uncomfortable in the role.

Powell: Crowe was a little uncomfortable, but he knew what he had to do and he was good at it.

Goldberg: He had the ability.

Powell: Yes, and Cheney was good at it. But Les was always uncomfortable with it. He got better toward the end. They got him some new suits and tried to work on him, but he did not have a strong enough personal staff.

Goldberg: Let me ask a question having to do with the civil-military relationship and national security system, where there is a line to be drawn between civil authority and military authority. Obviously there is no line, it depends on the people in positions of power and making decisions. How do you see this relationship, this resentment on the part of the military often when civilians make a decision, and concern on the part of civilians about the military making some decisions? Is there any kind of a division that can be perceived apart from the personalities involved?

Powell: I wouldn't know how to describe it in a very useful way. My own understanding of the job as a military officer was that I was supposed to provide military advice for the purpose of solving a political problem. So I had to understand the politics of the situation and try to understand all the pressures working against the president and the secretary of defense, who was also a political figure. I had to not just sit there as a nice clean Mr. Military Man and not worry about what the right wing of the Republican party was going to say about this or that policy, or how the president would be attacked from the Democratic left, or whether he is campaigning or not, running or not running, what's going on, what have the French or Brits done to him. In order to give useful military advice, I think it was incumbent upon me to

understand the entire political environment in which he was selecting political goals. That is not crossing the line, that's just being useful. There are some who would say that I got too far into it, and I am regularly attacked as a political general. Be my guest. Any general at that level who doesn't understand politics shouldn't be at that level and is not going to be as effective as a general who does. At the end of the day I always had to give him the best military advice to deal with the political problem, and I tried to do that. My model of who gets offended or not comes to me from George Marshall. This was a man at the height of his influence and power, and in 1948 he argued vociferously against us granting recognition to Israel. Truman decided to grant recognition to Israel. Somebody went up to Marshall and asked him if he was going to resign. Marshall said, "Have you lost your mind? I don't have any accountability or responsibility, it was the president's decision. Why should I resign?" I always felt that way. At the end of the day, it isn't my accountability or responsibility. I'm not shirking from it, but the Constitution and the American people give that responsibility to the president. My job is to help him with it, and if it doesn't go the way I would like it to go, but the one who is supposed to make that decision has made it, whether I like it or not, it will be executed.

Goldberg: There was a secretary of state who did resign for reasons of principle.

Powell: I'm not saying that you run against principle. I'm saying that you asked me where the line is. You can't quit every day on principle, either. If it's a matter of high principle and you cannot support the execution of such a decision, then you should resign. As Vance did. As chairman, I was privileged to be in a command climate with Bush, Scowcroft, Cheney, Baker, Eagleburger, Quayle, Sununu, Marlin

Fitzwater, where we knew each other so well that nobody thought it weird if at a meeting I would offer advice that went beyond my portfolio. I had been the national security adviser, the deputy national security adviser, I had shared offices with George Bush, so I had full rein to say whatever I wanted to. In meetings with them all, when they got into very political matters, I tended to say nothing, because I was wearing my uniform and didn't want to step on the toes of my successor, who was sitting in the room. But if the president turned to me and asked me what I thought, I had no reservations about answering. Cheney, after laying out his assessment of a political situation would say, "I have to say, Mr. President, Colin doesn't agree with me. Colin and I are not of the same view on this one, you have to hear it from him." It was a beautiful command relationship, because we really couldn't make each other mad for long. Brent could be a screamer from time to time, and I could get mad, but one of the rules in my book was never to let our egos get so close to our positions that when our positions fell our egos and friendships fell. There were days, I'm sure, when they were all by themselves and would say, "We have to do something about Colin, he's just off the wall on this," I know that happens from time to time. But it never affected the friendship that we all had for each other. That's what makes organizations really function well, not Goldwater-Nichols or organization charts. You run organizations with people, not charts.

Goldberg: But you still have to have an organization.

Powell: That's how you requisition people. There are dysfunctional organizations, but you give me the right people and I can run just about any dysfunctional

organization you want. I will try to fix it. But you give me the wrong people, and there is no organizational chart that will fix it.

Goldberg: Eisenhower is an example of the role of civil authority. He wanted his generals and chiefs of staff to take political considerations into account, but he did not want them to talk publicly about policy. He was very hard on them if they got out of line. As you know, he and Marshall were absolutely positive in their belief in civil authority over the military. They pushed that very hard, and Eisenhower did, as president, no doubt about it. Military were committed to speak their minds before congressional committees, that was to be expected. On the other hand, he very much wanted to fire at least one chief of staff and one CINC but was talked out of it by the secretary of defense. They had said things publicly that he thought they shouldn't, and they appeared to be taking issue with him about policy. He had a terrific temper about these matters and really flew off the handle. It's impossible for people in positions like you held and the chiefs hold not to have to take political considerations into account, but Eisenhower positively wanted them to and complained if they didn't. In your book you said, "During my service in both military and civilian national security posts, I studiously avoided doing or saying anything political, and it's taken me a while to shed the lifetime habits of a soldier." Some critics have charged that you overstepped the bounds of authority in appearing to oppose the policies of President Clinton with particular reference to the gay issue and the question of roles and missions. This goes back to the previous question. Do you think you were justified in speaking out publicly on these issues?

Powell: There are four exhibits that are usually brought to the court for court-martialing me for destroying civil-military relations and crossing the line: Exhibit one is a Foreign Affairs magazine article I wrote essentially laying out the base force and the strategy for the base force. I was asked to do it by the editors of Foreign Affairs. I did it; it was rewritten extensively many times to make sure it was consistent with all the policies, cleared by OSD, read by the secretary of defense and Scowcroft, and everyone was congratulating me on doing it. It was printed in Foreign Affairs and I think it is still a pretty good article. Some had the view "How dare the chairman of the Joint Chiefs write an article on national security policy?" I have never done a Lexus Nexus search, but I don't think I'm the first chairman who ever wrote an article, and I'm certainly not the last. Exhibit two is the famous New York Times Op Ed piece that I wrote on Bosnia. I wrote it because I was mad one day because the New York Times had written an editorial that essentially banged away at me on the use of force. It was originally going to be a letter to the editor, but that doesn't get so much attention, so I made it an Op Ed piece. Of course they rubbed their hands at the fact that they were going to get an argument from the chairman, and that article has been cited repeatedly as evidence of a breakdown of civilian-military control. What nobody will listen to is that the article was cleared, and it was absolutely consistent with U.S. government policy at the time. I signed it because I was the one who was attacked in the press. In fact, the morning that it was printed Eagleburger called me to congratulate me. It was essentially saying that we could do anything we wanted, but we had to make sure we knew what the objectives were, and at that time the assigned objectives did not lend themselves to

that kind of use of force in Bosnia. That was cited as exhibit two of my general level of insubordination. Exhibit three was gays in the military, having to do with my opposition to changing the policy. I gave a speech at the Naval Academy in January 1993, at the end of which a midshipman asked me if I had such moral indignation at serving with gays that I didn't think I could serve with them. He was speaking about himself. My answer was perfect. I said that President-elect Clinton asked me about it; he knew it was a serious issue with us. He had made some commitments and wanted to move in that direction, but wanted to take the time to study it very carefully. I was pleased that he had said that and that at the end of the day after complete examination the president would make his decision, Congress would make its judgment, and we would execute whatever we were told to do. If the decision was to change the policy and the midshipman still felt it morally unacceptable, he would have to resign. Then Clinton came into office and all hell broke loose. The sound biters found that tape and the only part they took out of it was the part where I said, "You will have to resign." Exhibit three: Powell is promoting insubordination. The insubordination would have been if I had told Clinton something different from what I told Bush the week before. So I was savaged in the press for weeks for being insubordinate by telling that midshipman he might have to resign.

Goldberg: You made no other statements on the subject.

Powell: Every statement I made was consistent with the views I held when the president decided he would study it for a while. The night he made that decision there was a press platoon outside. I went out and said the president had made his announcement and we looked forward to working with him and his people on the

issue. My views were well known. The president never made a decision at that time. He was studying it. I had recommended to Clinton not to touch the issue, to throw it to us, get it out of the White House and give it to the secretary of defense. They didn't. They tried to throw a hard ball at the military, high and hard at our heads, and the strong advocates of the gay and lesbian community thought it was an easy one, but they misread their target. They went after an institution that was very high in the esteem of the public at the time with leaders who were well regarded at the time, and they didn't properly sense the mood of the Congress.

Goldberg: And the institution was much more tolerant than many other institutions.

Powell: It was a huge political mistake and they spent the next six months trying to get out of the political problem. One of the greatest ironies of all is that at the end of the day after a pretty miserable time in my life because of the attacks for insubordination, the president said to me after one of our meetings, "Don't ever fail to give me your best advice when I ask for it. These are tough problems. If they weren't, someone would have solved them before you and I came along." I never had a problem with Clinton. He understood. What I said to people was that my life would have been much easier if he had come in on inauguration day and told me he had changed the policy. That's all he would have had to say. But when he asked me for my position, I could not be inconsistent with what I had said earlier. But if he had changed the policy on the day he came in, the Congress would have changed it back the day after. So they had a mess. It took us six months to find a way out.

Goldberg: It's a tough one, it will take time to get any kind of a consensus or near consensus on it.

Powell: They badly misread not only the military, but the country as well. While they were banging away at us the mail was running ten to one. That finally sunk home in the Democratic party up on the Hill. The great irony was that when we had to compromise all the Democratic leaders turned to me and said they were counting on my support. They said they would be standing behind me and counting on my cover.

Goldberg: And vice versa.

Powell: No, not vice versa, they needed the cover, I didn't. But that's politics. It's not taught at Leavenworth.

Goldberg: No, you have to learn it here.

Powell: There is an exhibit four, but I can't remember what else I did to get in trouble. Those are the three that are usually brought up.

Goldberg: There was a lot of fine indignation. We had a manuscript of a book sent in by someone who said that Goldwater-Nichols was the worst possible thing that could happen to the country, it was turning over all the power to the military, it was unconstitutional, etc. He didn't have any evidence to go with it, but he wrote a whole book on it. I said it shouldn't be published, but I think it was.

Powell: I don't think the world has noted it so far.

Goldberg: No, not much attention.

Powell: People who want to change Goldwater-Nichols forget that Congress was quite happy with its handiwork.

Goldberg: It was the first real congressionally inspired legislation on that scale on that subject. It was Truman who pushed the National Security Act through in 1947.

Goldwater-Nichols came primarily out of Congress. The administration didn't inspire it and wasn't supporting it.

Powell: And because they didn't, they were not about to listen to an administration that said it didn't like parts of it. They can make a persuasive case. I have never understood why people continue to scream in the woods about how horrible Goldwater-Nichols is. It isn't going away.

Goldberg: It made some changes, but they haven't been drastic, not anywhere near on the scale of 1947.

Powell: The fourth piece you were saying was something about roles and missions?

Rochester: Would that have had to do with the Gulf War? With Woodward saying you privately opposed it?

Powell: No, the fourth exhibit was that Woodward's book The Commanders left the impression that I had used Woodward and was trying to undercut the president and the secretary of defense through him. Not the case. Woodward and I started out in an entirely different vein. He was trying to write about the Pentagon and how the Pentagon does things. He had been writing it for a year and a half when the Gulf War came along and suddenly he'd had to start the book all over. He suddenly discovered a better story than the one he had written. Yes, I talked to Woodward, but I wasn't the only one. He talked to lots of people. He's marvelous. That's why he is the best at that business. It came out that it was another difficult period, there were signs of my alleged lack of discretion. If I could have rewound the tape I would not have had those conversations with him. But most of them had nothing to do with

the Gulf War, they were long before that. But I had spoken to him so much that the whole thing created a body of evidence that I just had to live with. Guess who was the first one to call me and tell me not to worry about it?

Goldberg: Who?

Powell: George Bush. Not Cheney.

Goldberg: Well, the interesting thing is that you don't know how what you tell people is going to be used. You have one view of what you are telling them and they are looking for something else. It even happens at my level. I have told people something and it came out in a form that never had occurred to me.

Powell: It was a lesson painfully learned. My wife warned me the whole time, because Bob Woodward was calling rather frequently. But Bush said it was not a problem. It went away for a while and then flared up again. In order to spike it and make sure that everybody knew they were barking up the wrong tree, Cheney called me in one day and said that the president wanted to announce my reappointment. I said we should wait a while and see how things came out and whether it was something he really wanted to do. Cheney said, "No, we are not asking about it, or discussing it, he wants to reappoint you this afternoon. So get over to the Rose Garden." So I went over there and Bush said he was reappointing me. Obviously the first question was going to be about the Woodward book. The question of "was I guilty" was tossed to me and before I could get half the answer out Bush said, "I will take that," and slammed it down the reporter's throat. And that was the end of that. Then for some reason Sam Nunn decided to have some fun and made my reconfirmation a little more difficult than it might otherwise have been.

Goldberg: He held it up for quite a while, didn't he?

Powell: We just didn't get around to the hearing because of my travels and his annoyance, and Arnold Punaro and the others who worked up there who decided to have some mischief with it. They kept sending me questions about using classified information and this and that. It was like having an independent counsel asking me. I sent the answers back and they said they weren't completely acceptable. I wrote a letter saying that whether they were acceptable or not it was the best I could do and I had no further information for them. I went up for the first hearing and it became very testy. They said I would have to come back the next day and sent more questions down. Cheney meanwhile was paying no attention to this. He said I had gotten myself into this and I could get myself out. So on Friday, with my term expiring on Monday, Cheney called me and said to come up because they did have a problem now. He said I was accused of not answering the questions. I said I had told them everything and sent a note to that effect. Cheney said that I just couldn't do that. This was a case of civilian-military foul-up, because I had had it by then. I said I had nothing else to say about it.

Goldberg: This is the legislative side.

Powell: Yes, they said I could not refuse to answer their questions. From my side I had answered them. They got to pick the questions, and I got to pick the answers. If they didn't like the answers, and found them so unacceptable that it made my candidacy or renomination such a terrible problem for them, they should do what they had to do. Cheney still found this all amusing, because he knew it would all work out.

Rochester: Why would Nunn have given you a hard time?

Powell: Because Nunn was on the wrong side of the Gulf War. Nunn essentially had lost his opportunity for higher office, and he could be very hard, sometimes to the point of taking offense. This offended me. He thought that I had done something improper and inappropriate and he wanted to get to the bottom of it.

Goldberg: What was it that he thought was improper?

Powell: His people had told him that there were classified items in Woodward's book and wanted to know if they had come from me. There were no real classified items. Woodward had a few code names that meant nothing, and none of it came from me. So they were just grinding their teeth on this and Nunn wanted to make a point. Then on the last day, the 30th, when I was up testifying again, Senator Robert Byrd got testy. He wanted to swear me in because he wanted me under oath when he asked me questions about what I was planning to do with some National Guard armories in West Virginia. So Senator Nunn had to take the prerogative of the chair and say that it was not their tradition to swear in witnesses before the Senate Armed Services Committee. So I just sat there and watched them fight for a while. They got over that and I didn't get sworn in. I told Senator Byrd that I had taken an oath of office in 1958 and that oath still stood; he would get the truth to anything he wanted. One oath was enough for me for a lifetime. That took care of that. Then finally Nunn said he didn't know if they could get through with it that day, because he still had some questions. Meanwhile, the Senate was being held. I said, "Very good, sir, I'll be at home." He said, "No, you will still be a four-star general." I said, "Yes, but I won't be the chairman. I will be a four-star general for another 60 days

and then you can decide whether you wish to retire me as a two-star or a four-star, for I will not be the chairman as of midnight.” He said, “That’s not the advice I have, sir.” I said, “I am not a lawyer, but I am using the advice of the lawyers in the Department of Defense who have researched this carefully, and my two-year term as chairman is up at midnight and I will no longer have any authority to walk into that office tomorrow morning. I will turn myself in to the chief of staff to await any duties he wishes to assign me until such time as I retire or you do whatever you want to do.” He looked at Punaro and Rick De Bobes, who had gotten him in this position and they said that was correct. So, in that case, they had unanimous consent and it went to the floor. But I don’t know why he went through all this, because he had to confirm me.

Goldberg: It was probably an ego trip.

Powell: Those are generally the charges against me for my having ruined civil-military relations.

Rochester: Did you support the Dugan firing?

Powell: I am accused by some in the Air Force as having instigated the firing. What happened was that Mike had been out on the road as a new chief trying to put his stamp on the Air Force. He thought he was off to a good start, but on two occasions he had said things publicly that were beyond his portfolio. I had mentioned to him privately twice that it wasn’t the administration’s position, and that he had to support the administration’s position. Then he went off to the Persian Gulf and for some reason he and Buster Glosson sat on an airplane with reporters for a dozen hours. My rule is 30 minutes, and after that you get clobbered. You forget what you told

them in the first place and you think you are BS-ing with friends. And you are never with friends. I never had a meal with reporters, I never have a working lunch, and I never do media breakfasts, because you get relaxed. Wrong. It's always business. So he gave these guys a story. I read it on Sunday morning. I called Cheney, he read it and called me back. We chatted about it. I heard no more from him that afternoon. [Cheney and his wife spent the afternoon relaxing and walking the B&O Canal]. The next morning I went in and there was a bit of a fire storm. I talked to Dugan a few times. I got called by the secretary and went up to see him. He was sitting there with Deputy Secretary Atwood, and he said he was going to fire Dugan. I said it might not be a good idea at this time. He said he had thought about it and talked to the White House and had decided to fire him. He didn't want to talk about it any more. Once he did it, I supported it, it was a done deal. He had the basis to do it. I wouldn't have done it, because I think we could have saved Mike, but he did it. He was tough on a number of others. They were almost all Air Force. Every now and then he would catch some Air Force man off base and chew him out. He caught me off base and chewed me out. The other part of the story is that there was also some reporting in Air Force circles that I was mad because Dugan had gone to the Gulf and I hadn't, or he had gone there before me. As if I cared. The chief of staff of the Air Force should go out to the Gulf if he wanted to. That was part of the rhetoric.

Goldberg: Do you think in Cheney's case it was a matter of asserting his authority?

It seemed to be, in the Welch business. That came early on, the matter of serving notice on people that he was no patsy, he was going to be in charge.

Powell: I don't know that Dick knew the effect he was having on Welch and the system, because it was sort of extemporaneous. It was not something he thought about, it just came out. The press converted it into a Talmudic uttering and the whole building shuddered. Larry is such a great soldier, he took his pop and kept right on going.

Goldberg: He gave us his version of it; it was very reasonable.

Powell: He was not that far off the farm. Will Taft knew he was going up, so I'm still not sure why he got pinned. It was what almost every chief does.

Goldberg: I think you hit the nail on the head. It was an off-the-cuff remark by Cheney and then he had to back it up.

Powell: Yes, and it served his purposes. Dugan was considered and discussed with people in the White House. Not with me knowing, but there was no reason for him to discuss it with me. I'm not even sure he told the Air Force secretary before he fired Dugan; you'd have to ask Cheney. The secretary of the Air Force was not part of that, either. It wasn't just to be a big bad wolf, he really found what Mike did to be just off the mark.

Goldberg: There were political implications that were pretty far-reaching. He had sufficient justification for it.

Powell: He also wondered how he could go through the up-coming conflict with somebody who didn't understand what position he had put himself in.

Goldberg: To get back to your service with NSC--that obviously affected your perspective on national security problems, the role of OSD, and the whole political context. It probably affected the perception of you by people who alleged that you

were a political general because of that experience, plus some others, too. Did you find that your overall perspective was changed substantially by that NSC experience?

Powell: Yes. Not so much because I was in the NSC, but because of what I saw--I saw the Soviet Union coming to an end. I ran five summit meetings. I was at the side of the president and the secretary of state negotiating the INF treaty, START I, CFE; I spent hours with Gorbachev. When I went to Moscow I would be taken to a private KGB hotel with Dobrynin so he could try to give me insight as to how serious this was and that they were not playing a game with us. To see all of that and to be witness to such a period of history for two years and then to go back and discover that I am chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the consequences of that history were unfolding, fundamentally changed me. By then I had picked up the political general thing. It was well-deserved, I might add. It's not as if I wasn't helped by my political contacts, and I had gotten to be a corps commander without commanding a division. When I went to the NSC I wasn't sure I was ever going back to the Army.

Goldberg: You probably wouldn't have gotten as far as you did without the political sense. It was indispensable.

Powell: It was Wickham who told me at one point in my career when I was working for Weinberger that he wasn't sure I would ever get what I wanted in the Army because I did one better than I probably did the other, meaning that I seemed to have a ken for this. He said, "You seem to have a better understanding of this than most people we put up here. This may be where you make your greatest service." What he meant was that I might end up a three-star somewhere in a pol-mil job, but I

shouldn't think I was necessarily on the road to becoming a four-star commander or candidate for chief. That was good advice from a dear friend and mentor. When I left Fifth Corps to go to the White House, I was a man who had been commanding the Corps for five months and hadn't commanded a division. When Carlucci said he was picked to be secretary of defense I assumed that was my way out, to go into civilian life, and I had been given a number of very nice offers, or to go back to the military if there was a job for me. But instead they had a better idea, to make me national security adviser.

Goldberg: It's interesting. In some ways Crowe's career was something like yours.

Powell: Except he planned it.

Goldberg: He wanted it, yes. He had policy jobs. He never got up to the same level, he was mostly DoD, but it was in the policy area, and he told us he could never have been chief of naval operations, they would never have given him the job.

Powell: It never would have happened. To some extent we both got to the same position because we brought these skills and talents to the equation, but we started out differently. I don't shrink from the political general label, it's not necessarily bad, but I have to sometimes remind people that if they take a hard look they will find that I was a pretty good infantryman for 15 or 20 years.

Goldberg: There have been lots of political generals.

Powell: I had more command than Marshall or Eisenhower did.

Goldberg: Eisenhower was certainly a political general, he had to be. MacArthur was a political general.

Powell: In the greatest sense of the term. He even had his mother traveling along with him

Goldberg: If you don't have the political sense, you are not going to get to the top usually. Marshall did his best to avoid being labeled that, but obviously he had to exercise political judgment and influence all through his career as chief of staff.

Powell: I have given up worrying about labels. We'll let time tell.

Goldberg: There is not much point in worrying about it.

Powell: They are giving you a signal, in case you haven't noticed.

Goldberg: McNamara's people used to do that for him, too. His secretary used to call. The phone would ring, and we knew that was the end of it. We want to thank you very much. We have just gotten started, of course.