

Forced Conversion: Civil-Military Relations and National Security Policy in the Carter
Administration, 1977-1981

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate in History in the
Department of History.

Chapel Hill
2010

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ABSTRACT

JOHN D. MINI: Forced Conversion: Civil-Military Relations and National Security
Policy in the Carter Administration, 1977-1981
(Under the Direction of Richard H. Kohn)

President Jimmy Carter took the helm as commander-in-chief at an important juncture in American civil-military relations. Civil-military conflict prevailed throughout most of Carter's term primarily because of the president's attempt to exclude Congress from any role in defense policy and budget formulation. Although differing with Carter on many issues, the Joint Chiefs of Staff still proved willing to compromise with their commander-in-chief as well as most of their civilian superiors in the Pentagon. Unanimous support from the Joint Chiefs for the SALT II treaty provided one of the best examples of this willingness to support their civilian superiors. Despite such instances of cooperation between Carter and his military advisors, a military-congressional alliance formed over his four-year term in which key members of the legislature sought to overturn the president on many issues relevant to national defense. Encouraged by frank testimony from the Joint Chiefs expressing their views of weaknesses in Carter's policies and budgets, this military-congressional alliance largely blocked the administration's plans to limit global commitments and economize in national defense. In defeating Carter's plans through a series of end-runs, this military-congressional alliance set the stage for one of the largest peacetime military buildups in the nation's history. Jimmy Carter's bold plans to change national defense policy were defeated and only the most modest of reforms took place. This dissertation details the course of this relationship between the Pentagon,

White House, and Congress in a topical chronology that examines three interrelated themes: the civil-military dialogue surrounding the annual defense budget process, how civil-military relations affected and were influenced by the making of national security policy, and finally how specific events requiring close civil-military contact influenced the relationship.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFHRA—Air Force Historical Research Agency

AUSA—Association of the United States Army

BG—Brigadier General (“one star general”)

CDI—Center for Defense Information

CG—Consolidated Guidance

CINC—Commander-in-Chief of a Unified or Specific Command

CJCS—Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

CLL—Congressional Legislative Liaison

CNO—Chief of Naval Operations

CPI—Consumer Price Index

DG—Defense Guidance

DoD—Department of Defense

ERW—Enhanced Radiation Weapon (“neutron bomb”)

FLSN—Sandinista Rebel Movement in Nicaragua

FG—Fiscal Guidance

FORSCOM—U.S. Forces Command

FY—Fiscal Year

GEN—General (“four star general”)

HAPC—House Appropriations Committee

HASC—House Armed Services Committee

HCOB—House Committee on the Budget

HR—House Resolution

ICBM—Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile

JCS—Joint Chiefs of Staff

JSOP—Joint Strategic Objectives Plan

JSPS—Joint Strategic Planning System

LTG—Lieutenant General (“three star general”)

MG—Major General (“two star general”)

MLRS—Multiple-Launch Rocket System

NATO—North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NARA II—National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland

NSC—National Security Council

NSDM—National Security Decision Memorandum (from Nixon/Ford Administration)

OMB—Office of the Management of the Budget

OSD—Office of the Secretary of Defense

PD—Presidential Directive

POM—Programming Objectives Memorandum

PPBS—Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System

PPG—Planning and Programming Guidance

PRC—Policy Review Committee (of the National Security Council)

PRM—Presidential Review Memorandum

RDF—Rapid Deployment Force

ROK—Republic of Korea (South Korea)

SACEUR—Supreme Allied Commander, Europe

SALT—Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty

SAPC—Senate Appropriations Committee

SASC—Senate Armed Services Committee

SCC—Special Coordination Committee (of the National Security Council)

SECDEF—Secretary of Defense

SLBM—Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile

SLEP—Service Life Extension Program (for naval vessels)

SOUTHCOM—U.S. Southern Command

USAF—United States Air Force

USMC—United States Marine Corps

ZBB—Zero-Based Budgeting

CHAPTER I

TAKING THE HELM: JIMMY CARTER BECOMES COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

Prologue: Blair House, December 10, 1976, 1:00 p.m.¹

President-elect Jimmy Carter sat silently, smiling and nodding as General George Brown, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, briefed him on the state of the nation's military and on national security. These meetings between presidents-elect and the nation's top military officers were nothing new to Washington. Jimmy Carter, however, had made it clear during his campaign that he planned to make many changes in terms of American foreign policy, defense spending, and U.S.-Soviet arms control. He had also campaigned as a Washington outsider—a man who would return honor to a presidency disgraced by Watergate, a peanut farmer from Georgia who would shun the corrupt politics of the Capitol Beltway, an idealist who would restore American prestige following the national nightmare of Vietnam. Jimmy Carter was definitely a fresh face in Washington, and the entire nation, including some of the highest ranking military officers present at Blair House, waited expectantly to see how he would handle the presidency.

Flanking the incoming president were Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Advisor, and Harold Brown, the incoming Secretary of Defense. Both Brzezinski and Brown

¹ Blair House is a secure building across the street from the White House. The date and time of this meeting, the first between President-elect Carter and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is taken from George S. Brown, "Daily Log, January 1, 1977 to June 30, 1977," CJCS Brown Files, Box 64, NARA II, College Park, MD. General account of this meeting is taken from Mark Perry, *Four Stars* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 264-266. A Pentagon civilian present at the meeting confirmed Perry's anonymously sourced account in Richard A. Stubbing and Richard A. Mendel, *The Defense Game: An Insider Explores the Astonishing Realities of America's Defense Establishment* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 345.

shared Carter's ambitious desires for change. The president, however, planned to exert direct control in both of their realms—especially within the Pentagon's defense budget and the NSC's national security planning process. Jimmy Carter, despite his relaxed posture and smile, listened intently to George Brown, absorbing the information of the briefing.

Jimmy Carter was the third president for whom General Brown had served as the senior ranking military advisor. A decorated bomber pilot in World War II and Korea and a senior officer in the Pentagon during Vietnam, Brown had seen remarkable changes in both warfare and American policy during the Cold War. He must have believed with deep conviction the underlying message of his briefing, which he delivered with a sense of urgency: The Soviet Union's growth in power over the previous decade presented a grave risk to America's national security. Brown indicated that he was "well aware of the intense pressure to reduce defense appropriations" but emphasized that he could not "stress too strongly that preserving the freedom and security of the United States requires well-equipped, trained, and ready armed forces whose power must be recognized and reliable."²

Harold Brown, the incoming Secretary of Defense, remained taciturn and expressionless throughout the presentation. Secretary Brown was also a veteran of the Pentagon during the Vietnam War, serving as the Director of Defense Research and Engineering and later Secretary of the Air Force. He obtained his Ph.D. at the age of twenty-three, and those close to him dubbed him nothing less than an "authentic genius." Harold Brown was a quiet and

² George S. Brown, "JCS Briefing to President Elect Carter, 1976," CJCS Brown Files, 001 Transition to President Carter, Box 4, NARA II, College Park, MD. For General Brown's service background, see Willard J. Webb and Ronald H. Cole, *The Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, ed. Joint Chiefs of Staff Historical Division (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), 89-95, 147-148.

introverted man; although not outwardly expressive of his opinion, he considered the Soviet Union as a grave threat and agreed with General Brown's views.³

Around the edges of the room sat lower-ranking members of the military who served as aides or members of the service staffs in the Pentagon. Sometimes referred to in Washington as "iron majors," these officers had spent much less time in service than the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).⁴ They had almost certainly seen combat in Vietnam, but not in World War II and Korea. Despite their more limited military experience, they would play an important role in implementing the new president's defense policies.

Carter smiled again and thanked General Brown for the briefing. The President indicated that he would study the written copy detailing the relative inferiority of the U.S. vis-à-vis the Soviets. Military stomachs probably churned as Carter announced that he planned to reduce and economize U.S. military spending while at the same time seeking "deep cuts" in both the Soviet and U.S. nuclear weapons arsenals. Then he asked a question, almost in an off-hand manner: "By the way, how long would it take to reduce the number of nuclear weapons currently in our arsenal?"⁵

³ For Harold Brown's background see Roger R. Trask and Alfred Goldberg, *The Department of Defense, 1947-1997*, ed. Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 96. For quiet demeanor and leadership style see Bernard Weinraub, "The Browning of the Pentagon," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 29, 1978. For quote on "authentic genius" see John Kester, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 14 April 1998, OSD Oral History, 36. For his view of the Soviet threat and understanding of the Joint Chiefs' position, see Harold Brown, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 8 October 1992, OSD Oral History, 1-4.

⁴ "Iron major" is, according to Pentagon correspondent Richard Halloran, "a term of obscure Army origin." "Iron majors" were often lieutenant colonels and sometimes even full colonels. The example "iron major" cited in Halloran's account was a Navy commander with sixteen years of service. In Halloran's words these officers "labor in the back rooms of the Pentagon drawing up the first drafts of anything from national strategy to military budgets to war plans." Often the final drafts bore strong imprints of their initial work. See Richard Halloran, "Of Paper Tigers Whose Joy in Life Is Red Stripes," *New York Times*, October 25, 1984, B14.

⁵ Perry, *Four Stars*, 265.

General Brown hesitated, and he and Harold Brown exchanged uneasy glances. The U.S. possessed thousands of nuclear weapons—carried by over one thousand land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, approximately 650 submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and over two hundred nuclear-capable B-52 bombers—which formed a balanced strategic force known as the “triad.”⁶ The military considered all three mutually supporting and necessary. They had come on line during the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations with approval by Congress in order to maintain a credible national strategy of deterrence against the Soviets. Most defense analysts believed that even minor reductions in one part of the triad might have a major impact on the overall strategic balance.⁷ General Brown asked for clarification. What kind of reduction did the president-elect have in mind?

Then Carter issued his “blockbuster” reply: “What would it take to get it down to a few hundred? Let’s say 200 missiles total.” Silence fell on the room. One military staff member present that afternoon later recalled, “You could hear a pin drop.”⁸ Stunned by the boldness of the reduction, General Brown was speechless. He just stood looking at Carter. After an awkward moment of silence, the reply came from the heretofore quiet Harold Brown, who cautioned that such an immense reduction would be a “fundamental risk.” Carter nonetheless indicated that he wanted studies conducted on the matter immediately. General Brown,

⁶ United States Department of Defense, *Annual Defense Department Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), C-5. Hereafter cited as *FY78 Annual DoD Report*.

⁷ For diversification and mutual support of the triad, see Harold Brown, *Thinking About National Security: Defense and Foreign Policy in a Dangerous World* (New York: Westview Press, 1983), 62-64. For necessity of balance in the triad, see Brown, *Thinking About National Security*, 74.

⁸ Perry, *Four Stars*, 266.

“apparently overcoming his astonishment,” replied that he would ensure that his staff conducted the study.⁹

Within hours, some of the military participants leaked reports of the meeting to congressmen and senators on Capitol Hill, as well as to the outgoing administration in the White House, where President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger were quoted as being “appalled.” Political pundits wrote two accounts of the incident within a month, fed by further leaks concerning the meeting and Carter’s reiteration of the request for a “200 missile” study at a subsequent meeting in January.¹⁰ Since the Joint Chiefs had not dissented during the meeting, incoming Secretary of State Cyrus Vance told Kissinger that he felt the military was in favor of the reduction of missiles and defense spending. After leaving office, Kissinger contacted the Joint Chiefs and told them that they “might be in for difficult times.”¹¹ It appeared that relations between the civilian leaders of the new administration and their military advisors were off to a tense start.

In many ways, this first meeting between President Carter and his senior defense advisors was emblematic of civil-military relations during the first two years of the Carter administration. Carter had bold plans to cut defense expenditures and reduce nuclear weapons, and they made not only the military, but also many of his civilian advisors, apprehensive. Harold Brown, quiet at first, would gradually become more assertive in aligning himself with the Joint Chiefs and speaking out when he felt Carter’s plans went too

⁹ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Nuclear 'Blockbuster'," *Washington Post*, January 27, 1977, A23. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski also confirmed this account and the uproar it caused among the military. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1985), 157.

¹⁰ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Carter's 200 Missiles," *Washington Post*, February 12, 1977, A15.

¹¹ LTG William Y. Smith, "Memorandum for Record, Subject: JCS Meeting 1000 19 January 1977, January 21, 1977," CJCS Brown Files, 001 Transition to President Carter, Box 4, NARA II, College Park, MD.

far; and the military would continue to resort to using press leaks and behind-the-scenes congressional lobbying, often termed the “end run,” to resist Carter’s plans.¹²

While certainly this first meeting between Carter and the Joint Chiefs showed that the civil-military relationship began on a tense note, one should not rush to judgment as to its long-term impact. To understand and evaluate fully the relationship between President Carter, his military and civilian advisors, and the Congress requires a much deeper analysis which to date does not exist in the scholarship.

The Carter Years and Civil-Military Relations: A Gap in the Scholarship

Scholars have neglected the Carter Administration’s civil-military relations, perhaps because no major military conflict or civil-military “blowup” occurred in those years. Furthermore, even the secondary literature devoted to evaluating and chronicling Carter’s presidency barely mentions his relationship with his military advisors. This omission is all the more surprising considering that Carter’s presidency came immediately after the Vietnam War, a conflict that had, in the words of military historian Allan Millett, “ended twenty-five years of American military superiority” and left many in the nation feeling “disaffected from both their political leadership and their armed forces.”¹³

For several additional reasons the Carter years provide an intriguing perspective for further research into the post-World War II civil-military relationship. While civil-military relations during the Carter years may have been in somewhat similar to other post-war

¹² The definition of the term “end run” has varied, but in general the term referred to a maneuver in which impediments were bypassed, often by deceit or trickery. The term has applied to football when the running back attempts to circumvent one end of the defensive line. A less well-known usage connoted a high-speed maneuver by a submarine used to gain a hidden and advantageous firing position against an unsuspecting surface ship. This second definition seemed particularly ironic given President Carter’s military service as a submarine officer and the fact that his policies became the “target” of such a maneuver by the military.

¹³ Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 572, 607.

administrations, certain factors make them unusual and worthy of more in depth historical study. Several factors warrant reflection when one considers the situation Jimmy Carter faced when taking office in 1977 and the subsequent legacy of his tenure.

First, extreme distrust between the president and his generals and admirals characterized the last years of the Nixon Administration, often cited as the nadir of American civil-military relations.¹⁴ Carter's ascendancy therefore represented an entirely new administration coming to power at a potentially critical juncture for the future of civil-military relations. Just as the nation watched to see if Jimmy Carter would alter politics as usual in Washington, many high-ranking military leaders and "iron majors" at the Pentagon watched to see how this Democrat and self-proclaimed moralist would deal with the military.

Second, the Carter administration invited civil-military conflict because of the president's desire to assert strong personal control over several areas in the Pentagon. Not all presidents came into office with plans to do so. Some commanders-in-chief and their Secretaries of Defense have taken a more "hands-off" approach from the start. Arguably, the administrations of Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Reagan took such an approach.¹⁵ Nixon's first Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird (1969-1973), consciously tried to reverse the trend of civilian involvement under McNamara and stated that he was "striving to decentralize

¹⁴ Richard H. Kohn refers to this period of time as the "low point" in civil-military relations in his interview with General David Jones. See GEN David Jones, interview by Maurice Maryanow and Richard H. Kohn, transcript, K239.0512-1664, IRIS# 01105219, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 197. Political scientist Dale Herspring also agreed with this assessment, placing the Nixon Administration above all others in his "high conflict" category and contending that the JCS, when dealing with Nixon, "could not get over his lies, his deceitful ways, and his many efforts to get them to commit open violations of the chain of command." See Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency: Civil-Military Relations from FDR to George W. Bush* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 409, 415.

¹⁵ Trask and Goldberg, *The Department of Defense*, 86, 91-93. Adam Yarmolinsky, writing in 1971, indicated that the Nixon Administration "appeared to be establishing a pattern of civil-military relations which reverses that of the Kennedy and Johnson years" and turned away from systems analysis as a means of problem solving. See Yarmolinsky, *The Military Establishment*, 32.

decision making as much as possible” while “delegating to the Military Departments more responsibility to manage development and procurement programs.”¹⁶ Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger (1973-1975), although held in high regard by the military, was fired when the Ford White House initially would not support larger defense budgets, but under President Ford and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld the budget increased again with the FY77 and FY78 submissions. Ronald Reagan, never regarded as a “details president,” had this image confirmed by his first Chairman of the JCS, General David Jones, who stated that Reagan simply did not want to get involved in the intricacies of the Defense Department.¹⁷ Thus, the Carter administration chose a bold course in the immediate post-Vietnam era with its desire to assert more presidential control over the Pentagon’s budgetary, procurement, and planning processes.

Third, the Carter administration also chose to increase civilian control in areas that had traditionally been closely guarded by the military, including retirement pay, officer promotions, contingency planning, and most importantly the specifics of the budgeting process. While it would seem at first that the McNamara years, often cited as the pinnacle of civilian “involvement” in military realms, would not be comparable to the Pentagon under Jimmy Carter and Harold Brown, the contrast was not so straightforward. Harold Brown, for instance, asserted more direct influence over officer promotions and assignments than any previous Secretary and differed sharply with James Schlesinger in this regard.¹⁸

Additionally, Secretary Brown, although doing so to ease civil-military tension, increased the

¹⁶ Trask and Goldberg, *The Department of Defense*, 86.

¹⁷ GEN David Jones, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 21 October 1987, OSD Oral History, 31.

¹⁸ LTG Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, transcript, K239.0512-1570, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 7-8 February 1984, 278.

authority of his assistant secretaries over the Service Secretaries, thus consolidating civilian control at an even higher level in the Pentagon.¹⁹ The Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) process, installed by McNamara as a means to increase civilian control of the budget, was still in use and Carter wanted to place Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB) on top of it as an additional layer of control.²⁰ These factors, coupled with the president's personal involvement in the defense budgetary choices, led in some ways to civilian control in the Carter years rivaling that of the 1960s.

Fourth, the Carter administration found itself to be the first Democratic administration to have to deal with a military officer corps becoming increasingly Republican—or, at the very least, more open in proclaiming its conservatism. According to one well-known survey of senior Pentagon officers, as Carter entered office in 1976, 16 percent of all high ranking officers serving at the Pentagon characterized themselves as “liberal” and 61 percent as “conservative.” By the end of Carter's term in 1980, only 4 percent would classify themselves as liberal, with conservatives increasing to 72 percent.²¹ Likewise, the margin of preference among officers for the Republicans over the Democrats jumped from less than 3:1 to almost 5:1 in the same period.²² While many scholars have noted the unique dynamics of

¹⁹ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, History and Museums Division Oral History Transcript, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., 1988, 116. General Wilson found this to be “a disturbing trend.”

²⁰ Lawrence J. Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon: American Defense Policies in the 1970's* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 85-88.

²¹ Ole R. Holsti, “A Widening Gap between the U.S. Military and Civilian Society?: Some Evidence 1976-1996,” *International Security* 23, No. 3 (Winter 1998-1999), 13. One must note how limited the data from Holsti's sample is. His 1976 survey contained approximately 500 military correspondents, while subsequent surveys contained as few as 115. Despite its limited scope, few other qualitative measures exist to measure political associations of the officer corps during this time period.

²² Ole Holsti, “Of Chasms and Convergences: Attitudes and Beliefs of Civilians and Military Elites at the Start of a New Millennium,” in *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*, ed. Peter Feaver and Richard H. Kohn (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 31, 92. Holsti confirmed that many

civil-military relations between the “liberal” Clinton administration and the “conservative” military under General Colin Powell, the Carter administration actually provided a precursor to this phenomenon.²³

Fifth, the expansion and strengthening of the U.S. military after the Vietnam War, so often credited to Reagan’s buildup of the military, cannot be fully understood without attention given to the Carter administration. All too often, Carter’s term has been associated with the famous “decade of neglect” thesis which stated that the 1970s represented a period where U.S. military power declined significantly.²⁴ While the overall idea may have validity, holding the Carter administration primarily responsible for the decline in military strength does not seem justified. Often overlooked, for example, is the fact that Carter’s final two budgets foreshadowed the flood of defense spending in the Reagan years.

Finally, understanding civil-military relations during the Carter administration offers insights into that administration which are not available in the current literature and political science models. The civil-military dialogue created by the 1980-1981 defense budget process provides one significant example of this. Many observers have cited Carter’s increase in these defense budgets as primarily a concession to conservative members of the

results from the more recent Triangle Institute for Security Studies (1998-1999) survey of the “elite officer corps” proved to be “fully consistent with the previous findings that the civilian-military gap in partisan identifications had widened during the 1976-96 period.”

²³ For examples of attention to the civil-military tensions of the Clinton years see Richard H. Kohn, “Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations,” *National Interest* (Spring 1994): 3-17 and Christopher Gelpi and Peter D. Feaver, “Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick? Veterans in the Political Elite and the American Use of Force,” *The American Political Science Review* 96, No. 4 (December 2002): 779-793.

²⁴ For source of the original “decade of neglect” thesis see Colin S. Gray and Jeffrey G. Barlow, “Inexcusable Restraint: The Decline of American Military Power in the 1970s,” *International Security* 10, No. 2 (Autumn 1985): 27-69. Gray and Barlow held the Carter Administration primarily responsible for the decline of U.S. military power during the 1970s.

Senate in order to gain their support for ratification of SALT II.²⁵ Such an analysis certainly has merit—Carter himself admitted his intentions in this regard.²⁶ Closer analysis of the civil-military dialogue, however, demonstrates that Carter fought these defense budget increases until the end and was largely forced to accommodate the desires of an alliance between his own military advisors and conservative members of Congress. Likewise, a more complete understanding of the civil-military relations within the Carter years can assist in explaining otherwise confusing outcomes that do not fit a particular political science model. As one example, political scientist Ole Holsti commented that there was little explanation in his study for why military officers would have expressed little disdain for Ronald Reagan's stateside public relations assignment during World War II relative to Jimmy Carter who served with distinction in the U.S. Navy.²⁷ As oral histories and personal reflections reveal, however, even Harold Brown's special assistant John Kester, a civilian in the Pentagon, expressed doubt as to the meaningfulness of Carter's military service and other reports indicated that senior admirals were "rankled" by Carter's claims about his naval service. Taking these negative perspectives into account may help explain why the military officers in Holsti's sample gave little credit to Carter's military service compared to that of Reagan. Overall, these two points illustrate the value of further in-depth analysis of civil-military relations during the Carter administration.

While many of these important factors bearing on the Carter years tend to be overlooked, this period has not been utterly ignored in the scholarship. Works dealing with the broader

²⁵ For example see M. Glenn Abernathy, Dilys M. Hill, and Phil Williams, *The Carter Years: The President and Policy Making* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 96-99.

²⁶ Jimmy Carter, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 12 March 86, OSD Oral History, 25-26.

²⁷ Feaver and Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians*, 30-31.

topic of American civil-military relations usually devote a chapter to the Carter years, but their analysis tends to be very general, attempting to compare and contrast administrations. One example of such a study is Mark Perry's *Four Stars* (1989) which examined civil-military relations from the Truman to the Reagan administrations.²⁸ Perry, a journalist, conducted interviews with field-grade military officers to craft an interesting portrait of a very strained relationship between Carter and the JCS, but because of his anonymous attributions and non-specific citations, his work is not in many respects a credible or respected source. Relying heavily on Perry's interpretations, Dale Herspring's *The Pentagon and the Presidency: Civil Military Relations from FDR to George W. Bush* (2005) also dedicated a chapter to the Carter years.²⁹ Both works concluded that, in part due to the tenseness of the first meeting between Carter and the JCS, the civil-military relationship began badly and never fully recovered. Charles Stevenson's *SECDEF: The Nearly Impossible Job of Secretary of Defense* (2006) took a similar approach. His comparative study explored the operating styles of various Secretaries, devoting a chapter to Harold Brown and concluding that he was an effective "team player."³⁰

Many scholars have attempted to explain why Carter's defense and foreign policy changed over the four years, primarily using political-science models. Gaddis Smith argued in *Morality, Reason, and Power* (1986) that the split between dovish Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and hawkish National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski was primarily responsible for the changes in Carter's policies. Gaddis showed that Carter at first relied

²⁸ Perry, *Four Stars*, 264-277.

²⁹ Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 237-264.

³⁰ Charles A. Stevenson, *SECDEF: The Nearly Impossible Job of Secretary of Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006), 5.

most on Vance, but by 1979, after a series of foreign policy setbacks, listened mostly to Brzezinski.³¹ Alexander Moens argued essentially the same thing using the “multiple advocacy” model in *Foreign Policy Under Carter: Testing Multiple Advocacy Decision Making* (1990).³² Richard Thornton’s *The Carter Years: Toward a New Global Order* (1991) posited the thesis that advances in Soviet nuclear weapons technology exacerbated this well-known Vance-Brzezinski split from the start of the administration.³³ David Skidmore, in *Reversing Course: Carter’s Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and the Failure of Reform* (1996), claimed instead that it was primarily domestic political pressure which forced Carter into a more hardline foreign policy in his last two years.³⁴ Most recently, Brian J. Auten challenged both Thornton’s and Skidmore’s interpretations in *Carter’s Conversion: The Hardening of American Defense Policy* (2008). Focusing on defense budgets and nuclear weapons modernization, Auten argued that external geo-strategic factors primarily caused the administration’s “conversion” to a “harder” defense policy by 1979.³⁵ While

³¹ Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 35, 49.

³² Alexander Moens, *Foreign Policy Under Carter: Testing Multiple Advocacy Decision Making* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 1-3. The “multiple advocacy” model assumes the president sets up his advisory process as a series of adversary proceedings. The National Security Advisor is responsible for managing this process, but the president remains the final arbiter in all cases. Moens argues that the Carter administration was an ideal case study for this model because Carter intended his NSC system to function in this manner. Unfortunately, according to Moens “Carter’s open process did not produce the results he had sought.”

³³ Richard C. Thornton, *The Carter Years: Toward a New Global Order* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), xiii.

³⁴ David Skidmore, *Reversing Course: Carter’s Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and the Failure of Reform* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996), 55, 180.

³⁵ Brian J. Auten, *Carter’s Conversion: The Harding of American Defense Policy* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 2-3, 21, 27, 306, 308. Auten classified Skidmore’s model as an *innenpolitik* theory, while his own model is that of neoclassical realism. He refuted Thornton’s thesis by pointing out that any policy change associated with Soviet weapons modernization would have had to take place well before 1979. Carter’s policy shift is thus an example of a “self-correcting policy change” whereby the administration realized the increasing threat posed by the U.S.S.R. and sought to build American strength in response to that threat.

there is truth to each of these interpretations, none of these accounts provide much attention to or insight into Carter's relationship with his military advisors or his theater commanders.

The only historical account focusing exclusively upon Carter's interaction with his military advisors is Steven Rearden's volume in the classified official history of the JCS. Based upon extensive research in classified government documents and memos, in *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy Volume XII 1977-1980* (2002), Rearden concluded that, although the relationship between Carter and the JCS improved somewhat over time, it never became a relationship based on trust and cooperation.³⁶ Rearden's access to classified documents in both the Pentagon and the Carter Library proved to be one of the great strengths of his account, yet because of his exclusive focus on the JCS he tended to examine the defense policy formulation process to the exclusion of other areas such as the defense budget process. The work also suffers from some of the limitations associated with official history. As historian Martin Blumenson has pointed out, many scholars have been quick to criticize the perceived "partisan" nature of official histories and the "censorship" process involved in finalizing them.³⁷ While most of these weaknesses have been overstated, the fact that Rearden's official history remains accessible to only a small readership means that a new look at civil-military relations during the Carter years will be a significant contribution to the historiography.

³⁶ Steven Rearden, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy Volume XII 1977-1980* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002).

³⁷ Martin Blumenson, "Can Official History Be Honest History?," *Military Affairs* 26, No. 4 (Winter 1962-63): 153-161.

A New Look at Civil-Military Relations in the Carter Years: The Purpose and Thesis of This Study

This study will explore the characteristics of civil-military relations in the Carter Administration and explain why the relationship had these characteristics. In doing so, it will contribute to the understanding of civil-military relations since World War II, which demands close study of how the highest ranking members of the military command structure have interacted with their civilian superiors. As Louis Smith pointed out in *American Democracy and Military Power* (1951), in the age of “total war” since World War II, the civil-military relationship has required not only military *subordination* to civilian power, but also *coordination* with civilian policy. In his words, such coordination is “imperative if the requisite power for sustained combat is to be maintained.”³⁸ The debacle of Vietnam provides a modern example of failed civil-military coordination. Some critics argue that the current Global War on Terror will yield a similar result. Thus, understanding the American civil-military relationship today has powerful political and national security implications.

This dissertation will extend the existing historiography by examining three themes in civil-military relations which have often been examined only separately. The first of the three themes will be the civil-military interaction surrounding the annual defense budgets. The defense budgetary process deserves this central role because it requires sustained, day-to-day contact between the civilians and military in the government and also fully involves Congress, which can and does alter the defense budget through the appropriations process.

³⁸ Louis Smith, *American Democracy and Military Power: A Study of Civil Control of the Military Power in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 12. Similarly, political scientist Edward Kolodziej has argued that a “political consensus” is required in the civil-military relationship and that such a consensus has largely failed to develop since WWII. See Edward A. Kolodziej, *The Uncommon Defense and Congress, 1945-1963* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1966), 30.

As one retired general who worked in the Pentagon put it, “attention to the budget never ceases throughout the year.”³⁹

As a second theme, the dissertation examines how the national security policy of the Carter administration evolved over time and how it affected and was influenced by civil-military relations. National security policy is critical to understanding the civil-military relationship because ultimately military plans should support civilian efforts to form a coherent grand strategy.

As a final theme, the dissertation examines specific events in the Carter administration that involved substantial civil-military dialogue. It will explore the events seen by key leaders and journalists as generating civil-military conflict or requiring significant civil-military cooperation. As an example, the military had little involvement in fashioning of the Camp David accords, so this episode, though important in the overall course of the Carter administration, will not loom large in this study; however, the SALT II treaty had major civil-military ramifications, so it will hold a central place in the study.

The seven broad questions that form this study will be: (1) What was the political-military situation as Carter came into office and how did it affect civil-military relations? (2) What were the incoming administration’s goals in relation to defense policy and budgets, and how did the military initially perceive these goals? Related to this is the question of what kind relationship the incoming administration and the military expected to have: Would it involve extensive collaboration, and how willing would the new administration be to listen to military advice? How involved would the military be in the policy making process overall?

³⁹ GEN Frederick Kroesen, interview by Jerry Frost, 1987, Vol. II, Carlisle Oral History Collection, Project 87-14, Box 1, 367. Hereafter cited as GEN Kroesen, interview by Jerry Frost, Carlisle Oral History. For other scholarly support for the importance of the budget, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 223. Huntington points out that the budget is “a principal means of civilian control over the military.”

(3) What patterns of cooperation and conflict shaped the defense budget process through FY78, 79, 80, and 81? Why did these patterns prevail? (4) What impact did major defense policy initiatives and decisions have on civil-military relations? How did the military support or resist the administration's national defense strategy as demonstrated by their public and private comments and/or actions? (5) How did the administration's national defense policy evolve over time, and was the evolution influenced by the course of civil-military relations? (6) What did JCS support of SALT II, a controversial position, say about the relationships between Carter, his military and civilian advisors, and Congress? (7) Was the failure of the attempted rescue of the American hostages in Iran a manifestation of a failed civil-military relationship? Answering these questions will describe the nature of the relationship between Carter, Congress, and his civilian and military advisors, explain why the relationship had its particular characteristics, and in doing this broaden the historiography of post-World War II civil-military relations and the Carter presidency.

The thesis of this study is that civil-military relations in the Carter administration were best characterized by growing cooperation within the Pentagon, increasing conflict between the Pentagon and the White House, and a strengthening military-congressional alliance—all the product of the administration's attempts to change defense policy and the president's unwillingness to accept the role of Congress in this process. Carter and his staff had conducted extensive research into national defense policy prior to assuming office. Their desire to shrink defense spending was well publicized. Assuming power after intense civil-military conflict, both the military and Congress worried about the new president's plans. Immediately upon taking office, Carter embarked on an ambitious effort to increase presidential control over the defense budget, but met resistance from a military-congressional

alliance. Conflict was not the only aspect of the civil-military relationship during the Carter administration. Military leaders gradually adapted to and cooperated with the civilians in the Pentagon, although Secretary of Defense Harold Brown never fully gained the loyalty of his first set of military Chiefs. For both the military and for Congress, the main conflict came over early presidential involvement in the budgetary process and the administration's attempt to change defense policies. The military, often cooperating with civilians in the Pentagon, sought to circumvent Carter's control of the budget and the policy-making process by increasingly lobbying Congress from FY78 to FY79. The military recognized that the opportunity was ripe for such lobbying due to an opening rift between the White House and Congress. This Executive-Legislative conflict was brought about by the inexperience of Carter's staff and the President's increasing attempt to usurp Congress' role in formulating the defense budget and national defense policy. The conflict culminated in the sustained presidential veto of the FY79 defense appropriations bill in late 1978, the height of President Carter's assertion of authority in defense matters. In part due to the veto nearly being overturned, and in part due to Carter's better relations with his second set of Chiefs, the president and his staff began to recognize the importance of courting congressional favor and taking Pentagon and congressional advice in regard to defense matters. This led to JCS willingness to testify in support of SALT II in hopes of it leading to higher defense budgets from Carter. The president, however, resisted raising defense expenditures even until 1980. The situation proved too tempting for many iron majors in the Pentagon and many retired military members on the executive boards of defense contractors. Playing upon Carter's weakness in the foreign policy arena and holding SALT II ratification hostage in the Senate, the military-congressional alliance forced Jimmy Carter to raise defense budgets and change

his defense policies. Facing some of the highest public disapproval ratings of any president in modern history, Carter was unable to combat these end-runs. Later, while his relationships with his military and civilian defense advisors may have improved, his success in the defense and foreign policy arena did not. Operation Eagle Claw, the failed attempt to rescue the American hostages in Tehran, ended in disaster and, although it was not caused by a failed civil-military relationship, did mark Jimmy Carter's involvement with military and defense matters as an ultimate failure in the minds of many.

Although starting with bold plans to cut defense spending and limit American global commitments, in the end the military-congressional alliance forced Jimmy Carter to surrender most of his ambitions. Carter's late effort to become a Cold Warrior and boost national defense spending was thus more a forced conversion than a willing change of faith. The administration took credit for some evolutionary reforms but any great transformation in the realm of defense budgets and policy remained elusive. The limited reforms of the Carter years, however, were notable: the development of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), increased emphasis on American involvement in the Middle East, and increased civilian control and input into defense planning in the Pentagon. In this regard, the legacy of the Carter years very much remains with us today. Thus, although one may not see the Carter years as a watershed in American civil-military relations, the period 1977 to 1981 is an important one to chronicle and understand.

As much of the historiography of the Carter years has suggested, events in the second half of Carter's term made it relatively different from the first half. Dividing the administration into two-year segments is useful to gain perspective on why the administration changed or kept its policies consistent over time. The annual defense budget process, central to

understanding civil-military relationships within the government, is the first topic explored in each two year segment, beginning with the FY78 and FY79 budgets. The next topic examined is defense and national security policy. The Carter administration's first two years of defense policy were typified mainly by patterns of conflict in civil-military interaction while the second two years were marked more by compromise and cooperation between the White House, the Pentagon, and Congress. Because of its continued and sustained importance to the course of civil-military interaction throughout the administration, the next segment of the study will be dedicated to revealing patterns in the relationship manifest through the process of SALT II. Finally, the conclusion discusses how Operation Eagle Claw manifest patterns of civil-military conflict and cooperation present throughout the four years. The dissertation ends by placing the Carter years in context with the broader stream of civil-military relations since the end of World War II and explaining how the study of civil-military relations changes what we know about Jimmy Carter's presidency.

Evaluating Civil-Military Relations: Other Approaches and this Study's Methodology

Historians and political scientists have studied civil-military relations in the United States using a variety of methodologies or approaches with diverse results. Some have focused on specific events and attempted to gauge civil-military cooperation and conflict from the dialogue created during these crises. An example of such a methodology, which examined the civil-military relations surrounding the creation of the Department of Defense from the former Navy and War Departments, is Demetrios Caraley's *The Politics of Military Unification* (1966).⁴⁰ Paul Hammond took a similar approach in his book *Organizing for*

⁴⁰ Demetrios Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification: A Study of Conflict and the Policy Process* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

Defense (1961), an “administrative history” of the military focusing on key events from 1945-1960.⁴¹

A second approach has analyzed the civil-military dialogue created by the evolution and crafting of defense policy or wartime decisions. The best example of such a work is Eliot Cohen’s *Supreme Command* (2002), which used case studies of national leaders from Abraham Lincoln to David Ben-Gurion to demonstrate successful civilian control over military leaders in wartime, even to the point of *how* war would be waged.⁴² An application of this approach to the Carter Administration is Sam Sarkesian’s *Defense Policy and the Presidency: Carter’s First Years* (1979). Because Sarkesian authored his work midway through the administration, he was unable to draw more than tentative conclusions about the civil-military relationship, which he characterized as strained but showing promise for improvement.⁴³

A third approach has been to study the “politics of defense resource allocation” by examining the civil-military interaction involved in crafting defense budgets. Edward Kolodziej did so in *The Uncommon Defense and Congress, 1945-1963* (1966).⁴⁴ Similarly, Alex Mintz focused exclusively on the budget in *The Politics of Resource Allocation in the U.S. Department of Defense* (1988).⁴⁵

⁴¹ Paul Y. Hammond, *Organizing for Defense: The American Military Establishment in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961).

⁴² Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002).

⁴³ Sam Charles Sarkesian, *Defense Policy and the Presidency: Carter’s First Years* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979).

⁴⁴ Edward A. Kolodziej, *The Uncommon Defense and Congress, 1945-1963* (Ohio State University Press, 1966).

⁴⁵ Alex Mintz, *The Politics of Resource Allocation in the U.S. Department of Defense: International Crises and Domestic Constraints* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988).

A final approach to the study of civil-military relations has focused primarily upon the interaction between Congress and the military since World War II. Samuel Huntington's *The Common Defense* (1961) is probably the most significant work of this type.⁴⁶ Steven Scroggs' *Army Relations with Congress* (2000) provides a more recent example. Scroggs examined and compared the "congressional liaison offices" of each armed service and how each has become increasingly assertive in engaging Congress to gain support for desired programs and for a larger share of the defense budget.⁴⁷ Overall, however, as historian A. J. Bacevich has pointed out, the field of military history has been slow to identify and evaluate this "politicization" of the military.⁴⁸

One reason for the variety of methodologies used to study civil-military relations may be the difficulty in defining precisely what the term "civil-military relations" means. Samuel Huntington, in his landmark *The Soldier and the State* (1957), crafted the first broad definition of civil-military relations, perceiving it as a "system composed of interdependent elements." Three primary components comprised this system: (1) "the formal, structural position of military institutions in the government;" (2) "the informal role and influence of military groups in politics and society at large;" and (3) "the nature of the ideologies of military and non-military groups."⁴⁹ Douglas Kinnard truncated Huntington's definition, describing it as "the relationship between the military and society" and "the politics of

⁴⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

⁴⁷ Stephen K. Scroggs, *Army Relations with Congress: Thick Armor, Dull Sword, Slow Horse* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000).

⁴⁸ Andrew J. Bacevich, "The Paradox of Professionalism: Eisenhower, Ridgway, and the Challenge to Civilian Control, 1953-1955," *The Journal of Military History* 61 No. 2 (April 1997): 305.

⁴⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), viii.

defense policy and resource allocation.”⁵⁰ Richard Kohn has often focused on civil-military relations “at the pinnacle of the government,” pointing out “the *ménage a trois* between the administration, Congress, and the military.”⁵¹ Most recently, political scientist Peter Feaver has examined civil-military relations in terms of an “agency theory” where “the essence of civil-military relations is strategic interaction between civilian principals and military agents.”⁵² The diversity of these definitions, all certainly accurate but with different points of emphasis, attest to the need for the historian to define the term as it applies to his work.

For the purpose of this study, civil-military relations are defined as the relationships between the president, his high-level military and civilian advisors, and the Congress. High-level advisors in this case include the president’s own staff and cabinet as well as the JCS and service staffs of the Pentagon. The relationship is built upon communication, not merely control—although the president constitutionally assumes duty as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, all chief executives have to some degree taken the advice of their uniformed military advisors as to how to play this role, and this advisory relationship is codified in law. While the military remains constitutionally and legally subordinate to the president and his Secretary of Defense, high ranking officers have always resisted some aspects of civilian control.⁵³

⁵⁰ Douglass Kinnard, “The New Civil Military Relations,” in *The U.S. Constitution and the Military*, ed. Charles A. Bodie and Blair P. Turner (Virginia Military Institute: Department of History and Politics, 1986), 65.

⁵¹ Richard H. Kohn, “The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today,” *Naval War College Review* 55, No. 3 (Summer 2002): 9, 17.

⁵² Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2-3.

⁵³ Harold Brown discussed this at length in his oral history interviews, noting that military resistance was particularly strong when civilians attempted to become involved in contingency planning and general officer promotions. See Harold Brown, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 4 December 1981, OSD Oral History, 20 and Harold Brown, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 28 February 1992, OSD Oral History, 16, 19-20. Note that this study most closely follows the definition of civil-military relations

Congress has always played a major role in the civil-military relationship and has always attempted, to a greater or lesser degree, to influence an administration's national defense policy. Members of the House and Senate Armed Services, Budget, and Appropriations Committees have particular power in the politics of defense policy and resource allocation.⁵⁴ The members of these committees have tended to be more conservative than the Congress as a whole, but like the rest have been subject to the pressures of their own parties and voters.⁵⁵ High ranking members of the military services frequently testify before various House and Senate committees, and Congress expects these officers to present their personal views fully and honestly when questioned on the issue, even if they disagree with an executive policy.⁵⁶ There has always been some degree of doubt as to whether their testimony is full and frank, since future promotions or assignments, or relations with White House and senior civilian officials in the Pentagon, may be at risk if public statements prove damaging to official policy.⁵⁷ Intrigued by this paradox, the press has often taken particular interest in the interaction between the military, the president, and Congress, all of whom in turn have used the press to influence public opinion.

proposed by Richard H. Kohn because its focus is on the highest levels of government and also includes the role of Congress. Note also that in this study the term "Pentagon" will generally be used to refer to the combination of civilians and military in the defense department. The term "White House" will generally refer to President Carter, the White House staff, and the NSC and its staff.

⁵⁴ Kolodziej, *The Uncommon Defense and Congress*, 26.

⁵⁵ Huntington, *The Common Defense*, 390. For military confirmation of this perspective see David Jones, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 26 August 1987, OSD Oral History, 42-43.

⁵⁶ For this precedent, see the testimony of Harold Brown in United States Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Nominations of Harold Brown and Charles W. Duncan, Jr. : Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, Ninety-Fifth Congress, First Session, on Nominations of Harold Brown, to Be Secretary of Defense, Charles W. Duncan, Jr., to Be Deputy Secretary of Defense, January 11, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 18. Hereafter cited as SASC, *Brown Nomination Hearings*.

⁵⁷ Smith, *American Democracy and Military Power*, 236.

The military's relationship with Congress has become increasingly significant to civil-military relations since the end of World War II. One of the central arguments of Huntington in *The Common Defense* was that, since 1945, the military has sought influence within Congress in order to "develop the mechanisms and support necessary for survival in the pluralistic world of American politics."⁵⁸ Each Service's Congressional Legislative Liaison (CLL) office in the Pentagon, formed after the 1947 Defense Reorganization Act, exemplified such support mechanisms. Each CLL has employed military officers with special knowledge of important service programs to influence members of Congress and their staffs. Although officially each CLL conducts "liaison," not lobbying (which is illegal for executive branch organizations), they have increasingly provided a conduit for direct military communication to lawmakers.⁵⁹ The public relations division of the Pentagon has provided another support mechanism for post-WWII military dealings with Congress. Dedicated public relations efforts have helped the military pressure Congress by using the press to draw public attention to controversial defense issues.⁶⁰ Increasingly, congressmen have visited the military in the field, where one military legislative liaison officer stated that "our lobbying effectiveness is at its height" since in the field the congressmen can "see for themselves" and

⁵⁸ For an account of congressional involvement in defense policy see Huntington, *The Common Defense*, 384-389. Huntington described the military involvement with Congress as a process of "castellation" where the military constructed figurative castle-like fortifications to protect its interests and become "well entrenched on the political scene, as countless other interest groups, private and public, had done before them."

⁵⁹ For selection of officers and close contact with Congressmen and Senators, see Scroggs, *Army Relations with Congress*, 7. For history and evolution of CLL see Ibid., 17 and Adam Yarmolinsky, *The Military Establishment: Its Impacts on American Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 42. Yarmolinsky called the CLL the "most visible lobbying arm" of the military.

⁶⁰ Jack Raymond, *Power at the Pentagon* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 201. For significance of the public relations departments since World War II see Yarmolinsky, *The Military Establishment*, 197 and Smith, *American Democracy and Military Power*, 240-241.

talk directly to soldiers.⁶¹ Military-affiliated special interest groups, such as the Navy League, Association of the U.S. Army, and the Air Force Sergeants Association have also bolstered the influence of the military with Congress in the twentieth century.⁶² Finally, the increasing power of the military-industrial complex has allowed the Pentagon to adopt a “carrot and stick” approach with Congress, awarding the most lucrative contracts to districts represented by legislators who consistently voted “pro-defense.”⁶³ Thus, political scientist Dale Herspring’s conclusion that “the military is now a bureaucratic interest group much like others in Washington” seems very accurate.⁶⁴ Any full appraisal of post-World War II civil-military relations must therefore take the role of Congress into account.

In examining the interactions among the president, his military and civilian advisors, and the Congress, this study will use the annual defense budgetary process as a primary category of analysis because this process involves sustained, day-to-day contact between civilian and military personnel in the government and also draws the full involvement of Congress. As one retired general who worked in the Pentagon expressed it, “attention to the budget never

⁶¹ Raymond, *Power at the Pentagon*, 203.

⁶² See Jack Anderson, “The Lobbying for the B-1 Bomber,” *Washington Post*, April 3, 1977, C-7. Anderson stated that, “In the top executive suites of almost all the top defense contractors are retired generals and admirals who are on first-name basis with the Pentagon’s big brass.” For an example of the printed lobby material from one of these groups see “Air Force Sergeant’s Association Lobby Ledger Vol. II No. 11, November 2, 1976,” Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Box 36, Folder: Air Force Sergeant’s Association 7/76-4/77 [OA 4413], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. See also Huntington, *The Common Defense*, 396-397. Huntington described these military-affiliated lobbying groups as sometimes “more royalist than the king” in support for military spending.

⁶³ For examples of the power of the military industrial-complex with Congress and in the Pentagon see George C. Wilson, “Aircraft Engine Sparks Fierce Lobbying,” *Washington Post*, March 12, 1979, A1, A4 and Kenneth Bacon, “Pentagon Studies Anatomy of ‘Top Secret’ Data Leak,” *Washington Post*, March 3, 1979, A6. For “carrot and stick” see Yarmolinsky, *The Military Establishment*, 41.

⁶⁴ Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 1.

ceases throughout the year.”⁶⁵ This distinguishes the defense budgetary process from other categories of analysis which are often used to examine civil-military relations such as “official defense policies” and “key events.” For instance, official written defense policies are only periodically reviewed and, according to former Chairman of the JCS General David Jones, fulfilling all aspects of written defense policies “would require tens of billions of dollars more than was within the budget even in the best years.”⁶⁶ This is perhaps why long-time Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) historian Alfred Goldberg commented that the defense budget “may be a better guide to strategy than the defense [policy] guidance.”⁶⁷ Likewise, the focus on only “key events” surrounding civil-military relations has significant drawbacks compared to the defense budget process in evaluating these relations because the sum of “key events” does not necessarily add up to the whole “day-to-day” process of civil-military relations within a given administration. Thus, the annual defense budget process is critical to any understanding of the civil-military relationship.⁶⁸

The process of defense policy making is also critical to charting and explaining the course of civil-military relationships in an administration. Ideally, the president’s policy guidance details how he plans to employ the military to meet national policy. Examining the evolution of the Carter administration’s policy guidance and the associated civil-military dialogue can,

⁶⁵ GEN Kroesen, interview by Jerry Frost, Carlisle Oral History, 367. For other scholarly support for the importance of the budget, see Huntington, *The Common Defense*, 223. Huntington points out that the budget is “a principal means of civilian control over the military” and therefore critical to understanding civil-military relations as a whole.

⁶⁶ GEN David Jones, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, 21 October 1987, OSD Oral History, 9.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Goldberg has been the Chief OSD Historian since 1973.

⁶⁸ See Appendix 1 for a discussion and typical timeline of the annual defense budget process.

therefore, both help explain why the policy guidance evolved as it did as well as help to measure civil-military cooperation and conflict within the administration.

This dissertation will focus primarily upon the Carter administrations Presidential Directives (PDs) as a means to evaluate the civil-military interaction surrounding the defense policy making process. Presidential Directives evolved from the first policy papers drafted by the National Security Council (NSC), which President Truman created in 1947. Initially serving as informational tools for decision making, and created mainly from data gathered by the State and Defense Departments, the policy papers eventually evolved into summary memorandums signed by the president. Each administration since Truman has modified and adapted the NSC policy creation process to fit its own style. The Carter Administration dubbed their signed policy papers “Presidential Directives.”⁶⁹

An understanding of the Presidential Directives from the Carter years serves many useful functions. First, since these Presidential Directives provide succinct summations of the administration’s policies, many of them are particularly relevant to understanding how the military and civilians in the administration interacted, allowing greater study of civil-military relations. Second, these documents have been declassified only recently (and even then not in full) and much of the secondary literature on the Carter Administration discussed these documents using only the interpretations of administration officials. Conducting analysis and presenting these documents as primary sources will make a contribution to the evolving historiography of the Carter years. Finally, the Presidential Directives form a chronological account that links important specific events which also had major influence on the civil-military relationship within the government. For all of these reasons the Presidential

⁶⁹ Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Presidential Directives: Background and Overview*, ed. Harold C. Ralyea (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2005), 8-9, 11. Electronic copy of the source is available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/98-611.pdf> (Accessed July 8, 2008)

Directives, and the associated defense policy process, will complement the annual defense budget as a subject for the dissertation.

Important specific events outside defense policy and budgets will not be ignored. An entire chapter will examine the civil-military interaction surrounding the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II). The emphasis placed on this specific event during the administration is warranted for several reasons. First, unlike many crisis-oriented events, the extensive SALT II process lasted virtually throughout Carter's entire term. Second, the SALT process occupied, in the minds of Carter's advisors, "the central role in U.S. Soviet relations since the end of the Johnson administration."⁷⁰ It thus had major strategic and foreign policy implications at the time. Third, President Carter himself felt that it was critical to have the JCS support for SALT II and he dedicated much of his dialogue with them in efforts to secure their support.⁷¹ Likewise, the director of the Joint Staff in the Pentagon confirmed that SALT II was one of the most significant and time-intensive events taking place in the Pentagon during Carter's term.⁷² Finally, SALT II had tremendous personal meaning for Jimmy Carter. He desperately wanted to reach a nuclear-arms limiting accord with the Soviets and focused extensive personal and political effort into crafting and seeking ratification for the treaty. In his memoir he listed the failure of his administration to gain ratification of SALT II as "the most profound disappointment" of his presidency.⁷³

⁷⁰ Barry M. Blechman, "Brookings Institution Briefing Memorandum-Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, August 20, 1976," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers-Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office-Stuart Eizenstat, Box 17, Folder: Foreign Policy 7/20/76 to 8/76, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. Hereafter cited as Blechman, "Memo to Eizenstat on SALT II," 20 Aug 1976.

⁷¹ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 245.

⁷² LTG Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 269.

⁷³ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 271.

The last chapter examines the failure of Operation Eagle Claw—the mission to rescue the American hostages held in Iran. This specific event is significant for several reasons. First and most importantly, it was the only time Jimmy Carter used military force in his term. Second, there are differing interpretations of Carter and the Chief’s handling of the operation: some cite it as a textbook case of how a commander-in-chief should involve himself in military affairs, others claim Carter’s meddling caused the failure. Lastly, whatever the verdict on Jimmy Carter’s conduct, the disaster of Eagle Claw fatally wounded an already weakened presidency.

Background: The Military-Political Situation in 1976

Jimmy Carter’s term began at a troubled time but with high expectations. President Carter recognized that he was taking office at a time of political turmoil, when the wounds of Vietnam and Watergate were still fresh. He felt strongly that “Americans desired a return to the first principles of their government.” He hoped to bind the nation together by basing the role of America in the world on “a sense of remembered history” that focused on his “most important values—human rights, environmental quality, nuclear arms control, and the search for justice and peace.”⁷⁴ He viewed nuclear weapons as evil and a great threat to global security; consequently, in his inaugural address, he proposed eliminating nuclear weapons from the face of the earth.⁷⁵ Carter recognized the need to heal in some way the division of the country over Vietnam; therefore, one day after taking office, he issued a presidential

⁷⁴ Ibid., 21-22. Carter historian John Dumbrell points out that the primary campaign theme of his 1976 election campaign was “competence and compassion,” reflecting his desire for efficiency in government spending with an effort to “restore consensus by reinvigorating the nation’s moral purpose.” See John Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency: A Re-evaluation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), viii.

⁷⁵ Jimmy Carter, “Inaugural Address of President Jimmy Carter,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 3.

pardon for all those with outstanding warrants for draft evasion during the war.⁷⁶ Yet, besides the lingering wounds of Vietnam and the high expectations which greeted Jimmy Carter upon taking office, there were at least five additional factors that were particularly important to the future of the American military and civil-military relations.

First, according to mounting Cold War rhetoric from defense officials and military officers, the capability of the United States vis-à-vis the Soviets had declined significantly. Outgoing Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld lamented in his annual defense guidance that reductions in defense spending in the 1970s, combined with the enormous cost of sustaining the war in Vietnam, had severely “retarded the rate of modernization and expansion of U.S. forces.”⁷⁷ At the same time, as General Brown emphasized in his briefing to President Carter, the Soviet Union had more than doubled its defense outlays relative to the U.S.⁷⁸ Regardless of how one viewed the Soviet intentions, their capabilities appeared formidable—almost all of their modernization had gone into forces which constituted, in the words of defense analysts, a “direct threat to the United States and its European allies.”⁷⁹ Some argued that the fictional “missile gap” of the 1960’s had become a reality. Since 1965, the U.S. had developed one new intercontinental nuclear missile; in that same period, the U.S.S.R. had developed seven, and three of their newest missiles demonstrated more

⁷⁶ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Proclamation of Pardon, Proclamation 4483 January 21, 1977," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 5.

⁷⁷ *FY78 Annual DoD Report*, 2.

⁷⁸ Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon*, 147-149.

⁷⁹ *FY78 Annual DoD Report*, 26.

accuracy and power than even the best American model.⁸⁰ Defense experts considered the Russian front-line tank in Europe superior to any tank in NATO. Additionally, the Soviet Navy had embarked on a massive shipbuilding program and had just launched its first aircraft carrier, creating a “maritime problem” that constituted a “substantial and growing challenge to the U.S. and its free access to the seas.”⁸¹ Intelligence reports circulating in the DoD indicated that Soviet ballistic missile submarines had “started patrolling as close as three-hundred miles” off the American coast and that the Soviet Navy was capable of developing a “depressed trajectory” submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) which would provide “almost nothing” in the way of warning against a pre-emptive strike.⁸² Published just before Carter took office, the conclusion of the FY78 Defense Guidance emphasized that, “to a degree unprecedented in history, the United States has become directly vulnerable to attack.”⁸³ When President Ford proposed a record setting \$130 billion for defense in FY78, one Pentagon official explained: “The Russian’s aren’t coming—they’re here.”⁸⁴ While many would dispute the validity of the Cold War rhetoric, the fact remained that it had reached a near crescendo by the time Jimmy Carter assumed office.

Second, the military faced a potential personnel crisis as it entered the second half of the 1970s. After the abolition of the draft and the transition to the All-Volunteer Force, the

⁸⁰ *FY78 Annual DoD Report*, 10. Historian Richard Thornton indicated that such intelligence reports gravely alarmed National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, who felt that the Soviets now had the capability to execute a “first strike” which, with a high-level of probability, could render the U.S. unable to retaliate. See Richard C. Thornton, *The Carter Years: Toward a New Global Order* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), xiii.

⁸¹ *FY78 Annual DoD Report*, 111.

⁸² LTG Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 187.

⁸³ *FY78 Annual DoD Report*, 5.

⁸⁴ Leslie H. Gelb, “Pentagon Will Seek \$130 Billion Budget,” *New York Times*, September 15, 1976, A1. Leslie Gelb would later join the Carter administration and became Secretary of State Vance’s protégé and chief arms control consultant at the State Department.

military initially appeared to have stabilized its recruiting. However, 1974 saw a significant drop in volunteers and by 1975 most Services, the Army especially, found themselves significantly short of people. According to one Army official history, when faced with such challenges associated with the All-Volunteer Force, many high-ranking officers “began to question the efficacy of the concept once again.”⁸⁵ The Army and the rest of the military were not alone in recognizing the problem: one independent study projected that by FY80 the military would need to recruit one out of every three eligible service-age males to meet “total force requirements.”⁸⁶ The Air Force, in what was termed its period of “retrenchment,” also faced manpower shortages.⁸⁷ As a result of this personnel crisis, one suggested remedy was the fuller integration of women into the military. The U.S. military already by 1976 had 130,000 women in service, the largest number of females of any military force in the world; yet, the roles that these soldiers would fill were still under debate, leading to much uncertainty within all of the services as to how they might have to adapt.⁸⁸ Indeed, Congressional hearings concluded that in 1977 the military was “at something of a crossroads in regards to the cost of defense manpower.”⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Robert K. Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968-1974* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1997), 292-293. Griffith contended that by 1979 the Army All-Volunteer Force had again reached a “crisis point.”

⁸⁶ United States Congress, House Committee on the Budget, *Defense Manpower and the All-Volunteer Force: Hearings before the Task Force on National Security and International Affairs of the Committee on the Budget, House of Representatives, Ninety-Fifth Congress, First Session, July 12 and 13, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 1. Hereafter cited as HCOB, *Defense Manpower and AVF Hearings*.

⁸⁷ LTG James A. Hill, interview by Edgar Puryear, Jr., transcript, K239.0512-1437, IRIS#01053291, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 20 February 1980, Tape 1, Side 1, 7.

⁸⁸ HCOB, *Defense Manpower and AVF Hearings*, 170.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

Third, this time period saw the military in significant fiscal turmoil. Unprecedented inflation rates undermined the overall stability of the economy and threatened to wipe out the increase to the defense budget proposed by President Ford.⁹⁰ The long-term impact of the 1973 and 1977 OPEC oil embargoes had been to increase the price of fuel to the point that it was prohibitive for many services to conduct training exercises.⁹¹ Beyond the impact of inflation and fuel shortages, the military increasingly struggled to fund research, development, and procurement for new weapons systems because of rises in personnel operating costs. One major increase in costs came from pay for retired veterans, over one million of whom drew government pensions in 1974, a 150 percent increase from a decade earlier.⁹² In FY1964 overall personnel costs accounted for only 28.7 percent of the defense budget, but by FY1976 rose to 36.5 percent, with projections close to 57 percent for FY1978.⁹³ These “off the top” costs within the military budget drastically reduced money available for developing future weapons systems and for the procurement of more modern ones.⁹⁴ Longtime Department of Defense (DoD) official William Perry, then chief of

⁹⁰ United States Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1981*, 102nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 467. The Consumer Price Index (CPI), used by economists as the best measure of inflation, rose 6.5 percent in 1977, 7.7 percent in 1978, 11.3 percent in 1979, and a record 13.5 percent in 1980. For comparison, the “Bush Recession” of 1990 saw the CPI rise at 6.1 percent, while the average rise in the CPI from 1994-2000 was 2.6 percent. See http://www.bls.gov/schedule/archives/cpi_nr.htm (Accessed February 8, 2007) for general information on the CPI and source of the comparative figures.

⁹¹ For the impact of this on the Air Force, see LTG Ray Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 209.

⁹² Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon*, 32.

⁹³ United States General Accounting Office and United States Department of Defense, *Urgent Need for Continued Improvements in Enlisted Career Force Management in Department of Defense: Report to the Congress by the Comptroller General of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 1.

⁹⁴ Mintz, *The Politics of Resource Allocation in the U.S. Department of Defense*, 37. Mintz indicated 1975 as the nadir of procurement spending, with less than 20 percent of the defense budget allocated to this effort. 33 percent had been allocated in 1968, for example. Research and development, always the smallest of the defense subcategories, saw a decline from a high of 16 percent in 1964 to 8 percent in 1977.

research and development at the Pentagon, said that his “single most serious problem” was that by 1977 the U.S. defense technology budget had decreased by a factor of two since 1964.⁹⁵ This financial crisis meant that many within the military saw the new weapons programs proposed at the end of the Ford Administration as particularly critical.

The fact that Carter’s first year saw the emergence of these new weapon systems was thus the fourth significant factor bearing on the future of civil-military relations as he took office. Many high ranking military officers saw the procurement of these weapons as essential to balancing and eventually surpassing the Soviet Union’s military capability. Today these systems are crucial to the fighting forces, but in 1976 many were hanging by a thin fiscal thread. The Army’s XM-1 tank, Bradley infantry fighting vehicle, the Apache helicopter, and long-range Multiple-Launch Rocket System (MLRS) were all in the nascent stages of development. After ten years in development, the Air Force’s crown jewel, the B-1 bomber, was about to enter limited production as the costliest aircraft in history. The Navy was just starting to field its advanced “Aegis” air defense system and was fighting for funds to commission a fifth 97,000-ton nuclear-powered supercarrier. The Marines were on the verge of replacing their obsolescent A-4 attack aircraft with new “Harrier” and F-18 jet fighters. All of these advancements would require continued funding in the defense budget and approval from the new president.

Finally, the political climate in national defense was shifting significantly. In one aspect this seemed to bode well for the military, since some polls were indicating that public opinion now favored higher defense spending. One such poll indicated that, while in 1972 only 49 percent of Americans felt that military defense spending should be increased or maintained, by 1976 71 percent of Americans felt that way. Similarly, in the same period,

⁹⁵ William Perry, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 9 January 1981, OSD Oral History, 7.

those calling for reduced military spending fell from 37 percent to 20 percent.⁹⁶ Echoing public sentiment, the U.S. Conference of Mayors in late 1975 refused to endorse a resolution calling for a shift from defense to domestic spending, despite the fact that their cities were hard pressed for funds.⁹⁷ One senior Pentagon correspondent expressed his view of the situation by stating that Jimmy Carter would “take office enjoying an unusually wide agreement among hawks and doves that the Soviet military buildup is real and that the U.S. dare not cut its defense spending.”⁹⁸

In addition to the beginning of increased public support for higher defense spending, the role of Congress’ oversight and involvement with the defense budget and policy making process had also increased markedly in the years prior to Carter taking office. While Congress has always played a role in this regard, many senators and congressmen desired to become even more focused on debating and changing specific details of the defense budget in the post-Watergate years. This more detailed congressional process of examining defense authorizations and appropriations line-by-line, debating them, and then changing them for presentation to the executive was still evolving during the years before Jimmy Carter would take office. In the opinion of a *Washington Post* editorial this increased involvement of Congress in the defense process by 1975 amounted to “little more than a license to scrutinize certain Pentagon enterprises and not others and to do so in a piecemeal, ad hoc way.”⁹⁹ The

⁹⁶ William Chapman, "Poll of U.S. Backs Big Defense Outlay," *Washington Post*, October 1, 1976, A7. Most Americans polled in the study cited a perception of increased Soviet military power as the reason for their support for higher overall U.S. defense spending.

⁹⁷ David S. Broder, "Mayors' East Defense Stance," *Washington Post*, July 10, 1975, A2.

⁹⁸ George C. Wilson, "Carter's Pentagon Expected to Focus on Better Management," *Washington Post*, December 17, 1976, A11.

⁹⁹ "Congress and the Defense Budget," *Washington Post*, May 25, 1975, C6.

Carter administration would therefore be dealing with a Congress whose power in regard to defense spending was definitely increasing, but still somewhat ill-defined.

Part and parcel to this evolving role of Congress in defense affairs, the political composition of several key committees in Congress which would directly affect the military had changed significantly in 1976. Congressman Edward Hebert (D-LA), the long-time “dictatorial” chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, who had always insisted “the Pentagon knew best,” retired at the end of 1976. The Pentagon’s main challengers on the committee—Lucien Nedzi (D-MI), Robert Wilson (D-CA), Robert Leggett (D-CA), Les Aspin (D-WI), Patricia Schroeder (D-CO), Bob Carr (D-NY), and Thomas Downey (D-NY)—all won re-election. In both the House and Senate, the budget committees had increasingly challenged the Armed Services with success. In the Senate, Edmund Muskie (D-ME) enlisted the support of fellow members of his Budget Committee to overrule Armed Services Chairman John Stennis (D-MS) by refusing to fund an expensive nuclear-powered cruiser for the Navy. *Washington Post* Pentagon correspondent George Wilson concluded that these changes would “promise a series of thoughtful and sometimes stiff challenges to Pentagon weapons and policies.”¹⁰⁰

A New Captain on Board: The “Browning of the Pentagon” and the Initial Reactions

Amid this uncertain military-political climate, at a time where the armed forces were still trying to recover from Vietnam, the Carter administration began with ambitious plans to economize the defense budget and change defense and foreign policy.¹⁰¹ Carter himself

¹⁰⁰ George C. Wilson, “Pentagon Will Confront More Critical Congress as Old Warhorses Quit,” *Washington Post*, November 5, 1976, A12. For prior influence of Congressman Herbert, see Stephen S. Rosenfeld, “Rep. Hebert: A Sense of Power,” *Washington Post*, April 5, 1974, A30. Rosenfeld referred to Herbert as “one of the country’s most powerful public men.”

¹⁰¹ Secretary of Defense Harold Brown classified Carter’s proposed changes as “overly ambitious” in Harold Brown, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 28 February 1992, OSD Oral History, 9. For

wanted to pursue this course of action based partly on his own personality and partly on, in the words of his most senior military advisor, “serious reservations about what happened during the Vietnam War.”¹⁰² As a Naval Academy graduate and former submarine officer, Carter felt that he had unique qualifications to manage, institute budgetary control, and employ systems analysis in the Department of Defense. His engineer-style approach was to “make a list, compare, establish priorities, and cost-out things” and, regarding his personal involvement in the defense budget, stated, “I thoroughly enjoyed that role.”¹⁰³ His hero was Harry Truman, and Carter greatly admired the former president’s “strength in the face of the inevitable unpopularity of demonstrating the power of civilian control over the military” and admitted that he had “privately cheered” Truman’s decision to relieve General Douglas MacArthur for opposing civilian policy during the Korean War.¹⁰⁴ When asked directly if Carter entered office with suspicions about the military, General David Jones, who served on the JCS for all four years of the Carter administration, did not feel that this was the case. What was clear to General Jones, however, was that Carter strongly believed that the military’s “priorities got mixed up during the Vietnam War.”¹⁰⁵

Part of this perception about the military “losing its way” may have been linked to the president’s personal beliefs regarding the nature of the U.S.-Soviet conflict. Whereas the

further indications of the ambitiousness of the plans, see the opinion of the veteran chairman in United States Congress, House Committee on the Budget, *Five-Year Defense Planning : Hearing before the Task Force on National Security and International Affairs of the Committee on the Budget, House of Representatives, Ninety-Fifth Congress, First Session, July 14, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 30. Hereafter cited as HCOB, *Five Year Defense Plan Hearings*.

¹⁰² GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 210-211.

¹⁰³ Jimmy Carter, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 7-8.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 4 and 6.

¹⁰⁵ GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 210-211.

military and most previous administrations had focused upon the Soviet Union as the primary threat to American national security, Carter did not necessarily agree. When later reflecting on his tenure, he unhesitatingly stated that unrest in Panama posed the “most serious and immediate threat” to U.S. national security.¹⁰⁶ He, along with his closest foreign policy advisor, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, did not think of the U.S.-Soviet standoff in terms of a “Cold War.”¹⁰⁷ His desire to seek immediate and far-reaching cuts in nuclear arms with the Soviet Union was indicative of his belief that the two sides would continue détente and work together. He firmly believed that the time was ripe for nuclear disarmament and that he should aggressively revitalize the stagnating Vladivostok arms control agreement with the U.S.S.R. reached during Ford’s tenure.¹⁰⁸ This was seen by some as a “political gamble” which challenged “grim predictions about Soviet military superiority.”¹⁰⁹ President Carter came into office seeking peace and, when reflecting on his military service, assured listeners

¹⁰⁶ Jimmy Carter, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 16. OSD historian Alfred Goldberg posed this question regarding perceptions of threat to U.S. national security as an opening question to almost all his interviewees, the rest of whom uniformly replied that they saw the U.S.S.R. as the greatest threat. Carter never mentioned the threat posed by the Soviets.

¹⁰⁷ When addressing the nation on the presence of a Soviet “combat brigade” in Cuba in 1979, which some alarmists compared to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the president firmly stated that, “I have concluded that the brigade issue is certainly no reason for a return to the Cold War.” Likewise, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance “worried about the tendency . . . to ‘poke a stick’ at the Soviet Bear” and said that “he didn’t become Secretary of State in order to revise the vicious conflict of the old U.S.-Soviet ‘cold war,’ and would ‘resign tomorrow’ if he thought that this was the way things were going.” For Carter’s comments on the record, see excerpt from his televised speech at “‘We Face a Challenge to Our Wisdom, a Challenge to Our Determination’,” *Washington Post*, October 2, 1979, A6. For Vance’s perspective and quotes on the “Cold War,” see James Reston, “Mr. Vance: The Year Ahead,” *New York Times*, January 10, 1979, A23. For similarity of Carter and Vance’s foreign policy outlooks see Cyrus R. Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 31-33.

¹⁰⁸ Stuart Eizenstat, “Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Re: Princeton Address--Defense Posture, February 8, 1975,” p. 5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Noel Sterrett, Box 133, Folder: Defense Budget, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. Hereafter cited as Eizenstat, “Princeton Address Notes,” JCL.

¹⁰⁹ William Greider, “U.S.-Russian Arms Debate at a Crossroads,” *Washington Post*, February 20, 1977, A1.

on television that he felt “no aspect of militaristic inclination now on my part.”¹¹⁰ Jimmy Carter felt strongly about these ideals and sought to put them into practice when he assumed the presidency.

Although Carter may have dismissed his “militaristic inclination” and prided himself on his peanut farming business, he was not a defense policy neophyte. He had in fact honed his understanding of national security and the defense budget for some time before taking office. During his campaign, he and his staff had conducted extensive national defense research. Despite the presence of some public opinion polls supporting a rise in defense spending, Carter was presented with other authoritative evidence that indicated that the time was right to go on the offensive against excessive military largesse. In a memo which Carter recommended all members of his staff read, Harvard Professor William Schneider presented substantial data that the “public opinion trend since the early 1960s” had brought about “the destruction of the traditional pro-military consensus in the American electorate” and that “with so little consensus on military issues” it would be difficult to find any “valence sentiment likely to sweep the electorate in 1976.”¹¹¹ Soon afterward, Carter’s staff requested background papers from the Center for Defense Information (CDI), an organization often critical of Pentagon claims and analysis, regarding the 1976 Defense Budget, defense manpower studies, the Trident SLBM program, and the B-1 bomber, as well as other defense

¹¹⁰ Don Richardson, *Conversations with Carter* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 10.

¹¹¹ William Schneider, "Memorandum to Nick Nary, President, the Fund for Peace, Re: Foreign Policy Issues in the 1976 Election, January 14, 1976," p. 20-21, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Stuart Eizenstat, Box 17, Folder: Foreign Policy 5/6/75 to 1/23/76, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

programs. The staff began to compile such information into a series of “discussion papers” which were sent to Carter to expand his knowledge of national defense policy issues.¹¹²

Beyond the role of his staff in the process, Carter also took a strong personal interest in defense policy. He corresponded with his Navy mentor and nuclear-propulsion pioneer Admiral Hyman Rickover regarding advantages and disadvantages of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers.¹¹³ He questioned former Annapolis classmate Admiral Stansfield Turner on the state of the U.S. military during a rapid fire session of “tough, intelligent, relentless” questions that left the admiral “mentally drained.”¹¹⁴ Carter also maintained close correspondence with Marine Colonel James Donovan at CDI. Donovan authored no fewer than six briefing papers for Carter, always providing background information and evidence to refute or soften the strong Cold War rhetoric of the Defense Department. Donovan’s conclusions were sharp; according to CDI research, claims of a decline in U.S. military strength vis-à-vis the Soviets had “no basis in fact.”¹¹⁵ This personal research into different

¹¹² For information requested by staff see “Defense Policy Discussion Papers, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Noel Sterrett, Box 133, Folder: Defense and Defense Policy, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. See also “Discussion Paper: Defense Manpower Costs, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Noel Sterrett, Box 81, Folder: Defense Manpower, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹¹³ H.G. Rickover, “Letter to Jimmy Carter Re: Nimitz Class Aircraft Carriers, March 25, 1975,” Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Noel Sterrett, Box 133, Folder: Navy, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. Admiral Rickover touted the advantages of the nuclear carrier over any conventionally-powered alternative and stated that, “The Soviets recognize the importance of becoming the world’s strongest sea-power. We have not chosen to challenge them with numbers of ships. For this reason it is essential that the ships we do build are the most powerful and effective weapons that we know how to build.”

¹¹⁴ Stansfield Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy: The CIA in Transition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 14.

¹¹⁵ For “no basis in fact” see Jim A. Donovan, “Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Subject: The Artificial Crisis of American Security, April 27, 1976,” p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Noel Sterrett, Box 133, Folder: Defense-Defense Budget, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. For other CDI memos see: Jim A. Donovan, “Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Subject: A Zero Based Budget for Defense Spending, April 7, 1976,” Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Noel Sterrett, Box 133, Folder: Defense-Defense Policy, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.; Jim A. Donovan, “Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Subject: The Military Budget and

areas of defense policy and strategy provided the future president with much background information and many facts that he later used to argue against further military buildup.

Carter did not ignore the factors bearing on the future of the defense budget during his campaign for president; on the contrary, he and his staff calculated carefully every public comment that they made about national defense. Convinced that in 1976 both Congress and the American public were “being subjected to the most extensive fear campaign since the 1960 ‘missile gap,’” Carter remained on guard that “a crisis of confidence in United States military power” could be created.¹¹⁶ Veteran diplomat Richard Holbrooke advised Carter that, even if they were not conducting the perceived military buildup, the Soviets were very much interested in who would win the 1976 election and could take steps to either promote or hinder Carter.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, Carter sent his aide Stuart Eizenstat to visit the prestigious Brookings Institution to seek out advice on American national security policy and defense spending. The institution’s report concluded that “the defense budget could be cut without

National Priorities, April 8, 1976," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Noel Sterret, Box 133, Folder: Defense and Defense Policy, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.; Jim A. Donovan, "Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Subject: Important Comments on U.S. Military Strength, April 27, 1976," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Noel Sterret, Box 133, Folder: U.S. vs. Russian Military Strength, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.; Jim A. Donovan, "Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Subject: Exaggeration of the Soviet Threat, April 30, 1976," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Noel Sterret, Box 133, Folder: New Weapons Systems and Weapons Research, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.; and Jim A. Donovan, "Total Force Policy: A Background Briefing Paper for Governor Jimmy Carter, September 21, 1976," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Stuart Eizenstat, Box 17, Folder: Foreign Policy 9/76, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹¹⁶ Donovan, "Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Subject: The Artificial Crisis of American Security," 1.

¹¹⁷ Richard Holbrooke, "Background Paper: The Election and Foreign Policy, May 1, 1976," p. 5-7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Stuart Eizenstat, Box 17, Folder: Foreign Policy, 4/76-6/76, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, GA. Holbrooke linked his claim to past experience: in 1968, the Soviets wanted Hubert Humphrey; in 1972, Richard Nixon. In 1968, Holbrooke claimed the Soviets supported Humphrey by putting pressure on the North Vietnamese to negotiate but the South Vietnamese refusal to take part “may have cost Humphrey the election.” In 1972, the Soviets supported Nixon by giving him “several unexpected dividends” including a summit after the mining of Haiphong harbor.

impairing our defense posture” and that many military troop deployments and warfighting plans were “anachronistic” and needed to be re-examined. By increasing efficiency in the Pentagon and changing procurement policy to “stop buying the most expensive weapon systems,” the analysts at Brookings felt that Carter could safely reduce defense spending.¹¹⁸ After President Ford released his FY77 budget, a staff consultant pointed out to Carter’s campaign headquarters where up to \$8.5 billion could be “safely cut without endangering national security.” The recommended cuts included the Air Force B-1 bomber, the MX missile program, the Trident SLBM, the Army’s Apache attack helicopter, the Navy’s proposed nuclear carrier, and reductions in retirement benefits for DoD personnel.¹¹⁹ Carter had done his research and was prepared to institute major change in defense policy.

Carter’s views and plans regarding the military and national security were not hidden. He made bold and specific defense-related campaign promises. He repeatedly vowed to cut the defense budget by \$5 to \$7 billion, commented often about “Pentagon wastage,” and stated that he wanted personally to assert control of, and “discipline” over, the Pentagon and its budgetary process.¹²⁰ He sought to gain more control over military officer promotions and assignments. In particular, he saw military retirement pay, taking up to 7 percent of the

¹¹⁸ Stuart Eizenstat, "Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Subject: Notes on Visit to Brookings Institution on January 28, 1975, February 6, 1975," p. 5-9, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Noel Sterrett, Box 133, Folder: Defense Budget, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. Hereafter cited as Eizenstat, "Brookings Memo," JCL.

¹¹⁹ Barry Schneider, "Letter to Steve Stark, Carter Campaign Headquarters from Arms Control and Military Affairs Staff Consultant, Members of Congress for Peace through Law, June 24, 1976," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office--Noel Sterrett, Box 81, Folder: Department of Defense, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹²⁰ For defense cut promises see: Gelb, "Pentagon Will Seek \$130 Billion Budget," *New York Times*, 15 September 1976, A1, A13; Wilson, "Carter's Pentagon Expected to Focus on Better Management." *Washington Post*, 17 December 1976, A11; Eizenstat, "Princeton Address Notes," JCPL, 6. For persistence of the promise of cuts see Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "An Elusive Promise on Defense Spending," *Washington Post*, December 30, 1976, A15. For Carter’s comments on wastage and discipline see: Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 57-58 and Brown, *Thinking About National Security*, 216.

annual defense budget, as an egregious waste of taxpayer money given the fact that many pension holders pursued a second career in civilian government positions.¹²¹ He promised to institute rigorous “zero based budgeting” (ZBB) throughout the federal government, but especially in the Department of Defense, immediately after taking office.¹²² Additionally, he criticized several costly new weapons systems, especially the B-1 bomber as “an example of a proposed system which should not be funded and would be wasteful of taxpayer dollars.”¹²³ Beyond targeting specific programs such as the B-1 for possible termination, Carter indicated to the military through his transition team that he planned to employ the “controlled adversary process” which called for each service to compete against the others for resources and publicly critique the others requests during the annual defense budget process.¹²⁴ Clearly, President Carter’s plans for the Pentagon were ambitious, far reaching, and well known to the military as he began his term.

Carter’s choice of Harold Brown, a former “whiz kid” member of the McNamara defense department, as Secretary of Defense demonstrated a desire to increase discipline in the Pentagon and apply systems analysis to problems. In choosing Brown, Carter felt he had “a

¹²¹ For percentage of retirement pay in the annual defense budget see Mintz, *The Politics of Resource Allocation in the DoD*, 29. For Harold Brown’s views, see Norman Kempster, “Next Defense Chief Sees Slash in Military Benefits,” *Washington Post*, December 27, 1976, A6.

¹²² Zero based budgeting is a procedure for examining the entire budget, not just the funds requested above the current level of spending. It thus differs from (normal) incremental budgeting in which the review is concentrated on proposed increases while the “base” is given little attention. For definition and quote see David S. Broder, “A Closer Look At “Zero-Base Budgeting”,” *Washington Post*, August 8, 1976, C7. For intent to deploy in the DoD see Donovan, “Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Subject: A Zero Based Budget for Defense Spending,” 1-2.

¹²³ George C. Wilson, “One B-1 for \$101 Million,” *Washington Post*, May 19, 1977, A1. Carter also called for eliminating the Trident II missile program and “taking a hard look” at the XM-1 tank. See Eizenstat, “Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Re: Princeton Address--Defense Posture,” 5.

¹²⁴ Robert J. Dixon, “Memorandum from Commander, Tactical Air Command to General William Depuy, Commander Training and Doctrine Command, Subject: FY78-79 and the Transition Process, December 11, 1976,” p. 2-3, The General William DePuy Papers, Box 12, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA. Hereafter cited as GEN Dixon, “Memo to GEN DePuy, December 11, 1976,” CMH.

scientist with a thorough knowledge of the most advanced technology” as well as “a competent business manager, strong willed enough to prevail in the internecine struggles among different military services.”¹²⁵ Brown had previously served as head of Pentagon Research, Development, and Engineering under McNamara and had shown a willingness to oppose major weapon systems such as the Skybolt missile and the B-70 bomber. Like Carter, he was a “strong believer in reliance on the analytical capabilities of systems analysis.”¹²⁶ This school of “systems analysis” carried a highly negative connotation for the military. Many military officers considered McNamara’s reliance on systems analysis—and disparagement of military experience and judgment—as responsible for the failed military strategy in Vietnam.¹²⁷ High-ranking military officers saw Harold Brown and McNamara as similar and worried as Brown took over the Pentagon’s highest post.

In addition to his appointment of a McNamara protégé to lead the Pentagon, other early actions during his term made it seem that Carter might have hostile views toward the military. His decision to pardon draft evaders and deserters from the Vietnam War one day after taking office must not have registered well with many in the military. During a March 1977 visit to the Pentagon, several enlisted soldiers voiced their displeasure to the president at a news conference.¹²⁸ Only a few days later on live network television, the president

¹²⁵ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 57-58.

¹²⁶ For opposition to previous weapon systems see Weinraub, “The Browning of the Pentagon”, 44. For quote on belief in systems analysis, see David Cooke, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 20 November 1989, OSD Oral History, 14.

¹²⁷ This theme pervaded much of the historiography of the Vietnam War and civil-military relations during this time period. Many officers to this day still hold McNamara in contempt, as emphasized in Kohn, “The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military,” 21.

¹²⁸ Jimmy Carter, “Department of Defense Remarks and Question and Answer Session with Defense Department Employees. March 1, 1977,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 266. It must be noted that except for this instance there is little documented evidence that this displeasure or anger carried up through the highest

tersely informed Walter Cronkite, when asked about the issue, that he was not considering any bonus to Vietnam veterans for their service.¹²⁹ Such sympathy toward draft evaders and deserters, combined with dismissing those who had served in Vietnam led the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars to label the Carter administration “the most anti-veteran” in the nation’s history.¹³⁰

The military was apprehensive about the administration’s plans for defense for several additional reasons.¹³¹ The JCS and other high-ranking members of the military were wary of Carter’s plans for extensive arms-control negotiations with the Soviets. Most felt that the previous SALT I agreement under Nixon and the Vladivostok accords under Ford locked the United States into a “permanent position of inferiority” in the overall strategic balance. In addition, there was a widespread belief among the military, substantiated by some intelligence reports, that the Soviets were cheating on the agreements.¹³² For these reasons, General Brown’s initial briefing to Carter on SALT stated that “the unfavorable trend between U.S. and Soviet strategic nuclear forces is of grave concern and will continue to worsen until the early 1980s, when U.S. Trident, B-1, and MX programs will affect the

levels of the military. No three or four star general mentions Carter’s pardoning of draft evaders in any of the many oral histories consulted for this dissertation.

¹²⁹ Richardson, *Conversations with Carter*, 5 March 1977.

¹³⁰ “VFW Chief Hits Carter Policy,” *Washington Post*, August 27, 1977, A6.

¹³¹ General military apprehension was reported in: Richard Burt, “Officials Say Carter Has Won Unparalleled Sway over Defense Policy,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1978, A7 and Weinraub, “The Browning of the Pentagon,” 44. While these articles were written well after Carter took office, they do address many long term trends dating from the beginning of his administration.

¹³² For “permanent position of inferiority” see Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon*, 143-144. For later reported indications of a Soviet “pattern of selective cheating” regarding arms control agreements, see Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “A Pattern of Selective Cheating,” *Washington Post*, October 3, 1979, A23.

trends.”¹³³ Brown, a gregarious, articulate, and politically well-connected officer, had been assigned the heavy responsibility under Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger of steering the procurement of these new strategic programs through Congress.¹³⁴ As Chairman, Brown had more joint service in the Pentagon than any general officer at the time, and the JCS had high hopes that he could help reverse in Congress what was already seen as a steady weakening of U.S. strategic power.¹³⁵

General Brown’s status at the outset of Carter’s term, however, proved to be another source of apprehension for the military. On October 10, 1974, while addressing students at the Duke University Law School, he made anti-Semitic comments to the effect that Jews “own all of the banks in the country” as well as all of the newspapers, that Israel had “Congress in their hip pocket,” and implied that a potential solution to the problem might be a military coup of the federal government.¹³⁶ His comments sparked an immediate firestorm. The Jewish War Veterans and the Anti-Defamation League called for his dismissal.¹³⁷

Joseph Califano, Jr., a prominent Washington lawyer who would later serve as Carter’s

¹³³ GEN George S. Brown, “SALT Briefing to the President-Elect of the United States by the JCS, January 13, 1977,” CJCS Brown Files, 001 Transition to President Carter, Box 4, NARA II, College Park, MD.

¹³⁴ For General Brown’s personality and assignment to push strategic programs through Congress see Perry, *Four Stars*, 261-262. The assertion that he was politically well-connected is gleaned from the author’s analysis of his telephone and meeting records in his daily logs. According to these records Brown had frequent, sometimes daily, contact with Senators Barry Goldwater and John Stennis, retired members of the JCS including Admirals Elmo Zumwalt and Thomas Moorer and General Lyman Leminitzer, as well as H. Ross Perot. It is also confirmed in an oral history interview by a fellow Air Force General—see Howard M. Fish, interview by Edgar F. Puryear, Jr., transcript, K239.0512-1417, IRIS# 01053244, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 8 March 1980, Tape 2, Side 2, 1.

¹³⁵ For unique qualifications due to joint service experience, see LTG James A. Hill, interview by Edgar Puryear, Jr., transcript, K239.0512-1437, IRIS#01053291, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 20 February 1980, Tape 1, Side 1, 3.

¹³⁶ Joseph A. Califano, Jr., “Gen. Brown and Foreign Policy,” *Washington Post*, 25 November 1974, A20. See also Webb and Cole, *The Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 93.

¹³⁷ Edgar F. Puryear, *George S. Brown General, U.S. Air Force: Destined for Stars* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983), 247.

Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, wrote an editorial in the *Washington Post* calling for Brown's ousting because he had "irreparably damaged his ability to serve effectively as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."¹³⁸ Brown apologized publicly and President Ford, despite considerable political pressure, refused to dismiss him. Several weeks later Brown again seemed to lose control during an interview, telling a reporter that Israel was a "military burden" to the United States, that Britain had a "pathetic" military, and that the Shah of Iran was seeking to re-instate a "Persian Empire" in the Middle East.¹³⁹ Soon to be Vice-President Walter Mondale declared that Brown was unfit to be even a "sewage commissioner" and should resign immediately.¹⁴⁰ The media lampooned Brown, with one editorial cartoon portraying him sitting at his desk in uniform writing a speech consisting of "ethnic remarks" with his head as a balloon tethered to his tie.¹⁴¹ Still, Ford refused to dismiss the Chairman. Throughout his tenure the media continued to pay close attention to Brown's public and private comments, leading to further calls for his resignation as late as April 1977.¹⁴² Given these misstatements and his political vulnerability, many high-ranking military officers saw Brown as weakened and unable to oppose strongly any plans of the civilian leadership.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Joseph A. Califano, Jr. "Gen. Brown and Foreign Policy," *Washington Post*, 25 November 1974, A20.

¹³⁹ Puryear, *George S. Brown*, 263-264.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁴¹ Herblock, "(Cartoon) --and Here Is the Head of--I Mean the Chairman--," *Washington Post*, March 30, 1977, A20.

¹⁴² Joseph Churba, "Gen. Brown Must Be Forced to Resign," *Washington Post*, April 9, 1977, C6. For further media attention to Brown's missteps see Jack Anderson and Les Whitten, "Pentagon Turns Attack into Praise," *Washington Post*, May 7, 1977, E51.

¹⁴³ Perry, *Four Stars*, 261.

Beyond the fear that the highest-ranking officer in the military would be unable to represent the military perspective effectively, many high-ranking officers also worried about Carter's intentions to manage the defense budget. The very areas in which Carter proposed to make changes—retirement pay, officer promotions, and personnel assignments—were the areas where the military had in the past most actively resisted civilian “interference.”¹⁴⁴ Carter's proposed “controlled adversary process” approach to the annual defense budget also went directly against the traditional “logrolling” approach employed by the JCS, which, according to Lieutenant General Ray Sitton, Director of the Joint Staff, always generated decisions that were “a compromise position.”¹⁴⁵ Carter's “adversarial approach” was so unusual that it alarmed several high-ranking officers, one of whom wrote on a memorandum discussing the plan: “God help the U.S. and the DoD if we revert to type and do what this suggests—I am working with CSAF [Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General David Jones] to

¹⁴⁴ Harold Brown attested to these areas of resistance and his arguments with the JCS over them. See Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Trask, 4 December 1981, OSD Oral History, 20 and Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, 28 February 1992, OSD Oral History, 16, 19-20, 23. Harold Brown's special assistant John Kester also attested to the military resistance over these areas—see John Kester, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 5. General Brown's assistant Air Force Lieutenant-General William Y. Smith confirmed retirement pay as a contentious issue, see LTG William Y. Smith, interview by Edgar Puryear, Jr., transcript, K239.0512-1501, IRIS#01053446, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 25 April 1979, 15. For officer promotions and assignments as a source of civil-military conflict and objections to Harold Brown's “intrusion” in this, see LTG Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 278. See also Colin L. Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 236-237.

¹⁴⁵ LTG Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 263. The “logrolling” process was the system by which each service would support the others requests in order to achieve a unified military front for higher defense spending. As an example, the Chief of Staff of the Army would support the Navy's request for a nuclear powered aircraft carrier (even though it would not benefit his own service interests) in exchange for the CNO's support for funding of the Army XM-1 tank system. For the prevalence of logrolling among the JCS, see John W. Finney, “In Many Ways the Joint Chiefs Are an Island Unto Themselves,” *New York Times*, November 20, 1977, E3. See also Robert Komer, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 25 March 1981, transcript, OSD Oral History, 66. Somewhat prone to hyperbole, Komer asserted that the JCS spent “98% of their time” negotiating and lobbying each other for single-service issues. LTG William Y. Smith, who served as General Brown's assistant, noted the prevalence of this manner of negotiation between services, see LTG William Y. Smith, interview by Edgar Puryear, Jr., USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 12.

see if we can stop it from happening.”¹⁴⁶ Military apprehension of Carter’s plans for managing the DoD was great, but was not yet widely known.

Many of Carter’s top civilian appointees recognized these military concerns. Harold Brown expected some difficulties upon entering office. He knew that many of the current military leaders had been in the Pentagon during his tenure with McNamara and might question his leadership. He also knew of the influence that retired military officers could have on their active-duty brethren, admitting that “in the fading memories of some of the retired chiefs I am remembered as one of the ‘whiz kids.’”¹⁴⁷ Acutely aware of the perception that he was “introverted and likely to come across as cold,” Brown intended to make a conscious effort to mitigate, even if he could never fully overcome, this “problem.”¹⁴⁸ Robert Komer, Undersecretary for Plans and Policy, summarized Brown’s efforts well: “Harold was a veteran of the McNamara years,” but at the same time had “obviously studied carefully what McNamara did right and wrong, and had consciously tried to handle himself differently than Bob McNamara.”¹⁴⁹ Secretary Brown was committed to making the civil-military relationship in the Carter Administration as free of conflict as possible.

Trends and perceptions within Congress at the start of Carter’s term also affected civil-military relations within the administration. First, Carter had specifically campaigned as a “Washington outsider,” negating some of the advantage a Democratically-controlled Congress might offer. He vowed to avoid “Washington habits which had made it possible

¹⁴⁶ GEN Dixon, “Memo to GEN DePuy, December 11, 1976,” CMH, cover page.

¹⁴⁷ Harold Brown, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, 20 April 1990, OSD Oral History, 8.

¹⁴⁸ Harold Brown, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, 4 December 1981, OSD Oral History, 3. Colin Powell, who worked for Harold Brown’s special assistant John Kester, had much regard for the Secretary of Defense, but thought that he “preferred paper to people.” See Powell, *My American Journey*, 237.

¹⁴⁹ Robert Komer, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 100.

for the American people to be misled” and, in emphasizing this, placed even members of his own party on the defensive.¹⁵⁰ General Alexander Haig, the politically ambitious NATO commander at the time, felt that the president “made it inevitable that the Washington establishment would treat him as an antibody to be driven out of the system.”¹⁵¹ Second, despite the changeover of key personnel in the committees relevant to the military, pundits noted that recently-published polls supporting increased defense spending had influenced Congress to be wary of supporting Carter’s call for reductions.¹⁵² Even the Brookings Institution, having advised Carter in early 1975 about waste in the Pentagon budget, noted these trends and declared that the FY77 defense budget should increase.¹⁵³ Thus, as Carter prepared his first defense budget, Congress had reason to be less than supportive of his plans to economize on defense spending.

Congress demonstrated its apprehension about Carter’s plans for defense during Harold Brown’s nomination. Brown expected a difficult confirmation, keeping a note in front of him reading: “Keep Cool. Say Less. Stop.”¹⁵⁴ Brown did indeed keep his cool, holding up under five hours of “microscopic examination,” while addressing the Senators as a respectful younger man—rather than taking the brash, sometimes overwhelming approach of Robert McNamara. He downplayed Carter’s proposed \$5 to \$7 billion reduction in the defense

¹⁵⁰ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 29, 71. The Democratic majority in Congress was significant: 292 to 143 in the House and 61 to 38 with one independent in the Senate.

¹⁵¹ Alexander M. Haig, *Inner Circles: How America Changed the World* (New York: Warner Books, 1992), 531.

¹⁵² Bernard Weinraub, "Where Is the Great Debate over Military Spending?," *New York Times*, 15 January, 1978, E5.

¹⁵³ Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon*, 162.

¹⁵⁴ SASC, *Brown Nomination Hearings*, 5. Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas noticed the note when he entered the chamber from behind Brown’s table and read the contents aloud to the floor.

budget, saying it should be seen as “savings rather than cuts.” In the end, the Senate unanimously confirmed him, although Senator Strom Thurmond (R-SC) accused Brown of “withholding his views” on all major weapon systems planned for procurement.¹⁵⁵

Soon after the confirmation hearings, Secretary Brown appeared before Congress with General George Brown to submit the unmodified Ford/Rumsfeld Defense budget, as was customary for the incoming Secretary of Defense. Some members of Congress made clear their reservations about the new administration’s plans. Senator John Tower (R-TX) told Brown that some of the administration’s policies appeared “a little long on eagerness and a little short on caution.”¹⁵⁶ While such a statement might be expected from an opposition party member, Senator Sam Nunn’s (D-GA) made the unusual request to General Brown that the Joint Chiefs report directly to the Armed Services Committee because “in the past the President of the United States and the Secretary of State have ignored the advice of the Joint Chiefs.” Although Brown seemed surprised, he welcomed the request and agreed.¹⁵⁷ The pact would have significant ramifications throughout the rest of the administration, as the Pentagon now knew it had a powerful ally on the committee from Jimmy Carter’s home state. Soon after General Brown and Senator Nunn’s agreement, the hearings ended with Secretary Brown proposing to modify and resubmit the FY78 defense budget by the end of

¹⁵⁵ For level of examination and unanimity of his confirmation see United States, Congress Senate Armed Services Committee, *Fiscal Year 1978 Authorization for Military Procurement, Research and Development, and Active Duty, Selected Reserve and Civilian Personnel Strengths: Hearings on S.1210, 95th Congress, 1st Session*, 10 vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 8. Hereafter cited as SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*. For demeanor during testimony see Don Oberdorfer, “Brown Sees Rise in Defense Budget in Coming Years,” *Washington Post*, January 12, 1977, A1, A14. For Senator Strom Thurmond’s comments see SASC, *Brown Nomination Hearings*, 83.

¹⁵⁶ SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 7.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 508.

February—only a three-week deadline for a huge undertaking.¹⁵⁸ As work started on the modification of the FY78 defense budget, the first major task requiring sustained interaction among the White House, the Pentagon, and Congress in the Carter Administration began.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 365. The chairman of the committee was willing to give him until March 15.

CHAPTER II

CONGRESSIONAL END-RUNS: THE DEFENSE BUDGET AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS, 1977-1979

Interlude: The White House Cabinet Room, January 31, 1977, 4:00 p.m.¹

Richard Stubbing, an analyst with Carter's Office of the Management of the Budget (OMB), anxiously shifted several transparent viewgraphs at the head of the long oval table in the White House Cabinet Room. Stubbing was a veteran of the Washington bureaucracy. As a "defense specialist" in OMB he had helped craft every military budget since 1962. He had given numerous briefings to important government officials, and he and his staff had full confidence that they knew all the details of the complicated defense budget and its various programs. Yet, the situation now facing Stubbing was one that certainly gave him reason to be rather nervous.

At the center of the oval table a few feet from Stubbing sat President Jimmy Carter. He had been in office only eleven days, but the president sat silently and confidently. He looked intently at the part of the wall where the viewgraph projected its light, like an engineer eager to go to work on a challenging problem. To the president's right sat Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and the National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. On the left of the president sat Harold Brown and his deputy Charles Duncan. Across the oval table from them were key officials from the Pentagon and OMB. General George Brown, sitting directly across from

¹ For time, location, and eyewitness account of the meeting see Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 343-344. For additional confirmation of the meeting see Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 14. Brzezinski claimed the meeting was on February 1, 1977 but does agree almost completely with the duration and content of the meeting as depicted here.

Harold Brown, was the only military member present. Russell Murray, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Programming Analysis and Evaluation, sat to the General's left. Bert Lance, Stubbing's boss and the head of OMB, sat directly across from the President, and James McIntyre, Lance's deputy, sat next to him. Stubbing had never briefed so many key officials at one time on a military budget and seldom had a president shown as much interest in this matter as Jimmy Carter.

This briefing was in fact extremely important to President Carter because the process of modifying the FY 1978 budget provided the first opportunity for him to become directly involved with the defense budgetary process and cut the defense budget. In seeking to do so, Carter and Harold Brown immediately faced a quandary. Carter had made his campaign promise of \$5 to \$7 billion in defense cuts before Ford and Rumsfeld had finalized their FY78 defense budget. Just before submission, Ford cut his budget from \$130 billion to a "lean" \$123 billion, an amount widely considered to be a "bare bones" defense budget. Carter now faced the unsavory choice of having to break his campaign promise or break a previously negotiated NATO agreement that all members' defense expenditures would have an above-inflation (real) increase of 3 percent per year. Additionally, based on the structure of the Ford/Rumsfeld budget, any major cuts that Carter made would either result in a fundamental policy change or a challenge to "powerful vested interests," such as base closings or personnel reductions.²

² For President Ford's budget plans, requirements for a basic policy change, and challenges to the vested interest see John W. Finney, "\$123 Billion Budget for Defense Planned," *New York Times*, December 15, 1976, A21. For finalized Ford budget and challenges to Carter see David Binder, "\$110 Billion for Military Sought; Biggest Rise for Strategic Forces," *New York Times*, January 18, 1977, A19. For "bare bones" characterization and threat of political "uproar" see Wilson, "Carter's Pentagon Expected to Focus on Better Management." *Washington Post*, December 17, 1976, A11.

The president did not shrink from the challenge and wanted to remain personally involved in crafting the defense budget. As one of his first acts in office, he had directed Harold Brown and Bert Lance, Director of OMB, to work together to make the promised \$5 to \$7 billion in cuts. Carter's instructions to them were to "eliminate those programs that contribute only marginally to United States and allied security" and to "defer programs where doubt exists about the value they add to combat effectiveness."³ After three days of virtual "round the clock negotiation," Brown and Lance, working with input from the military, settled on only \$3 billion in cuts.⁴ Both men had met with President Carter on the Friday, January 27, 1977 and explained their proposal for the cuts. The president expressed dissatisfaction with their work and refused to make a decision based on the information that they had presented. Carter requested a briefing with more detailed information for the following Monday, saying he would decide only then if their proposal was acceptable.⁵

Stubbing felt haggard as he entered this meeting. He had worked through the entire weekend with his staff to prepare it and spent the rest of Monday polishing the briefing now taking place at 4:00 p.m. This had been no small task. Stubbing and his staff at OMB had worked with civilians and military officers in the Pentagon to compile briefings on forty-five separate issues related to the defense budget, many of which addressed specific weapon system capabilities and offered in depth cost-benefit analysis. They had consolidated these

³ United States Congress, House Committee on the Budget, *Defense Budget Overview : Hearings before the Task Force on National Security and International Affairs of the Committee on the Budget, House of Representatives, Ninety-Fifth Congress, First Session, March 10, 11, and 16, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 148. Hereafter cited as HCOB, *FY78 Defense Budget Overview*.

⁴ Perry, *Four Stars*, 266.

⁵ Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 343.

issues into a briefing packet which they had delivered to the president on Saturday evening.⁶ The core of the briefing, however, was a series of five viewgraphs representing “major areas” related to the defense budget, such as the overall spending on strategic weapons programs and U.S. defense spending supporting NATO.⁷ They were confident that these five viewgraphs should be sufficient for the briefing, since the president would probably only be interested in broad concepts and, since it was beginning so late in the day, the meeting would probably not last much longer than two hours. Not wanting to be caught unprepared, however, the workgroup had made a viewgraph for each of the forty-five sub-issues on the assumption that the president “might wish to explore one or more selected issues in greater depth.”⁸ Lance leaned forward around General Brown and nodded his head to Stubbing, the signal that it was time to start the briefing. In Stubbing’s personal reflection, what was about to happen at this meeting would be “far from the expected.”⁹

By the time Stubbing had finished with the first slide he knew he had made the right decision in preparing the backup viewgraphs for the specific issues. It was also clear that the president had done his homework from the briefing book they had delivered to him on Saturday night. Relentlessly, Carter plodded through each of the forty-five issues in detail, seeking input at various times from those present. Russell Murray recalled that, although the president had spent only a few minutes on the slide pertaining to U.S. policy toward NATO, Carter examined the Navy and Marine Corps’ proposed CH-53E helicopter program in detail,

⁶ Ibid., 343-344.

⁷ Russell Murray listed U.S. defense spending policy toward NATO as one of the major areas discussed at the meeting. See Russell Murray II, interview with Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 13.

⁸ Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 344.

⁹ Ibid., 344.

asking in-depth questions about the system's capabilities and cost.¹⁰ "What were the advantages of three engines in the CH-53E versus two in the CH-53D model and was it worth the extra 10,000 lbs. of weight? How much of an increase in range did this give and what would be this extra cost in terms of fuel annually? Why did both the Navy and Marines want this helicopter for different purposes? Would it be more cost effective for the Navy to use this helicopter for mine-clearing operations or would it be cheaper to build a larger fleet of wooden-hulled mine-clearing vessels? Why did the Marines need this platform to carry 38 fully equipped troops anyway?"¹¹ Almost an hour passed before Carter felt satisfied enough to move on to the next viewgraph.¹²

Carter's advisors were pressed to discuss the issues to the level of detail he requested. Harold Brown, as a scientist and former Pentagon head of research and engineering, proved even more knowledgeable about many of the systems than Carter, but the president seldom accepted his explanations and answers at this meeting, sometimes bluntly undercutting his Defense Secretary and moving on to the next question. General George Brown, as the only uniformed member at the table, was often consulted but rarely felt able to give substantive input on such minute details. The Chairman of the JCS was not renowned for his technical knowledge, and the meeting, now stretching into the night, was trying the patience of a general used to leaving the office at 5:00 p.m. on most days.¹³ He felt that the president was

¹⁰ Russell Murray II, interview with Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 13.

¹¹ Questions derived from major issues discussed regarding this weapon system in Ray Bonds, ed., *The Modern U.S. War Machine: An Encyclopedia of American Military Equipment and Strategy* (New York: The Military Press, 1989), 211-212.

¹² Russell Murray II, interview with Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 13.

¹³ For lack of technical knowledge see Edward L. Rowny, *It Takes One to Tango* (New York: Brassey's Inc., 1992), 100. General Rowny served as General Brown's primary advisor on arms control and indicated that Brown "did not like to immerse himself in the intricacies" of even such a major issue. Brown also disliked

trying to demonstrate his interest and knowledge of the defense budget by asking detailed questions, but seemed to have little concept of how all of these systems fit into the larger U.S. strategy of deterrence.¹⁴ Likewise, Zbigniew Brzezinski wondered if the president really cared about all of these details or if he was just trying to impress his advisors with his stamina.¹⁵ Russell Murray also longed for the president to skip the details and address higher-level issues such as the U.S. policy to NATO, but it was not going to happen at this meeting.¹⁶ The role of Congress in the appropriation and authorization process for many of these programs was barely mentioned. In fact, very little of significance was resolved. The seven-hour “marathon” adjourned at 11 p.m. with Carter indicating that he was still not completely satisfied and that he would decide on the final FY78 defense budget later.¹⁷

In many ways this first meeting between Carter and his defense advisors mirrored the civil-military interaction surrounding the annual defense budget for the next two years of his administration. Assistant Director of OMB James McIntyre understated things when he said, “it’s accurate to say that for the first year Carter immersed himself in budgetary details.”¹⁸ Indeed, the president’s intense personal role in the defense budget continued for two years at least. While Carter agreed with many of the points and answers presented by Harold Brown

answering detailed questions regarding the military budget from Congress, preferring instead to defer his answer and allow his staff to submit a detailed written response for the record. See Howard M. Fish, interview by Edgar F. Puryear, Jr., USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 12-13. Brown’s biographer agrees with him not being concerned with details. See Puryear, *George S. Brown*, 279. The analysis of General Brown’s work habits comes from examining his daily log from 1976-1978 in his personal papers at NARA II.

¹⁴ Rowny, *One To Tango*, 102.

¹⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 14.

¹⁶ Russell Murray II, interview with Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 13.

¹⁷ Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 344.

¹⁸ James McIntyre, interview by James Young, Donald Raider, et. al., 28 October 1981, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 42.

at the meeting, he continued to undercut and bypass him on defense budgetary matters. As Stubbing observed after this first meeting, “Carter’s insistence on double-checking each of the decisions made by his subordinates raised doubts for the first time as to Harold Brown’s clout” while at the same time Carter “seemed unconcerned with the need to publicly support his Secretary of Defense.”¹⁹ Furthermore civilians and military within the defense establishment united in their disapproval of Carter’s behavior and it cemented civil-military cooperation inside the Pentagon, at least regarding the defense budget. Finally, the president gave little concern or consideration to the role of Congress in the defense budgetary process. Carter, as commander-in-chief and a former naval officer, felt that he should ultimately dictate what programs in the military would continue to have funding, with Congress approving it *pro forma*, thinking that led ultimately to significant White House-Congressional conflict over the defense budget and opened the door for a strong military-congressional alliance and several very successful Pentagon “end-runs” to fund costly weapons programs that the administration did not want. Altogether, Carter’s detailed interventions—really micromanagement—proved self-defeating in the end.

The Test Case: The Modification of the FY78 Defense Budget and Procurement Policy

Not long after the January 31, 1977 meeting, Carter approved the majority of the OSD/OMB budget proposal. Harold Brown and General George Brown presented it to the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 24, 1977. The new defense budget totaled \$120.3 billion, a reduction of about \$3 billion from the Ford proposal. Yet, the reworking of the budget significantly affected all the military services. The Army lost funding for the non-nuclear Lance missile, the Apache helicopter, and the Bradley fighting vehicle; the Navy had

¹⁹ Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 344.

a prized “nuclear strike cruiser” cut along with a submarine and two frigates; the Air Force faced reduced procurement of B-1s and F-15s and lost a new cargo plane; and the Marines lost the CH-53E helicopter. In addition, the major new nuclear missile, the MX, was cut from “full scale development” to an earlier phase known as “advanced development” that would delay it for at least a year.²⁰

Publicly, the military acquiesced and supported these changes. General Brown stated in testimony that, “It will come as no surprise to the Chairman or other members of the committee that the judgment went against me,” but that the new budget would “provide adequately for the immediate security needs of our country.”²¹ In its official statement on the budget, the Department of the Air Force confirmed its involvement in “every iteration” of the budget process and alluded to no “significant disagreements” during the process. Admiral James Holloway III, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), testified that, despite the changes in the FY78 budget, the new submission had a “very fine balance between fleet readiness and force modernization” and would allow the Navy to maintain a “margin of superiority over the Soviet maritime forces.”²² Subsequent testimony revealed that, although “systems analysis people in DoD” proposed most of the cuts, the military had ample opportunity to take part in the budget debates. Each of the Services accepted several of the original proposed cuts and, in all cases where the Services appealed the cuts, the civilians accepted their appeals in whole

²⁰ For total cuts and MX reduction see Hedrick Smith, “Carter to Propose Defense Fund Cuts as Signal to Soviet,” *New York Times*, February 21, 1977, A45. For cuts to each service see George C. Wilson, “Carter Will Seek \$2.7 Billion Cut in Defense Budget,” *Washington Post*, February 20, 1977, A1. For listing of all changes to the budget see SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 589.

²¹ SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 606.

²² For Air Force statement see United States Congress, House Armed Services Committee, *Hearings on Military Posture, Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1978, 95th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 548. Hereafter cited as HASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*. For statement of CNO see *Ibid.*, 575.

or in part.²³ Even the usually critical special interest groups expressed little opposition to Carter's 1978 budget and declared that it was "understandable" that the new administration "barely four weeks in office" would "feel responsible for at least addressing some of the campaign promises they made."²⁴ Thus, the level of cuts that Carter had proposed, and even the systems that he proposed to eliminate or delay, did not generate significant controversy or dissention in 1977. Many high ranking Pentagon officers seemed willing to work with the new administration, perhaps hoping for a change after several months of experience in office.

In hindsight, however, the administration's modifications to the FY78 defense budget indicated a fundamentally different policy toward defense spending. Carter shifted defense procurement away from quickly acquiring new high-cost, high-technology systems in favor of sustaining older, less costly alternatives. The budget, in taking away from new systems, had added over \$600 million to deferred maintenance and modification to older equipment.²⁵ This change in defense procurement priorities demonstrated an assertion of civilian authority that went against the desires of the military. Generally speaking, the Department of Defense recognized three competing priorities in the defense budget: force structure (number of units, people, organization, and equipment), modernization (upgrading of equipment), and readiness (the ability of forces to go into immediate battle, based on the training of people, maintenance of existing equipment, and logistical capacity). The military had traditionally viewed force structure as the most important, followed by modernization, with readiness the last priority. Military thinking espoused the view that if they could get enough people and

²³ SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 671, 676-678.

²⁴ "AUSA Position Paper: A Look at the Fiscal Year 1978 Defense Budget, p. 16, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Public Liaison, Costanza, Box 36, Folder: Association of the U.S. Army 2/77-3/77 [O/A 4413], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²⁵ SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 589.

weapons, then they would receive more money for modernization, and they could put off readiness until a crisis forced a rapid preparation for combat. Carter, backed fully by Harold Brown, sought to economize defense spending and reverse these priorities, placing readiness of existing forces first.²⁶

Thus, despite their public statements in support of the budget, the military hesitated to accept the changes in procurement proposed by the new administration—and so did Congress. Senator Howard Cannon (D-NV) of the Senate Armed Services Committee admitted that he received a call from Army General James Hollingsworth in Europe who was “very much concerned” with the cancellation of the non-nuclear Lance missile and thought the system “very, very worthwhile.”²⁷ Admiral H.G. Rickover, Carter’s service mentor and the pioneer of nuclear propulsion, put strong, behind-the-scenes pressure on Congress to increase shipbuilding and procure additional A-7E aircraft for the Navy.²⁸ Air Force officials in charge of the B-1 bomber project met with contractors from Rockwell Corporation at a Maryland hunting lodge. Subsequently, Rockwell President Robert Anderson provided stationary, stamps, and envelopes to all of the firm’s 119,000 employees and urged them to write their congressmen in support of the new bomber.²⁹ Although publicly supportive of the budget, the military clearly had the leverage to lobby quietly for important programs, and many congressmen and senators proved more than willing to listen.

²⁶ Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 8.

²⁷ SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 498.

²⁸ George C. Wilson, “Carter’s Pentagon Cutbacks Face Tests on Hill This Week,” *Washington Post*, March 1, 1977, A2.

²⁹ Anderson, “Lobby for the B-1 Bomber,” *Washington Post*, April 3, 1977, C7. Also, 104 of Rockwell’s executives were retired military officers who had held at least the rank of Army Colonel or Navy Captain, see Yarmolinsky, *The Military Establishment*, 61.

The military lobbying and congressional desire to control priorities in defense spending resulted in a completely revised FY78 budget. Although Congress retained the monetary value of the cuts as proposed by Carter, it prioritized the spending back in line with military preferences for procurement of more advanced systems. Congress restored the Army's Lance missile and the Bradley fighting vehicle, additional F-15 fighters and new cargo aircraft for the Air Force, and the Navy's A-7 aircraft as well as some additional ships.³⁰ New to office, the administration did not challenge Congress' redrafting of the defense budget; however, according to Harold Brown, the process of the FY78 budget "set the tone" for the rest of the administration's defense budgets and "it was a fight all the way after that on specific programs and on totals."³¹

The White House vs. the Pentagon and Congress: Crafting the FY79 Defense Budget

The Carter administration kept to its course during the creation of the FY79 budget which, as part of the administration's changes in DoD planning, began almost immediately after the approval of the FY78 budget. In building up the FY79 defense budget, Carter intervened personally at the start. He also involved the staff of the White House, the NSC, and the OMB in the process and attempted to enforce strict "zero-based budgeting" in building his administration's first complete defense budget.³²

³⁰ United States Congress, House Appropriations Committee, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1978. Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations. 95th Congress, 1st Session.* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 11.

³¹ Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, 28 February 1992, OSD Oral History, 34.

³² HCOB, *Five Year Defense Plan Hearings*, 30, 44. For orders to involve the NSC with the defense budget see Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #33, October 21, 1977," p. 4, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President 31-41: 10/77-1/78, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

The early involvement by the president exacerbated tense relations with the Pentagon. It was now clear that Carter was not just attending defense budget meetings to become better informed about the process. The president spent over eighty hours examining the details of the FY79 defense budget. According to special assistant Hamilton Jordan, Carter arrived well prepared for every meeting so that “the Joint Chiefs couldn’t go in there and bedazzle him with either budget figures or technical talk.”³³ Some officers in the Pentagon questioned whether it was “necessary or desirable for the president to get so deeply involved with the intricacies of defense planning.”³⁴ When explaining the administration’s new five-year defense budget planning process to the House Budget Committee, Defense Comptroller Fred Wacker called Carter’s early involvement in the process “disruptive” but defended it as being “a step in improving the link between planning and budgeting.” House Budget Committee Chairman Robert Leggett (D-CA) disagreed, warning that, “every place you turn in the Pentagon you are either going to run into a mutiny in the ranks or perhaps a mutiny in the Congress.”³⁵ Leggett’s prediction, while overstated, was prophetic.

Beyond his personal involvement, the president also increased the role of the White House staff in the defense budget process, creating additional civil-military tension. In the White House, the “change in atmosphere was striking” when Carter’s staff arrived, noted William Jorden, a veteran White House staffer and later ambassador to Panama. “Suits were replaced with slacks and sweaters . . . haircuts were two or three inches longer . . .” and “it appeared

³³ Hamilton Jordan, interview by James Young, Erwin Hargrove, et. al, 6 November 1981, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 65.

³⁴ Burt, “Officials Say Carter Has Won Unparalleled Sway Over Def. Policy,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1978, A7.

³⁵ HCOB, *Five Year Defense Plan Hearings*, 44.

the average age of the White House staff had dropped about twenty years.”³⁶ One of Carter’s senior advisors resigned after investigative reporters revealed he had used cocaine and marijuana. Hamilton Jordan, Carter’s special assistant and later chief of staff, was also accused of drug use and lewd behavior.³⁷ Many senior military officers in the Pentagon thus questioned if the members of Carter’s White House staff had “the competence to get deeply involved in military issues.”³⁸

Carter also pushed Zbigniew Brzezinski and his NSC to become more deeply involved in matters related to the defense budget process, but this too met stiff resistance from the Pentagon. When assessing the progress of his NSC in October 1977, Carter listed the failure of Brzezinski to oversee “budget analysis” and “defense matters” as his most significant shortcoming.³⁹ Though Brzezinski tried to become more involved in the defense budget process, he was forced to admit that he never really succeeded in doing so, largely because of Harold Brown’s lack of cooperation.⁴⁰ The National Security Advisor noted that at times the effort to break into DoD matters “was like negotiating with a foreign state.”⁴¹

³⁶ William J. Jorden, *Panama Odyssey* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 343.

³⁷ Jack Anderson, “White House Aides Are Accused,” *Washington Post*, October 2, 1979, B8. Dr. Peter Bourne was ironically President Carter’s “drug czar” when he resigned due to the substance abuse accusations. He later claimed that there was a “high incidence” of pot smoking and cocaine use among Carter’s staff. Hamilton Jordan was accused of snorting cocaine at Studio 54 in New York, but charges were never filed in the case because the witnesses were disreputable. Jordan was also accused of lewd behavior. The most serious accusation was that during a White House function he overtly peered down the blouse of the curvaceous wife of the Egyptian ambassador and told her his action was to “get a better view of the pyramids.”

³⁸ Burt, “Officials Say Carter Has Won Unparalleled Sway Over Def. Policy,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1978, A7.

³⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #34, October 28, 1977,” p. 2-3, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President, 31-41 [10/77-1/78], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁴⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 46.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

The administration's changes to the defense budget process soon drew the ire of Congress and resulted in a military-congressional alliance against White House budget priorities. Fueled by the leak of an unclassified paper from the Defense Department ordered to be "tightly held in Pentagon circles," four members of the House Armed Services Committee, led by Congressmen Robert Sykes (D-FL) and Robert Wilson (D-CA) wrote to Secretary Brown requesting a full explanation of the new budget process. The congressmen indicated that the proposed changes "spell out a move toward an ever tighter control of budgeting processes by a civilian 'general staff'" and that the proposed changes "would exclude the recommendations of military personnel until the budget is in sufficiently final form to preclude corrections." The congressmen stated that they were "gravely concerned" with this development and that they had "discussed the matter informally with various members of the military community who also are gravely concerned." They also stated their fears that too many military witnesses appearing before Congress were "in the position of either supporting the programs approved by the Secretary of Defense or being replaced." They concluded with their intention to "explore measures which will ensure that witnesses can testify in complete candor" because this "unfortunately, is not now the case."⁴²

The forging of this military-congressional alliance smacked of rebellion against any effort to restore the civilian dominance in the Pentagon that had characterized the McNamara years. Despite his efforts to distance himself from his "whiz kid" past, many still feared that Harold Brown was instilling McNamara-style civilian supremacy in the Pentagon. Jimmy Carter, while certainly not as domineering as Lyndon Johnson, was definitely willing to pry into details of defense spending and question and overrule his military advisors. Most of this

⁴² Melvin Price, "Letter to ASD L&L, Subject: Request for Explanation Regarding Changes in PPBS, January 19, 1978," CJCS Brown Files, 550 Budget, Box 34, NARA II, College Park, MD.

resistance was to come from uniformed military in the Pentagon below the level of the JCS, such as the “iron major” who probably leaked the confidential memo. Conservative members of the Armed Services Committee understood these fears and their letter clearly demonstrated that they would oppose any efforts to return to the McNamara days.

A military-congressional alliance was not the only opposition to Carter and his staff’s involvement with the defense budget. By early 1978, despite the friction caused by Harold Brown’s changes, the civilians and military in the Pentagon adapted and worked with each other to oppose further White House intrusion. Harold Brown’s efforts as a mediator paid off, and the Joint Chiefs largely accepted him as a reasonable and effective leader. Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and later Chairman of the JCS, General David Jones remembered that the Chiefs “welcomed the assignment of Harold Brown as Secretary of Defense” and added that they were able to have deep “substantive discussions with Harold Brown and understanding of our concerns, and greater accommodation on his part.”⁴³ *New York Times* Pentagon correspondent Bernard Weinraub described Brown’s relations with the JCS as “straightforward and surprisingly friendly” and that “on important issues . . . the Joint Chiefs have, so far, fallen into line under Brown.”⁴⁴ It appeared that what the press was calling the “Browning” of the Pentagon was working out well for the civil-military relationship between the Chiefs and their civilian superiors.

The high quality of many of Harold Brown’s civilian subordinates facilitated civil-military cooperation in the Pentagon. Brown’s special assistant, John Kester, gained a reputation with

⁴³ For quote regarding welcome of Brown see GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 208. For good relationship between JCS and Brown see GEN David Jones, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 30.

⁴⁴ Weinraub, *The Browning of the Pentagon*, 58.

military officers as a “player.” According to Kester’s executive assistant, Colonel Colin Powell, Kester employed a “hard-nosed style,” and those who worked with him respected his direct approach and candor.⁴⁵ Brown’s Deputy Secretary of Defense, Charles Duncan, the former President of Coca-Cola, was highly regarded and “had a particular gift for handling defense contractors and politicking on the Hill.”⁴⁶ A technical consultant to the Pentagon since 1966, William Perry assumed the role of Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering. Perry proved a remarkably adept manager and succeeded in keeping many advanced weapon systems, especially for the Army, in the defense budget.⁴⁷ Also part of the respected Brown team was David O. “Doc” Cooke, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for administration—known in some circles as the “Mayor of the Pentagon.” A former Navy Captain, Cooke was also a Washington lawyer who understood how to make things happen in the sprawling Pentagon bureaucracy and had served in the job since 1971. He would go on to become a thirty-year veteran of the Pentagon, serving through four presidential administrations as one of the most respected civil-servants in the government. Colin Powell may not have been exaggerating when he declared that, “Without Doc Cooke, the Pentagon would not open in the morning.”⁴⁸ These experienced, savvy officials contrasted dramatically with Carter’s young White House staff and assisted Harold Brown in forging a strong partnership with the military.

⁴⁵ Powell, *My American Journey*, 233-234, 237.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 239-240.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁴⁸ For tenure of “Doc” Cooke see Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office, *Department of Defense Key Officials 1947-2004* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004), 29. For high regard and quote see Powell, *My American Journey*, 300.

The relationships between the Service Secretaries, the military chiefs, and Harold Brown varied and were not always conducive to civil-military cooperation. General Jones, for example, described his relationship with Secretary of the Air Force John Stetson as a “delightful arrangement,” yet Stetson “absolutely could not get along with Harold Brown” and resigned his post rather quickly. Stetson’s replacement, Hans Mark, indicated that he “didn’t mix very well” with Jones, yet General Lew Allen, who replaced Jones in 1978, said he had “close and friendly relations” with Mark.⁴⁹ General Bernard Rogers, the Chief of Staff of the Army, had “very tense relations” with Clifford Alexander, his Secretary, and even contemplated resignation.⁵⁰ Secretary of the Navy W. Graham Claytor’s outspoken leadership gained the respect of superiors and subordinates alike, later earning him elevation to Deputy Secretary of Defense.⁵¹ Harold Brown and special assistant Kester attempted to circumvent the often-embattled Army and Air Force Secretaries and dealt directly with military members of their staffs.⁵² One Pentagon reorganization study commissioned by Brown even considered recommending the abolishment of the Service Secretaries with their

⁴⁹ For Jones’ quote see GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 223. For Hans Mark’s quote see Hans Mark, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Ronald Landa, 4 August 1999, OSD Oral History, 31. For Gen. Allen’s quotes see GEN Lew Allen, interview by James Hasdorf, transcript, K239.0512-1694, IRIS# 01105260, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 184-185.

⁵⁰ John Kester, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 2.

⁵¹ Both Brown and his deputy, Charles Duncan, confirmed that Claytor was the strongest service secretary. See Charles Duncan, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 17 May 1996, OSD Oral History, 31. Likewise, the Marine Commandant had high praise for Claytor—see GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 223.

⁵² John Kester indicated that “Although Harold and I both were always mouthing the mantra that we did not want to go around the service civilians and deal directly with the staff . . . we found ourselves doing it frequently.” He also confirmed, “somewhat as with the Army, we went around the civilians in the Air Force.” See John Kester, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 2-3.

positions being taken over by the uniformed chiefs.⁵³ In the end, however, Brown did not take such drastic action, but instead chose to rely more heavily on his under- and assistant-secretaries to conduct day to day business with the Army and Air Force.

Perhaps as in any work environment, the Pentagon civilians and military had some good and some troubled relationships. Yet, the FY79 budget process demonstrated a trend toward more united civil-military opposition in the Pentagon to White House involvement in the budgetary process. Three major areas demonstrated this trend: the imposition of zero based budgeting (ZBB), the “turf battles” between OMB and OSD over the budget, and Pentagon attitudes toward the Carter White House.

Although Carter demanded that all government agencies institute ZBB, the Department of Defense resisted with particular vehemence. One reason was that the Pentagon already employed the “cumbersome” Planning Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS) that, “in effect, did everything for us that ZBB would do” according to “Doc” Cooke, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Administration.⁵⁴ Deputy OMB director James McIntyre acknowledged that the Pentagon was “one of the most organized submitters of the budget.”⁵⁵ In short, explained Cooke, “we did not need the discipline or extra work of ZBB.”⁵⁶

⁵³ "The DoD Reorganization Studies, November 30, 1978," p. 2, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Congressional Liaison--Beckel, Box 220, Folder: Department of Defense Studies 11/30/78, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. Hereafter cited as “The DoD Reorganization Studies.”

⁵⁴ For “cumbersome” description see Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 362. For effectiveness of PPBS system see David Cooke, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 11.

⁵⁵ James McIntyre, interview by James Young, Donald Raider, et. al., 28 October 1981, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 59-60.

⁵⁶ David Cooke, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 9.

For the Pentagon, Carter's attempt to impose ZBB proved to be "the ultimate in micro-management."⁵⁷ Carter himself acknowledged that Harold Brown and the Pentagon resisted ZBB "vociferously," but he still insisted upon forcing them to use the system.⁵⁸ Brown admitted his resistance, saying, "I thought it was not a great idea. You can't keep pulling up the plant to look at the roots every year," while Assistant Secretary of Defense Russell Murray urged Brown to tell "the President and OMB" to "consider special considerations and arrangements from the standard ZBB procedures for DoD."⁵⁹ In the end, the civilians in the Pentagon largely ignored the policy. Congress convened hearings to discuss alternative DoD budgets and noted that, "the Defense Department is not really conforming to the mandate of the president to carry out ZBB," and lamented, "it is time that we did some *real* ZBB on our national strategies."⁶⁰ United Pentagon resistance to ZBB carried the day.

The wrangling between OMB and OSD over the defense budget created further conflict between the White House and Pentagon. OMB Director Bert Lance viewed the Pentagon as fiscally irresponsible. He urged Carter to become personally *more* involved in the defense budget in 1979, something that the Pentagon dreaded after the "fiasco" of the 1978 budget.⁶¹ Secretary Claytor criticized Lance and his organization, saying that "the staff at OMB

⁵⁷ Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 361.

⁵⁸ Jimmy Carter, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 6, 23.

⁵⁹ Harold Brown, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 23. For quote by Murray see Russell II Murray, "Memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, Subject: March 10 NSC Meeting on the Cg-Information Memorandum, May 5, 1978," CJCS Brown Files, 550 Budget, Box 34, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁶⁰ United States Congress, House Committee on the Budget, *Alternative DOD Budgets : Hearing before the Task Force on National Security and International Affairs of the Committee on the Budget, House of Representatives, Ninety-Fifth Congress, Second Session, February, 22 1978* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 14, 22. Hereafter cited as HCOB, *Alternative DoD Budgets*.

⁶¹ Jack Anderson and Les Whitten, "Lance Hits Pentagon on Overspending," *Washington Post*, June 4, 1977, E41. For "fiasco" quote see Russell Murray, "Memo to Sec. Def. 5 May 1978."

considers themselves the super-secretaries of defense and they'd like to make all decisions internal and external on defense."⁶² Russell Murray warned that in the Pentagon, "the whole building seemed to be united" in its concern about too much outside interference in the defense budget, and that "the problem is not in this building but with OMB."⁶³ Clearly, key leaders in the Pentagon objected to what they deemed over-involvement by an outside agency in their area of expertise.

In April of 1978, the conflict between OMB and the Pentagon worsened during the FY79 defense budget debate when Carter placed his support behind the "defense specialists" in OMB. One such specialist was Randy Jayne, a former Air Force pilot characterized by Bernard Weinraub as "typical of a group of little-known officials, often relatively young, who have moved into influential policy-making positions" in the administration. Twelve years earlier, Harold Brown, who had already served eight years in the Pentagon, had handed Jayne his diploma at the Air Force Academy. Now the tables seemed to be turned, with youth trumping experience. When Jayne and Brown pitched their final figures for the budget—Brown requesting \$130 billion and Jayne arguing for \$126 billion—Carter sided with Jayne and proposed a \$126 billion budget for FY79.⁶⁴ Carter supported OMB over the Pentagon during the final stages of the FY79 defense budget.

The attitude inside the Pentagon toward Carter and his White House staff provided a final source of the conflict between the two. The youth and seeming inexperience of Carter's staff, combined with the adverse media attention focused upon them, continued not only to

⁶² W. Graham Claytor, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 22.

⁶³ Russell Murray, "Memo to SECDEF, 5 May 1978."

⁶⁴ Bernard Weinraub, "Young Aide Shapes Defense Policy," *New York Times*, April 15, 1978, A9.

color the perceptions of military officers, but also Carter's own Pentagon civilian appointees. John Kester likened the Carter White House to a "Where's Waldo?" book, saying that it was "just a big muddle" with "people stumbling all over each other" and that "most of them didn't really know much about the Pentagon except that it was sort of big and evil."⁶⁵ "Doc" Cooke classified the Pentagon's relationship with Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, as "complicated" because Brzezinski spent too much time building up his own influence with the president and "trying to out Kissinger-Kissinger."⁶⁶ Major-General John Singlaub, whom Carter had fired as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army in Korea when he spoke out against the administration's troop withdrawal policy, compared the president's advisors to "summer interns."⁶⁷ General David Jones, the Air Force Chief whom Carter would later appoint Chairman of the JCS and certainly one of the most cooperative leaders in the military, also saw Carter's closest staff in a negative light, stating that they failed to understand how to operate in Washington.⁶⁸ Clearly the Pentagon seemed united in its disdain for the Carter White House.

Several senior military and defense officials were not only contemptuous of the White House staff but also of Jimmy Carter himself. While the president was proud of his prior military service in the Navy and felt that it gave him credibility when dealing with military officers, others did not agree. Harold Brown, for instance, thought that the president "overestimated the waste in the military compared to that in all other departments of the

⁶⁵ John Kester, interview with Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 6, 15.

⁶⁶ David Cooke, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 5.

⁶⁷ John K. Singlaub and Malcolm McConnell, *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), 396.

⁶⁸ GEN David Jones, interview by Walter Poole and Steven Rearden, 4 February 1998, JCS Oral History, 6-7.

government” because of his prior service.⁶⁹ General Singlaub commented that Carter’s “claim” to have been a “nuclear engineer” for the Navy “rankled many senior Navy officers” and scoffed at the president’s assertion that rising to lieutenant commander in the Navy had prepared him to make “difficult decisions.”⁷⁰ John Kester had a particularly hostile view of Carter. He claimed that there was “something wrong” with the way Carter ended his service in the Navy. He felt that the president “really, deep down, did not like the military,” and even believed that Carter “took a certain perverse enjoyment in having four-star people call him sir and that sort of stuff.”⁷¹ At least one member of the JCS noted this “anti-military” sentiment in a more subtle light: Marine Corps Commandant General Louis Wilson went out of his way in his oral history to state that the President and Mrs. Carter had “discontinued” the practice of inviting a member of the JCS to the White House for state dinners and that he felt it was a “downgrading of the Chiefs.”⁷² In the opinion of Charles Stevenson, additional dinner invitations may not have mattered; in his view, “Jimmy Carter provoked anger and hostility among many senior officers by his style and policies” and his sometimes “condescending and sanctimonious” demeanor toward subordinates created gulfs “so profound that no social amenities could bridge them.”⁷³

⁶⁹ Harold Brown, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, 8 October 1992, OSD Oral History, 29.

⁷⁰ Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 397. Carter was not officially a “nuclear engineer” for the Navy, although he did work with Admiral Hyman Rickover for a period of time during the nascent stages of the Navy’s development of nuclear-powered submarines. Later in newspaper and television interviews Carter cited Admiral Rickover as “having more effect on him than any other man” besides his own father. See T.R. Reid, “Shipmates of Carter Recall a Determined Hard-Worker,” *Washington Post*, November 27, 1976, A6. For television transcript see Richardson, *Conversations with Carter*, 10. According to anonymous sources, Admiral Rickover, a man supposedly with a “talent for instant recall,” upon hearing Carter’s praise of him on television “sent aides scrambling to find out just who Carter was and when he had served.” See Perry, *Four Stars*, 264.

⁷¹ John Kester, interview with Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 10.

⁷² GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 179, 207.

⁷³ Stevenson, *SECDEF*, 125.

Although a negative perception of Carter may have prevailed, both military and civilians in the Pentagon came to recognize and appreciate Harold Brown's quiet, reasonable demeanor. They respected his behind-the-scenes battle with Carter and his advisors over the defense budget. General Wilson, despite at times offering vehement criticism of the president, stated that he had "nothing but high praise for Harold Brown."⁷⁴ General Jones acknowledged that he and the other members of the JCS knew Brown had "fought hard" for higher defense budgets and more programs but had done so "in a loyal way to a great extent in the Oval Office."⁷⁵ Kester agreed, categorizing Brown as "total loyalty in that regard," but adding that "Harold would take the heat for Carter but I don't think that Carter ever appreciated it." In the end, Kester felt certain that "the budgets were bigger than they would have been had Harold not been there."⁷⁶ Russell Murray made an even more profound statement: "Harold pretty much saved the defense budget. I think that everything we got in the defense budget was due to Harold's efforts."⁷⁷ Likewise, Harold Brown spoke favorably of General George Brown, who he claimed had always given him frank advice and was "very supportive, very helpful."⁷⁸ It seemed clear that military disdain for the administration did not always extend to the civilians in the Pentagon, and that the civilians in the Pentagon were increasingly cooperating with the military to oppose the White House's budget reductions.

⁷⁴ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 216.

⁷⁵ GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 209.

⁷⁶ John Kester, interview with Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 14, 19. Zbigniew Brzezinski confirmed this view in his memoirs, stating that, after 1977, Harold Brown became increasingly assertive in pressing for higher defense spending. At times Carter made "no secret of his aggravation" with Brown's pestering. See Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 45-46.

⁷⁷ Russell Murray II, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 37.

⁷⁸ United States Congress, House Armed Services Committee, *Hearings on Military Posture, Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1979, 95th Congress, 2nd Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 20. Hereafter cited as HASC, *FY79 Authorization Hearings*.

At the same time that civil-military relations between the White House and Pentagon became more strained, the administration's relationship with Congress also soured. Events outside the realm of defense, such as Carter's unpopular stand on the Panama Canal and energy conservation, cost him in his relationship even with his own party in 1977. Political scientist and retired Air Force Colonel Sam Sarkesian, in his 1979 study of the first two years of Carter's Administration, stated that "even Jimmy Carter's most sympathetic supporters" concluded "that there was something wrong in the national security area" and the political consensus "seemed to be that the national security policies lacked initiative, were primarily reactive, and reflected the administration's inability to ascertain a clear focus and purpose."⁷⁹ Carter's congressional liaison, Frank Moore, proved ineffective and House Majority Leader Tip O'Neill (D-MA) told him to "stay the hell out of my office."⁸⁰ As a result, Brzezinski added Madeline Albright to his National Security Council Staff in 1978 as a special congressional liaison for defense matters. She confirmed the poor relations with Congress, stating that Carter "didn't do a lot of the oiling and stroking activity" that was required in the presidential-congressional relationship.⁸¹ Likewise, Carter's special assistant Hamilton Jordan could not think of a single popular initiative supported or proposed by Carter in his first year: "Everything was a political loser."⁸²

The combined effects of the contested FY79 budget, the military "end runs" to Congress, the increasing civil-military cooperation in the Pentagon, the tension between the Pentagon

⁷⁹ Sarkesian, *Defense Policy and the Presidency*, 23.

⁸⁰ Abernathy, Hill, and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 145.

⁸¹ Madeline Albright in oral history of Zbigniew Brzezinski and staff, interview by David Truman, Erwin Hargrove, et. al., 18 February 1982, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 23-24.

⁸² Hamilton Jordan, interview by James Young, Erwin Hargrove, et. al., 6 November 1981, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 7.

and the White House, and Carter's declining standing with Congress weakened the administration's ability to win its own priorities for defense spending. The military recognized the opportunity offered by the confluence of these events and, as a result, increased its lobbying by aggressively courting recently-retired officers to speak out publicly against Carter's policies. The Navy which possessed one the best-organized Congressional Liaison office of the services and which was further strengthened by the good relationship between Secretary Claytor and the CNO, mounted a particularly effective lobbying effort.⁸³ As the FY79 budget neared completion, the Navy especially, but the other Services as well, saw what was coming and reverted to their well-honed practice—the "end run."

Showdown on the Beltway: Carter's FY79 Defense Budget Faces the Military-Congressional Alliance

President Carter submitted the \$126 billion proposal to Congress with the message that it was "prudent and tight" and "consistent with campaign pledges" since it was \$8 billion below the Ford projection.⁸⁴ The Navy felt the stinginess of the new budget in particular, suffering the loss of a nuclear-powered supercarrier and a reduction in overall shipbuilding by 20 percent.⁸⁵ The Pentagon did not wait long after the submission of the new budget to leak its views to the press. A high-ranking naval officer lamented that the new budget would put "the Navy in a Coast Guard status." Another "Pentagon insider" likened Carter to George McGovern, who had run against Richard Nixon in 1972 as a boldly anti-war and anti-military

⁸³ For robust nature of the Navy CLL, see Scroggs, *Army Relations with Congress*, 23.

⁸⁴ Jimmy Carter, "Message to Congress Transmitting the Fiscal Year 1979 Budget. January 20, 1978," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1978* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 187.

⁸⁵ "Carter Defense Budget Asks \$126 Billion; Navy's Shipbuilding Plans Are Cut Sharply," *Washington Post*, December 24, 1977, A6.

Democratic nominee.⁸⁶ Discontent spread within the Pentagon, and several correspondents wrote about strong objections to Carter's budget. An anonymous "senior military official in the Pentagon" indicated "that there's significant concern about meeting our readiness and force level requirements."⁸⁷ The military effort to reduce Carter's control and increase the defense budget had begun.

As Congress reviewed the budget, a number of recently retired and active duty military officers stepped up their lobbying effort. Recently retired General Richard Stillwell and retired JCS chairman Admiral Thomas Moorer both weighed in against the plans to increase civilian control over the budget process and in letters to Congressmen likened Harold Brown to Robert McNamara.⁸⁸ Two other generals contacted House Budget Chairman Robert Leggett (D-CA) and told him, with unconvincing hyperbole, that the defense budget should be "fifty times" higher.⁸⁹ The Navy League, one of the oldest and most potent of the military special interest groups, published a statement to members of Congress stating alarm with the "downward spiral of U.S. naval strength."⁹⁰ Admiral Rickover again applied his back-channel pressure on Congress to overturn Carter's shipbuilding cuts and restore the nuclear-

⁸⁶ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "The Defense Budget's Message to the World," *Washington Post*, December 29, 1977, A19.

⁸⁷ Bernard Weinraub, "President Approves \$126 Billion Budget for Military in 1979," *New York Times*, December 23, 1977, A1, A10.

⁸⁸ Bernard Weinraub, "2 Officers Protest Plan to Strengthen Civilians in Pentagon," *New York Times*, February 6, 1978, A17.

⁸⁹ United States Congress, House Committee on the Budget, *Fiscal Year 1979 Defense Budget Overview: Hearings before the Task Force on National Security and International Affairs of the Committee on the Budget, House of Representatives, Ninety-Fifth Congress, Second Session, February 21, 23; March 1 and 7, 1978* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 285. Hereafter cited as HCOB, *FY79 Defense Budget Overview*.

⁹⁰ George C. Wilson, "Brown Says Goal Is More Bang for the Navy's Buck," *Washington Post*, June 7, 1978, C9. For the stature of the Navy League see Raymond, *Power at the Pentagon*, 192. Raymond noted that the Navy League considered itself "the civilian arm of the Navy."

powered supercarrier. As the House Armed Services Committee blasted Harold Brown and added the carrier back into the budget, Congressman Tom Downey (D-NY) conceded that “Rickover’s got a stranglehold on the committee.”⁹¹ In contrast to the FY78 budget, the military’s lobbying effort appeared overt. It was also extremely effective, and used by many members in Congress who wanted to challenge Carter’s national defense policy.

While retired and active duty military invoked the “end run” to resist Carter’s plans, the Secretary of the Navy took a more direct stand in opposition to official policy. In a private meeting with the president, Graham Claytor told Carter to his face that he could not support the reduced shipbuilding plan and would work with his contacts in Congress to increase it. President Carter supposedly only smiled in response.⁹² This was not the first time that a Secretary of the Navy had openly opposed the President. In 1947, James Forrestal “did all that he could to obstruct” the plan for military unification that President Truman had submitted to Congress. Truman did not feel that he could fire Forrestal without creating a civil-military crisis because the Secretary represented the views of all high-ranking Navy officers. Instead, Truman sought to compromise his own position and co-opt Forrestal.⁹³ This approach worked and may suggest why Carter acted as he did, for as previous comments from Harold Brown and John Kester indicated, Claytor was by far the most popular and respected Service Secretary by 1978. It may also help explain why Carter

⁹¹ John W. Finney, "The Military Has Always Known Who Was in Charge," *New York Times*, May 29, 1977, E4. For the extreme level of influence that Rickover had with Congress, see John W. Finney, "Rickover: A Way of Getting His Way," *New York Times*, July 13, 1975, E2.

⁹² Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "A Defeat for the Navy," *Washington Post*, March 27, 1978, A25.

⁹³ Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification*, 144-145. From the perspective of political scientist Samuel Huntington, there are few outright firings of high level Pentagon personnel because at the highest levels of government relationships tend to be more “collegial.” The collegial nature of these relationships increases as one moves up in the hierarchy because of the risk of adverse publicity from firings and the difficulty in finding qualified replacements. See Huntington, *The Common Defense*, 148.

actually promoted Claytor to Deputy Secretary of Defense later. What remained certain was that the military-civilian alliance in the Pentagon strengthened throughout the 1979 budget process to the point that the senior Service Secretary felt capable of openly challenging the president.

Not only did the military and civilians in the Pentagon talk to the press, conduct a behind-the-scenes lobbying effort, and privately inform Carter that they opposed his plans, but their FY79 congressional testimony conveyed considerably less support than in FY78. In February of 1978, both Harold Brown and General George Brown categorized the FY79 defense budget as “austere, but adequate”—hardly staunch support from the two ranking defense officials in the administration. Both warned of no “cut insurance” in the submitted budget, and “if reductions are made, it will cut into muscle—not fat or padding” and any cuts at all “could very well erode the very slim margin of superiority that we have over the Soviet threat.”⁹⁴ Army Chief of Staff Rogers stated that he wanted the Bradley fighting vehicle retained and felt that the current budget had “major shortfalls” in Reserve readiness. Contrary to FY78 testimony about a “balance” in the Navy budget, in FY79 CNO Holloway testified that it was “adequate only to maintain the very slim margin of superiority” over the Soviets and stated that the nuclear-powered supercarrier should be built.⁹⁵ The Service Secretaries provided similarly reserved support for the budget. Claytor told Congressman Les Aspin (D-WI) that he was “concerned about the future” because the Navy “could very

⁹⁴ For “cut insurance” and lack of padding see HCOB, *FY79 Defense Budget Overview*, 316-317, 336. For statement about very slim margin over Soviet threat see United States Congress, House Appropriations Committee, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1979. Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations. 95th Congress, 2nd Session.* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 568. Hereafter cited as HAPC, *FY79 Defense Appropriations Hearings*.

⁹⁵ HAPC, *FY79 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 97, 609. For Admiral Holloway’s statement on continuing with the carrier see HCOB, *FY79 Defense Budget Overview*, 234.

well be in trouble.” Air Force Secretary Stetson’s statement expressed qualified support for the budget and admitted that he saw “potential problems ahead.”⁹⁶ Seemingly the only support for the administration came from General Jones, who although “disappointed,” supported Carter’s cancellation of the B-1 bomber despite rigorous questioning by congressmen, one of whom called Jones a “defeatist” for not lobbying behind Carter’s back to continue the program.⁹⁷ Jones himself confirmed the pressure and admitted later that he was “asked by some members of Congress to help end-run the President” but refused to do so.⁹⁸ Compared to FY78, it seemed that the military had waited for Carter to change his policies and when he did not, in FY79 the dissention became openly public.

While the congressional testimony illustrated the civil-military cooperation in the Pentagon and the tension between the Pentagon and the White House, the reaction by Congress showed the strength of the military-congressional alliance. Senator Tower (R-TX) again assailed Harold Brown, indicating that the “compelling arguments and recommendations of our uniformed military leaders” were being given scant attention.⁹⁹ Congressman Robert Leggett (D-CA), traditionally sympathetic to economizing defense spending, classified the FY79 budget a “controversial one” and felt that significant cuts could result in voters “erupting in response.”¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, Congress reworked the budget again and approved more high-technology items, including the Navy’s fifth nuclear carrier costing

⁹⁶ HASC, *FY79 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 644 and 879.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 881, 924, 939, 948, 956.

⁹⁸ GEN David Jones, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 20.

⁹⁹ United States Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1979, Hearings on S.2571, 95th Congress, 2nd Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 8.

¹⁰⁰ HCOB, *Alternative DOD Budgets*, 1, 59.

\$2 billion.¹⁰¹ Congress, in the same manner as with the FY78 budget, had brought the FY79 defense budget more in line with military prerogatives and this time had been brash, openly questioning the administration's policies.

Carter blustered at having his first complete defense budget submission re-prioritized by Congress. He took the "daring" and "extraordinary step" of vetoing the defense appropriations bill. Indeed, a defense authorization bill had never before been vetoed.¹⁰² The press characterized the move as Carter's "most serious challenge to Congress in sixteen months in office."¹⁰³ Carter's veto message set straight his priorities for defense spending, stating that "we need more immediate improvements in our defense forces. The Navy does not need a fifth nuclear-powered aircraft carrier," and the expenditure for such a ship would force cuts in Army and Air Force equipment maintenance and research and development.¹⁰⁴ Carter made clear his resentment of Congress altering his plan for defense spending and declared that he, as the commander-in-chief, would be the one to determine how defense dollars should be spent.

The veto message provoked an immediate and harsh backlash from Congress. Even congressmen who had voted against the nuclear carrier went on the record saying that "it was a poor reason to veto a defense bill." One deemed Carter's action "irresponsible." Melvin Price (D-IL), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, sent a scathing letter to

¹⁰¹ Don Oberdorfer, "President Weighs Veto of Weapons Procurement Bill," *Washington Post*, August 17, 1978, A1, A14.

¹⁰² Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 355. Carter's staff acknowledged that such a bill had never been vetoed in their "talking points" as well. See "The Defense Appropriation Authorization Act, the President's Veto: Background Report by the Office of Media Liaison, White House Press Office, August 18, 1978," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Congressional Liaison--Beckel, Box 220, Folder: Defense Authorization Veto, 8/16-31/78, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹⁰³ Edward Walsh and Mary Russell, "Weapons Bill Vetoed," *Washington Post*, August 18, 1978, A1, A6.

¹⁰⁴ United States Congress, House, *Presidential Veto of HR 10929, Document 95-377* (August 17, 1978).

President Carter, lecturing him on the process of defense authorization and appropriation, refuting the assertions in the veto message line by line, and explaining how appropriating and authorizing a \$2 billion nuclear carrier did not equate to cutting funds from other areas of the defense budget. Having made his point, Price could “only conclude, Mr. President, that you have been ill-advised on the process of Congressional authorization and appropriation.”¹⁰⁵

He went on to lambaste the tone of the veto message and met Carter’s challenge to Congress:

The burden of your message is that Congress does not have a place in defense policy-making except to ‘rubber stamp’ recommendations of the Executive Branch. I reject that philosophy. I believe Congress deserves to be treated as a partner in defense decision-making, not as a poor relation.¹⁰⁶

Price then assailed Carter’s past record on defense, referencing a letter he had written a year earlier concerning the cancellation of the B-1 and the slowdown of the MX missile program:

At that time, I expressed hope that the Congress could work with the Administration to provide necessary defense systems. Since that time, we have had the cancellation of production for the enhanced radiation weapon, the indecision in response to the demonstrated need to protect the vulnerability of our land-based ICBMs, the proposed withdrawal of our forces from Korea, and now the veto of a Defense authorization bill and a determined effort to stop another large aircraft carrier. I am deeply concerned as to the cumulative effect of all these actions on our defense capability and equally concerned as to their effect on the perception of potential adversaries as to our willingness to meet our national security commitments.¹⁰⁷

He further noted Senate opposition to Carter’s veto, including resistance from Senator Gary Hart (D-CO), who “despite being one of the most vigorous spokesmen in Congress for going

¹⁰⁵ Melvin Price, "Letter to President Carter from the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, August 31, 1976," p. 4, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Congressional Liaison--Beckel, Box 220, Folder: Defense Authorization Veto, 8/16-31/78, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. Copy of the letter in possession of the author.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

to smaller carriers,” had called on his colleagues to override the veto. Price closed with a promise that he would ask the House of Representative to override Carter’s veto in one week.

Carter, having fully committed himself and his administration, fought doggedly to prevent the veto from being overturned. Vice President Walter Mondale held daily meetings to coordinate the effort. The DoD provided information to Mondale’s staff, suggesting that they emphasize that “money would be taken from urgent time-critical needs for a purpose that is not time-critical” and recommending that Carter promise a conventionally-powered carrier in the FY80 budget.¹⁰⁸ Harold Brown, who was reported to have “mixed feelings” about the veto in the first place, was forced into the role of public salesman while at the same time conducting lobbying behind-the-scenes with influential Senators.¹⁰⁹

Knowing of the congressional challenge to Carter’s veto, high-ranking staff officers in the Navy staged what some insiders termed a “revolt.”¹¹⁰ Admiral Thomas Hayward, who had been selected to replace the retiring Holloway, became CNO at the beginning of the struggle. Hayward sought to maintain order within the Navy Department, giving harsh verbal orders to his most senior officers not to oppose the veto. While at first this may seem to have been unnecessary given the tradition of civilian control over the U.S. armed forces, the situation was actually closer to a rebellion than Hayward may have expected. The new CNO’s orders

¹⁰⁸ John Kester, "Memorandum to Richard Moe, Chief of Staff to the Vice-President, August 23, 1978," p. 2, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Congressional Liaison--Beckel, Box 220, Folder: Defense Authorization Veto, 8/16-31/78, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹⁰⁹ For congressional comments see Walsh and Russell, “Weapons Bill Vetoed,” *Washington Post*, August 18, 1978, A1, A6. For effort to sustain the veto and Brown’s feelings about it see Edward Walsh, "White House Pushing to Sustain Veto," *Washington Post*, August 23, 1978, A2. For Brown’s subsequent defense of the veto see Peter Barnes, "Brown Defends Carter Weapons Bill Veto," *Washington Post*, August 21, 1978, A16. and Walter Pincus, "Pentagon Lists Some Items Chopped from Budget Requests by Congress," *Washington Post*, September 2, 1978, A2. For Brown’s efforts at lobbying see "Memorandum for Mr. Dan Tate, Subject: Nuclear Aircraft Carrier, August 14, 1978," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Congressional Liaison, Box 220, Folder: Defense Dept. Authorization Bill 1978 [1], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹¹⁰ Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 353.

were so openly disparaged by his junior staff officers that the admiral later softened his tone in an official memorandum. He appealed to the same set of senior officers whom he had reprimanded and asked that they try to understand that the “fundamental goal” of the Navy must be to “preserve the momentum” already in place toward obtaining the conventional carrier promised by Carter.¹¹¹ So weak was the CNO’s wording that senior naval officers anonymously termed the memo “an exercise in ambiguity” and a “masterpiece of obfuscation.”¹¹² Noticeably absent were any instructions to stay clear of the ongoing lobbying efforts to overturn the veto. Many naval officers chose to interpret Hayward’s position as being “if you lobby to override the veto, don’t get caught.”¹¹³ These senior naval officers were aware of the administration’s difficulties and more or less openly exploited the politics of the issue in order to get another nuclear carrier for their service.

The Carter White House did not stand idly by in the wake of such a major challenge. The Office of Media Liaison mounted an extensive public relations campaign, disseminating “talking points” to all members of the staff while emphasizing that Carter had not taken the decision to veto “lightly” and that “the key behind the President’s veto is the fact that the Act reverses our national defense priorities by de-emphasizing immediate strength and readiness.”¹¹⁴ The concerted effort paid off and, by August 25, 1978, Carter’s staff could celebrate the fact that newspaper editorials were running nine to one in favor of the veto.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Washington’s Naval Battle,” *Washington Post*, September 4, 1978, A15.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “The President’s Veto: Background Report by the Office of Media Liaison,” 2.

¹¹⁵ Jerry Rafshoon, “Memorandum to White House Staff Cabinet Officers, August 25, 1978,” Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Congressional Liaison, Box 220, Folder: Defense Department Authorization Bill, 1978 [2], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

Thus, when Congressmen Price revealed his intent to override the veto in his letter of August 31, 1978, the president was unmoved. He knew Price did not have the votes. Carter's Congressional Liaison Frank Moore dismissed Price's challenge, noting that "we will have a clear-cut victory" when it came to the motion to override.¹¹⁶ Carter and his staff were correct. Not only did the attempt to override the veto fail, but, in part by promising to request a conventionally-powered carrier of Nimitz-class size in the FY80 budget, the revised bill eliminated the nuclear-powered vessel. Carter had his victory over Congress, but it had come at the price of hardening an alliance between military leaders and civilians in the Pentagon and defense hawks in Congress, and at the sacrifice of a possible future executive-legislative defense policy consensus.

After the Battle: The Veto and Civil-Military Relations through the FY78 and FY79 Defense Budgets

Although much of the press and subsequent historiography tended to cast the veto as being simply a fight over the procurement of the nuclear supercarrier, clearly much else was involved.¹¹⁷ The president was locked in a larger struggle with Congress at the time over executive authority. Carter threatened to veto up to thirty other bills "to conform to the administration's program of budget restraint."¹¹⁸ By his veto, Carter was sending a message which once again asserted his desire to reverse priorities in the defense budget process so as

¹¹⁶ Frank Moore, "Memorandum to the President, Subject: Attached Letter from Congressman Melvin Price, August 31, 1978," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Congressional Liaison--Beckel, Box 220, Folder: Defense Authorization Veto, 8/16-31/78, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹¹⁷ For historiography indicating limited conflict over the carrier see Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 248-249 and Perry, *Four Stars*, 269-270. These works focus on the veto as a conflict with the Navy to the exclusion of other factors.

¹¹⁸ Jack Nelson, "At Least 30 Bills in Danger of Veto, Budget Officials Say," *Washington Post*, August 23, 1978, A2. See also talk of political pundits in Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Carter's Veto Politics," *Washington Post*, August 25, 1978, A19.

to emphasize readiness ahead of force structure and modernization. He was challenging traditional DoD budgetary priorities. Finally, the veto had a lasting and adverse impact on Carter's relationship with Congress in defense policy. In an effort to repair the damaged relations, Harold Brown himself wrote an apologetic letter to Melvin Price (D-IL) and Charles Bennett (D-FL), Chairman of the House Sea Power Subcommittee, the latter having held his first news conference in thirty years to protest the president's handling of the veto. Both congressional leaders rebuffed the Defense Secretary's efforts to smooth the situation.¹¹⁹

To view Carter's veto as a climatic battle or a decisive turning point in post-World War II civil-military relations would exaggerate its significance. Nonetheless, if the budget was as important to civil-military relations as those involved at the time believed, it does provide a logical breaking point in examining the first half of the administration's defense budgets. His future defense budgets were to be much larger, but the pressure of the military-congressional alliance forced them even higher. But by 1979 Jimmy Carter did not have the political capital to veto another defense bill.

In addition, Carter's views on defense and foreign policy began to change by 1979. Most secondary literature has attributed the change to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.¹²⁰ At least one senior Defense Department official called the invasion a conversion-like experience: Carter was "reborn after Afghanistan."¹²¹ Yet, Carter had promised to increase

¹¹⁹ George C. Wilson, "Brown Bids to Take Some Sting out of Carter Defense Bill Veto," *Washington Post*, September 6, 1978, A3.

¹²⁰ For example see: Abernathy, Hill, and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 66; Thornton, *The Carter Years*, 480; Donald S. Spencer, *The Carter Implosion: Jimmy Carter and the Amateur Style of Diplomacy* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 109.

¹²¹ Russell Murray II, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 37.

defense spending long before the Soviet invasion.¹²² Several other incidents—a Soviet combat brigade being “discovered” in Cuba, the seizing of American hostages in Tehran, and polls indicating a sharp rise in the popularity of defense spending in late 1978—also influenced Carter’s change of mind.¹²³ As the next chapters will illustrate, these events combined with the strength of the military-congressional alliance, forced Carter to submit higher defense budgets in his last two years.

The defense budgets in FY80 and FY81 were less controversial and relatively larger than FY78 and FY79. By the end of 1978, liberal members of Carter’s staff who had previously resisted any rise in defense spending began to support Pentagon requests for more money.¹²⁴ Harold Brown also became more vocal and assertive in pressing the president for higher defense expenditures.¹²⁵ Publicly, Carter himself began to emphasize plans to increase the defense budget rather than decrease it, even while making cuts in social programs.¹²⁶ The

¹²² In addition to dates on the newspaper articles stressing Carter’s plan for raising defense spending, Carter himself attempted to emphasize this point to Congress. The Soviet invasion did not occur until December 27, 1979. Carter had really been calling for increased defense budgets since the end of 1978, though as the next chapter will illustrate, what he called for and what he actually supported were not always the same. For example see Charlie Schultze, “Memorandum for Secretary Brown, OSD, and James McIntyre, Chief, OMB, Subject: Attached Draft of Presidential Statement, February 8, 1980,” Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Staff Office Council of Economic Advisors [Department of Commerce [2]], Box 17, Folder: Department of Defense, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹²³ For influence of public opinion see Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #69, August 4, 1978,” p. 4, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President 61-71: 6/78-9/78, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. See also Martin Schram, “Defense Spending: Times Change, as Does the Public Mind,” *Washington Post*, December 16, 1979, A10.

¹²⁴ Bernard Weinraub, “Jordan and Rafshoon Said to Back Pentagon Head in Debate over Budget,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1978, A1.

¹²⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 45-46.

¹²⁶ For example, see Art Pine, “Carter Wants A “No-Growth” Budget, Sparing Pentagon,” *Washington Post*, November 6, 1978, A2 and Edward Walsh, “Carter Refuses to Bend on Defense Spending Rise,” *Washington Post*, December 15, 1978, A50.

president did this despite strong attacks from the liberal wing of his party.¹²⁷ David Cooke, who felt that the defense budget “bottomed out” in FY79, conceded that in the last years “of Carter’s administration there was an upturn which foreshadowed the flood of the Reagan years.”¹²⁸ Air Force Chief Lew Allen went a step further when he stated that Carter’s growth rate in defense, “had it been sustained,” would have been “a higher growth rate than the Reagan administration.”¹²⁹ Allen was correct: the administration’s FY80-81 defense budget requests were much higher than FY78-79.¹³⁰ Indeed, by 1980 Carter emphasized how much the administration had boosted military spending in its last two years.¹³¹ Regardless of the motivation, *Washington Post* Pentagon correspondent George Wilson observed accurately that, by 1979, Carter had “chosen a far different path” than the campaign promises that he had made in 1976.¹³²

¹²⁷ See Edward Walsh, "Carter Defends Social Security Cuts, Pentagon Increases," *Washington Post*, January 27, 1979, A9; Robert G. Kaiser, "Kennedy Criticizes Defense Spending as Too Generous," *Washington Post*, January 27, 1979, A10; Edward Walsh, "Carter Urges Steady Rise in Defense Spending," *Washington Post*, December 13, 1979, A1. Note that if the potential of Reagan pressing Carter in 1980 on a lack of defense spending was a threat, Senator Edward Kennedy ousting him for the Democratic nomination was probably a more immediate threat for Carter at the time.

¹²⁸ David Cooke, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 6.

¹²⁹ GEN Lew Allen, interview by James Hasdorf, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 109.

¹³⁰ *Department of Defense Key Officials*, 86. From FY78 to FY79 the defense budget saw a real loss of -0.9%. From FY79 to FY80 the real growth was 2.6% and from FY80 to FY81 it was an unprecedented 8.1%. Thus, from the first year of the Carter Administration to the last was an overall net real increase of 10.8% in defense spending. While the Reagan years started off with the 8.1% increase in FY81 and then increased to 10.3% real growth in FY82, from then on the budgets gradually saw a drop in real growth until by FY86 they were seeing net real losses higher than the Carter Years of -1.5% in FY86, -1.2% in FY87, and -1.8% in FY88. From the high watermark of FY82 the Reagan budget actually averaged a real loss of a little over -2% per year.

¹³¹ "National Defense: The Budget and the Record, Background Report by Office of Media Liaison, White House Press Office, June 12, 1980," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of the Assistant to the President for Women's Affairs--Weddington, Box 80, Folder: PSB File Budget--National Defense, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹³² George C. Wilson, "Arms Policy: Farewell to Nixon Doctrine," *Washington Post*, December 13, 1979, A33.

Finally, as Chapter IV will show, Carter became less personally involved in the FY80 and FY81 budget processes. Harold Brown later admitted that Carter's "strong personal role in defense decisions" had tapered off by the last two years of the administration.¹³³ Consistent with limiting his personal involvement in the process, Carter also began increasingly to accept the advice of his military advisors. The president had never shut out military advice. He just seldom followed it in his first two years in office. As Carter distanced himself from the defense budget process, he proved more willing to listen to his advisors, although he resisted raising the defense budget to the levels which the JCS recommended.

The FY78 and FY79 defense budgets thus ended a phase of civil-military relations in the Carter Administration. Growing cooperation within the Pentagon, increasing conflict between the Pentagon and the White House, and a strengthening military-congressional alliance best characterized civil-military relations during this phase. This pattern prevailed because of Carter's personal involvement in the budget process and his desire to re-prioritize defense spending. Carter took office in the wake of the Vietnam War, during a period of great uncertainty about the future of the military. His campaign promises and his initial intervention in the Department of Defense budget process demonstrated his far-reaching ambitions. The military, apprehensive about increasing civilian interference and reduced defense spending, lobbied behind-the-scenes to Congress to defeat many of Carter's modifications to the FY78 budget. As the administration continued through the FY79 budget process, the military and civilians in the Pentagon formed a better working relationship. While civil-military cooperation in the Pentagon increased through the FY79 budget process, friction between the more-unified Pentagon and Carter's White House also increased.

¹³³ Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, 28 February 1992, OSD Oral History, 29.

Carter's relationship with Congress continued to deteriorate through 1978, and the military, along with some civilians in the Pentagon, sought an even stronger alliance with Congress to oppose Carter's efforts to reshape and reduce the military establishment. The veto of the FY79 defense authorization bill was the result.

Clearly, the primary point of contention for the military was presidential involvement early in the budgetary process and different priorities in spending, even more than the actual budget cuts. While the military certainly wanted to keep all of its major programs, and some officers saw Carter's ending his first meeting with the JCS with promises to cut the defense budget as a "parting shot," there were also some realists in the military like Jones who knew that cutting the defense budget was not unique to the Carter administration.¹³⁴ Jones stated bluntly that "everybody cut the defense budget" at some point in their terms: "Nixon had, Ford had, and Carter cut it even more. We didn't like it."¹³⁵ The source of conflict was larger than any one program; it lay in Carter's effort to reshape the allocation of resources in the military from force structure and modernization to readiness and maintenance, to impose OMB-controlled zero-based budgeting on the Pentagon, and to involve himself personally in many of the minute details.

The Carter administration found itself at odds with the military and Congress beyond defense budgets. Carter's desire to economize was also linked with several fundamental changes that he wanted to make in defense policy. Moreover, the administration planned to change not only the substance of defense policy, but the manner in which defense and foreign policy were formulated. The transition to new policies and a new policy-making process was

¹³⁴ GEN Dixon, "Memo to GEN DePuy, December 11, 1976," CMH, 1.

¹³⁵ GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 210-211.

stormy—and again put the desires of the military and Congress in at odds with Jimmy Carter. Just as with defense budgets, there was significant conflict surrounding defense policy from 1977 to 1978.

CHAPTER III

CONFLICT: DEFENSE POLICY AND PLANNING IN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, 1977-1978

Interlude: The White House Situation Room, April 11, 1978, 3:15 p.m.¹

Zbigniew Brzezinski closed the door to the White House Situation Room. This was a familiar place for him—as the National Security Advisor to President Carter he regularly conducted National Security Council Meetings here, many of them with the president in attendance. Although Jimmy Carter was not here for this meeting, the president had ordered it to take place. Brzezinski would take charge and ensure the group discussed the important matters ahead.

The subject for the afternoon meeting was the overall East Asian strategy for the Carter administration. The two most salient issues were the withdrawal of troops from South Korea and the future normalization of relations with China. Each of the issues taken separately represented a major defense and foreign policy change for the United States. Taken in concert they presented a series of very difficult challenges. First, the individuals in this room would have to agree on courses of action which might conflict with their own agency's interests or their own personal views. Second, whatever consensus the president's advisors reached, they would then have to gain congressional approval for these major shifts in the

¹ Location, time, subject, and overall conduct of the meeting taken from "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Summary Minutes of the April 11, 1978 Meeting on Korea and China," (White House Situation Room: Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 36, Folder: Serial X's-[8/77-8/78], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA, 1978). Declassified copy of the memo in possession of the author.

nation's defense and foreign policies. This would prove very difficult given the president's strained relationship with Congress over the first year of his term. Finally, whatever decisions the civilian advisors reached in this room, they would have to gain tacit endorsement from another group—the uniformed military. Though this certainly was not the constitutional role of the military, courting military approval remained part of civil-military relations in many administrations. All of these factors had to be taken into consideration and presented complex problems for the group assembled in the White House Situation Room.

Brzezinski exuded confidence as he sat down at the head of the rectangular table in the center of the room. The National Security Advisor took a sort of relish in these meetings. For him this was the policy making process as it was intended. A group of senior staff members discussed the problems, developed solutions, and later one person (preferably Brzezinski himself) offered a sterile, emotionless briefing to the president who would then select one of the solutions.² Though he knew chairing this meeting would not be easy, the fact that he was on his own turf boosted Brzezinski's confidence. He also enjoyed the company of three fellow NSC members—Deputy NSC Advisor David Aaron along with Michael Armacost and Michael Oksenburg, two senior NSC staff members. Brzezinski and his NSC would have not only the home-field advantage, but also a numerical advantage over the two other departments in attendance—State and Defense.

Representing the State Department was its head, Cyrus Vance. Described by one reporter as the “quiet and cautious member of the Carter cabinet,” the Secretary of State was indeed taciturn as the meeting began, peering over his glasses at Brzezinski.³ Known for being

² For Brzezinski's view of the NSC staff process as revealed by a subordinate, see Marilyn Berger, "Vance and Brzezinski: Peaceful Coexistence or Guerrilla War?," *New York Times*, February 13, 1977.

³ Reston, "Mr. Vance," *New York Times*, January 10, 1979, A23.

“scrupulously polite” and one of the most “well-liked” men in Washington, it was unlikely that Vance would be difficult during the meeting even though his views and those of the National Security Advisor might clash.⁴ Supporting Vance in this meeting was Richard Holbrooke, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs. He would fill in some of the details regarding the situations in China and Korea with which Vance might not be so familiar. In this meeting the State Department’s primary concern was moving ahead with the normalization of relations with China.

Harold Brown represented the Department of Defense. He had brought only one aide to the meeting, Morton Abramowitz, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. The reserved Defense Secretary leaned back in his chair anticipating the start of a contentious meeting. Though certainly he would have to deal with the normalization of relations with China, the Defense Department’s main concern at this meeting was the issue of troop withdrawals from South Korea.

Notably absent from the meeting, by design and not by happenstance, were any uniformed service members. In the Nixon White House, the uniformed military had often been part of the policy making process.⁵ Some argued that the integration of the uniformed military had reached a dangerous level when General Alexander Haig resigned his commission to take on the role of President Nixon’s chief of staff. Back on active-duty, the general was later nominated and confirmed to be the vice-chief of staff for the Army and later the even more

⁴ For “scrupulously polite” see Thomas C. Norman, “The Carter Administration Memoirs: A Review Essay,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (June, 1986): 351. For “well-liked” see Berger “Vance and Brzezinski,” *New York Times*, February 13, 1977.

⁵ Under the Nixon administration the JCS had particular sway over the policy making process for arms control, so much so that at one point Kissinger was said to have asked Defense Secretary James Schlesinger if the president or the JCS was making policy for the nation. See Tom Braden, “Diplomatic Concessions, Military Demands,” *Washington Post*, June 15, 1974, A21.

influential position of SACEUR.⁶ Although merging the military and the political in Alexander Haig may have been a perversion of civilian control of the military in the Nixon administration, the Chairman of the JCS would almost certainly have been present if this meeting had occurred in the Nixon or Ford years. The Carter-Brzezinski policy making system, however, had specifically sought to limit the role of the uniformed military, and General George S. Brown was not in attendance for this important meeting.⁷

Brzezinski began by asking Harold Brown to brief his area of concern: the proposed withdrawal of troops from South Korea. Brown himself had never thought that the troop withdrawals were a good idea, but when President Carter had made the promise during his campaign and again when he was elected, the Secretary of Defense became the principal defender of the decision both in public and before Congress.⁸ Both the JCS and the military commanders in Korea objected.⁹ When Major General John Singlaub, the Chief of Staff of U.S. Forces in Korea, publicly indicated that Carter's decision would "lead to war," the

⁶ Jerome K. Walsh, "The Political General," *New York Times*, September 10, 1974, 41.

⁷ For a quote on Brzezinski's perspective on limiting the advice of the JCS in the NSC, see James R. III Locher, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 136. This exclusion will be discussed in more detail later, but the Carter-Brzezinski system removed the CJCS from the list of regular attendees at the administration NSC meetings. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC 2, January 24, 1977," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. Under the Nixon administration the CJCS had been virtually a statutory member of the NSC, though such a relationship was not, and never has been, codified in law and was explicitly rejected during the Goldwater-Nichols reform debates.

⁸ The initial pre-campaign promise was made in a taped interview with Bill Moyers of the Los Angeles Times. See Richardson, *Conversations with Carter*, 10. For post-election promise made to U.S. News and World Report in an interview, see Richardson, *Conversations with Carter*, 107. For Brown's disagreement but role as "principal defender" see Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Landa, 1 March 1993, OSD Oral History, 12. Brown also asserted in his memoirs that the U.S. should maintain a direct presence in South Korea, one of the few times in the book where he openly contradicted one of Carter's views. See Brown, *Thinking About National Security*, 123.

⁹ For JCS non-concurrence in the decision see testimony of CJSC Brown see SASC, *FY79 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 543. For opposition of commanders in Korea, including General Vessey, see John Saar, "Background on the Singlaub Affair," *Washington Post*, June 4, 1977, C1.

president had recalled the general to Washington and fired him.¹⁰ Following this incident in March of 1977, Congress launched what reporters had termed a “frontal assault” on Carter’s Korea policy, calling Singlaub to testify. Many prominent congressmen, such as Samuel Stratton, and senators, including John Tower and John Stennis, strongly opposed the withdrawals.¹¹ Now, a year later, the Secretary of Defense recognized that in April 1978 the greatest problem with continuing with the plans for troop withdrawals was gaining congressional approval.

Brown explained that the President Carter favored troop withdrawals at a rapid pace—one full brigade by the end of 1978, with another by June of 1980. Carter wanted to proceed with these withdrawals as planned, even if the Congress was not willing to vote the required military aid to South Korea that was part of his withdrawal plan.¹² “It is not clear that that option is viable on the Hill, and even if it were, it would come at considerable cost to our credibility in East Asia,” Brown admitted. Richard Holbrooke added that it would be seen as a “retreat policy from East Asia.” It was therefore not compatible with normalization with China, which required strong credibility in the region. Two other options included delaying the troop withdrawals even further or delaying the entire process “at the behest of Congress” until they agreed to vote for the compensatory package to the South Korean Army.¹³

¹⁰ For original quote from MG Singlaub see John Saar, "U.S. General: Korea Pullout Risks War," *Washington Post*, May 19, 1977, A1. For firing, see Austin Scott, "President Fires Gen. Singlaub as Korea Staff Chief," *Washington Post*, May 22, 1977, A1.

¹¹ George C. Wilson, "House Panel Begins 'Frontal Assault' on Korea Policy," *Washington Post*, May 26, 1977, A1.

¹² For the President’s proposed withdrawal plan, see Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 12, May 5, 1977," Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. All Carter administration Presidential Directives are available at <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/pddirectives> (Accessed July 8, 2008)

¹³ "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Summary Minutes of the April 11, 1978 Meeting on Korea and China," 1. For characterization as a “retreat policy” see *Ibid.*, 4. For the listing of the various options discussed

“The way I see it, this is a no-win proposition,” Secretary of State Vance interrupted. “If the president delays, then he intensifies his image as a vacillator at home. If he persists with the reduction, he loses in his credibility abroad.” Vance therefore suggested deferring to the Congress, letting the legislature take the initiative and the president follow its lead. Richard Holbrooke agreed, indicating that if Carter proceeded with his preferred course of action he would be “hard hit on the Hill.”¹⁴

Brzezinski was the only presidential advisor who had supported Korea withdrawals from the outset, and he pressed hard for following Carter’s desired course of action. He did not see it as inconsistent with China normalization. “This may have been the wrong decision, but now it has been made. We cannot afford to go back on it,” he asserted.¹⁵

Morton Abramowitz then broke in with another point that Harold Brown had been reluctant to bring forward. General John W. Vessey, the four-star commander of U.S. forces in Korea, strongly opposed Carter’s plan. Abramowitz, who had at various times solicited informal advice from the JCS regarding Korea, stated bluntly that if the group chose to follow the president’s preferred option, “we will also face the resignation of our military commander. Vessey is likely to resign under those circumstances. Second, we will lose the

at the meeting, see Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Memorandum to the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, Subject: Summary of April 11, 1978 Meeting on Korea and China, April 18, 1978," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 36, Folder: Serial Xs [8/77-8/78], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹⁴ "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Summary Minutes of the April 11, 1978 Meeting on Korea and China," 2.

¹⁵ For Brzezinski as the only advisor in support of withdrawals, see Vance, *Hard Choices*, 32, 128-130. For Vance’s comments during the meeting, see “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Summary Minutes of the April 11, 1978 Meeting on Korea and China,” 2-3.

JCS.”¹⁶ The room fell silent as these civilian advisors contemplated the political ramifications of such a split with the uniformed military.

After further discussion the group began to arrive at a consensus that it was best to delay troop withdrawals and seek an increased compensatory package for the South Korean forces. This was not the president’s preferred choice, but it would at least meet his goal of reducing U.S. presence in Korea. It would also be less objectionable to the military and was more likely to be approved by Congress.

David Aaron, known as the head of the more “liberal” staff of the NSC, had listened silently thus far, but now felt compelled to speak up: “Why delay? The watchword of this administration is becoming ‘delay.’” Contempt creeping into his voice, he went on: “Let’s go to the heart of this matter. Congress is playing for a veto over the troop reduction. It is opposed to the President’s policy.”¹⁷ Aaron, like the president himself, resented having to compromise to reach political accords with Congress.

Harold Brown cut Aaron off. “That is not correct,” the Defense Secretary interjected, “the congressional attitude is due to a combination of factors.” He explained how the troop withdrawals had become politically linked with “Koreagate,” a recent scandal in which prominent Congressmen had been indicted for taking bribes from South Korean officials in exchange for votes for economic aide. Holbrooke supported Brown, adding that he had almost daily contact with members of Congress. He indicated that the majority were in favor

¹⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Summary Minutes of the April 11, 1978 Meeting on Korea and China,” 2. For close and informal contact between Abromowitz and the JCS, see Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 202.

¹⁷ “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Summary Minutes of the April 11, 1978 Meeting on Korea and China,” 2. For Aaron as head of what was considered the liberal “Mondale” wing of the NSC, see comments of Harold Brown’s special assistant in John Kester, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 8. See also the comments of General Odom, then Brzezinski’s military assistant in BG William Odom, interview by James Milano, Carlisle Oral History, 75-76.

of the president's plan for withdrawals, but were fearful to vote for any sort of aid package because they feared "retribution at the polls." Harold Brown argued that troop withdrawals should be delayed even further, since more time would separate the aid from the scandal and make Congress more supportive.¹⁸ "One has to recognize the military consequences of taking out our first combat forces," Brown appropriately noted, "They guard key mountain passes." The Defense Secretary then again brought up the political implications of this military issue: "If adequately armed replacements do not take their place, we will be susceptible to conservative charges in the U.S. that we are threatening the safety of the remaining two brigades."¹⁹ As a civilian appointee, Brown certainly felt obligated to include such political ramifications of military decisions. Had the Chairman of the JCS brought up this point the politics of the situation may not have played such a prominent role. In the politically-charged atmosphere of this meeting, however, straightforward military advice, such as the threat posed by the North Korean forces, might have seemed less relevant.

"Let's be clear about one thing. It is not the president but Congress which is not fulfilling our commitment," Aaron broke in again, "Congress is not leading. The president remains credible on this issue." The Deputy National Security Advisor strongly objected to any delay in troop withdrawals because he felt that it would be politically damaging to the president. "The question is whether the president is in command of his own house," added Richard Holbrooke. "We can't tell the East Asians that the president is credible and the lack of

¹⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Summary Minutes of the April 11, 1978 Meeting on Korea and China," 3-4.

¹⁹ Ibid., 3.

American credibility is with the Congress. That simply underscores the weakness of the president.”²⁰

Vance felt compelled to resolve the impasse. “I share all these concerns,” he admitted. “We must also recognize we are running out of time.” Congress would soon adjourn and a series of already controversial measures were before it, including the Panama Canal treaty. Vance again proposed that the administration try to talk to congressional leaders to get them to come forward and ask the president to change his course of action and delay the withdrawals. Then, the Secretary of State insisted, the action “will not be perceived as additional presidential vacillation but as a presidential response to congressional pleas.”²¹

Brzezinski conceded that this might work, but still pressed to meet the president’s guidance. He suggested that in response to the congressional “plea” that Carter agree to a phased withdrawal of combat-ready units, one battalion at a time. “I know I am going against my Asian experts on this, but I think that the president cannot change his decision. He must begin as scheduled, but he could slow down the pace.”²² The National Security Advisor was a powerful advocate of continuing Carter’s course of action.

One of Brzezinski’s advisors again brought up the fear of military resistance to the president’s plan. “This proposal may make the issue even more contentious,” Michael Armacost pointed out, “for the Chiefs may claim that we are endangering the remaining American forces and demonstrably lowering our preparedness on the Peninsula.”²³ The

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 4.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 5.

specter of military opposition scuttled Brzezinski's proposal to execute the president's desired policy as others in the room acknowledged the necessity of JCS support.

As the group proposed a series of possible modifications to the withdrawal plan, David Aaron again brought up the conflict between the president and Congress. He felt strongly that if Carter backed down in the face of congressional opposition on the troop withdrawals, then Congress would "exercise a veto power on normalization as well."²⁴ The administration seemed unable to come to a consensus on how to deal with Congress, and strong elements within this particular group seemed unwilling to take into account congressional concerns or accept congressional advice.

Frustrated by the inability thus far to reach a consensus, and knowing that he would have to convince the legislators of whatever proposal this group reached and the president decided, Harold Brown closed down the debate. "We are, in brief, playing 'chicken with Congress,'" the Defense Secretary forcibly interjected. The others around the table sensed his frustration and listened closely. "I am not opposed to that if one feels confident that one has the votes and the capacity to deliver. But I am not sure that situation exists." Taking off his glasses and wiping them with his handkerchief, Brown leaned back in his chair and muttered, "We seem to be willing to act more firmly with Congress than with the Russians."²⁵

Sensing that the issue would not be resolved in the manner he wanted, Brzezinski moved to get the input from the principal advisors, Secretary Brown and Secretary Vance. Both men wanted to delay withdrawal with the strong compensatory package to the South Koreans. Brzezinski acceded to their pressure, still holding out the hope that troop

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

withdrawals that had already taken place could be seen as “an indication of the president’s determination” on this matter of policy.²⁶ The meeting adjourned with the group having agreed to a compromise position that would probably not please the president, but that would be palatable to the JCS and to Congress.

This meeting between the top civilian advisors in the Carter administration was in many ways emblematic of civil-military relations in 1977-1978. First, Carter and his civilian advisors consciously chose to exclude the uniformed military from their deliberations. Second, the same inability to work with important members of Congress that had plagued executive-legislative relations on the defense budgets also prevailed in national security policy formulation. Finally, as had been the case with the defense budget, Harold Brown found himself frustrated when supporting administration defense policies. With little support from others in the administration, Brown had to balance loyalty to the president with resistance from the military-congressional alliance.

While in some ways more in keeping with a proper civil-military relationship than what had taken place under Nixon’s tenure, the exclusion of the uniformed military from the policy process developed into its own set of problems in the Carter administration. First, civilians in the Carter administration often valued the JCS for the quality of their military advice, but even more so for the political value of their support for administration policies. The JCS recognized this and adjusted to the new administration’s way of business, supporting many controversial policies, including the Panama Canal Treaties and SALT II. This, however, created a second problem, evident by the looming threat of General Vessey’s resignation. Even as the JCS compromised and supported some administration defense policies, military officers more removed from the Pentagon, especially theater CINCs like

²⁶ Ibid.

Vessey, thought that the Carter administration was “muzzling” the JCS. The military outside the Pentagon therefore often resisted administration policies even when the JCS supported them. While not unique to the Carter years, the administration’s political weakness and growing unpopularity intensified these problems.

As this chapter and the next will demonstrate, understanding the civil-military relations in policy making in the Carter administration provides powerful insight as to why certain defense and foreign policy decisions took the course that they did. Historians and political scientists have often written about the foreign and defense policies of the Carter Administration. Most agree that Carter’s policies, like those of all presidents, evolved over time. The consensus—typified by the edited essays in Abernathy, Glenn, and Williams’ *The Carter Years*—has been that Carter based his early policies on rather idealistic principles, yet, because of domestic political failures and foreign policy setbacks, gradually shifted his policies to reflect a more pragmatic approach.²⁷ While in broad terms this assessment seems accurate, most scholars have neglected the role of civil-military relations in the Carter administration’s policies.

Most of those detailing the evolution of Carter’s policies have focused upon the accounts of the key individuals in the administration. Among these accounts they have found supporting evidence for the theory of Carter’s policies moving from idealism toward

²⁷ Abernathy, Hill, and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 66. In the synthetic work edited by Abernathy, political scientist Raymond Moore termed the policy shift as one from “liberal idealism” to one of “pragmatic realism.” These terms derived from two other works concerning Carter’s policies: Jerel Rosati, “The Impact of Belief on Behavior: The Foreign Policy of the Carter Administration,” in *Foreign Policy Decision-Making: Perception, Cognition, and Artificial Intelligence*, ed. Donald A. Sylvan and Steve Chan (New York: Praeger, 1984). and John Stoessinger, *Crusaders and Pragmatists: Movers of Modern American Foreign Policy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979). Cold War diplomatic historian John Lewis Gaddis’ assessment of Carter’s grand strategy also fits this characterization. See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, Revised and Expanded ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 343-346.

pragmatism. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Advisor, admitted that there was a "highly liberal" tone to the first two years of the administration, but that through his efforts and with hard-learned experience this "bias was contained."²⁸ General William Odom, then a colonel serving on the NSC staff, agreed that the administration "sailed in one direction for two years and slowly came back around the other direction in the last two."²⁹

Some policies were much more relevant to civil-military relations than others. The Camp David Accords, although a cornerstone to Carter's term, did not require significant military input and resulted in little civil-military conflict.³⁰ Similarly, normalization of relations with China, although hugely significant for American foreign policy, appears not to have required as much civil-military dialogue as the Korea troop withdrawals. Other policies and decisions made during Carter's term, however, generated significant civil-military friction.

The Presidential Review Memoranda (PRM) and Presidential Directives (PD) of the administration provided the framework for these civil-military interactions.³¹ These important documents evolved from the first policy papers drafted by the National Security Council (NSC), which Congress created in 1947. Initially serving as informational tools for decision making, and created mainly from data gathered by the State and Defense Departments, the policy papers eventually evolved into summary memoranda signed by the

²⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, iv.

²⁹ BG William Odom in oral history of Zbigniew Brzezinski and staff, interview by David Truman, Erwin Hargrove, et. al., 18 February 1982, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 34-35.

³⁰ Secretary Brown described the JCS role in the Camp David process as "peripheral" and indicated that they did not have any dissent over the process. See Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Landa, OSD Oral History, 14. Chairman of the JCS General David Jones also confirmed a minor role for the JCS in Camp David. See GEN David Jones, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 16.

³¹ While these documents provide a useful chronology for discussion, the policy decisions should not be viewed as discrete civil-military events. Many of the events discussed in this chapter took place in relation to each other or even simultaneously. This is brought forward when relevant, but for a timeline of events relevant to civil-military interaction in the administration, refer to Appendix 2.

president. These signed and approved “national security instruments” articulated the official policy of the administration. Each administration since Truman modified and adapted the NSC policy creation process to fit its own style.³² The Carter Administration dubbed their requests for organizational studies as “Presidential Review Memoranda” and their signed policy papers “Presidential Directives.”³³

An understanding of the PRMs and PDs from the Carter years serves many useful functions. First, since the Presidential Directives provide succinct summations of the administration’s policies, many of them are particularly relevant to understanding how the military and civilians in the administration interacted, allowing greater study of civil-military relations. Second, these documents have been declassified only recently and much of the secondary literature on the Carter Administration discussed these documents only through the interpretation of administration officials. Analyzing these documents as primary sources will make a contribution to the evolving historiography of the Carter years. Finally, this work will contribute to the overall historiography of American diplomatic and political history by demonstrating the evolution of U.S. policy formation from 1977-1981. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the administration’s policies did indeed evolve over time, but due not only to external experiences, but also because of the internal influences of civil-military relations.

A New White House, A New Way of Business: PD-2 and the Carter Revision of the NSC and Defense Policy Process

Jimmy Carter entered office intending to change American defense and foreign policy. Just as he had with defense budgets, Carter had spent a great deal of time prior to his election

³² Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Presidential Directives: Background and Overview*, ed. Harold C. Ralyea, 8-9, 11. Source available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/98-611.pdf>.

³³ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 1, January 20, 1977," JCL, 1.

studying these policies. At least one close advisor told the future president that he should make ending U.S. “foreign policy fumbling a major campaign theme.”³⁴ Carter apparently heeded the advice, giving an address at Princeton University prior to his election arguing that “Today in American government there is too little coordination between our foreign policy goals—to the extent anyone has thought of them—and our defense budget and defense posture.”³⁵ He criticized the Nixon-Kissinger style of détente, saying it had been “oversold for political profit.”³⁶ The unhealed wounds of Vietnam deeply influenced Carter’s appraisal of American foreign policy. His “essential foreign policy philosophy” was that “the era of American interventionism is or should be over” and that “future military commitment/involvement in the internal affairs of another country will be carefully avoided.”³⁷ Carter planned to use his NSC as the agent of these changes.

Carter intended to alter the previous National Security Council structure which, under the control of Henry A. Kissinger, had dominated policy formulation for the previous eight years.³⁸ Nixon’s and Ford’s NSC consisted of the President, Vice-President, Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, Director of the CIA, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, as well as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Kissinger, as

³⁴ Eugene H. Methvin, "Memo from Eugene H. Methvin to Jimmy Carter, July 11, 1976," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office-Stuart Eizenstat, Box 17, Folder: Foreign Policy 7/1/76 to 7/19/76, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

³⁵ Eizenstat, “Notes on Princeton Address,” JCL, 1.

³⁶ Jimmy Carter, "Foreign Policy Speech: An Agenda for the Future, May 5, 1975," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers--Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign-Issues Office-Stuart Eizenstat, Box 17, Folder: 5/5/75, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

³⁷ For “era of American interventionism over” see Eizenstat, “Notes on Princeton Address,” JCL, 1. For “future military commitment/involvement avoided” see Carter, “Foreign Policy Speech: An Agenda for the Future,” JCL, 5. The remark is taken verbatim from Carter’s own handwriting, where he suggested replacing a more moderately worded phrasing.

³⁸ Sarkesian, *Defense Policy Making and the Presidency*, 11.

Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, served as the primary director of the policy formulation branch of the NSC. The Kissinger NSC structure, in the words of senior defense analyst Lawrence Korb, consisted of an “elaborate network of interagency bodies that supported the Council.”³⁹ Kissinger’s NSC structure contained eight subcommittees and formed ad-hoc “interdepartmental groups” when a particular issue required coordination between the subcommittees.⁴⁰ The result was a complicated and excessively cumbersome process.

In addition, the complicated process proved to be overly reliant on Kissinger himself, who at one point chaired seven out of the eight subcommittees. No policy recommendation or study could reach the president without Kissinger’s personal approval. If he was out of the country or otherwise engaged, the NSC process simply ground to a halt. Kissinger’s viewpoints always governed.⁴¹

President Carter objected to the over-reliance of the NSC on a single strong personality. He criticized Kissinger and his policies, referring to them as “Lone Ranger” diplomacy that tarnished America’s image.⁴² Before his inauguration, and after selecting Polish-born scholar Zbigniew Brzezinski to be his National Security Advisor, Carter met with his cabinet at St. Simon Island in Georgia to plan a new structure for his NSC. Brzezinski initially proposed a slightly modified version of the Kissinger model, with different advisors chairing each committee so as to eliminate the influence of a single person. Carter rejected the

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 112-113.

⁴¹ Ibid., 114-115.

⁴² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 8. Carter also indicated in a pre-election speech that “foreign policy can no longer be conducted by one man in a back room,” clearly a direct criticism of Kissinger. See Carter, “Foreign Policy Speech: An Agenda for the Future,” JCL, 3.

proposal out of hand, telling Brzezinski, “Too many committees. I want a simple, cleaner structure.”⁴³

Brzezinski vastly simplified the NSC structure and Carter approved it in Presidential Directive 2 the day he took office. PD-2 reduced the core membership of the NSC to only the President, Vice-President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense. Other advisors, including the Chairman of the JCS, attended NSC meetings only as Carter or Brzezinski saw fit. The directive reduced the number of NSC committees to two: the Policy Review Committee (PRC) and the Special Coordination Committee (SCC).⁴⁴ According to the directive, the members of the PRC could establish ad-hoc “interdepartmental groups” to deal with certain issues, but, unlike the Kissinger structure, this would be the exception rather than the rule.

The PRC served as the primary vehicle for developing the administration’s national security policy. Carter personally selected the chairman of this committee based on the issue at hand. This gave the president more control of the policy making process, since he could appoint an individual whose views were consistent with his own on any particular issue. Early in his administration Carter most often chose Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to chair the PRC, probably because Vance’s foreign policy outlook closely mirrored his own.⁴⁵

The SCC, always under the chairmanship of Brzezinski, dealt primarily with the implementation of presidential decisions and sensitive national security issues. The SCC strongly influenced the NSC system. Even though PD-2 made no mention of an SCC role in

⁴³ Ibid., 58-59.

⁴⁴ Carter, “Presidential Directive/NSC 1,” JCL, 1.

⁴⁵ For frequency of Vance chairing the PRC, see Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 66. For similarity of Carter and Vance’s foreign policy outlook, see Vance, *Hard Choices*, 31-33.

policy making, Brzezinski himself admitted that he “used the SCC to try to shape our policy toward the Persian Gulf, on European security issues, on strategic matters, as well as in our response to Soviet aggression.”⁴⁶

Although simple in design and effective in preventing a single person from becoming dominant, the Carter-Brzezinski NSC structure proved problematic. Vance and Brzezinski held fundamentally different world-views centered on the U.S.-Soviet relationship: Vance espoused an optimistic view of future cooperation with the Soviet Union, while Brzezinski kept a pragmatic outlook, expecting a more adversarial relationship with the U.S.S.R. With each of these men chairing part of the NSC, and with each controlling a major element of the policy making machine, the products and advice reaching the president often contained diametrically opposed views.⁴⁷ Additionally, Brzezinski’s hand-picked NSC staff itself became a microcosm of the larger NSC-State Department conflict. William Odom, Brzezinski’s military assistant, felt that Vice President Mondale “insinuated a significant number of people into Brzezinski’s staff” who had more liberal leanings, including David Aaron.⁴⁸ Brzezinski accepted this varied composition of the NSC, calling it “creative tension.” Others mocked it as “creative destruction.”⁴⁹ The conflict inherent in the NSC

⁴⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 66.

⁴⁷ Abernathy, Hill, and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 63-65. Note that while this judgment is probably accurate from a historical standpoint, it was not necessarily evident prior to the two men assuming their posts. One reporter writing an article on the new NSC system wagered that “there seems little likelihood of a major clash between Vance and Brzezinski, who share many of the same views.” See Berger, “Vance and Brzezinski,” *New York Times*, 13 Feb 77.

⁴⁸ BG William Odom, interview by James Milano, Carlisle Oral History, 75.

⁴⁹ BG William Odom, in oral history of Zbigniew Brzezinski and staff, interview by David Truman, Erwin Hargrove, et. al., 18 February 1982, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 42.

process resulted in official policy that seemed, in the words of one veteran policy analyst, “contradictory, vacillating, and fragmented.”⁵⁰

Carter’s new NSC structure also set the stage for civil-military tension. Unlike the Ford-Nixon NSC, the uniformed military representative, the Chairman of the JCS, attended only designated meetings. In one instance, General George Brown arrived at the White House and attempted to enter one of the first NSC meetings, but a Secret Service Agent stopped him at the door to the Oval Office. “I’m the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, I’m invited to this meeting,” he stated. The agent gave his instructed reply, “You’re not on the list.” He then escorted the general from the premises.⁵¹ Beyond physically restricting military access to the inner workings of the NSC, Carter also rescinded NSAM-55 which had called for “direct and unfiltered” JCS advice to the president.⁵² Harold Brown followed suit at the Pentagon, developing a “single coordinated Defense position” on many matters where the JCS had in the past provided independent input directly to the president. The JCS felt that such a “wholly synthesized OSD-JCS perspective” was not realistic or desirable in every instance.⁵³ Despite military objections, Carter had made it clear that he wanted his military advice to be passed to him through the Secretary of Defense.

In addition to restructuring the NSC system and limiting military input into the policy making process, Carter also immediately moved to make changes to U.S. foreign policy.

⁵⁰ Sarkesian, *Defense Policy and the Presidency*, 22.

⁵¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview by David Truman, Edwin Hargrove, et. al., Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, The Jimmy Carter Project, 86.

⁵² For the official repeal of the NSAM, see Jimmy Carter, “Presidential Directive/NSC 14, June 10, 1977,” p. 11, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. For contents of the NSAM see Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 8-9.

⁵³ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 14-15.

Brzezinski felt that the White House should focus on three major objectives. First, he felt that America should increase its “ideological impact on the world.” Second, he wanted to improve the nation’s “strategic position” in the world. Finally, he desired to “restore America’s appeal to the Third World.”⁵⁴ Many of Carter’s early presidential directives reflected these goals. PD-5 boldly declared that the American government’s new aim “will be to promote a progressive transformation of South African society.”⁵⁵ PD-6 directed that “we should attempt to achieve normalization of our relations with Cuba.”⁵⁶ PD-9 placed “a strictly controlled and limited” intelligence gathering capability on the Army Special Operations Field office in West Berlin compared to Nixon’s more permissive NSDM 355.⁵⁷ Carter formulated each of these directives by the end of March 1977, less than two months after he had taken office.

The JCS had many problems with the way the new administration went about making these early policy changes and found that Harold Brown was less than supportive of their concerns. On May 3, 1977 the JCS sent a memorandum to Brown complaining that the NSC was “tabling” important information in order to gain consensus during their meetings. Brown refused to forward the memo to Brzezinski.⁵⁸ When General George Brown was invited to attend NSC meetings, he complained that he was often given little information beforehand to prepare and sometimes meetings were cancelled without informing him. Brown’s aide indicated that, in the first year of the administration, 60 percent of the material

⁵⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 3.

⁵⁵ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 5, March 9, 1977," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁵⁶ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 6, March 15, 1977," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁵⁷ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 9, March 30, 1977," p. 1, 3, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁵⁸ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy, Vol. XII*, 7.

that the NSC sent to the CJCS arrived less than twenty-four hours before the meeting. This was less than half of the time needed for the Chairman to read the material, formulate his opinions, and contribute to the meeting.⁵⁹ Since Harold Brown refused to address the JCS grievances to the NSC, General Brown's assistant contemplated sending a memo directly to Brzezinski. His indictment of NSC efforts to integrate the CJSC proved harsh:

Your 48 hour guidance has apparently become a target rather than an intended minimum. Frequently we do not see the agenda and the final revised papers to be addressed until a few hours before meeting time. Gen. Brown and I are unable to prepare as well as we would like for these important sessions.⁶⁰

Indeed, it appeared that civil-military friction typified the early policy making process of the Carter administration. Unlike the budget, when it came to policy, Harold Brown seemed to side more with the White House than with the JCS. Civil-military interaction surrounding in the policy making process was thus even more contentious than that surrounding the defense budget in the first year of Carter's term.

Limited Global Commitments and Military Dissent: PD-12, The Withdrawal from Korea, and the Singlaub Affair

The first major civil-military conflict over defense policy was Carter's decision to withdraw American troops from South Korea. Carter had promised such during his run for office, a huge change given the fact that the American military had been stationed there since the mid-1940s.⁶¹ He made good on his promise when he signed PD-12 on May 5, 1977.⁶²

⁵⁹ LTG William Y. Smith, "Draft Memorandum to Dr. Brzezinski from LTG W. Y. Smith, Subject: Preparation for Meetings of the National Security Council Committees, February 1, 1978," CJCS Brown Files, 035 NSC, Box 14, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ John Saar, "GIs Hit Carter's S. Korea Pullout Plan," *Washington Post*, November 6, 1976. See also Richardson, *Conversations with Carter*, 10.

⁶² Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 12," JCL, 1.

The president's decision was not cavalier. As in his involvement in the defense budget in 1977, Carter played a strong personal role in the decision to pull American forces out of Korea. Still under the pall of Vietnam, the president wanted no chance of American troops getting involved in another ground war in Asia during his term. Prior to election, Carter had read a Brookings Institution report which indicated that American troops could be withdrawn from Korea to save money without endangering U.S. interests.⁶³ Carter agreed and adopted it as part of his foreign policy platform, arguing in his Princeton Address that "many of our troops in Asia are there based on outmoded and anachronistic policies no longer in force."⁶⁴ Immediately upon taking office, Carter instructed Cyrus Vance to undertake a comprehensive review of U.S. policy toward Korea and determine if the troop withdrawals were feasible.⁶⁵

Vance's study produced PD-12. The directive ordered that the 2nd Infantry Division be withdrawn from Korea one brigade at a time, with the first brigade out by the end of 1978 and the second by July 1980, with Carter deciding the schedule for the rest of the forces "at a later date."⁶⁶ Part of the calculation involved the South Korean government's problematic human rights record. Yet, PD-12 also pointed to another less recognized part of Carter's policies: a strategy of limited global commitment that placed the primary focus on Western Europe, the Middle East, and Japan.⁶⁷ The strong emphasis in PD-12 on ensuring

⁶³ Eizenstat, "Notes on Brookings Institution Visit," JCL, 6.

⁶⁴ Eizenstat, "Notes on Princeton Address," JCL, 2.

⁶⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC 13, January 29,," Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁶⁶ Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC-12," JCL, 1.

⁶⁷ Bernard Weinraub, "Pentagon Chief Tentatively Backs Budget Rise to \$130 Billion in '79," *New York Times*, November 11, 1977. Further supporting this interpretation is the fact that, at the same time, Carter also had his NSC initiate a study considering American withdrawal from Philippine bases. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC 12, January 26, 1977," Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. The Philippine bases were one of the suggested withdrawals in the original Brookings Institution report as well.

understanding and communication with Japan further attested to this strategy of limited global commitments. Carter viewed Japan as America's most important ally in the Far East. Since South Korea rated only of secondary importance, it did not warrant a large contingent of ground troops, relying on less manpower intensive American air power to stop a North Korean invasion.

Military opposition explained the uncertain phrasing of the withdrawal plan. Carter discussed it at a meeting with the JCS before his inauguration. When asked if the U.S. could remove the 2nd Infantry Division, General Bernard Rogers, the Chief of Staff of the Army, replied, "Yes, *if* we make improvements in the South Korean capability." David Jones, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, felt Carter did not listen to the "*if*" enough and, in his words, "it caused a lot of problems later."⁶⁸ When the NSC discussed withdrawal with the DoD, the JCS were shocked to find that their part in the study was only to decide the pace of troop withdrawals.⁶⁹ Carter had heard the Chiefs in person but dismissed their concerns. Given the three choices, the JCS recommended the slowest, most gradual reduction of troops, informing their civilian superiors that their support for the administration policy was contingent upon guarantees that the United States remaining "a Pacific power."⁷⁰ Carter and Brown agreed to the JCS position, with a prominent line in the FY79 Annual Defense Report reading that "the planned withdrawal of the 2nd Infantry Division from South Korea in no

⁶⁸ GEN David Jones, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 15.

⁶⁹ *FY79 DoD Annual Report*, 141; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "A Muzzle on the Military?," *Washington Post*, May 25, 1977, A17; "Army Head Says Service Chiefs Opposed Plan for Korea Pullout," *New York Times*, July 14, 1977, A8. See also testimony of Gen. George Brown in SASC, *FY79 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 543. The account is confirmed in MG Singlaub's memoirs as well.

⁷⁰ For the nature of the agreement, see Gen. Rogers' testimony in HCOB, *FY70 Defense Budget Overview*, 379.

way” changed the commitment of the U.S. to being a power in the Western Pacific.⁷¹ With a compromise reached, George Brown testified in support of the decision before Congress, although he disputed the administration contention that troop withdrawals would save money.⁷² The Chiefs thus came to the grudging decision to support the president’s Korea policy, but they demanded concessions for doing so.

Though the JCS compromised on the Korea troop withdrawals, the generals in command in Korea felt betrayed by their superiors at the Pentagon. General John Vessey, commander of U.S. forces in Korea, as well as his deputy, Army LTG John J. Burns, and his Chief of Staff, Army Major General John Singlaub, publicly opposed Carter’s withdrawal plan. All felt that the announced pullout could spark another war on the peninsula. As one staff officer said of the president’s decision: “I don’t know anybody who is not staggered by it.”⁷³ When *Washington Post* Far East correspondent John Saar attributed Singlaub by name as saying Carter’s plan would lead to war, the president recalled the general to Washington, ordering him to report to the Secretary of Defense. Singlaub strongly objected to reporting directly to Secretary Brown rather than his “military chain of command.”⁷⁴ When allowed to report to Bernard Rogers instead, Singlaub found little support. He later indicated that he felt betrayed because the Army Chief of Staff “had made no effort to defend me” and had “manipulated

⁷¹ FY79 DoD Annual Report, 8.

⁷² Don Oberdorfer, “Gen. Brown Backs Korea Withdrawal, Doubtful on Savings,” *Washington Post*, June 11, 1977, A10.

⁷³ Saar, “U.S. General: Korea Pullout Risks War,” *Washington Post*, May 19, 1977, A1. Singlaub denied making the quote for attribution, claiming that Saar had “ambushed” him. Singlaub also claimed that he did not realize the decision to withdraw troops was yet official policy. See Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 390. Saar fiercely defended his reporting practices, claiming that Singlaub had given him “crisp instructions” to make the comments on the record. See Saar, “Background on the Singlaub Affair,” *Washington Post*, June 4, 1977, C1.

⁷⁴ Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 392.

plausible perception to cover himself” from any blame in the incident.⁷⁵ Vessey, on the other hand, strongly supported Singlaub.⁷⁶ The split between the JCS, with their qualified support for the policy, and commanders in the Korea, with their open opposition to it, was complete.

Carter’s White House, on the other hand, planned to use General Singlaub as an example to the entire military. Carter did not immediately decide to relieve Singlaub. Hamilton Jordan wrote to Carter that the “Singlaub incident” was “an opportunity for you to firmly establish the position of your administration on the question of civilian control over the military establishment.”⁷⁷ Jordan argued, “it is important for the military establishment to understand that when they challenge your decisions and judgments, they do so at the risk of their own careers.”⁷⁸ The president’s chief advisor counseled that doing nothing to Singlaub meant that “the point that you have an opportunity to make with the military establishment would be lost,” but that an outright firing of the general risked “making a martyr out of him.” Jordan therefore recommended the middle ground of reassigning Singlaub to a minor job in the Pentagon.⁷⁹ The president opted instead for the harshest option, calling Singlaub to the White House and personally firing him.⁸⁰ The president later justified his decision, stating

⁷⁵ Ibid., 393, 399.

⁷⁶ Perry, *Four Stars*, 304.

⁷⁷ Hamilton Jordan, “Letter to President Carter, Re: General Singlaub, 1977,” p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Chief of Staff Jordan, Press-President 1979 through WH Staff Coordination/Changes Memo, Box 37, Folder: Singlaub, General, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

⁸⁰ Scott, “President Fires Gen. Singlaub as Korea Staff Chief,” *Washington Post*, 22 May 77, A1. Singlaub’s account of the firing is vivid in his memoirs. The general recalled that the president arrived outside the oval office in a polo shirt and slacks. Seeing Singlaub waiting in his dress uniform, Carter left for several minutes and changed into a business suit, apparently thinking that his previous attire was too informal for the rare occasion of a president firing a general officer. Reflecting on the meeting later, Singlaub held his commander-in-chief in open disregard, deriding Carter’s “jack-o’-lantern grin” and scoffing at the president’s assertion that

that Singlaub had committed “a very serious breach” of the military command system.⁸¹

Indeed, at first it seemed that the treatment of General Singlaub had sent a powerful message to the military.

Unfortunately for the administration, Carter’s bold move to use the “Singlaub incident” to assert civilian authority and to send a message to the military backfired. Conservative columnists blasted Carter’s treatment of the general. One criticized the president’s “muzzling” of senior military officers throughout his administration, calling it “an arrogant act, a waste of lives” and accused Carter of using Singlaub like a “political football.”⁸² Potential Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan took advantage of the crisis in civil-military relations, saying that Carter’s actions were “disgraceful” and demonstrated “petulance.”⁸³ Singlaub’s friends leaked reports to the press that the general was “stunned” by Carter’s actions and felt he was being pressed to retire by both Carter and Harold Brown.⁸⁴ As the fallout from the situation worsened, Thomas B. Ross, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, released a press statement that “Carter’s disciplining of Singlaub for publicly criticizing a presidential decision is not to be interpreted as a grounds for military men not to talk.”⁸⁵ Originating as a means to send a message to the

as a junior officer in the Navy he had become accustomed to “such difficult decisions” as having to relieve a general. See Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 397.

⁸¹ Edward Walsh and George Wilson, “President Defends His Korea Policy,” *Washington Post*, May 27, 1977, A1.

⁸² James Webb, “Muzzling Generals: An ‘Arrogant’ Act, a Waste of Lives,” *Washington Post*, June 11, 1977, A17. See also comments from retired officers in “The Singlaub Affair,” *Washington Post*, May 25, 1977, A16.

⁸³ “Reagan: Carter’s Handling of General Is ‘Disgraceful,’” *Washington Post*, May 23, 1977, A3.

⁸⁴ Jordan, “Memo to Carter Re: Gen. Singlaub,” 5.

⁸⁵ George C. Wilson, “Word Is Passed at Pentagon: Don’t Fear to Talk to the Press,” *Washington Post*, June 3, 1977, A16.

“military establishment,” the administration’s handling of the “Singlaub incident” began to develop into a political fiasco.

Rather than standing tough during the politically costly effort to demonstrate civilian supremacy over the military, Carter chose to try to defuse the situation. Hamilton Jordan suggested that Carter provide Singlaub with a prominent and challenging assignment, otherwise “the option of being a conservative hero might be more appealing to him than continued service in the Army.”⁸⁶ Carter approved of the idea, writing his reply on the memo: “I agree, have Harold expedite.”⁸⁷ Harold Brown subsequently offered Singlaub what was considered a “prized staff position” as the chief of staff of FORSCOM, the largest command in the Army. Iron majors at the Pentagon beamed with approval, and the Army information chief, BG Robert Solomon, issued a statement saying that Singlaub’s assignment was a “very, very significant job.”⁸⁸ Unlike his mentor Harry Truman, Carter buckled when confronted with a direct challenge to his defense policies, and Singlaub and the uniformed military were the victors.

Carter’s Korea policy became more troubled as military dissent fused with congressional opposition to the withdrawal plan, creating even more political problems for the administration. Singlaub testified at the behest of Congress, where he informed the House Armed Services Committee that intelligence reports used by Carter and his advisors underestimated North Korean strength by up to 30 percent.⁸⁹ Both George Brown and Bernard Rogers admitted in subsequent testimony that the JCS had in fact not supported the

⁸⁶ Jordan, “Memo to Carter Re: Gen. Singlaub,” 5.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Harold Logan, “Gen. Singlaub Given Prized Staff Position,” *Washington Post*, May 28, 1977, A6.

⁸⁹ Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 401.

president's plan.⁹⁰ The generals' testimony revealed that Carter's NSC planning process had often lacked military advice. In response, members of the committee and several senators from both parties declared a "frontal assault" on Carter's Korea policy.⁹¹

Despite the military-congressional resistance, Carter continued his plans for the Korea troop withdrawals into the second half of his administration. The military-congressional alliance continued to strengthen, however, and Carter indefinitely postponed the withdrawals on July 20, 1979.⁹² The administration never fully executed PD-12, and the 2nd Infantry Division remained in Korea, except for one brigade that was withdrawn. Military opposition to the administration's plan undermined Carter's efforts to limit American military commitments in the Far East and weakened civilian authority over the military in his administration.

Immanent Logic?: PD-13, Conventional Arms Transfer Policy and the B-1 Bomber Cancellation

PD-13 "Conventional Arms Transfer Policy" proved to be another Presidential Directive that helped shape foreign policy, defense policy, and civil-military relations early in the Carter Administration. Indicative of Carter's early idealism, this directive furthered his commitment to improving America's moral leadership in the world. The underlying premise of the PD was that the transfer of U.S. weapons to other countries would be an "exceptional foreign policy implement" rather than a business-as-usual method of bolstering American security interests abroad.⁹³ Carter's NSC staff even pressured the DoD to remove Air Force

⁹⁰ For testimony of Gen. Brown, see SASC, *FY79 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 543. For testimony of Gen. Rogers, see HCOB, *FY79 Defense Budget Overview*, 379.

⁹¹ Wilson, "House Panel Begins 'Frontal Assault' on Korea Policy," *Washington Post*, May 26, 1977, A1.

⁹² Vance, *Hard Choices*, 32, 128-130.

⁹³ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 13, May 13, 1977," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

LTG Howard M. Fish, the Pentagon arms-sales director, because he was associated with the expansion of arms exports during the Ford administration.⁹⁴

The directive remained consistent with Carter's desire to limit U.S. military commitment to areas of vital interest. PD-13 defined these, including Western Europe and Japan, by exempting them from the arms-sale constraints. The administration also dodged the politically charged issue of limiting arms sales to Israel by stating that the U.S. would "honor its historic responsibilities regarding Israel's security."⁹⁵ Such wording appeased pro-Israeli sentiment in Congress, but at the same time kept open the door for future U.S. leadership in the Middle East peace process. The statement that the United States would not become the "first supplier" to introduce new weapons into a region appeared to be an overture toward further détente with the U.S.S.R.

Although consistent with Carter and Vance's early optimism for better relations with the Soviets, Carter's military and civilian advisors did not support PD-13, feeling it risked a loss of American influence in Latin America, while at the same time encouraging Soviet-Cuban incursions into Africa. George Brown testified before Congress that encouraging nation building at the expense of weapons sales was unwise in Latin America. Indeed, the Soviet Union sold weapons to Peru and Ecuador, perhaps because of the reduced availability of U.S. supplied weapons to fight their insurgencies. "I think it is not in the interest of the United States," said Brown, "I do not like to see that influence in Latin America."⁹⁶ Harold Brown

⁹⁴ "New Job Scheduled for Arms Salesman," *Washington Post*, November 24, 1977, A17.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 638.

also admitted that the policy did not make much sense because the dearth of U.S. supplied weapons simply forced former allies to turn toward the Eastern Bloc for support.⁹⁷

The Pentagon's opposition transformed PD-13 into more a statement of ideals than an actively implemented policy. For example, in the first real test of PD-13, the sale of ten AWACS aircraft to Iran, the Pentagon advocated the sale and the Department of State opposed it. The president, convinced by Harold Brown, the JCS, and more hawkish members of the NSC, overruled State and authorized the sale of seven of the aircraft.⁹⁸ This pattern continued through much of the administration. A congressional study commissioned to investigate the impact of the policy determined that arms sales actually continued "on a rather routine basis." The study condemned the policy as creating "high expectations" and then becoming "a victim of its own rhetoric."⁹⁹ Testimony by defense intellectuals confirmed that the American defense industry and the Pentagon both opposed the policy as unnecessarily weakening U.S. influence abroad.¹⁰⁰

Examined in concert with PD-12, published only the week prior, PD-13 demonstrated several trends in the early Carter Administration NSC policy formulation process. First, the military saw that resistance to Carter's policies paid off. The Korea withdrawals seemed unlikely to take place, Singlaub was rewarded as well as reprimanded, and many arms

⁹⁷ Brown, *Thinking About National Security*, 167.

⁹⁸ Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran* (New York: Random House, 1985), 29-30.

⁹⁹ Library of Congress, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, United States Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and United States Congress, House Committee on International Relations, *Implications of President Carter's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy: Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate by the Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate Prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate and the Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), iii-iv.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

transfers continued to circumvent the intent of PD-13. Second, a rift was hardening between the Pentagon and the White House on defense policy. Finally, the administration could not advance its defense policy agenda with Congress, in large part due to the impression that advice from senior military officers was being ignored. These facts hovered in the background while a series of unpopular political choices were looming for the administration.

The first was the B-1 bomber program. For many years a manned bomber had anchored the nation's strategic "triad" of nuclear weapons. As the B-52 bomber aged, it seemed increasingly unable to deliver nuclear weapons through Soviet airspace. The Air Force proposed a new bomber that could penetrate Soviet air defenses and deliver nuclear payloads into the 1990s. Built to fly at low-levels and supersonic speeds, the B-1 would evade radar detection and carry twice as many nuclear weapons as the B-52.¹⁰¹

Whether or not to mass produce the B-1 bomber had been debated since the late 1960s. North American Rockwell won the contract to begin developing the bomber on June 5, 1970. At the Air Force's full request for 240 aircraft, the contract would exceed \$10 billion dollars, making it the largest weapons procurement program in history.¹⁰² In part because of the cost, Congress and several presidents hesitated to make, in Jimmy Carter's words, a "final and binding judgment on the matter."¹⁰³

The debate came to a head in the election year of 1976. A huge Rockwell lobbying effort, emphasizing the four prototypes already built, placed tremendous pressure on Congress to

¹⁰¹ Nick Kotz, *Wild Blue Yonder: Money, Politics, and the B-1 Bomber* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 93.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁰³ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 81.

fund the entire fleet. The impending presidential election gave many in Congress an easy way out of the dilemma: they would let the next president decide the fate of the bomber.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the decision fell to Carter. Despite his campaign promises to cancel the bomber, Carter vowed to “reassess all the factors before making a final judgment.”¹⁰⁵

Many in the Pentagon, especially senior Air Force officers, did not trust the president since his previous policy decisions had been quite consistent with his campaign promises.¹⁰⁶ The Air Force viewed the B-1 bomber as its single most important project. In 1976 Hearings on Military Posture before Congress, LTG Alton D. Slay, Deputy Chief of Staff for Research and Development, testified that the augmentation of the nation’s bomber force was “essential.”¹⁰⁷ The B-1 would replace aging B-52s and thus maintain the strategic “triad.” The new bomber would double the payload of the B-52 in a smaller package and allow the plane to operate from many more airbases because of its short take-off capability and, most importantly, be able to penetrate Soviet airspace.¹⁰⁸ Slay concluded that the B-1 served a flexible role that would “support national objectives across the full scale of conflict.”¹⁰⁹ The Air Force testified clearly that the B-1 was vital to both the service’s future and the nation’s security.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Perry, *Four Stars*, 235, 264.

¹⁰⁷ United States Congress, House Armed Services Committee, *Hearings on Military Posture: Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1977, 94th Cong., 2nd Sess., 17-20 February* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 187. Hereafter cited as HASC, *FY77 Defense Authorization Hearings*.

¹⁰⁸ Len Famiglietti, "Carter Brings Halt to B-1 Plans," *Air Force Times*, July 11, 1977, 3.

¹⁰⁹ HASC, *FY77 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 188.

Yet compelling contrary arguments existed. Though the B-52s could no longer effectively penetrate the Soviet air defense system, it was unlikely that B-1s could do much better.¹¹⁰ In fact, Soviet air defenses were adapting to engage aircraft with the attack profile of the B-1 and could probably do so with a high rate of success.¹¹¹ Opponents used such facts to argue against the B-1, especially given its \$100 million cost per plane.¹¹²

Although Carter eventually rejected the idea of the B-1 bomber as necessary to maintain the triad, he did not dismiss the Air Force's contention that the B-52s could no longer adequately penetrate Soviet airspace. The president saw air-launched cruise missiles as the solution.¹¹³ The current fleet of B-52s, he argued, could be modified at relatively little cost to launch the cruise missiles, and the long range of the missile would allow the B-52s to remain well outside of the range of Soviet air defenses. Hundreds of these cruise missiles could be produced for the price of each B-1. "A swarm of cruise missiles," he believed, "once launched could not be intercepted short of their multiple targets. Even a fairly large attrition rate would leave a large number to conclude a successful mission."¹¹⁴ Carter also spoke hopefully of new "stealth" technology under development at the time that would render planes virtually invisible to radar.¹¹⁵ Based upon all of this information, the president and Secretary of State Vance agreed that they should cancel the B-1 and continue with the

¹¹⁰ Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 80.

¹¹¹ Brown, *Thinking About National Security*, 73.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 81.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

development of cruise missiles and the stealth program.¹¹⁶ Although Carter articulated these views after he had announced his decision, his conduct leading up to that point left many, including most of his military advisors, guessing as to which way he would finally decide.

Carter addressed the B-1 at several White House press conferences. In an early one, on January 27, 1977, a reporter questioned his plans to drop the project. Carter replied tentatively, indicating that just that morning he had discussed it with members of the National Security Council. "I will have to know more about its capability, its cost, what we have in the way of other weapons systems" before deciding, he said.¹¹⁷

The President spoke of the B-1 again less than one month later during a February 23, 1977 press conference. When ABC News reporter Ann Compton posed a series of questions to Carter regarding his campaign promises, including the cancellation of the B-1 bomber, Carter emphasized that he had "cut \$200 million for the B-1 program in the budget just submitted to the Congress."¹¹⁸ He went on to say that he had "serious questions about whether or not the B-1 should be in the future the center of our airborne defense capability."¹¹⁹ In less than a month, Carter appeared to have changed his position significantly.

Not only had Carter seemingly undergone a change of position, but he also kept his thoughts on the matter secret, consulting very few individuals and keeping people guessing until the very end. In another press conference on June 13, two weeks before he announced

¹¹⁶ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 416.

¹¹⁷ Jimmy Carter, "The President's News Conference of January 27, 1977," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 28.

¹¹⁸ Jimmy Carter, "The President's News Conference of February 23, 1977," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 224.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

his final decision, Carter emphasized that he had “not made a decision” but would do so before the end of the month.¹²⁰

The announcement came at a White House press conference on June 30, 1977. In a brief statement before taking any questions, he said that he had decided on cancellation. Characterizing the decision as “one of the most difficult . . . since I’ve been in office,” Carter assured the press that Secretary of Defense Brown agreed.¹²¹ The president reflected in his memoirs: “Logic finally prevailed . . . I have no doubt that it was the correct decision, supported by the Secretary of Defense, key military leaders, and a majority of Congress.”¹²² But, in fact, Carter’s decision lacked that support, and the manner in which he made the decision maximized civil-military distrust and anger. Although the decision to cancel the B-1 had considerable logic, the lack of consultation with the Pentagon further damaged his relationship with senior military officers and Congress.

Carter’s decision made newspaper headlines the next day, largely because it came so suddenly and so unexpectedly. The *New York Times* called it a “surprise move,” while the *Washington Post* echoed “a closely guarded decision that surprised B-1 proponents and opponents alike.”¹²³ To some it seemed that Carter had intentionally manufactured the drama. *Washington Post* columnist Haynes Johnson thought that “Everyone in Washington

¹²⁰ Jimmy Carter, “The President’s News Conference of June 13, 1977,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 1110.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 83.

¹²³ Austin Scott, “Carter Halts B-1 Bomber Production,” *Washington Post*, 1 July 1977, A1. For “closely guarded decision” see Haynes Johnson, “Carter Again Shows Deftness with Press,” *Washington Post*, July 1, 1977, A1.

knew, it seemed, that Carter was going ahead with the B-1 bomber.”¹²⁴ Carter even left his audience on the edge of their seat at the final announcement, beginning with a long preamble explaining how difficult the decision had been and how much he had thought about it.

Regardless of whether or not Carter intentionally created a shocker for Washington, the decision certainly had that effect. Only a half dozen people knew what the president’s decision was going to be twelve hours before he made it.¹²⁵ Three weeks earlier, Carter met with two anti-B-1 Democratic congressmen for approximately forty minutes and both emerged from the meeting dejected, announcing that the president was “leaning very definitely toward building it.”¹²⁶ Even Senator Barry Goldwater (R-AZ), a strong proponent of the B-1 stated, after consulting with Carter a few days before his decision, that he was “becoming convinced that we can’t live without the B-1.”¹²⁷ Carter’s decision certainly surprised Congress. Senator Robert Dornan (R-CA), a vocal B-1 proponent, went so far as to say that he felt “deceived” by Carter’s sudden announcement.¹²⁸

In the last press conference before he made the decision, Carter had indicated that it was time to “perhaps on my own and perhaps in a lonely way” to make the final judgment.¹²⁹ Apparently, that was what Carter did. His close confidant Peter Bourne admitted that Carter

¹²⁴ Johnson, “Carter Again Shows Deftness with Press,” *Washington Post*, 1 Jul 77, A1.

¹²⁵ Scott, “Carter Halts B-1 Bomber Production,” *Washington Post*, 1 Jul 77, A1.

¹²⁶ Johnson, “Carter Again Shows Deftness with Press,” *Washington Post*, 1 Jul 77, A1.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ United States Congress, House, *Congressional Record, 95th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 21693.

¹²⁹ Johnson, “Carter Again Shows Deftness with the Press,” *Washington Post*, 1 Jul 77, A1.

matter-of-factly broke the news to him while the two were playing tennis.¹³⁰ He consulted and informed very few people and made the choice for discontinuation largely on his own. It shocked military leaders. According to newspaper reports, Carter's decision came "as a complete surprise to SAC" which believed that, while full production of 244 bombers might not be possible, at least 140 B-1s might be approved.¹³¹ Never before had a president killed such a large weapons program so close to production.¹³² The Air Force had already chosen its new plane and thought that the only question remaining was how long it would be before Congress approved mass production.¹³³ Now it appeared that the entire program was dead, and it had been killed by a single, unexpected presidential decree.

Signs of increased civil-military tension became obvious only one day after the decision. From his headquarters at Offutt Air Force base in Nebraska, SAC commander General Russell Dougherty told reporters that "his personal views and conclusions on the desirability of the B-1 were well known" but added that, "in view of the official policy of the United States administration," neither he nor his command had any further comment on the matter.¹³⁴ Dougherty added that he would "await official guidance flowing from the President's decision through military command channels."¹³⁵ Other Air Force officers were less reserved. Newspaper reports indicated that "one common reaction among officers in the

¹³⁰ Peter Bourne, *Jimmy Carter: A Comprehensive Biography from Plains to Post Presidency* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1997), 395.

¹³¹ Drew Middleton, "B-1 Decision Seen as Basic Shift in Strategic Doctrine," *New York Times*, July 1, 1977, A11.

¹³² Bourne, *Jimmy Carter*, 396.

¹³³ SASC, *FY77 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 199.

¹³⁴ Middleton, "B-1 Decision Seen as Basic Shift in Strategic Doctrine," *New York Times*, July 1, 1977, A11.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Air Force” was that Carter’s rejection of the B-1 compromised America’s greatest advantage against the threat of the Soviet Union.¹³⁶ Some officers were quoted as saying that they “could not understand how the B-1 could be rejected” when the current manned bombers employed by the Air Force were “clearly inferior.”¹³⁷ In Geneva, a senior Air Force Colonel working on the U.S. SALT II negotiating team was so incensed upon hearing the news of the cancellation that he quit the delegation and asked to be retired immediately.¹³⁸ Retired Major General George Keegan, Jr., former chief of Air Force intelligence, wrote an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* blasting Carter’s decision as opting for the “ignoble military unpreparedness of the 1930s.”¹³⁹ In a question and answer session with ROTC cadets at Georgia Tech, the recently retired General Singlaub called the decision “not in the best interests of the security of the United States.”¹⁴⁰ The consensus of opinion in uniformed ranks outside of the Pentagon was that the president had not adequately considered the defense needs of the nation, and many officers voiced dissent publicly.

Just as had been the case with Korea, the B-1 decision drew some negative reaction from the JCS, but not nearly as much as from the field commanders. The JCS felt Carter’s decision was made with little attempt to compromise or build consensus. He had rejected their advice that B-1 production continue with reduced funding, as well as the idea that the

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 108.

¹³⁹ Richard L. Garwin, "The National Security vs. Service Preferences," *New York Times*, July 26, 1977, L28. Civilian defense analyst Richard Garwin in turn responded to Keegan’s assertions by supporting the decision, saying that “The B-1 was the shadow of real military capability; the strategic cruise missile is the substance.”

¹⁴⁰ Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 410.

bomber be used as a bargaining chip with the Soviet Union for arms reduction.¹⁴¹ Chairman George Brown broke with the administration and testified before Congress that the bomber should be kept in production.¹⁴² In the end, however, both Air Force generals on the JCS, and most of the members of the JCS staff, supported the president's policy and did not attempt to overturn it beyond offering their disagreement to Congress.¹⁴³

In the Pentagon, the most significant result stemming from the president's manner of making his policy decision was an undercutting of his own Secretary of Defense. Staff officers began to question Secretary Brown's leadership during the B-1 debate because of the confusion concerning which way the president would ultimately decide. While some felt the decision was reminiscent of the "systems approach" promoted during the McNamara regime and was an archetypical example of how professional military advice could be ignored by civilians, this unfavorable outlook was probably not a majority view.¹⁴⁴ Central to the controversy surrounding Brown's leadership was the opinion of the JCS that Brown was personally in favor of the B-1 but unwilling to convey this to the president. Air Force Chief of Staff David Jones confirmed this idea when he stated that the Secretary of Defense "was careful not to reveal his position, but deep down I knew he would like to continue the

¹⁴¹ Perry, *Four Stars*, 268.

¹⁴² Bernard Weinraub, "Pentagon Is Seeking \$56 Billion Increase over Next Five Years," *New York Times*, February 3, 1978, A1.

¹⁴³ Two very senior Air Force Staffers at the time both disagreed with, but chose not to fight, the decision and respected Generals George Brown and David Jones for not doing so also see comments in: LTG William Y. Smith, interview by Edgar Puryear, Jr., USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 22; LTG Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 185-186.

¹⁴⁴ Perry, *Four Stars*, 269. Perry gave the impression that this was a prominent view of officers in the Pentagon at the time. Given the outlook of Generals Brown, Jones, Smith, and Sitton, it seems more likely that the anonymous interviewee from whom Perry based his account was probably an "iron major."

program.”¹⁴⁵ Press reports similarly indicated that Brown was in favor of continuing with the B-1, but was overruled by the “security analysis staff” of the NSC, headed by Victor Utgoff.¹⁴⁶ Brown was thus seen by many of his subordinates in the Pentagon as either unwilling to speak up to his boss or too weak to protect the interests of his own organization.

In the midst of this civil-military conflict a potential revolt was staved off by General Jones’ professional behavior. Jones came under heavy fire from his Air Force colleagues who expected him to resign in protest over the decision and who even accused him being a “traitor” to his service when he refused.¹⁴⁷ Jones referred to these vocal critics of the decision as “iron majors” and “zealots” and admitted later that he never considered resignation.¹⁴⁸ Instead, Jones assented to the norms of civilian control: “It seems to me that it is very presumptuous that somebody in the military can set themselves up on a pedestal, that they have the answer to the country.”¹⁴⁹ “We have a leader elected by the American people,” Jones said, “and during his campaign he said he was going to stop the B-1. And the American people voted for him. Who am I to step above that?”¹⁵⁰

Despite Jones’ professional behavior, Carter’s solitary method of making the policy decision on the B-1 hurt civil-military relations in his administration. The lack of

¹⁴⁵ GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 177. Secretary Brown denied this was the case. When asked point blank by OSD historian Alfred Goldberg if Carter had “overruled” Brown on the B-1, he replied “not really.” See Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Trask, December 4, 1981, OSD Oral History, 17.

¹⁴⁶ Burt, “Officials Say Carter Has Won Unparalleled Sway Over Defense Policy,” *New York Times*, A7. Burt cited this example as the “most conspicuous” example of the Carter White House influence in the defense policy making process.

¹⁴⁷ David Cooke, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 7-8.

¹⁴⁸ GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 179, 182.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 178-179.

¹⁵⁰ Perry, *Four Stars*, 269.

consultation with the Chiefs and failure to keep Harold Brown in the decision making process further soured the relationship between Carter and his military advisors. A quotation from a retired Air Force officer captured the frustration that many uniformed Air Force personnel felt: “Carter’s decision on the B-1 was just a disaster for him. It really made him a lame duck with us long before his other decisions made him a lame duck with the American people.”¹⁵¹

Further evidence about the extent of the civil-military conflict came later in an *Air Force Times* editorial. Carter’s decision regarding the B-1, the *Air Force Times* reported, “reached far beyond the bounds of a single weapon system” and in fact could make “a major shift in air strategy” inevitable.¹⁵² Defiantly, the paper announced that the question of the B-1 was not “laid to rest.” Those “now elated over the President’s action probably will be unsatisfied a year from now,” the editor predicted. The article closed with a warning that the B-1 debate was not really about a bomber, but instead about “the exact price of security and whether the nation can and will pay for it.”¹⁵³

Indeed, the controversy did not die for some time. On the same day that Carter announced cancellation, the House of Representatives passed by a 333-54 vote a defense appropriations bill which included funds for the B-1. Earlier that same week the House defeated a bill by a vote of 243 to 178 that would have cut \$1.5 billion from the project.¹⁵⁴ Once again, Carter’s refusal to build a consensus for his decision showed.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Bruce Callander, “B-1: The Debate Is Not Ended,” *Air Force Times*, July 18, 1977, 14.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ “House Votes Arms, B-1 Funds,” *Washington Post*, July 1, 1977, A18.

The B-1 controversy further strengthened the alliance of the military with more conservative members of Congress, particularly congressmen with constituencies that would suffer from the B-1 cancellation. They realized that they could court a shunned and frustrated Air Force for support. Only one day after the announcement of Carter's decision, Senator Goldwater read aloud a letter from SAC's General Dougherty, written in 1976, in which Dougherty strongly supported the B-1 and asked for Goldwater's help in getting the final production run pushed through Congress.¹⁵⁵ In the end, this combined lobbying of Congress and the military fell only three votes short of overturning Carter.¹⁵⁶ Already developing because of the battle over the defense budget, the military-congressional alliance hardened with the cancellation of the B-1.

Potential for Compromise: The Panama Canal

Despite the civil-military conflict created over the B-1, the JCS demonstrated willingness to compromise and strongly supported a very unpopular administration policy—surrendering U.S. sovereignty over the Panama Canal. While historian Steven Rearden argued that JCS support for the Panama Canal treaties was “weak,” this judgment is incorrect.¹⁵⁷ In fact, the Chiefs faced considerable criticism yet never wavered in their backing of the decision.

The status of the Canal had been in question since the administration of Lyndon Johnson. In 1964, violent anti-U.S. riots shook Panama, forcing Johnson to consider a new treaty with the government of Panama, then under the leadership of President Roberto Chiari. In 1968, General Omar Torrijos seized control of the Panamanian government in a coup, nullifying all

¹⁵⁵ United States Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record, 95th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 22035.

¹⁵⁶ Perry, *Four Stars*, 269.

¹⁵⁷ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy, Vol. XII*, 388-389.

previous negotiations. The Nixon administration picked up where Johnson had left off, attempting to create a new treaty which would alleviate the animosity in Panama over the fact that their nation was cut in two by a sovereign piece of U.S. territory. Gerald Ford's administration came close to finalizing negotiations with Panama on a new treaty, but the struggling president abandoned the efforts as the 1976 election approached and it seemed that the "Panama issue" would do more harm than good.¹⁵⁸ During the campaign, Carter promised that he would re-negotiate a new treaty, preferably one that would "share sovereignty and control" of the Canal.¹⁵⁹

The renegotiation and ratification of the Panama Canal treaty became the primary foreign and defense policy issue that Carter tackled in his first year in office. After his election, Carter's advisors discussed the issue of the Canal and several possible "inconsistencies" in the president's pre-election promises. They determined that anything close to the "status quo" would lead to permanent "Third World hostility" and the "probability of sabotage."¹⁶⁰ Accordingly, on the first full day of the administration, the president directed that the NSC make the Panama Canal its first order of business.¹⁶¹ One of Zbigniew Brzezinski's reports to Carter emphasized the importance of gaining ratification of a new Panama Canal treaty:

There is no question in my mind that how we handle this issue poses the most important strategic decision you will be making this year insofar as your foreign policy is concerned. Success in ratification of the Treaty will clear

¹⁵⁸ Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, ix-x.

¹⁵⁹ Robert Pastor, "Memorandum, Subject: Gov. Carter's Position on a Panama Canal Treaty, July 28, 1976," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers-Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office-Stuart Eizenstat, Box 17, Folder: Foreign Policy 7/20/76-8/76, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC 1, January 21, 1977," Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. All PRMs available at <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/prmemorandums> (Accessed July 8, 2008)

the way for SALT, Comprehensive Test Ban, and a host of other issues that we all hope will be the landmarks of your Administration. Failure, on the other hand, will severely undermine your ability to negotiate them successfully, since there will be concern on the part of other governments that you cannot deliver the Congress.¹⁶²

Indeed the stakes were high, and the strategic importance of the Canal meant that the Pentagon must support any treaty. Hamilton Jordan told the president to “worry about the Defense Department.” Given the nature of the conflict over the Korea withdrawals and the B-1, the president’s closest aide recalled the anxiety: “We had to get the people in the Pentagon to see the need for the treaty. There were some that didn’t. You’ve got to ride herd over those people.”¹⁶³ The Carter White House recognized the importance of Pentagon and JCS support for a Panama Canal treaty, but was apprehensive about support for it due to the existing civil-military tensions.

With the Panama Canal, unlike the B-1 bomber, Carter conducted his policy making and decision making process in a much more open manner. The president met personally with General Brown almost bi-weekly as both countries drew close to an acceptable treaty.¹⁶⁴ For the entire JCS, the Panama Canal treaty appeared quite regularly on their agenda during this time period.¹⁶⁵ LTG Tom Dolvin served as a JCS military representative on the negotiating

¹⁶² Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Memorandum to the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #25, August 26, 1977," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President 16-30: 6/77-9/77, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹⁶³ Hamilton Jordan, interview by James Young, Erwin Hargrove, et. al, 6 November 1981, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 47.

¹⁶⁴ Frequency and subjects of these meetings taken from General George Brown’s daily log. The meetings took place on August 23, September 14, and November 7, 1977. See George S. Brown, "Daily Log, July 1, 1977 to December 28, 1977," CJCS Brown Files, Box 64, NARA II, College Park, MD.

¹⁶⁵ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 99. LTG Ray B. Sitton, the director of the Joint Staff, indicated that the JCS position on the Panama Canal was one of the most significant events for him and his staff as well. See Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 269.

team and was involved during every step of the process.¹⁶⁶ As they debated the issue and helped formulate the administration position, the JCS “decided what was important was the use of the Canal and not the ownership.”¹⁶⁷ The Pentagon’s FY79 Annual DoD Report, formulated during this time period, reflected JCS views almost exactly, saying that “guaranteed use, not sovereignty, is all that we seek.”¹⁶⁸ In a meeting between Carter, Secretary Brown, the JCS, and Undersecretary of State Warren Christopher, the military chiefs assured the president of their “full support” for the Panama Canal Treaty.¹⁶⁹ The unified assent of both the top civilian and top military official in the Pentagon came to be the “Brown and Brown formula” in Washington lingo.¹⁷⁰ In large part due to the close contact between the President and the Pentagon during the policy making process, Harold Brown had almost no problem getting the JCS to accept the terms of the Canal treaty as it was finally negotiated.¹⁷¹

The administration cooperated much more with Congress than it had on previous policy decisions. Carter, anticipating the tough battle that would come with ratification, invited the input of over seventy members of the Senate on disputed points while the treaty was still under negotiation. The administration also mobilized support among prominent private individuals and organizations who in turn lobbied Congress.¹⁷² As a result, several senators

¹⁶⁶ Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 472.

¹⁶⁷ LTG William Y. Smith, interview by Edgar Puryear, Jr., USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 19-20.

¹⁶⁸ *FY79 Annual DoD Report*, 26.

¹⁶⁹ James T. Wooten, "Joint Chiefs Pledge to Help Carter," *New York Times*, August 12, 1977, A6.

¹⁷⁰ Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 369.

¹⁷¹ Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Landa, 1 March 1993, OSD Oral History, 22.

¹⁷² James Reston, "A Strange Arms Debate," *New York Times*, January 21, 1979, E21.

who later fought the administration on defense issues actually supported it on the Panama Canal Treaty.¹⁷³ Not only was the administration's civil-military interaction better, but its executive-legislative interaction was in fact never closer on any other issue than it had been on the Panama Canal treaty.

Also unlike previous defense decisions, the theater CINC expressed his support for the administration. General Dennis P. McAuliffe, SOUTHCOM commander, offered supportive testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Like the JCS, he contended that the U.S. needed only free operation, not direct control, over the Canal.¹⁷⁴ He hosted briefings for groups of prominent Congressmen on-site at the Canal Zone to help support the need for the treaty.¹⁷⁵ In letters to Senator Strom Thurmond, who opposed the treaty, McAuliffe assured the senator that, given the treaty, the U.S. could still protect its interests.¹⁷⁶ Carter later selected General McAuliffe to be the first administrator of the Canal Zone formed as a result of the ratified treaty.¹⁷⁷ The administration's approach to policy making in the case of the Panama Canal had brought not only the JCS into the fold, but also the CINC.

Despite the support of the JCS and the CINC, many retired military officers still strongly opposed the treaty.¹⁷⁸ One was John Singlaub: "giving the Canal to an unpredictable

¹⁷³ One of the most prominent, of these was Ernest Hollings (D-SC). Others included Howard Baker (R-TN) and Robert Byrd (D-WV). See Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 264-265, 494-495, 515-516 respectively.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 471-473.

¹⁷⁵ LTG D. P. McAuliffe, "Memorandum from UNCINCSO Quarry Heights, CZ to JCS, Subject: Visit of CODEL Cranston, January 30, 1978," GEN McAuliffe Papers, Military History Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA.

¹⁷⁶ LTG D. P. McAuliffe, "Memorandum from HQ USSOUTHCOM Quarry Heights, CZ to JCS/J5 Washington, D.C., Subject: Reply to Questions from Sen. Thurmond to CINC USSOUTHCOM, January 31, 1978," GEN McAuliffe Papers, Military History Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 683.

¹⁷⁸ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 150.

Panamanian government might mean that one day we would have to fight to have access to it.” He then accused the Carter administration of being “hell bent on turning the Canal over to a government headed by murderous thugs.”¹⁷⁹ Four former CNOs, including George Brown’s predecessor Admiral Thomas Moorer, wrote the president urging him not to relinquish U.S. sovereignty of the canal.¹⁸⁰ A retired Navy captain warned in a *New York Times* op-ed that the treaty imperiled U.S. Naval transit “during an international crisis.”¹⁸¹ The American Legion disseminated thousands of flyers “staunchly against any proposal that will surrender or subordinate American rights.”¹⁸² General Brown was accused of supporting the treaty as an “act of loyalty to the President,” even though it was not in the best interest of the nation.¹⁸³ Others accused the JCS of being “intimidated” or supporting the treaty in order to protect their careers.¹⁸⁴ As the charges grew more accusatory, it seemed that the retired military lobby posed a real threat to the ratification of the treaty.

In response, the JCS took the offensive against the charges of the retired military. In a press conference on August 12, 1977, David Jones, speaking for the JCS, endorsed the treaty and promised, “Mr. President, we will do what we can to help its ratification.”¹⁸⁵ Later that month, George Brown, in what was termed “a highly unusual, if not unprecedented step,”

¹⁷⁹ Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 407, 411.

¹⁸⁰ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 148.

¹⁸¹ Paul B. Ryan, “The Canal Terms, Argued from Different Premises,” *New York Times*, September 11, 1977, 177.

¹⁸² “American Legion Lobby Flyer, ‘Save the Canal!!!’ 1977,” Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Public Liaison-Costanza, Box 36, Folder: American Legion, 2/77-9/77 [O/A 4413], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹⁸³ George C. Wilson, “Retired Brass Courted on Canal Pacts,” *Washington Post*, August 31, 1977, A1.

¹⁸⁴ Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 472.

¹⁸⁵ Wooten, “The Joint Chiefs Pledge to Help Carter,” *New York Times*, 12 Aug 77, A6.

called a meeting of retired generals and admirals to justify his support of the JCS treaties.¹⁸⁶

Marine Commandant Louis Wilson braved a crowd of hostile members of the American Legion and spoke in favor of the treaty.¹⁸⁷ Later, when Jones got word that the Air Force Association was about to pass a resolution condemning the treaty at a meeting in Washington, he stormed out of his office, saying that he was going to “get this straightened out.” The Air Force Chief went to the meeting and made sure the resolution failed.¹⁸⁸

Later comments also rebutted the charge that Carter or his civilian leaders coerced support for the treaty. General Brown’s special assistant remembered that the chairman’s “convictions were such that he did believe the Panama Canal Treaty was the proper thing,” not “just because the Commander-in-Chief said this is what we are going to do.”¹⁸⁹ Marine Commandant Wilson believed: “it was a good idea for us to sign this treaty. I have no regrets in regards to my position on the treaties.”¹⁹⁰ The director of the Joint Staff was unequivocal: “It was a unanimous JCS position. There were no dissenters, and there were no minority opinions.”¹⁹¹ David Jones, perhaps the most ardent supporter of the treaty on the JCS, said, “To my dying day I will say that the Panama Canal Treaty was clearly in the best interests of the United States.”¹⁹² The Panama Canal showed that civil-military relations in the Carter administration were not all conflict. In fact, civil-military cooperation inside the

¹⁸⁶ Wilson, “Retired Brass Courted on Canal Pacts,” *Washington Post*, August 31, 1977, A1.

¹⁸⁷ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 262.

¹⁸⁸ LTG Howard M. Fish, interview by Edgar F. Puryear, Jr., USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 7-9.

¹⁸⁹ LTG William Y. Smith, interview by Edgar Puryear, Jr., USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 20.

¹⁹⁰ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 297.

¹⁹¹ LTG Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 269.

¹⁹² George C. Wilson, “Low-Key Military Leader Makes No Apologies, No Changes,” *Washington Post*, June 1, 1980, A17.

Pentagon increased even if Panama was the exception to broader civil-military relations in Carter's first two years.

Big on Abstractions, Short on Specifics: PD-17, PD-18, and the Neutron Bomb Debacle

PD-17, "Reorganization of the Intelligence Community," also demonstrated greater unity within the Pentagon but led to much Pentagon conflict with the White House. This significant directive gave substantially more power to the Director of Central intelligence, Admiral Stansfield Turner. Turner was the highest ranking midshipman in Carter's class at Annapolis. Some at the Pentagon felt Carter had offered him the post of CIA director because the new president, who had ranked near the middle of his Naval Academy class, "took delight" in having Stan Turner now working for him.¹⁹³ More likely, Carter chose Turner because the Admiral was a maverick whose self-professed "unconventional ideas" often unnerved his colleagues.¹⁹⁴ Turner was also an outsider in the intelligence community. Just prior to Carter taking office, three investigative commissions had issued stinging rebukes of past American intelligence gathering practices. Carter wanted to right these wrongs and change the manner in which the intelligence community operated. Turner, having no institutional bias and a demonstrated willingness to instigate change, was just the person to make the required adjustments.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ John Kester, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 28.

¹⁹⁴ Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy*, 9-10. Turner, for instance, opposed the idea that the navy should be centered around large carriers, putting him in the same camp as Carter. He was also mentored by Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, who instituted a huge number of controversial reforms in the Navy during his tenure as CNO. Turner was one of two candidates whom Carter considered for the post. The other was Army Chief of Staff Bernard W. Rogers who also fit the same mold.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 4-5, 10-11. Turner had also served as the head of the Naval War College in Newport, RI. He created a much more rigorous academic program and enticed high-quality civilian professors to join the faculty by offering them tenured positions.

During his first meeting with the president, Turner requested greater authority for the Director of Central Intelligence.¹⁹⁶ The admiral viewed competition between the CIA and the “large and clever military bureaucracy” of the Pentagon as a “dangerous hindrance” to U.S. intelligence capability.¹⁹⁷ He recounted many instances in which he felt that the Pentagon intentionally misrepresented Soviet strength in order to try to gain congressional approval for expensive weapons systems, such as the MX missile.¹⁹⁸ As the Director of Central Intelligence, Turner was by law supposed to exercise some oversight of the Pentagon intelligence apparatus, but Pentagon intelligence chiefs proved uncooperative and at times almost insubordinate. In the first meeting between the CIA and Pentagon intelligence chiefs, for example, the Chief of Army Intelligence disparagingly referred to Turner as the “titular” head of the intelligence community.¹⁹⁹ Given this animosity and lack of cooperation between the CIA and the Pentagon, Turner wanted greater authority.

Carter agreed with most of Turner’s bold reform proposals and delivered his promise in the form of PD-17, which empowered Turner with “full tasking responsibility and authority for translating PRC [Policy Review Committee of the NCS]-validated national intelligence requirements into specific intelligence collection objectives.”²⁰⁰ Previously this tasking had been split between the CIA and intelligence staff in the Pentagon. The directive also granted Turner much greater budget authority which had traditionally rested with the Pentagon. Harold Brown strenuously objected to Turner’s and Carter’s ideas about centralizing the

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 18.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 98.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 249.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 32.

²⁰⁰ Jimmy Carter, “Presidential Directive/NSC 17, August 4, 1977,” p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

intelligence community.²⁰¹ Another Pentagon official showed more reserve, stating that as long as Turner “doesn’t try to force it all the way to the wall, we can live with it.”²⁰² The head of the CIA confirmed these views in his memoirs, indicating that the Pentagon had offered “stubborn opposition” to his plans for reform.²⁰³ In the end, the reorganization of the intelligence community was a victory for the CIA over the Pentagon.

Turner’s reform efforts had further long-term implications for the administration’s civil-military relations. Like Carter and Harold Brown, Turner was a firm advocate for leveraging technology. Early in his tenure he urged a focus away from human-gathered intelligence to imagery obtained from satellites and signal intelligence gained from listening posts.²⁰⁴

The new Director of Central Intelligence claimed that as soon as he entered the building at Langley, he had a feeling that excessive personnel burdened the CIA’s abilities. “Too many old timers were hanging on,” he recalled.²⁰⁵ To correct these weaknesses, Turner decided in August of 1977 to reduce the CIA’s personnel. On October 31, 1977 hundreds of impersonal letters went out to CIA employees, dismissing them from federal service, some just a few years from retirement. The media quickly dubbed the event the “Halloween Massacre.” Since most of the cuts came from the clandestine branch of the CIA, critics charged that Turner had “emasculated” the nation’s spying capability.²⁰⁶ Though the head of the CIA

²⁰¹ Hedrick Smith, “CIA Director Given Wide Budget Power in Carter Proposal,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1977, 1.

²⁰² Quoted in *Ibid.*

²⁰³ Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy*, 260-261. The Reagan administration scrapped most of Turner’s reforms immediately upon taking office.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 206-207.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 197-199.

fiercely defended his decision, and the impact of the “Halloween Massacre” was grossly inflated in the media, the event did worsen civil-military relations within the administration. Following Turner’s reductions in the human intelligence gathering capability of the CIA, a series of intelligence failures later rocked the administration. First, the CIA failed completely to provide warning of the fall of the shah in Iran. Second, a brigade of Russian troops in Cuba, left over from the era of the Cuban Missile Crisis, was “rediscovered,” having been “lost” because of faulty CIA reports, causing the administration to over-react. As Chapter V will demonstrate, these two events created significant civil-military tension in the second half of Carter’s term.

Carter’s next directive, PD-18 “U.S. National Strategy” proved to be a long-awaited and controversial one. PD-18 evolved from PRM-10, a comprehensive overview of the nation’s national security strategy that Carter had commissioned soon after taking office.²⁰⁷ Although every president since World War II had conducted such a policy review upon taking office, the PRM-10 studies were, in the opinion of JCS historian Steven Rearden, “some of the most laborious ever conducted.” PRM-10 involved more than a dozen interagency groups as well as several independent “think tanks” and consultants.²⁰⁸ The JCS wanted to play a leading role in the PRM-10 study, hoping to influence PD-18, recognized as the administration’s “grand strategy.”²⁰⁹

Civil-military conflict characterized the PRM-10/PD-18 policy-making process almost from the outset. Many in the Pentagon viewed the call for the study negatively given

²⁰⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC 10, February 18, 1977,” Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²⁰⁸ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 300.

²⁰⁹ BG William Odom, interview by James Milano, Carlisle Oral History, 79.

Carter's early meetings with the JCS in which he had inquired about drastically reducing the number of U.S. nuclear weapons. It appeared that with his requests for PRM-10, Carter wanted to, in the words of one senior defense correspondent, "dig into questions of nuclear targeting and operation plans, rather than leave these matters to the Pentagon."²¹⁰

Similar to previous defense policy making efforts, the administration largely excluded the JCS from the PRM-10 studies. George Brown expressed his concern about this exclusion in a private memo to the Secretary of Defense. "The nature of the PRM-10/PD-18 follow on studies require the full participation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in all phases of the study effort," the general began, "In the past, the Joint Staff has worked closely with the OSD staff in the development of studies relating to national defense."²¹¹ General Brown complained that the JCS had been asked to provide informal comments on minor aspects of the study, but as yet had "no opportunities to comment on the Hard Target Kill Capabilities, Future of the Triad, or Targeting Policy studies."²¹² He recommended that a representative from the JCS be included in a new subcommittee that would reexamine some of the important issues associated with the study.²¹³ The general concluded, "I am concerned that the lack of early military participation in formulating these tasks may be detrimental to the quality of these important studies of military forces and planning."²¹⁴

²¹⁰ George C. Wilson, "New Carter Directive Could Mean Rising, Not Falling Defense Budgets," *Washington Post*, August 27, 1977, A6.

²¹¹ George S. Brown, "Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Subject: PRM-10/PD-18 Follow-on Studies, 1977," p. 1, CJCS Brown Files, 035 NSC, Box 14, NARA II, College Park, MD.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

Along with objections to the crafting of PD-18, many in the military criticized the directive's view of the U.S.-Soviet relationship. Vaguely worded, PD-18 vacillated in its conclusions. Describing the U.S.-Soviet relationship as "characterized by both competition and cooperation, with the attendant risk of conflict as well as the opportunity for stabilizing," it seemed only to be a compromising generalization to cover the different foreign policy outlooks of Carter, Vance, and Brzezinski.²¹⁵ Many also disagreed with what they viewed as an overly optimistic appraisal of the U.S. strength vis-à-vis the Soviets.²¹⁶ Given their views of the disparity between defense spending in the U.S. and U.S.S.R., the JCS simply did not share in the outlook espoused in PD-18 that the United States was surpassing a Soviet Union on the downside.

Many within the Pentagon also cited a lack of reconciliation between means and ends within the directive. The only link between the defense budget and defense policy was a reiteration of the NATO pledge that all members of the alliance should increase defense spending by 3 percent per year.²¹⁷ The administration later experienced divisive conflict even over this point, with the Pentagon arguing that the 3 percent increase applied to the entire defense budget, while the Office of the Management of the Budget argued that the increase should only apply to the small portion of the defense budget directly supporting NATO.²¹⁸ The remaining guidance on how the U.S. should pursue its national strategy

²¹⁵ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 18, August 24, 1977," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²¹⁶ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. II, 302.

²¹⁷ Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC-18," JCL, 2.

²¹⁸ George C. Wilson, "Advisors Fighting Carter's Military Budget Increase Plan," *Washington Post*, November 18, 1977.; Pine, "Carter Wants a 'No-Growth' Budget, Sparing Pentagon," *Washington Post*, November 6, 1978, A1; Bernard Weinraub, "Defense Hierarchy Puzzled on Budget," *New York Times*, November 13, 1978.; Weinraub, "Jordan and Rafshoon Said to Back Pentagon Head in Debate Over Budget," *New York Times*, December 5, 1978, A1.

seemed amorphous and generalized. According to one veteran Pentagon official, PD-18 was “big on abstractions and short on specifics.”²¹⁹

If PD-18 was the administration’s first attempt at articulating a grand strategy, it seemed to confirm and emphasize all of the previous trends associated with the administration’s defense policy formulation process. The result of months of intensive study, the final directive appeared unable to resolve differences of opinion and announce a consensus. The JCS were again largely excluded from policy making, angering the Chiefs. PD-18 also highlighted the increasing conflict taking place inside the administration between the more hard-line NSC under Brzezinski and the more conciliatory Department of State under Vance. Harold Brown remained in an awkward position, seemingly unable to advance the DoD perspective. Providing no resolution of this conflict or reconciliation these competing viewpoints, PD-18 instead degenerated into vague generalizations.

While PD-18 clearly showed the division, conflict, and sometimes confusion within the Carter administration’s policies, the document also reflected a degree of pragmatism. The section on “Global Contingencies” alluded to one of the major contributions of the Carter years toward American military power-projection: The development of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF).²²⁰ The final “Additional Studies” section of the directive called for several studies, most importantly a “targeting review” which became PD-59, a much more refined defense strategy.²²¹

²¹⁹ Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 361.

²²⁰ Carter, “Presidential Directive/NSC-18,” JCL, 4.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 5. PD-59 is examined in detail in Chapter V.

A centerpiece of the PD-18 “grand strategy” was the U.S. commitment to the NATO alliance, clearly defined as one of the country’s vital commitments. Carter’s views on NATO alliance were well known to the military before he took office. He had stated in his address at Princeton University that, “Our NATO strategy is incorrectly premised on the theory of a long, World War II ground war. The better thinking is that any conventional war will rather be of short duration.”²²² In his first meeting with the JCS, he had indicated that he planned to force NATO allies to assume greater responsibility for their own defense.²²³ This disturbed both General Brown and high ranking NATO officers.²²⁴ Traditionally, the American strategy had been to defend Western Europe as far forward as possible in the event of Soviet aggression, perhaps even taking the offensive into Eastern Europe.²²⁵ It seemed that Carter at a minimum planned to change this strategy and perhaps planned to abandon it altogether.

Consistent with PD-18’s NATO focus, Carter moved quickly to change U.S. policy toward Western Europe. A month after entering office, the NSC issued PRM-9 calling for a

²²² Eizenstat, “Notes on Princeton Address,” JCL, 4.

²²³ Perry, *Four Stars*, 264.

²²⁴ General Brown testified that his “counterparts throughout the NATO countries have expressed concern to me and it has been around the corridors of the NATO headquarters as to what President Carter might do when he came to office in relation to NATO.” See SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 522. Harold Brown confirmed these sentiments, warning the JCS that any change in strategy in Europe would have to be handled very delicately. See Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 312.

²²⁵ Laurence Martin, *NATO and the Defense of the West: An Analysis of America's First Line of Defense* (New York: Holt, Rinehard, and Winston, 1985), 38-40. Embodied in NATO document 14/3, the modified strategy adopted in 1967 was termed “flexible response,” probably because it was developed during the Kennedy-Johnson years. It replaced the plan laid out in document 14/2, known as the “trip wire” defense, which would have yielded large amounts of West German territory to an attacking Warsaw Pact force. The U.S. Army developed its doctrine of “active defense” in part to help defend farther forward and meet the goals outlined in NATO document 14/3.

comprehensive re-evaluation of U.S. policy toward Europe and NATO.²²⁶ As part of the study, Harold Brown appointed Robert Komer as his special assistant for NATO affairs.

Komer, a self-professed believer in the systems analysis approach, reported directly to the SECDEF. He shared Brown's view that the NATO alliance should be the primary focus of U.S. defense policy.²²⁷ Komer examined closely the military contingency plans for war in Europe. Never tactful, his conclusion was acerbic: the Army's plans, in particular, were "moronic" and "inane."²²⁸ Komer, agreeing with Carter's assessments, convinced Brown that the "long war" theory that the military was preparing for in Europe was incorrect. He argued instead that war reserve stocks of ammunition should be dramatically cut and that the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions should be removed from the list of ready reinforcements to Europe in order to save money.²²⁹ Army Chief Meyer strongly opposed Komer's ideas, leading to much tension between the two.²³⁰ Marine Commandant Wilson described Komer's interests in NATO as faddish and "parochial."²³¹ The Chiefs had again been cut out of the policy making process on an important defense matter and voiced their objections.

The biggest conflict between the Pentagon and White House occurred over the president's decision against deployment of the Enhanced Radiation Weapon (ERW). Also known as a "neutron bomb," an ERW was designed to provide minimal blast damage and residual

²²⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC 9, February 1, 1977," Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²²⁷ For self-description see Robert Komer, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 66-67. For confirmation of view of NATO in keeping with Brown, see David Cooke, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 10.

²²⁸ Robert Komer, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 20.

²²⁹ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 234.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

²³¹ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 228-229.

radiation while maximizing radiation at the moment of detonation in order to kill large numbers of soldiers in armored vehicles.²³² The military saw ERW as an advantage, particularly where the U.S. might be fighting on an allied nation's soil and facing massive armored attacks. The low blast damage, lack of long-term radiation effects, and armor-stopping potential of ERW seemed ideal.²³³ Ultimately, Carter's preemptory veto of ERW without consultation further undermined his standing with the military.

ERW had been under secret development since well before Carter took office, and the U.S. had consulted NATO allies beginning in 1974. Carter opted to continue the negotiations and development of the weapons, with Brzezinski describing NATO leaders as "cautiously affirmative" on the prospect of deployment on European soil.²³⁴ Then, in early June of 1977 a *Washington Post* reporter researching the budget of the Department of Energy found an overlooked item that should have been classified—funding for an "enhanced radiation" weapon.²³⁵ The front page story that a "neutron killer warhead" was "buried" in the Energy Department budget shook the administration, forcing it to take a political stand on a previously secret program.

The political fallout from the Singlaub incident only two weeks prior had just begun to dissipate, so the administration chose to tread carefully in the ERW controversy. Carter issued public statements defending the weapon and ordered a Pentagon study of the issue to

²³² Chris Bishop and Ian Drury, eds., *The Encyclopedia of World Military Weapons* (New York: Crescent Books, 1988), 12.

²³³ Martin, *NATO and the Defense of the West*, 92-93.

²³⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #22, July 22, 1977," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President, 16-30 [6/77-9/77], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²³⁵ Walter Pincus, "Neutron Killer Warhead Buried in ERDA Budget," *Washington Post*, June 6, 1977, A1.

be completed by August 15, 1977.²³⁶ On August 11, Harold Brown recommended that the program be continued.²³⁷ The administration began a series of close consultations with NATO allies, discussing various options for the politically unpopular weapons. Meetings between September and October of 1977 generated no consensus, but recommended that the U.S. either produce and deploy ERW or force concessions from the Soviets for not doing so.²³⁸ German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was particularly reluctant to have the weapons placed on his own soil, but was equally wary of the fact that the Soviets were deploying their new 1,500 kiloton intermediate ranged ballistic missile, the SS-20.²³⁹ Unable to gain anything other than tenuous support from NATO allies, the president requested further options.

The NSC gradually assumed the dominant role in the ERW process, eclipsing that of the Pentagon. Brzezinski and the NSC offered the president another option: produce the weapon, but limit deployment based on Soviet concessions to the Mutually Balanced Force Reduction (MFBR) treaties, a pending series of agreements that aimed to reduce NATO and Warsaw Pact conventional forces in Europe.²⁴⁰ Brzezinski pointed out that this option was

²³⁶ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 301.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 302.

²³⁸ James Thomson and Victor Utgoff, "National Security Council Memorandum through Reginald Bartholomew and Robert Hunter for Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, Subject: SCC Meeting, Enhanced Radiation (ER) and MBFR, Wednesday, November 16, 1977, 3:00 P.M., November 14, 1977," p. 1-3, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 27, Folder: Meetings-SCC 41: 11/16/77, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. Hereafter cited as Thomson and Utgoff, "SCC Meeting on ERW 16 Nov 77."

²³⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 301-303. At the start of the ERW controversy, the Soviets had built four bases in the Western U.S.S.R. and three on the border with China but not yet deployed the missiles to the bases. See Harold Brown, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Getting Something for the Neutron Bomb: ER for SS-20?, November 8, 1979," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 27, Folder: Meetings-SCC 41: 11/16/77, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²⁴⁰ Thomson and Utgoff, "SCC Meeting on ERW, 16 Nov 77," 8.

acceptable to Helmut Schmidt, who felt that the weapon could be used as a “credible bargaining counter.” In this way the “tank killing” potential of the ERW could be realized without ever having to use the weapon—by demanding that the Soviets withdraw over 1,700 tanks in exchange for the U.S. not deploying the weapons that could neutralize those same tanks.²⁴¹ When the suggestion was forwarded to the Pentagon, both military and civilian officials strongly objected to the plan. They argued that the NSC proposal was “inadequately studied” and “should not be considered a valid option.”²⁴²

Harold Brown was so concerned that he wrote privately to the president strongly opposing the linkage of ERW with the MBFR treaty. He proposed instead that the administration should “state that we will not deploy ER weapons (to Europe or anywhere else) so long as the U.S.S.R. does not deploy the SS-X-20.”²⁴³ Brown listed a litany of reasons why the “ERW for SS-20” proposal was superior, concluding that his proposal provided NATO allies “a politically viable way to support the deployment if the Soviets reject the offer.”²⁴⁴ Upon hearing of Brown’s proposal, the NSC staff aggressively attacked it as “a bad principle of single trades of items that are not logically connected.”²⁴⁵ The NSC also argued that nothing would stop the Soviets from deploying the SS-20 and that Harold Brown probably knew this

²⁴¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #36, November 11, 1977,” p. 2-3, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President, 31-41 [10/77-1/78], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. Schmidt also rapped Carter, saying that the B-1 bomber had been “given away for nothing” and that he did “not want to see this repeated.”

²⁴² Thomson and Utgoff, “SCC Meeting on ERW, 16 Nov 77,” 9.

²⁴³ Harold Brown, “Memorandum for the President, Subject: Getting Something for the Neutron Bomb: ER for SS-20?”, 1. The “X” in the missile title designated that it was still viewed as an “experimental” model by some.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁴⁵ Thomson and Utgoff, “SCC Meeting on ERW, 16 Nov 77,” 9.

when he suggest the course of action.²⁴⁶ Indeed, the NSC had probably seen through the true intention of the Secretary of Defense, betrayed by Harold Brown's own admission that the Soviets had already built bases for the SS-20. Unwilling to suggest a course of action which he knew Carter would reject (full production and deployment of ERW), Brown had instead offered another alternative that, if carried out, would eventually necessitate full production and deployment of ERW. The NSC intervention into the ERW policy making process had forced the Secretary of Defense to take the "backdoor" to getting his way.

An NSC meeting on November 16, 1977 debated the issue more fully with the military in direct attendance for the first time. The consensus was that the U.S. should produce the weapons, but on deploying the weapons into the field the attendees were split. General George Brown and Energy Secretary James Schlesinger strongly pressed for full deployment, while Harold Brown still pressed his "SS-20 linkage" proposal.²⁴⁷ Brzezinski sided with Harold Brown, saying that he "pushed very hard" for adoption of that course of action.²⁴⁸ When Brzezinski presented the alternatives to the president, Carter agreed to linking ERW deployment with a Soviet willingness to forego SS-20 deployment, writing in on his response that he hoped in the future this might "prohibit production of all nuclear weapons."²⁴⁹ In its limited participation in the ERW policy making process, the military had thus been overruled.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "National Security Council Special Coordination Committee Meeting, Subject: Enhanced Radiation Warheads," (White House Situation Room: Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 27, Folder: SCC 41: 11/16/77, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA, November 16, 1977), 1-2.

²⁴⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 303.

²⁴⁹ Brzezinski, "National Security Council Special Coordination Committee Meeting, Subject: Enhanced Radiation Warheads," 1-2.

While the military had been consulted but their input rejected, Congress was almost completely left out of the loop on ERW. As the ERW policy process was underway in late 1977, Senator Stennis asked that the administration provide, by the end of 1978, a detailed report on its plans for ERW. One day before the deadline, on December 30, 1978, the OSD staff responded by submitting a twelve sentence reply that answered none of the specific questions contained in the congressional inquiry. Since this was the extent of executive-legislative consultation on the issue during a two year period, it is easy to see how the administration's response drew condemnation from Senator Sam Nunn.²⁵⁰

Without the consent of the military or Congress, the NSC, civilians in DoD, and Carter finally had come to a course of action on ERW by early 1978. Realizing that Germany would be the only European nation willing and able to accept ERWs, the administration crafted a letter to Helmut Schmidt suggesting that Germany accept the deployment of ERW based on "SS-20 linkage" and a two-year gap between U.S. production and deployment of the weapon. A meeting with NATO was arranged for March 28, 1978 to seal the final elements of the agreement.²⁵¹

Just as the meeting with NATO was about to commence, Carter opted for the policy decision process that he had used during the B-1 bomber incident—a solitary, lonely decision. He ordered all departments to delay until they had consulted him personally. At a morning briefing just two days before the planned NATO summit, Carter said he did not want to go through with the deal. He told his advisors, "I wish I had never heard of this weapon," that he could not bear to be remembered as the president who "introduced bombs

²⁵⁰ SASC, *FY80 Defense Budget Hearings*, 95.

²⁵¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 303.

that kill people but leave buildings intact,” and that it “ran counter to his goals of nuclear disarmament.”²⁵² On April 7, 1978 the president announced indefinite deferment of ERW with the message that he was doing so in the hope that the U.S.S.R. would demonstrate “restraint in its conventional and nuclear arms programs and force deployments affecting the security of the United States and Western Europe.”²⁵³ Brezhnev issued a terse statement in response: “We resolutely reject any attempt by the United States to impose unacceptable terms on the Soviet Union.”²⁵⁴ The Soviets continued full deployment of the SS-20, some models with three MIRVs each, fielding almost 200 new warheads by the end of the year.²⁵⁵

Having been largely omitted from the decision, the military reacted unfavorably. David Jones, generally the most supportive of Carter’s Chief’s, recalled feeling that the issue “was not handled well.”²⁵⁶ Regarding the international implications of the German Chancellor deciding to accept Carter’s tentative offer, Jones correctly indicated the U.S. had “left Helmut Schmidt out on a limb” and then “sawed it off on him.”²⁵⁷ LTG Edward Rowny, serving on the negotiating team in Geneva for SALT II, said that Carter had “surrendered neutron weapons and received nothing in return.”²⁵⁸ John Singlaub heavily criticized the decision on the conservative lecture circuit.²⁵⁹ Even though Carter admitted later that his

²⁵² Ibid., 304; Richard Burt, “Aides Report Carter Bans Neutron Bomb; Some Seek Reversal,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1978, 1.

²⁵³ SASC, *FY81 Defense Budget Hearings*, 47.

²⁵⁴ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 109.

²⁵⁵ Martin, *NATO and the Defense of the West*, 130-131.

²⁵⁶ GEN David Jones, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 7-8.

²⁵⁷ GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 280.

²⁵⁸ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 109.

²⁵⁹ Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 411.

own handling of ERW had been a mistake, it did not change the fact that he had exacerbated civil-military relations in 1978.²⁶⁰

Prepared for the Worst?: PD-32, the Horn of Africa Crisis, and PD-41 “Civil Defense”

While PD-12 and PD-18 had defined Japan and Western Europe as areas of vital interest, Africa was not defined as such a vital area. This did not meet with the views of the Joint Staff, who in late 1976 pointed to the “conspicuous growth” of Soviet, Cuban, and Chinese influence on the continent. To military planners, communist involvement in African affairs “posed a serious threat to U.S. interests.”²⁶¹

Through the first two years of the administration, the defense policies of the Carter administration had done little to address this perceived threat to American interests in Africa. In PD-30 on February 17, 1978 the administration articulated a “Human Rights” policy: The U.S. would support foreign governments not on their anti-communist stance but primarily upon their treatment of their own citizens.²⁶² While the Pentagon registered no explicit objections to PD-30, many in the military rejected the statements of Andrew Young, the administration’s ambassador to the U.N., that the Cuban presence in Africa was actually good and had introduced “a certain stability and order” and was “essentially opposing racism.” Young declared, “I don’t believe Cuba is in Africa because it was ordered there by the Russians. I believe Cuba is in Africa because it has a shared sense of colonial oppression.” The U.N. Ambassador’s assurance that Americans need not fear “a few

²⁶⁰ For Carter’s admission that his handling was a mistake, see Jimmy Carter, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 28.

²⁶¹ Ronald H. Cole and others, *The History of the Unified Command Plan 1946-1999*, ed. Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint History Office (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2003), 55.

²⁶² Jimmy Carter, “Presidential Directive/NSC 30, February 17, 1978,” p. 2, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

Communists, or even a few thousand Communists” working in Africa could not have meshed well with the perspective of the Pentagon, which viewed this presence a serious threat.²⁶³

U.S. defense policy regarding Africa met one of its first major challenges in what came to be known as the “Horn of Africa Crisis.” A series of tumultuous events shook the area in the summer of 1978. Somalia, traditionally supported by Moscow, made overtures toward the West, while its neighbor, Ethiopia, increasingly accepted Soviet and Cuban aid. A long-standing border dispute between the two nations broke into open warfare and the two superpowers seemed obligated to take sides.²⁶⁴ Carter initially agreed to provide “defensive” arms to Somalia, but when that country gained the upper hand in the dispute, he quickly withdrew the aid. The Soviets increasingly poured in advisors and the Cubans even sent combat units to fight on the Ethiopian side.²⁶⁵ Further inflaming tensions, the Soviet Union helped a communist coup in South Yemen across the Arabian Sea from Somalia.²⁶⁶ Additionally, the Soviets had shown strong concern about any foreign presence in the Indian Ocean, demanding the “elimination” of American bases in the area, including Diego Garcia.²⁶⁷ Brzezinski believed that these events “posed a potentially grave threat to our position in the Middle East.”²⁶⁸

²⁶³ Spencer, *The Carter Implosion*, 55. Andrew Young also encouraged the president to support Prime Minister Michael N. Manley of Jamaica, until Admiral Stan Turner interceded and informed Carter that Manley had strong ties to Caribbean Communist organizations. See Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy*, 130-131.

²⁶⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 178.

²⁶⁵ Richard Burt, “U.S. Sends Ships to Arabian Sea in Yemen Crisis,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1979, A1.

²⁶⁶ Gregory F. Treverton, *Covert Action: The Limits of Intervention in the Postwar World* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 203.

²⁶⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #18, June 24, 1977,” p. 5-6, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President, 16-30 [6/77-9/77], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²⁶⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 178.

Perhaps learning from previous experiences, the administration sought early input from the uniformed military during the Horn of Africa Crisis. One of the first NSC meetings included both General Brown and his aide, LTG William Y. Smith.²⁶⁹ When the Chairmanship of the JCS changed in June of 1978, David Jones continued to attend the NSC meetings about the region.²⁷⁰ Although Brzezinski pressed very hard for a strong U.S. response, including deploying a carrier battle group into the Arabian Sea, both Harold Brown and the JCS were “skeptical” over these moves, advocating a more diplomatic course. Brzezinski was enraged, noting in his journal that both Harold Brown and the JCS seemed “badly bitten by the Vietnam bug” and consequently were “fearful of taking the kind of action which is necessary.”²⁷¹ In part due to fuller participation in the policy making process, the Pentagon presented a unified front and substantively contributed to a resolution of the crisis.

The resulting directive, PD-32, proposed that the U.S. government support a local solution to the conflict through the Organization of African states. The directive ordered a restriction on transfers of arms to the region and promised U.S. willingness to “offset Soviet threats or actions.” The document did not approve the deployment of the aircraft carrier to the region, but indicated “willingness to consider moving a carrier closer to the area.” Unlike many previous decisions, the directive contained a plan for how the administration would consult closely with congressional leaders.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Christine Dodson, "Memorandum to David Aaron from Christine Dodson, Subject: SCC Meeting December 21, 1977 on Horn of Africa, December 20, 1977," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 27, Folder: Meetings-SCC 46: 12/21/77, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²⁷⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 183.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 32, February 24, 1978," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA., 1-3.

Brzezinski believed that the weak response proposed by PD-32 represented a critical turning point in the administration's relationship with the Soviets.²⁷³ David Jones differed. When asked to comment on Brzezinski's thesis and the Horn of Africa Crisis, Jones scoffed. "I don't recall it at all. It wasn't an important issue in my mind." Clearly the Pentagon view had won out over that of the National Security Advisor in the case of PD-32.

PD-41, "U.S. Civil Defense Policy," published in 1978, also reflected the increasing weight that the Pentagon was beginning to have on some policies. Pressure from the Pentagon, especially Secretary of Defense Brown, to examine how the U.S. could minimize damage from a nuclear exchange with the U.S.S.R. spurred the directive.²⁷⁴ Department of Defense studies had for some time suggested that a civil defense program might have potential, but Carter remained unconvinced despite Harold Brown's advocacy.²⁷⁵ In authorizing PD-41 Carter emphasized the importance of civil defense and re-energized government efforts toward examining how the nation might survive a protracted war with large scale use of nuclear weapons. This turn toward analyzing potential conflicts with the Soviet Union illustrated the more pragmatic policies that typified the second half of the administration.

PD-41 emphasized the value of civil defense preparation in the "perception" of the nuclear balance of power. Civil defense preparation could prevent the U.S. from being "coerced in a

²⁷³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 189. Brzezinski felt that the weak response emboldened the Soviets and led the administration to over-react from that point forward, especially with the issue of the Soviet Brigade in Cuba, a subject in the next chapter. These U.S. over-reactions led to the derailment of the SALT II treaty. Brzezinski has therefore made the comment that "SALT lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden." The Ogaden was the disputed desert region between Ethiopia and Somalia.

²⁷⁴ Brown, *Thinking About National Security*, 81.

²⁷⁵ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 465-466. Brown did not, however, approve of a massive civil-defense effort on the scale of the Soviets. Defending limited spending on civil defense in subsequent budgets, Brown indicated that he felt it would be a "serious mistake for us to go into an all-out civil defense effort." See HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 440.

time of crisis.” It recognized the “continuing U.S. reliance on strategic offensive nuclear forces as the preponderant factor in maintaining deterrence.”²⁷⁶

The Pentagon and uniformed military were pleased with the policy articulated in PD-41. William Odom, the military aide to Brzezinski, was certainly very satisfied with PD-41. He, along with NSC aide Samuel Huntington, worked extensively to bring civil defense to both Carter and Brzezinski’s attention. These men recognized the significance and evolutionary nature of PD-41 and praised Carter’s decision to implement it.²⁷⁷ Press interpretation billed the passage of the directive as a victory for the Pentagon over the State Department and arms control advocates within the administration.²⁷⁸

While the military may have applauded PD-41, many of Carter’s civilian advisors did not. Odom recalled that Leslie Gelb and Lynne Davis, two more liberal minded members of Carter’s administration, strongly objected to PD-41.²⁷⁹ Before the president assumed office Barry Blechman and Stuart Eizenstat had counseled against spending on civil-defense.²⁸⁰ Paul Warnke, who had recently resigned as Carter’s head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, was also highly critical of the effort.²⁸¹ Vance’s State Department

²⁷⁶ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 41, September 29, 1978," Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²⁷⁷ BG William Odom, interview by James Milano, Carlisle Oral History, 80.

²⁷⁸ Richard Burt, "Carter Adopts a Program to Bolster Civil Defense in a Nuclear Attack," *New York Times*, November 13, 1978, A1.; Richard Burt, "Civil Defense Drive: A Turnabout in U.S. Strategic Policy," *New York Times*, December 6, 1978, A20.

²⁷⁹ BG William Odom, interview by James Milano, Carlisle Oral History, 80.

²⁸⁰ Blechman, "Memo to Eizenstat on Brookings Institution Study on SALT," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA, 12.

²⁸¹ Bernard Weinraub, "Civil-Defense Limits Suggested by Ex-Arms Negotiator," *New York Times*, January 9, 1979, A9.

was also said to have fought against the allocation of resources for civil defense.²⁸² In some ways, the drafting of this directive began to show the final splits in the administration that would lead to an NSC policy formulation process dominated by the hard-line predilections of Brzezinski and culminate in the resignation of Secretary of State Vance.

Building and Refining a Grand Strategy: Civil-Military Relations and Defense Policy, 1977-1978

PD-41 ended the first phase in civil-military relations surrounding defense policy in the Carter administration. In the first two years of the administration, Carter chose to exclude the JCS from his official policy making process as part of his revision of the NSC system. He listened at times to the Chiefs in person, but when it came to policy making he wanted their views filtered through Harold Brown. Carter's NSC process, while intended to create dissenting views, often kept the Pentagon out of the process. This led not only to the beginning of the oft-discussed Vance-Brzezinski split, but also to the perception among members of the military that the JCS was being "muzzled." A secondary consequence was tension between the JCS and Harold Brown, whom the Chiefs viewed as ineffective in advancing Pentagon policy preferences. Finally, as the Chiefs adapted to Carter's policy making process, they proved willing to compromise and support the administration, with the Korea withdrawals being a case of weak, qualified support and the Panama Canal treaties demonstrating strong support. Despite willingness to compromise and work with the administration, many members of the military outside the JCS and Joint Staff opposed Carter's policies. Korea was the worst case of dissent with the theater CINC breaking openly with the administration. Even in the case of strongest support—the Panama Canal treaties, where both the JCS and the CINC supported the policy—the administration still suffered a

²⁸² Burt, "Carter Adopts a Program to Bolster Civil Defense in a Nuclear Attack," *New York Times*, November 13, 1978, A1.

litany of dissent from prominent members of the retired military. In effect, civil-military conflict dominated the first two years of the Carter administration.

The sources of this conflict were many. The early exclusion of the JCS from the policy making process was certainly a major source of frustration. In policies where the JCS were steadily consulted, such as the Panama Canal Treaties and the Horn of Africa Crisis, the tension eased. Carter's own proclivity for making surprise decisions at the last minute without consulting advisors or Congress also maximized civil-military conflict. The B-1 bomber cancellation was perhaps the best example of this, but the last-minute unilateral ERW deferral and the rather sudden issuance of PD-12 on Korea also created needless anger. Finally, the Carter administration continued the post-World War II willingness to politicize the role of the JCS on many matters related to defense policy. While Carter generally failed to heed the advice of his military advisors in his first two years in office, he and members of his cabinet recognized the critical need for their support of his policies. This created civil-military tension during the Korea incident, the B-1 bomber cancellation, and also during the Panama Canal treaties. Each of these factors explains why civil-military conflict predominated the defense policy making process in Carter's first two years of office.

Carter recognized the growing civil-military discord and called a meeting with the Chiefs in late 1977. The president asked the Chiefs if they were "participating to the extent" that they believed "appropriate in the decisions being made" within the administration. While the Chiefs responded "generally in the affirmative," they suggested it might be helpful if all of them, not just the Chairman, were able to become more involved with the NSC. Carter yielded to their request and directed that Brzezinski would meet once a month with JCS. Additionally, Carter cleared the Chairman or the Acting Chairman and his assistant to attend

all NSC meetings.²⁸³ This decision helped to alleviate some of the tension caused by the initial exclusion and filtering of military advice. The reduction in tension and increase in JCS participation were shown in the events surrounding PD-32 and PD-41.

Civil-military relations surrounding the policy making process in the Carter administration would not experience an abrupt change with the passage of PD-41 and the arrival of 1979, but in several ways the relationship changed in the second two years of the administration. Several crises placed the civil-military relationship under an even greater strain. Revolutions in Nicaragua and Iran, a coup in Korea, the discovery of a brigade of Russian troops in Cuba, the taking of the American hostages in Tehran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan all required close civil-military consultation. Yet, the relationship managed to remain functional through the turmoil. Nonetheless, in the last two years of Carter's term the defense policy process was to be taxed to its limit—and in a state of virtual chaos.

Despite the civil-military conflict surrounding defense policy and budgets in the first two years of Carter's term, there was still potential for compromise on many issues. Harold Brown had built a working relationship with two sets of Chiefs by 1979. David Jones, taking over as Chairman in 1978, supported Brown and Carter on many important issues, setting aside service interests to do so. The military-congressional alliance pushed Carter toward raising defense budgets and fought him on certain policy issues such as Korea troop withdrawals, but had been willing to support him on the critical but controversial Panama Canal treaties. By the start of 1979, civil-military relations in the Carter years were by no means doomed to perpetual conflict. In the last two years of his administration there would be much compromise in this area—but ultimately, especially in the realm of defense budgets,

²⁸³ Bernard Rogers, "Memorandum for Record, Subject: Luncheon Meeting of JCS with President Carter, 30 Nov 77," General Bernard Rogers Papers, Box 192, File: JCS Luncheon Meeting with President, 1 Dec 77, National Defense University, Washington, D.C.

it was going to be the uncompromising Jimmy Carter who would have to accept most of the compromises with the military-congressional alliance.

CHAPTER IV

COMPROMISE: THE DEFENSE BUDGET AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS, 1979-1981

Interlude: Room 2337, Rayburn House Office Building, May 29, 1980, 9:00 a.m.¹

Representative Samuel Stratton, sitting beneath a huge painting of the Iwo Jima flag raising, had just lowered his gavel, bringing to order a special congressional hearing. As chairman of the investigations subcommittee, Sam Stratton held a key position within the larger House Armed Services Committee. In past congressional testimony, he had often questioned the Carter administration's defense policies and had suggested that uniformed military advice was being ignored. Although Stratton was a Democrat and one of the most senior members of the committee, Jimmy Carter and his staff had never asked his advice, invited him to dinner at the White House, or even spoken to him by phone.² Like his friend Melvin Price, who was also a member of the subcommittee, Stratton had serious doubts about the adequacy of the Carter Administration's defense budgets and felt that Congress had been given scant attention in the defense policy making process in the last four years.

Preparing to testify before the subcommittee were the highest ranking military officers in the nation. At their center sat Air Force General David Jones, the longest serving member of

¹ Information on this Congressional Hearing taken from United States Congress, House Armed Services Committee, Investigations Subcommittee, *National Defense Funding Levels for Fiscal Year 1981, Ninety Sixth-Congress, Second Session, May 29, 1980* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980). Hereafter cited as HASC, *FY81 Defense Budget Investigations Hearings*. For details on the layout of the Rayburn House Office Building, see Rosenfeld, "Rep. Hebert: A Sense of Power," *Washington Post*, April 5, 1974, A30.

² Bernard Weinraub, "Rep. Stratton Shows the Flag for the Pentagon," *New York Times*, February 8, 1979, B9.

the JCS and now its chairman. General Lew Allen represented the Air Force and General Edward Meyer spoke for the Army. Admiral Hayward was out of the country at the time and was therefore represented by Admiral James Watkins, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations. The Commandant of the Marine Corps had recently been made a full member of the JCS through legislation, so the newly appointed General Robert Barrow also sat before the congressional panel. Each of the Chiefs was prepared to answer questions relating to the Carter Administration's Fiscal Year 1981 Defense Budget. Each one of them was also prepared to be put on the spot. Given the animosity that existed between the House Armed Services Committee and the president, the Chiefs certainly expected a pointed series of questions. As always when testifying before Congress, these military men would have to balance their support for stated administration policies with being truthful about their own professional opinions.

Notably absent from the hearings were any of the Joint Chiefs' civilian counterparts. Neither Harold Brown nor any of the Service Secretaries had been called to testify at this special hearing. Actually, they had been specifically excluded from the roll call. Past hearings of this particular subcommittee had sought to discover if uniformed military leaders were actually being consulted by the administration, but it had been almost a full year since the subcommittee had last discussed these matters. Now the issue was front and center once again. This particular hearing was called due to what Chairman Stratton termed an "almost unprecedented development."³ Only a few weeks earlier both the President and the Secretary of Defense had each written letters to the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee asking that increases in defense spending proposed by the House Armed Services Committee be struck down. Secretary Brown's letter in particular was a point of great contention, for it

³ HASC, *FY81 Defense Budget Investigations Hearings*, 1.

accused the House Armed Services Committee of “jeopardizing” the military capability of the United States by pursuing its own course and making additions to the defense budget.⁴ The absence of Pentagon civilians at this hearing was designed to insure that the military leaders would be completely candid when questioned about these letters and their role in formulating them.

As Congressman Stratton brought the meeting to order, he leaned forward in his chair, spoke into his microphone, and outlined the reason for the hearing. Stratton stated for the record the fact that the JCS advisory role to the President was codified in written law. He then made it clear that he and most of the members of his committee felt that uniformed military advice was being ignored. This, said the senior congressman, “seemed to us a very unfortunate situation since, if you are going to have advisors but consistently don’t take their advice, something is radically wrong and needs changing.”⁵ Stratton scanned the faces of the JCS, who sat in a row opposite him in the room at a large desk beneath an oil portrait of two young girls waiting for their POW father to return from Hanoi. The differences between the emotional faces in the painting and the stoic expressions of the JCS could not be more stark. If these professionals agreed with Stratton’s statements then it was not outwardly apparent, but the veteran congressman was undeterred. He was all too familiar with the Beltway etiquette. He would have to ask these military men very specific questions to get them to reveal their disagreements with the commander-in-chief and the Secretary of Defense. And Stratton and his Committee knew exactly what to ask.

Stratton began with Jones. He asked if Secretary Brown had consulted him before sending the letter to Congress requesting reduced defense expenditures. General Jones, wanting to

⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵ Ibid., 1.

deflect possible criticism of his civilian superior, stated that it was “common procedure” for the Secretary of Defense to submit such letters to Congress. No skilled politician would accept such an answer. “I would prefer if you would just answer the question, General,” Stratton shot back. General Jones admitted that he had not seen the letter until shortly after it was sent to Congress. Stratton sensed victory, but wanted to clarify the issue even more for the record: “Secretary Brown did not consult you—is that right?” General Jones paused momentarily, trying to decide if there was any way to soften his response. “He did not on this letter,” the general finally replied.⁶ Given the treatment afforded to him by the president and his staff, Stratton felt obligated to slam his point home in even more dramatic fashion:

So on a matter which would appear to be of grave significance . . . Secretary Brown did not consult you before he advised Senator Stennis that the funds added by the House could seriously jeopardize our national defense?⁷

“He did not,” General Jones conceded.⁸ The Chairman was immensely pleased. He had known Jones would be the most difficult member of the JCS to question because in the past the Air Force general had, in hours of cross-examination, supported the administration’s decision to cancel the B-1 bomber.⁹ Now, in just a short series of questions, Stratton felt he had clearly demonstrated the civil-military discord between the President, his Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs.

Still not wanting to let the point rest, Stratton questioned each of the members of the JCS in turn about both Secretary Brown’s and the president’s letters to Senator Stennis. Each of them testified that they had not been consulted on the content of the letters. Two of them,

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ HASC, *FY79 Authorization Hearings*, 881, 924, 939, 948, 956.

Meyer and Barrow, were not even aware of their existence until reading about them in the newspaper some days later.¹⁰ This placed at least two of the service chiefs in the same situation as all members of the House Armed Services Committee, since Harold Brown and President Carter had informed none of them as to the letters which they had sent to Congress.¹¹ As the five Chiefs finished their testimony, Stratton wondered aloud how “on a matter so vital to our national security and one where a sovereign House of Congress was being challenged by the Secretary of Defense on a professional military matter,” he himself would not have at least been informed of the administration’s intentions.¹² It seemed that Carter and his civilian advisors had attempted their own variant of the end-run on Congress with the veiled goal of curbing rises in defense spending.

Having established the lack of military consultation surrounding the two letters, Stratton unleashed the other members of his committee to question the Chiefs’ personal opinions about various modifications and omissions from the defense budget. Two cancelled programs received particular attention: The B-1 bomber and the AV-8B Harrier II. Under intense questioning, General Jones, in somewhat of a backtrack from his FY78 defense budget testimony, stated that he regretted the cancellation of the B-1 bomber and hoped that it would be considered again for procurement as a cruise-missile carrier.¹³ General Barrow classified the AV-8B, which had been rejected by Harold Brown as too costly, as the

¹⁰ For unanimity of non-consultation, see HASC, *FY81 Defense Budget Investigations Hearings*, 8. For newspaper discovery see HASC, *FY79 Authorization Hearings*, 5-6.

¹¹ HASC, *FY81 Defense Budget Investigations Hearings*, 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 12.

Marine's "number one aviation priority."¹⁴ One of the most vocal critics of the proposed Carter budget was the Chief of Staff of the Army. General Meyer testified that he currently felt that there was "a tremendous shortfall in our ability to modernize the Army," and that the present budget did not allow his service to meet "the challenge of the eighties." He went on to cite grave recruiting shortfalls and bluntly stated that the Army had become "hollow."¹⁵ Under continued questioning from the committee members, each of the Chiefs admitted that they felt the defense budget was inadequate without the additions proposed by the Armed Services Committees in Congress. Many of the Chiefs cited the recent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as proof of the need to bolster the nation's military posture.¹⁶ From the questioning, the JCS unanimously agreed that the additions and modifications to the defense budget proposed by Congress were essential to guarantee the future security of the nation.

Given the unanimity among the Chiefs, some members of Congress found it shocking that military end-runs to Congress had not been more prevalent and intense over the last four years. To address this issue, Sam Stratton called on Marjorie Holt (R-MD), a member of both the Armed Services and Budget Committees. She opened by lamenting that she was the only one fighting for the defense portion of the budget on the Budget Committee, traditionally more liberal than the Armed Services Committee, and that she had little support from the military's congressional liaison office. This, she argued, was in stark contrast to the Nixon and Ford administrations, when liaison officers were "swarming all over the place providing information." Looking directly at Jones, she declared that there was little hope of

¹⁴ Ibid., 6. For Harold Brown's repeated opposition to the AV-8B see GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 331.

¹⁵ HASC, *FY81 Defense Budget Investigation Hearings*, 9, 11, 18.

¹⁶ Ibid., 7, 11.

passing a higher defense budget “simply because we are not getting any assistance from you at all.”¹⁷ “You know the situation better than anybody,” she implored to the stoic uniformed men sitting before her: “You’re the men who are going to have to go out there and lay yourselves on the line.” “Ma’am,” General Jones interjected, “We’ve tried to be helpful this morning, in sharing our concerns.” Congresswoman Holt was not so easily deterred. “We appreciate it very much,” she conceded, but reiterated that in her mind the matter was “very serious.” She alluded to many allies in the Senate who felt that the defense budget should increase. “I think it’s time that all of us wake up,” she concluded forcefully.¹⁸ Sam Stratton leaned forward, passing his gaze over each member of the JCS. “I think Mrs. Holt has put her finger on what is the most frustrating thing to all of us.” He challenged the JCS on their relative silence on the defense budget prior to this morning, asking each member of the JCS if they had been instructed to lobby against increases in the defense budget. Each Chief denied it.¹⁹

The panel was clearly suggesting that the military end-runs over the last four years had been relatively minor compared to what they might have been given the circumstances. “I just can’t see why every other agency in the Federal Government is free to lobby,” Holt broke in, “the food stamp people are here in full force . . . [yet] the Defense Department is under such constraints to tell us, to tell publicly, what we need.” Opening a new line of questioning, she pressed the Chairman of the JCS for answers, “Where does the president get his military advice? Who makes the decisions, OMB?”²⁰ General Jones was noticeably

¹⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹⁹ Ibid., 22.

²⁰ Ibid., 23.

flustered by Congresswoman Holt's blunt questioning, and one of the more senior members of the panel, Robin Beard (R-TN) attempted to interrupt Holt. She brushed him off: "Wait a minute. Let me finish. On the military budget from whom does President Carter take his advice? General Jones?" "He gets it from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and from the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Council," Jones replied. She quickly retorted, "And he doesn't pay any attention to it at all, from what you said this morning." The general paused a moment to reflect on an appropriate moderating counter to this last line of questioning. "Our record is mixed," he replied. General Jones then went on at some length to describe how Carter had over time added to the defense budget and listened increasingly to the advice of the JCS. He emphasized the loyalty that the JCS had for their commander-in-chief, and the fact that it would be wrong for the military to lobby against any executive decision. "That would destroy the discipline in the military if we can make choices as to whom we obey," Jones concluded. Congresswoman Holt felt obligated to soften her harsh tone. "I certainly commend you gentlemen, and I didn't mean to imply that you should have a lot of people swarming around," she acknowledged, "I don't mean to belittle your efforts or not to recognize the constraints you're under; but somehow we've got to get the message out, and I'm really very concerned."²¹ Most of the committee nodded in agreement, and all seemed impressed by the loyalty and professionalism of the Joint Chiefs.

Stratton smiled and prepared to end the hearing with a sort of grand finale. He turned to fellow committee member Robin Beard next to him and nodded. Beard took the floor and first addressed Congresswoman Holt. "I identify with your frustration, and I know you are searching for answers from these gentlemen," he said, gesturing to the JCS, "but there's no

²¹ Ibid., 24.

way these individuals can give you the answer.” With emotion creeping into his voice, Beard lambasted the administration’s entire defense policy: “I think the fact of the matter is the defense of this country is caught up in this cheap shot, irresponsible politics.”²² He then launched into a verbal assault on the last three plus years of defense policy decisions:

We talk about some of the battles we’ve won or some of the battles we’ve lost. I don’t think the President is listening to you as much as he should. We look at the shipbuilding program. . . . We look at the nuclear carrier when the President used one of his few vetoes during his tour. We look at the neutron bomb; we look at the AV-8B, which the Marine Corps has begged for and pleaded for and sacrificed for; we look at the B-1 bomber. . . . With all of these things, the changes have been because political polls show that maybe it’s more popular. I think the straw that breaks the camel’s back is a letter from the Secretary of Defense and a letter from the President which read like third-grade readers. It’s an insult. These letters are an insult to the Congress; they’re an insult to the military leadership; and they’re an insult to the American people. These letters are absolutely, totally insane.²³

The committee room remained silent as Congressman Beard concluded his remarks. The Carter administration, in his mind, was “caught up in campaign politics” and the defense of this country was “paying the price.”²⁴

As he adjourned the committee at 10:40 a.m., Sam Stratton felt quite pleased. The JCS had remained as loyal and professional as he expected, but with his system of pointed questioning he had been able to reveal fully the two-faced nature of Jimmy Carter’s promises to increase defense spending in the last two years of his presidency. The media would soon get hold of the incident and widely report that the JCS had broken with the administration over the adequacy of the defense budget.²⁵ Carter had throughout his term snubbed Congress

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 24-25.

²⁴ Ibid., 25.

²⁵ George C. Wilson, "Joint Chiefs of Staff Break with Carter on Budget Planning for Defense Needs," *Washington Post*, May 30, 1980, A1, A16; Martin Tolchin, "House Rejects Budget Compromise as Foes of

in the defense budgeting and policy making process. The president, thought Stratton, would now reap what he had sowed. The military-congressional alliance had reached one of the highest points in the four years of the administration, and Stratton, along with allies like Sam Nunn and Ernest Hollings in the Senate, were about to unleash a flood of peacetime defense spending.

In many ways this particular hearing exemplified four years of civil-military relations surrounding the defense budget in the Carter Administration. First, although Jimmy Carter would become less personally involved in the third and fourth iterations of his administration's defense budget, he and his staff still chafed at Congress altering his defense spending priorities. This rejection of the traditional role of Congress in formulating the defense budget led to continued ineptitude within the administration when dealing with the Armed Services Committees and often resulted in Harold Brown being caught in the middle during his testimony before Congress. Ultimately, Carter's condescending attitude toward key pro-defense congressmen and senators cemented a firm military-congressional alliance and hardened a bi-partisan consensus within the Congress that his administration was not doing enough in the realm of national security. Second, the JCS, under the leadership and example of General Jones, would remain loyal and professional throughout Carter's term. Although end-runs would certainly take place, they did not occur to the extent that one would expect given Carter's weak standing with Congress. Finally, as this hearing vividly demonstrated, Harold Brown would find himself caught in the middle between a bi-partisanly pro-military Congress and a president unwilling and unable to negotiate important issues related to the defense budget. This strained the relationship between civilians and the

Military Outlay Prevail," *New York Times*, May 30, 1980, A1; Richard Halloran, "Joint Chiefs Dissent on Carter-Brown Military Budget," *New York Times*, May 30, 1980, D14.

military within the Pentagon and exacerbated animosity between the Pentagon and the White House.

When reflecting upon his tenure as Harold Brown's special assistant, John Kester recalled that with regard to the defense budget "there was a great concern to have the chiefs sign on and say the funding was there—that the budget was adequate for the next year," but as he was leaving his post in 1981 Kester admitted that, "there came a time when the chiefs refused to do that."²⁶ The hearing before Sam Stratton's Investigations Subcommittee had revealed this dissent, but such a civil-military break had not occurred overnight. The culmination of the events that took place in May 1980 can be traced back to the early stages of the formulation of the previous defense budget.

Bold Promises: Rhetoric and the Need for Higher Defense Spending in FY80

As the time approached to prepare the FY80 defense budget, the Carter administration clearly held a position of weakness relative to that of the military-congressional alliance. Victory in the veto of the FY79 defense appropriations bill had come at a high cost to the administration's relationship with pro-defense senators and congressmen. Carter would soon need these same lawmakers' votes when it would come time to present the SALT II treaty for ratification. With public opinion polls showing an increased desire for higher defense spending, many high ranking officers at the Pentagon saw the opportunity as ripe to lobby openly. Bolstering the military's position, Douglas Heinl, a pro-military political scientist, published in early 1979 a prominent op-ed in the *Washington Post* decrying the Soviet threat and calling for increased defense spending as an "insurance premium" for the nation.²⁷ Air

²⁶ John Kester, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 5.

²⁷ Robert Debs Heinl, "The Nimbus of Myths About Defense," *Washington Post*, January 28, 1979, C7.

Force Chief Lew Allen followed up a little more than a month later with a public speech to the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce describing the Soviet threat as greater than any threat in the nation's history.²⁸ Senator Stennis (D-MS) remarked as he began hearings on the FY1980 budget that the "balance between ourselves and the Soviets should be a matter of concern to all Americans."²⁹ The rhetoric of the Soviet threat and the need for increased defense spending in FY80 had made an early appearance in 1979.

Not only was the rhetoric of the Soviet threat increasing on the eve of the SALT II debate and the FY80 defense budget preparation, but the economy also proved to be a major issue on which the military-congressional alliance capitalized. While Carter had repeatedly stated that he would decrease the budget deficit for the nation in FY80, ruinous inflation and a sagging economy forced him to reconsider his promise. Two distinguished chief economic advisors to former presidents, including Alan Greenspan, agreed that a recession year made President Carter's goal of holding the budget deficit for FY80 to \$30 billion "unrealistic."³⁰ Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) concurred that the economic situation was detrimental to paring defense spending, publicly stating that a balanced budget amendment would "endanger national defense."³¹ The Pentagon followed suit, releasing reports that the military was 27 percent over budget on its fuel costs. Additionally the military would require \$890 million more than was allocated in the FY79 budget in order to pay its operating costs for

²⁸ GEN Lew Allen, interview by James Hasdorf, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 105.

²⁹ United States Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for FY80, 96th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 5. Hereafter cited as SASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*.

³⁰ Hobart Rowen, "Economists Question Carter's '80 Budget," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1979, B7-B8.

³¹ Bill Peterson, "Byrd Warns Budget Restrictions Could Endanger National Defense," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1979, A16.

that year. \$470 million was required just to hold even with inflation, and another \$490 million was needed for “deferred DoD property maintenance, equipment repair, and unit training.” Still unfunded would be \$250 million for recruiting and \$200 million for ship and aircraft overhaul, plus over \$400 million for increased utility usage. General Jones publicly stated that these items badly needed funding and were of the “highest priority.”³² The Pentagon clearly planned to milk the current political and economic situation in order to get the most defense dollars possible.

Following Carter’s veto of the FY79 defense bill in August of 1978, Congress had been unable to agree on what items should replace the money allocated for the rejected Nimitz class carrier. The House Armed Services Committee therefore made the relatively rare concession that any replacement items could be considered in a supplemental defense request for FY79.³³ Taking advantage of this offer, the Pentagon sought to place their “unprogrammed” cost overruns into a \$2.7 billion supplement for the FY79 defense budget. JCS Historian Stephen Rearden has termed the submission of this FY79 supplement to the defense bill as “the first sign of a crack in the administration’s budget policy,” and truly it was a crack into which the Pentagon chose to drive a wedge.³⁴ High ranking military officers and many civilians in the Pentagon realized that Carter’s desire to smooth congressional relations in advance of SALT II were too important for him to risk fighting another FY79-

³² "Congressional Talking Points Supporting the Restoration of the 3% Real Increase in Defense Spending, 1979," p. 1-2, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Congressional Liaison-Beckel, Box 220, Folder: Defense Budget 9/9-14/79, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

³³ United States Congress, House Armed Services Committee, *Full Committee Consideration of HR 2575 and HR 3354* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, April 3, 1979), 1.

³⁴ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 359.

style veto. By taking full advantage of the FY79 Supplemental, the Pentagon recognized the opportunity to gain more funding with comparatively little risk.

Although the FY79 Supplemental seemed an attractive option for the administration to increase defense expenditures, it met with significant congressional scrutiny. Such defense supplementals had been rare, and passage would require a waiver from the Rules Committee of Congress.³⁵ Additionally, because the need for the supplemental had arisen due to Carter's veto, many in Congress did not intend to give him an easy pass in modifying his plan for defense spending. Yet, early in January of 1979, the Pentagon drafted plans, with Carter's approval, to submit the supplemental authorization for the FY79 defense budget. Such an immediate and active discussion of the submitting of a FY79 supplemental defense spending bill shocked even Senator John Stennis (D-MI), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, who indicated that he would object to the supplement on the grounds it was not a military emergency and was not needed until FY80.³⁶ Likewise, Joseph Addabbo (D-NY), the new chairman of the House Budget Committee, initially felt that the supplement should be rejected on similar grounds.³⁷ Likewise, House Appropriations Committee Chairman Robert Giaimo (D-CT), generally favorable toward defense spending, questioned the need for the supplemental, asking why the additions could not wait a few extra months to be considered with the FY80 Defense Budget.³⁸ This posed a dilemma for Carter, and

³⁵ United States Congress, House Appropriations Committee, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1980, 96th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 507. Hereafter cited as HAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*.

³⁶ SASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 79.

³⁷ United States Congress, House Committee on the Budget, Task Force on Defense and International Affairs, *Overview of FY80 Budget for Defense and International Affairs, 96th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 524. Hereafter cited as HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*.

³⁸ HAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 507-508.

revealed why he had made such a strong effort to pass the FY79 supplement. If his administration had in fact disregarded the supplement and instead rolled the increase into the FY80 defense budget submission, then there would have been an almost unprecedented 21 percent increase in the yearly budget, something completely irreconcilable with Carter's bold promises to trim the federal budget deficit and economize in defense spending.³⁹ As the rumors of defense spending increases, and the efforts to conceal them, spread at the start of the second half of his administration, critics declared that the president was "going big on defense but trying to have his cake and eat it too."⁴⁰

The FY79 defense supplement was not the only veiled effort to bolster defense spending. As his plan to add to his FY79 allocation drew increasing fire, Harold Brown suggested an additional course of action which Carter chose to employ. Due to the internal situation in Iran, a large amount of American weaponry scheduled to be purchased by that nation had been cancelled. Since much of the equipment was for the Iranian Navy, the U.S. Navy began planning to acquire these systems for itself—in Secretary Claytor's words, "as soon as the troubles in Iran started."⁴¹ On February 27, 1979, the president asked Congress to allow the Pentagon to buy fifty-five F16 fighters, two Kidd class destroyers, and over six hundred missiles originally slated to be purchased by Iran prior to the fall of the Shah. In contrast to previous defense spending decisions, Carter followed Harold Brown's recommendation with

³⁹ Leonard Silk, "A Fat Budget for Defense," *New York Times*, January 24, 1979, D2. Carter would apply this technique again when dealing with the FY81 defense budget, but instead in an effort to make the real increase seem larger than it really was by lumping a FY80 Supplemental in with the FY81 budget rather than vice-versa. See George C. Wilson, "Pentagon Budget Is Stretched Out," *Washington Post*, March 15, 1980, A13.

⁴⁰ Silk, "A Fat Budget for Defense," *New York Times*, January 24, 1979, D2.

⁴¹ United States Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, *FY79 Supplemental Military Authorization, Ninety-Sixth Congress, First Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 81. Hereafter cited as SASC, *FY79 Supplemental Authorization Hearings*.

very little modification.⁴² Eventually, these items were attached to the FY79 supplement as an amendment which raised the total by an additional \$545 million.⁴³ Once word of the maneuver was leaked to the press, columnist Jack Anderson referred to it as an unabashed “bail out” for defense contractors and argued that most of the equipment was “obsolete or unnecessary.” He dubbed Carter’s defense spending addition the “Great Iranian Fire Sale,” a name which quickly gained common usage on Capitol Hill.⁴⁴

Getting the FY79 Supplemental with the additional items purchased from Iran through Congress would prove to be much harder than Carter expected. Senator Stennis stated at the opening of hearings on the bill that the “burden of proof” was on the Department of Defense to show why the requested programs should be funded in FY79 rather than FY80.⁴⁵ At first Congress called only William Perry, Undersecretary for Research and Development, and W. Graham Claytor, Secretary of the Navy, to testify regarding the supplemental on March 7, 1979.⁴⁶ In his prepared statement, Perry explained that approximately one-third of the supplemental dealt with compensation for “unprogrammed” cost overruns, while the remainder would provide for additional program changes. The largest portion of program changes would be the Pentagon acquisition of weapons systems formerly slated for Iran. The total amended supplement would come to just over \$4.4 billion, and since the president had

⁴² "Pentagon Acquisition of Arms Slated for Iran Requested by Carter," *Washington Post*, February 28, 1979, A5. Carter opted only to remove one major item, a naval frigate costing \$194 million, from Brown's proposed request.

⁴³ Jimmy Carter, "Supplemental Appropriations, Communication from the President March 1, 1979," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1979* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 4.

⁴⁴ Jack Anderson, "The Great Iranian Fire Sale," *Washington Post*, April 23, 1979, C24.

⁴⁵ SASC, *FY79 Supplemental Authorization Hearings*, 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, iii.

seen fit to veto the previous year's defense bill, the Senate Armed Services Committee was not about to let such a large supplement pass without debate.⁴⁷

The desire of many lawmakers to assert their role in the defense budget process was clear by the manner in which the Senate Armed Services Committee questioned DoD witnesses. Graham Claytor made a strong case for procuring two of the naval vessels previously slated for Iran, by explaining how badly the Navy needed these vessels and how much of a bargain it would be for taxpayers. He even went so far as to suggest phrasing language in the supplemental so as to pave the way for purchasing two additional destroyers bound for Iran that he was certain would also be rejected by the new government in Tehran. Stennis, considered to be one of the strongest supporters of the Navy in the Senate, tempered his approval of the plan so as to appear only partially supportive.⁴⁸ Many senators indicated dissatisfaction with the explanations provided by the first set of administration witnesses. By first having called only William Perry and Claytor to testify, the Committee was then able to demand that Harold Brown himself appear to further explain the need for the FY79 supplemental.

When Brown appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Cannon (D-NV), bluntly asked why Brown viewed the Congress as a “supermarket” for his seemingly whimsical choices regarding defense spending.⁴⁹ Brown took a rather apologetic tone to the committee, stating that external events, such as the exile of the Shah and the canceling of the arms for Iran, required the administration to submit an amendment to the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 82-83. Senator Stennis has been termed “the father of America’s modern Navy” and had a Nimitz class aircraft carrier named in his honor. See <http://www.cvn74.navy.mil/aboutSenatorStennis.html> (Accessed December 27, 2007)

⁴⁹ Ibid., 216.

supplemental. Cannon did not initially accept Brown's explanations. Brown appeared frustrated with the continued questioning and at one point admitted:

If I didn't tell you about these things, I would be concealing pertinent information. If we tried to amend the supplemental, you would rightly say that we didn't know what we wanted. Well, we do know now what we want, but I can see that the committee is not inclined to do it.⁵⁰

When Cannon continued to probe as to possible modifications, including buying an additional destroyer, Brown conceded, "I am not sitting on your side of the table. If I were, I would look to find enough money to purchase one of the ships now."⁵¹ Following Cannon's aggressive questioning, the usually pro-Pentagon Sam Nunn (D-GA) joined in the cross-examination, directing a barrage of technical questions about the acquired weapons systems at Brown.⁵² At several other points in the hearing, the Secretary of Defense used this "other side of the table" argument to imply that he would not personally object to congressional modifications of the defense budget. At one point Senator Stennis felt compelled to interrupt another senator and ask Brown, "Are you speaking as a representative of the executive branch of the government?" The Secretary of Defense then downplayed his statements, but concluded by saying that he did not "want to get involved in what is appropriately the committee's responsibility."⁵³ Under the directed questioning, Harold Brown had remained loyal to the policies of his administration, but also tried to make it known that he fully appreciated Congress' role in modifying the defense budget.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 217.

⁵¹ Ibid., 218.

⁵² Ibid., 225-226.

⁵³ Ibid., 219.

As Carter and his administration pushed the supplemental defense authorization, they also attempted to repair some of the damage done to their relationship with pro-defense Congressmen over the FY79 appropriations veto. Given the fallout experienced with HASC Chairman Melvin Price, the administration desperately wanted to keep up cordial relations with SASC Chairman Stennis.⁵⁴ By keeping the influential senator on their side, the administration would certainly find it much easier to move ahead with their modified plans for defense spending, as well as their hope for ratification of the upcoming SALT II treaty with the U.S.S.R. If the House Armed Services Committee was a lost cause, the Senate Armed Services committee appeared much more open for future good relations with the administration, including making Stennis an ally. The Mississippi Democrat had personally supported another nuclear carrier, yet had sided with the president and voted against it following the veto.⁵⁵ By touting increased defense spending and seeking more input from Stennis, Carter and his White House appeared to have found a method to reduce the effectiveness of the military-congressional alliance on Capitol Hill while at the same time paving the way for future ratification of SALT II.

Unfortunately for President Carter, the same ineptitude that had plagued his congressional liaison staff in his first two years continued, with grave consequences for his effort to limit the increases in defense spending. First, Carter's congressional liaison staff angered civilians and military in the Pentagon with their stance on the refurbishment of the aircraft carrier *U.S.S. Saratoga*. The supplemental defense appropriations for FY79 provided for the Service

⁵⁴ Robert Kaiser, "Senate Adds Ships to '79 Arms Budget," *Washington Post*, May 4, 1979, A18.

⁵⁵ "Memorandum for Mr. Dan Tate, Subject: Nuclear Aircraft Carrier, August 14, 1978." Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Congressional Liaison, Box 220, Folder: Defense Department Authorization Bill 1978 [1], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

Life Extension Program (SLEP) of the conventionally-powered carrier. Harold Brown and Graham Claytor had conducted extensive cost-benefit analysis, in cooperation with the Navy, and determined that the overhaul of the aging ship should take place in Newport News, Virginia. Claytor had even gone so far as to submit the Pentagon findings to Congress in writing. But a late afternoon phone call to the Pentagon from the White House caught Brown and his staff off guard.⁵⁶ Vice-President Walter Mondale contacted the Deputy Secretary of Defense at the Pentagon and demanded that the *Saratoga* be refurbished in the Philadelphia Naval Yard in order to help fulfill a campaign promise to create more jobs for the city's sagging economy. A young Colin Powell, the military aide to Charles Duncan, recalled the moment when Harold Brown informed the Secretary of the Navy of the changes that he would have to make to his upcoming Congressional testimony. Claytor fumed, at first refusing to testify differently than the report he had submitted which recommended refurbishment at Newport News.⁵⁷ When the day of reckoning came, however, Claytor relented, falling in line with the White House policy and standing up under rigorous cross examination as to why his testimony was inconsistent with his written report.⁵⁸ The only military witness on the matter, Admiral Thomas Hayward, frankly stated what the studies had actually shown: that Newport News was in fact more cost efficient for the overhaul than Philadelphia.⁵⁹ In the end, Claytor's testimony convincingly supported the refurbishment at Philadelphia Naval Yard, and the Senate Armed Services Committee agreed to the change.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Powell, *My American Journey*, 247-248.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ SASC, *FY79 Supplemental Authorization Hearings*, 253-255.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 256.

⁶⁰ Kaiser, "Senate Adds Ships to '79 Arms Budget," *Washington Post*, May 4, 1979, A18.

Although the vice-president had gotten his way, the White House had again made enemies in the Pentagon.

Following the *Saratoga* incident, the administration botched a second issue related to the inclusion of the “Iranian Fire Sale” naval vessels. Sensing that they could draw closer to their desired strength of six-hundred ships, the Department of the Navy informed Harold Brown that they needed not just two, but all four of the Kidd-class destroyers originally slated for the Shah of Iran. The Secretary of Defense agreed. Brown, aware of Carter’s efforts to gain Stennis as an ally, and shrewdly hoping to ease the passage of the supplement through the Senate, promised the senator that all four of the destroyers would be built in southern ports. As with the prior plan for the *Saratoga*, both civilians and military in the Pentagon fully supported Brown’s plan and felt it a wise tribute to Senator Stennis’ past support.⁶¹ Yet, Carter’s White House staff had different ideas. Without consulting Stennis or the Pentagon, the administration’s congressional liaison allied with Senator Donald Riegle (D-MI), who offered an amendment striking two of the four ships. Shocked at what he considered a political betrayal, Stennis strenuously objected, citing letters from Harold Brown, W. Graham Claytor, and various naval officers arguing that all four destroyers were needed immediately. He also brought up the fact that the four destroyers would bring needed jobs into southern naval yards.⁶² Riegle countered that he was in possession of documents from the administration showing that only two destroyers should be purchased with the FY79 supplemental, with the other two being part of the FY80 budget. According to Riegle, John White, the Deputy Head of OMB, had told him that this was the “definitive” administration

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

position. “This is a repudiation of everything that everybody has told me!” Stennis shouted on the floor of the Senate, prior to storming out of the debate.⁶³ The administration’s efforts to conceal its defense spending plans backfired, and the chance to make an ally of Senator Stennis met a similar fate.

Although ultimately a failure, the efforts to draw closer to Stennis proved unusual because the administration made few such efforts with other important congressmen and senators. A glaring example was the administration’s treatment of Samuel Stratton (D-NY). Stratton held a key position on the House Armed Services Committee. In congressional testimony he had often questioned the administration’s defense policies and suggested that uniformed military advice was being ignored. Though he was one of the most senior members of the committee, Stratton noted that the president and his staff never asked his advice, invited him to dinner at the White House, or even spoken to him by phone.⁶⁴ Perhaps the Carter White House did not want to invest time in cultivating relationships outside the Senate, where ratification of SALT II would not be an issue. Alternatively, Carter may have felt that the conflict with Melvin Price had ruined relations with the House Armed Services Committee. Whatever the reasoning, for many important members of Congress the message was clear. Senator “Scoop” Jackson may have summed up the prevailing attitude when he told the press, in regard to the Carter administration’s relationship with Congress on defense, “I’ve been around here a few years, and I’ve never seen such an amateurish operation.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Weinraub, “Rep. Stratton Shows the Flag for the Pentagon,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1979, B9.

⁶⁵ Kaiser, “Senate Adds Ships to ’79 Arms Budget,” *Washington Post*, May 4, 1979, A18.

Despite the botched handling by the administration, the FY79 Defense Supplemental passed both houses of Congress by May of 1979, in large part due to the testimony of Jones and Secretary of the Navy Claytor. Jones testified that although he was not an alarmist and would not “normally use words like crisis and emergency,” he did feel that these terms clearly applied to the need for the additional defense funds.⁶⁶ If Congress did not pass the supplemental, he argued, the United States would be “signaling to the rest of the world a perpetuation of slips, cuts, and reductions.”⁶⁷ Claytor stated that “a great deal of waste would be incurred” if the supplemental was further delayed and that the veto of the carrier in the FY79 bill had created a clear national emergency “if there ever was an emergency.”⁶⁸ By supporting the administration’s “emergency” criteria and by appealing to the Congress’ sense of fiscal responsibility, these two men helped President Carter to save face and in the process ensured the passage of the FY79 Defense Supplemental.

The Carter administration’s clumsy efforts to conceal defense spending increases, coupled with the administration’s inability to make political bargains that could advance the president’s cause, proved to be yet another factor in cementing a bi-partisan military-congressional alliance against Carter and his White House. The ultimate result was noted later by Harold Brown: Congress, in the last two years of the administration, tried increasingly to “micromanage defense.”⁶⁹ With the all-important SALT II on the table for ratification, key senators and congressmen found the means by which to force the president’s

⁶⁶ HAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 509.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ For “waste” see HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 156. For state of emergency due to the carrier veto see Ibid., 319, 322.

⁶⁹ Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, 28 February 1992, OSD Oral History, 31.

hand. This process of what Brown termed congressional “micromanagement,” having started with the FY79 supplemental, continued for the Carter administration into the FY80 defense budget proposal.

Less Bang for More Bucks: Crafting of the FY80 Defense Budget

In a January 1979 preliminary look at the proposed spending plan for FY80, one Washington Post columnist described it as a “Frankenstein’s monster for the Carter administration” which would clamp “a no-growth appropriations and spending rein on domestic departments and agencies” while being “downright openhanded with the Pentagon.”⁷⁰ Jimmy Carter and his White House had made their attempt to re-prioritize and economize defense spending and failed in FY78 and FY79. The next two years they would lack the political clout to carry on the battle. The crack in the administration’s budget policy would be broken wide-open by not only events such as the fall of Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the taking of American hostages, but also by the sustained efforts of the military-congressional alliance. Jimmy Carter found himself in January of 1979 already having to compromise on his plans for economical defense spending.

In marked contrast to his first two years of defense budgetary planning, Carter began to talk in terms of a long-term upward trend in military spending almost from the outset. In a February 1979 speech to graduates of Georgia Tech University, he emphasized this need for military preparedness and increased defense spending.⁷¹ This speech has often been cited as evidence of Carter’s decision to adopt a more hard-line defense policy in his second two

⁷⁰ James Canan, "Appropriated but Unspent Defense Dollars Piling Up," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1979, E1.

⁷¹ "Text of Speech by President Carter at Georgia Tech, Atlanta, February 20, 1979," *New York Times*, February 21, 1979.

years of office. What has seldom been emphasized is how his administration's efforts to increase defense spending were veiled and in some ways rather deceptive. In reality, Carter and his White House did not want to publicize the failure of their efforts to re-prioritize and cut defense spending, a failure which would lead to much higher defense budgets and therefore a failure to implement his campaign promises.

While Carter's rhetoric seemed to indicate that he wanted increased defense spending, his actions behind the scenes in the Beltway through most of 1978 and even 1979 indicated that this rhetoric was at best half-hearted. Carter, despite his defeats at holding down the defense budgets and emphasizing readiness in FY78 and FY79, still planned to resist continued calls for higher defense budgets. Carter's efforts to counter this pressure were manifest during the FY80 budget process which began in mid-1978.

According to Harold Brown's new process, each service had to submit its budget for FY80 in July 1978. Although not knowing the full outcome of the FY79 process, since Carter's veto would not come until August of that year, the service submissions contained a great deal of strategic maneuvering. In his annual Consolidated Guidance (CG), Brown ordered each Service to follow the "spirit of ZBB" and submit three different budget proposals termed the "basic, decremented, or enhanced" options. The top line envisioned a total Pentagon budget of \$138.4 billion, a three percent real increase from FY79. The decremented and enhanced proposals called for allocations plus or minus five percent from the basic proposal.⁷² Thus, the Secretary of Defense was sanctioning military planners and their service chiefs to plan for a possible 8 percent real increase in the defense budget.

⁷² David Aaron, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #68, July 28, 1978," p. 2, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Materials, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President, 61-71 [6/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

Carter, upon reviewing the initial submission of the FY80 defense budget, consulted his White House Staff. David Aaron, filling in for Brzezinski as National Security Advisor, examined the budget submission and put his reaction in the NSC weekly report to the president. Aaron indicated that each of the three submitted proposals reflected “a good deal of ‘goldwatching’ by the services, especially the Air Force,” in other words structuring of the budget in such a way that special programs require net additions. Many critical programs, including the MX missile, Trident II Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile, Air-Launched Cruise Missile, and the Ground-Launched Cruise Missile had been either left out of the budgets or placed in a lesser state of development.⁷³ The reasoning behind it was particularly shrewd. Given the political situation, the Pentagon knew that Congress would fight to add the important programs back into the budget without making hard decisions about what other programs cut. The result, correctly pointed out to the president, would be that the entire defense budget would have to increase once it left Congress. In Aaron’s opinion this gave Harold Brown “a difficult problem.” Admitting that Carter’s target defense budget had been \$135.4 billion (only .6 percent real growth), Brown would therefore have to remove over \$3 billion from the total while adding back in all of the expensive “goldwatched” programs.⁷⁴ The result of all of this, predicted Aaron, would be “tough infighting that is likely to spill out into the public view—with a possible adverse effect on the image we want to create in Defense for SALT.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Thus, even before the battle over the FY79 defense veto of August 1978 began, the Pentagon had already started a battle over the upcoming FY80 budget. Brown bypassed the President's "target" level for the defense budget, since even his "basic" proposal exceeded the president's guidance by \$3 billion. To meet the intent of the commander-in-chief, the only truly acceptable option would therefore have been the "decremented" proposal and this would not have been very palatable for the administration given its long-term goal of SALT ratification. Two weeks after reading Aaron's memo, perhaps seeing what the long term trend would be, Carter vetoed the FY79 appropriations bill. While ultimately he would win that battle, the price of victory would be inability to challenge effectively the pre-planned surge in defense spending templated for FY80.

Thus, the JCS began a strong push for increasing the FY80 defense budget. In a memo to Brown, they expressed extreme concern for the state of the military balance with the Soviets, characterizing the danger of not increasing defense spending in FY80 as "skating on thin ice with the ice getting thinner."⁷⁶ The debate over defense spending spilled across the river and into the offices on Pennsylvania Avenue. By early November of 1978 the press was reporting a schism in the administration. Apparently, the president's special committee had reached only a broad consensus on the platform of "3 percent increase" without really doing any detailed calculations. Brown and the Pentagon took the position that the 3 percent increase would naturally apply to the entire defense budget.⁷⁷ Key members of the White

⁷⁶ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 352.

⁷⁷ For view of Harold Brown see United States Congress, House Armed Services Committee, *Hearings on Military Posture and HR 1872 (HR 4040) and HR 2575 (S429), Part 1, 96th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 532-533. Hereafter cited as HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*. For statements from Gen. Jones see United States Congress, Senate Appropriations Committee, *Department of Defense Appropriations, FY80, 96th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 367. Hereafter cited as SAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*.

House Staff, however, argued that, since the purpose of the increase was to honor the pledge made to NATO, only items in the defense budget directly supporting NATO and Western Europe could qualify for the 3 percent increase.⁷⁸ This would result in a total defense budget of \$135 billion, a modest increase of 1 percent overall, and a number much closer to the president's original "target" budget—but almost \$5 billion below the Pentagon request.⁷⁹ The same Pentagon-White House animosity that had plagued the previous two years reappeared.

By December of 1978 the split reached the press. Most of Carter's domestic advisors, led by Stuart Eizenstat, opposed applying the 3 percent to the entire defense budget. Unlike previous budget battles, however, the president's Special Assistants Hamilton Jordan and Jerry Rafshoon sided with the Pentagon, arguing that the increase should apply across the board due to recent public opinion polls supporting higher defense spending.⁸⁰ This advice, coupled with the fact that Bert Lance, the Head of OMB, was under investigation for illegal activity that eventually drove him from office, gave Carter a moment of pause.⁸¹ The divisions within the administration gave the Pentagon hope that the president actually align himself with the Pentagon rather than his White House Staff. Anonymous press reports indicated that "defense officials" were "particularly gratified at White House efforts to raise

⁷⁸ Pine, "Carter Wants a 'No Growth' Budget, Sparing Defense," *Washington Post*, November 6, 1978, A2.

⁷⁹ Weinraub, "Defense Hierarchy Puzzled on Budget," *New York Times*, November 13, 1978, A9.

⁸⁰ Weinraub, "Jordan and Rafshoon Said to Back Pentagon Head in Debate over Budget," *New York Times*, December 5, 1978, A1.

⁸¹ Walsh, "Carter Refuses to Bend on Defense Spending Rise," *Washington Post*, December 15, 1978, A50.

the budget,” and for a while it seemed that the president might finally compromise with the Pentagon.⁸²

At the beginning of 1979, however, events prevented that. OMB gave the president an alternative that was too tempting to pass up. At the same time, political events in Congress gave a glimmer of hope that Carter could forge new relationships that could weaken the hardening military-congressional alliance. If so, there was hope that Jimmy Carter could in fact limit defense spending in FY80 and thwart some of the Pentagon’s previous plans.

OMB provided Carter in early 1979 with a plan that could potentially allow the president to economize greatly in defense spending in FY80. OMB argued that Carter should force the military to get its 3 percent increase in outlays by drawing on left-over appropriations.⁸³ These amounted to billions of unspent dollars allocated toward the completion of future contracts. Technically, though this money was already allocated to fund the completion of current projects, no law prohibited it from being “borrowed” in order to meet FY80 defense costs. Doing this, argued OMB, could hold the Pentagon even with inflation and not require any “real” increase in the defense budget at all.⁸⁴ Followed correctly, this proposal carried much less political risk than trying to argue that the 3 percent increase applied only to NATO items in the budget. The potential to yield substantial fiscal savings was real.

A significant change in the House gave Carter hope that he might be able to press forward with the OMB course of action. Joseph Addabbo (D-NY) had recently taken over the chairmanship of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee from the longtime Pentagon

⁸² Weinraub, “Jordan and Rafshoon Said to Back Pentagon Head in Debate over Budget,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1978, A15.

⁸³ Canan, “Appropriated by Unspent Defense Dollars Piling Up,” *Washington Post*, January 21, 1979, E1.

⁸⁴ James Canan, “The Pentagon's Simmering Kettle of Cash,” *Washington Post*, January 21, 1979, E4.

supporter George Mahon (D-TX).⁸⁵ Addabbo openly expressed strong interest in following Carter's proposed plan of forcing the Pentagon to draw on unspent appropriations, saying that he wanted "to give the Pentagon every weapon it needs, and I believe that we can cut its budget by several billion dollars and still accomplish that."⁸⁶ Along with the change in chairmanship on the House Appropriations Committee, many senior members, including pro-Pentagon Bob Sikes (D-FL) and Jack Flynt (D-GA), had retired and been replaced by more critical members such as Jack Murtha (D-PA) and Norm Dicks (D-WA). With these departures, the committee lost over one-hundred years of experience.⁸⁷ Along with the changes on the Appropriations Committee, Robert Giaimo (D-CT), the chairman of the House Budget Committee, publicly stated that if the House did not reject higher defense spending then it would be impossible to curb inflation.⁸⁸ As in the case of the Appropriations Committee, the House Budget Committee saw an increase in new members who would not be as sympathetic to the Pentagon as their predecessors.⁸⁹ Thus, it seemed that political events now favored Carter siding with OMB in the upcoming budget debate.

The Pentagon quickly responded to the president's new plan, seeking to counter it both in the press and with the use of the end-run to several senators. The Pentagon leaked a report that key defense officials believed that the president could be swayed from his course of action by an important "political point:" conservative senators, key to the ratification of

⁸⁵ Harold Brown considered Mahon "a close personal friend and ally." See HAPC, *FY80 Appropriations Hearings*, 3.

⁸⁶ Canan, "The Pentagon's Simmering Kettle of Cash," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1979, E4.

⁸⁷ HAPC, *FY80 Appropriations Hearings*, 1.

⁸⁸ Art Pine, "Budget Panel Rejects Tax Cut, Arms Rise," *Washington Post*, September 11, 1979, A1.

⁸⁹ HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 83.

SALT II, would chafe against the proposed OMB plan and “suspect Carter of playing numbers games with the defense budget, and interpret this as a sign of weakness.”⁹⁰ At the same time that they were threatening the future of SALT in the press, the Pentagon was busy consulting key allies in Congress. Both civilians and military leaders in the Pentagon viewed the president’s OMB-inspired course of action unacceptable and were not about to watch their plans for the increase in the FY80 budget unravel.

The sustained pressure of the military through late 1978 appeared to pay off by early 1979. Carter thus began talking to the press about increased defense spending in early 1979 not only because of the fight over the FY79 veto, but also because of the pressure of the military-congressional alliance on the FY80 budget. Following the president’s speech at Georgia Tech in February of 1979, press secretary Jody Powell even released a statement saying that the president intended to reach across party lines and draw in Republican senators and congressmen to support his plans for increasing defense spending.⁹¹ Clearly, Jimmy Carter recognized the need to boost defense spending in FY80, but at the same time hoped to contain the budget to a level that he would find acceptable.

Not Just 5 Percent, But at Least 5 Percent: Congress’ Push to Influence the Defense Budget Process

The president and his White House Staff recognized that the new OMB proposal, coupled with the change in power in the House Armed Services Committee, gave them a new chance to push their own prerogatives for defense spending. Although they probably realized that the OMB proposal was too drastic to make it through both houses of Congress, its existence made Carter’s “3 percent plan” seem all the more generous. Given this fact, the

⁹⁰ Canan, “The Pentagon’s Simmering Kettle of Cash,” *Washington Post*, January 21, 1979, E4.

⁹¹ Edward Walsh, “Carter Seeks to Sway GOP on SALT II,” *Washington Post*, February 6, 1979, A3.

administration began a public-relations offensive, hoping to counter an ongoing congressional debate as to whether to increase defense spending even more. The administration published a talking points memo that emphasized that the “The President’s 1980 defense program was carefully balanced” and provided for “essential defense needs as it was submitted to the Congress last spring,” arguing that “since that time . . . a number of significant and unnecessary changes to that budget have been made. We want the level we originally asked for—and we don’t want a nuclear carrier.”⁹² Ignoring the previous advice of Melvin Price, the president was making it clear to Congress that, again in FY80, it should be the junior partner in determining defense-spending priorities.

Military planners in the Pentagon, unable to miss the parallels to the FY79 veto fight, sought to end-run specific programs that had been cut by the administration. Of all the services, however, only the Navy had reason to be displeased with the FY80 budget as proposed by the Carter administration. The Army was allowed to keep in development the XM-1 tank, the Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, and the Blackhawk helicopter.⁹³ The Air Force gained significant funds, getting a 43 percent increase in its overall budget and additional allocations for the Minuteman III ICBM and full production of the Air-Launched Cruise Missile.⁹⁴ The Navy and Marines ended up getting, in the opinion of several anonymously quoted officers, “far less money and far fewer ships” than they had wanted.⁹⁵ General Louis Wilson, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, was particularly angry with the

⁹² Memorandum, “Congressional Talking Points Supporting the Restoration of the 3% Real Increase in Defense Spending,” JCL.

⁹³ Bernard Weinraub, “Defense up 3%, Stressing Arms in Europe,” *New York Times*, January 23, 1979, B12.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

administration's decision to cancel the planned upgrade to the Harrier jump-jet.⁹⁶ By early 1979, press releases cited naval and marine officers as saying Carter's decision on the Harrier was "clouding the future of naval aviation."⁹⁷ Similarly, although both Harold Brown and the CNO recommended that Carter keep his FY79 promise to fund a 90,000-ton conventional carrier, the president rejected this idea and instead told Brown to settle for a 60,000-ton mid-size carrier.⁹⁸ The Navy was clearly facing the greatest budget cuts in FY80; but, like FY79, that service would not be the only one politicking on the Hill to increase Jimmy Carter's budget.

In public statements Harold Brown's defense of the budget might have been stronger, but the Pentagon did have reasons to be optimistic. The Secretary of Defense called the proposed budget "acceptable militarily" but said he would have "grave concerns about the future balance" with the Soviets should any cuts be applied.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, the budget was termed a "muted triumph" for Brown and the Pentagon, since the level of spending was still opposed by many domestic advisors in the White House.¹⁰⁰ Overall, the final submission topped out at \$142 billion, which provided a 3.5 percent real increase from the last fiscal year.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 213.

⁹⁷ George C. Wilson, "President's Budget Omits Marine Jet, Big Carrier," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1979, A12.

⁹⁸ Weinraub, "Defense Up 3%, Stressing Arms in Europe," *New York Times*, January 23, 1979, B12; Wilson, "President's Budget Omits Marine Jet, Big Carrier," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1979, A12.

⁹⁹ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 448.

¹⁰⁰ Weinraub, "Defense Up 3%, Stressing Arms in Europe," *New York Times*, January 23, 1979, B12.

¹⁰¹ Walsh, "Carter Urges Steady Rise in Defense Spending," December 13, 1979, A1.

Despite Harold Brown's qualified support of the defense budget and despite the substantial gain of a 3.5 percent real increase in spending, many in the Pentagon sensed the opportunity ripe for pressing ahead with even higher defense appropriations. SALT II was on the table for future ratification and the Pentagon knew that the president would not want to seem soft on defense to conservative senators from both parties who would determine the outcome. Just as importantly, the Pentagon was well aware of the political damage the FY79 veto battle had done to Carter's relations with important members of the Armed Services Committees. Likewise, the administration's continued difficulties in courting Senator Stennis as an ally showed that it was not adapting very well to forging strong alliances in Congress. Given all of these facts, General Wilson, when reflecting in 1979 on the cuts to the Navy in the upcoming budget, was very confident that "his allies in Congress" would restore funding to his Service.¹⁰²

The initial congressional reaction to Carter's proposed budget was negative. Criticism first came from the more liberal wing of Carter's own party. Given the sagging state of the American economy, the 3 percent rise in defense spending was seen as being particularly contentious. Senator Edmund Muskie (D-ME), Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, commented that, if the state of the economy did not improve, then "all bets were off" regarding Carter's proposed plans.¹⁰³ Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), hopeful of unseating Carter for the Democratic nomination in 1980, charged that the White House had "juggled figures" in the defense budget in order to conceal a 4 percent real-increase.¹⁰⁴ Press

¹⁰² GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 214.

¹⁰³ Hedrick Smith, "'Contentious' Session of Congress Is Forecast over the Carter Budget," *New York Times*, January 14, 1979, A1.

¹⁰⁴ Kaiser, "Kennedy Criticizes Defense Spending as Too Generous," *Washington Post*, January 27, 1979, A10.

columnists soon joined in the criticism, even going so far as to attack Harold Brown's defense of the budget, stating that "only in the rarified atmosphere of Pentagon spending can a \$10 billion net increase be described as very austere."¹⁰⁵ Major newspapers pointed out that the 3 percent rise in defense was the largest increase in any single category in the budget.¹⁰⁶ Other journalists echoed the call, with one describing Carter's entire FY80 budget as being "a grapefruit diet budget" in the "non-defense area," with the overall design being "austerity for civilians, liberality for defense."¹⁰⁷ Herblock summarized such critiques in a political cartoon which depicted Carter serving scoops of "excessive pensions," "cost overruns," "weapons duplications," "surplus military brass," and "unneeded bases" to an obese general with the explanation "he's on a special diet." A civilian couple sat nearby in shock, deciding what to order off of the "austerity menu."¹⁰⁸ Political columnist Edward Walsh was correct in noting that, even in early 1979, "liberal criticism" of the president's defense budget was mounting.¹⁰⁹

The attack from the left weakened the president even further against the military-congressional alliance. Carter was forced into increasingly pro-defense rhetoric. He repeatedly labeled his submission "lean and austere" but consistent with a "compassionate society."¹¹⁰ In answer to Senator Kennedy, Carter said, "I have not robbed the poor or the

¹⁰⁵ William Flannery, "Pentagon Spending," *New York Times*, February 27, 1979.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Cowan, "A Plea for Sacrifice: \$532 Billion Plan Criticized as Favoring Military over Social Needs," *New York Times*, January 23, 1979, A1.

¹⁰⁷ Silk, "A Fat Budget for Defense," *New York Times*, January 24, 1979, D2.

¹⁰⁸ Herblock, "(Cartoon) 'He's on a Special Diet'," *Washington Post*, January 23, 1979, A16.

¹⁰⁹ Walsh, "Carter Defends Social Security Cuts, Pentagon Increases," *Washington Post*, January 27, 1979, A9.

¹¹⁰ Cowan, "A Plea for Sacrifice," *New York Times*, January 23, 1979, B10.

deprived or the social programs in order to provide for defense.”¹¹¹ He had “no apology to make for a strong, adequate defense,” while still claiming to have kept his campaign promise of \$5 to \$7 billion in savings.¹¹² By having to fight the left-wing of his party, Carter advantaged the Pentagon. Defense contractors took delight in the new turn of events, recognizing that the “new” Jimmy Carter would mean much higher profits. James M. Beggs, executive vice-president of General Dynamics, then the nation’s largest defense contractor, felt confident that “The year 1980 looks as good as last year and maybe even better,” with many big-ticket weapons systems in position to be accelerated into full scale production.¹¹³ In the minds of many, the president had been converted to a “big spender” on defense.¹¹⁴

Although Carter’s position was bleak, it was not entirely hopeless, for some in Congress vowed not to let increased defense spending pass so easily.¹¹⁵ From the pulpit of the House Appropriations Committee, Joseph Addabbo (D-NY) continued to complain about the backlog of appropriated funds at the Pentagon. Two new members of that same committee, John Murtha (D-PA) and Norman Dicks (D-WA) were also shaping up to be, in the appraisal of senior correspondent George Wilson, “less predictable than the old lions” whom they replaced.¹¹⁶ Harold Brown found himself having to devote considerable time and testimony

¹¹¹ Terence Smith, "Carter Denies He Has 'Robbed the Poor' to Provide an Increase for Defense," *New York Times*, January 27, 1979, A1.

¹¹² Walsh, “Carter Defends Social Security Cuts, Pentagon Increases,” *Washington Post*, January 27, 1979, A9.

¹¹³ George C. Wilson, "Good Times Are Ahead for Defense Industry," *Washington Post*, January 13, 1980, G26.

¹¹⁴ George C. Wilson, "Carter Is Converted to a Big Spender on Defense Projects," *Washington Post*, January 29, 1980, A16.

¹¹⁵ Hobart Rowen, "Projected Pentagon Outlays Stir Guns-or-Butter Debate," *Washington Post*, January 29, 1980, A16.

¹¹⁶ George C. Wilson, "House, in Changing Mood, Upholds Pentagon Budget Cut," *Washington Post*, June 7, 1979, A5.

to defending claims that the Pentagon could not make better use of these unobligated balances.¹¹⁷ While talk of reducing the defense budget was debated in the House, Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA), the Senate Majority Whip, challenged the president by calling for a massive \$5.2 billion cut in the defense budget, including the rejection of the FY79 supplemental bill.¹¹⁸ Robert Dole (R-KS), in a move that was called “surprisingly unpartisan,” questioned in a private letter to Carter whether additional defense dollars could be wisely spent.¹¹⁹ Even some “civilian executives” in the Pentagon admitted that it was unclear how added billions in the defense budget could be wisely used.¹²⁰ By April of 1979 the House Committee on the Budget was preparing to hand Carter what the press termed a “political hot potato” in terms of a reduced budget for defense spending.¹²¹ As the bill went through debate, the House Committee on the Budget, over the objections of its Chairman Robert N. Giaimo (D-CT), proposed significant cuts in defense in order to pare the deficit.¹²² Finally, in early June, in what was termed “a significant change of mood,” the House Budget Committee proposed a defense budget that was \$1.3 billion less than the Carter proposal.¹²³

¹¹⁷ For Harold Brown’s defense of the unobligated balances, see HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 445-446, 523, 526, 547-548. See also HAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 12-18 and SAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 371-373.

¹¹⁸ Robert Kaiser, “Cranston Proposes Arms Budget Cut Totaling \$5.2 Billion,” *Washington Post*, March 30, 1979, A15.

¹¹⁹ Clayton Fritchley, “What Price SALT?,” *Washington Post*, September 10, 1979, A27.

¹²⁰ George C. Wilson and Walter Pincus, “Embarrassment of Riches for the Pentagon,” *Washington Post*, August 3, 1979, A1.

¹²¹ Art Pine, “Budget Panel Chairman Readies Military Spending Bite,” *Washington Post*, April 1, 1979, A3.

¹²² Art Pine, “Congress Opens Battle on the Budget,” *Washington Post*, April 3, 1979, D7.

¹²³ Wilson, “House, in Changing Mood, Upholds Pentagon Budget Cut,” *Washington Post*, June 7, 1979, A5.

The administration did nothing publicly to challenge these defense cuts because in fact the situation was working out as hoped. The president would now be able to see defense spending limited without having to take the responsibility. The fact that the Budget Committee's actions appeared to be a "political hot potato" was all the better. Many in Congress, however, were aware of the administration's intentions and began a behind-the-scenes effort to counter the president's renewed hope for less defense spending.

Four powerful, conservative-minded senators served as the nucleus of the military-congressional alliance during the FY80 budget debate. At the center of the group of senators was Sam Nunn (D-GA). Relatively junior, Nunn was clearly a moderate Democrat who would be an important vote to secure in the upcoming SALT II ratification. "Scoop" Jackson (D-WA) was one of the most senior and influential senators and had gained much notoriety as a quintessential "Cold Warrior." Ernest Hollings (D-SC) was a veteran of World War II and a long-serving member of the senate. John Tower (R-TX), joined these Democrats as the ranking minority member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Together, these four senators formed a strong alliance with the Pentagon's lobby and sought to reverse the Carter Administration's trend toward economizing defense spending.

Nunn began the offensive in July 1979, and, in a "stroke that may have redrawn the battle lines in the SALT II debate," said that the Carter administration could gain his vote for the treaty by committing itself to substantially increased defense spending. He requested \$7 billion on top of what was already slated for defense. In the opinion of journalists, Nunn's actions not only enhanced the possibility of SALT II being ratified, but also established the junior senator as "a principle spokesman for the large number of moderate senators who

seem increasingly willing to accept SALT II” given larger defense budgets.¹²⁴ While the press’ characterization of Nunn’s leadership in the Senate was certainly accurate, it neglected to mention that Nunn had also placed himself as the de-facto leader of the military-congressional alliance during the Carter Administration.

By early August, Nunn gathered key senatorial allies and formally submitted his position to Carter. In a letter dated August 2, 1979, Nunn, Jackson, and Tower wrote the president objecting to any cuts in the defense budget and emphasizing the “crucial” need for additional funds for “weapons, ships, equipment, and research and development,” opposing the president’s priorities.¹²⁵ Anonymous sources within the Pentagon, when asked how the military might spend extra money, cited “a hell of a lot of areas” including resurrecting the cancelled B-1 bomber.¹²⁶ The Pentagon now had supreme confidence that the president could no longer impose his prerogatives on military spending. Indeed, the president did face what many saw as a “no win” situation: he would either have to bend on his priorities or risk alienating powerful senators that he would need to pass SALT.

Carter resisted. He met with Harold Brown and the JCS on September 10, 1979. The president stated his desire to press for a 3 percent increase but wanted to “go no further to meet Nunn’s demands.”¹²⁷ Meanwhile, the battle taking place in the House over reducing the defense budget bolstered Carter’s hopes for being able to curtail Nunn’s dramatic requests.

¹²⁴ Robert Kaiser, "Nunn Ties Vote on SALT to More Defense Spending," *Washington Post*, July 26, 1979, A1.

¹²⁵ George C. Wilson and Walter Pincus, "Defense Budget Tug of War Has Carter in Middle," *Washington Post*, August 4, 1979, A10.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Pine, "Budget Panel Rejects Tax Cut, Arms Rise," *Washington Post*, September 11, 1979, A1.

Nunn and Hollings also refused to relent on this issue and kept up the pressure. Angered at Carter's veiled efforts to moderate the defense budget increase, they accused the administration of being "two-faced on defense spending." They blasted the White House for "gently criticizing the Budget Committee's defense cuts" while leaving Nunn and Hollings the impression that the administration was simultaneously leading the fight behind the scenes to curtail defense spending.¹²⁸ The military-congressional alliance made it clear that it strongly resisted concealing Carter's spending increases and hiding behind the ongoing debate in the Budget Committees.

Given the efforts of Nunn and his allies, Carter clarified his position on defense spending for FY80. He sent personal letters to key senators pledging to support a 3 percent increase in real growth and stating that such an increase was in fact "necessary for our continuing effort to reverse the adverse trends in our overall military balance" relative to the Soviet Union.¹²⁹ He stated firmly that he supported 3 percent growth in the defense budget, but that "with respect to the 5 percent real growth . . . I cannot support those figures at this time."¹³⁰ Carter attempted to emphasize that the FY81 and FY82 budgets would have even higher growth, and that he was seeking to work with allies like Hollings to "reverse the ten-year trend during which every Congress has cut the amounts requested by the President."¹³¹ Recipients of the letter included Senators Sam Nunn, John Stennis, John Tower, Robert Byrd, Howard Baker,

¹²⁸ George C. Wilson, "White House Called Two-Faced on Defense Spending," *Washington Post*, September 8, 1979, A5.

¹²⁹ Jimmy Carter, "Letter to Senator Ernest Hollings, September 14, 1979," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Office of Congressional Liaison-Beckel, Box 220, Folder: Defense Department Authorization Bill 1978 [1], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Bob Packwood, and Pete Dominici. In addition to the letter, Harold Brown also assured each of the Senators in personal communications that the administration would press for a 3 percent increase in FY80, FY81, and FY82.¹³² Carter and his White House had thus been forced into putting their plans for the defense budget into the public forum and opted for a long-term “three, three, and three” plan.

With Carter’s plan for defense fully articulated, Nunn and the military-congressional alliance again went on the offensive. They agreed to table any massive increase in the FY80 budget; but, in regard to the “three, three, and three” plan, Senator Hollings bluntly informed Harold Brown, “We’re going for three, five, and five.”¹³³ Led by Nunn’s coalition, the Senate, in what was termed a “dramatic though symbolic demonstration of a new mood of toughness,” voted 55 to 42 for the “three, five, and five” plan for increasing defense spending in FY80, FY81, and FY82. Although several key Senators including John Stennis, Gary Hart, and Ed Muskie voted against the resolution, the thirteen vote majority demonstrated the power and cohesiveness of the military-congressional alliance. In a public moment of grandstanding following the vote, Nunn openly challenged the administration by citing the need for more defense expenditures because the only country currently “running in the arms race” was the Soviet Union.¹³⁴ Likewise, Senator Hollings followed up the vote by lambasting the administration for failing to back even the three percent rise for FY80.¹³⁵ The

¹³² George C. Wilson, "Carter Asks 3 Pct. Limit on Defense Budget Rises," *Washington Post*, September 12, 1979, A10.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Robert Kaiser, "Senate Votes for 5% Defense Increase," *Washington Post*, September 19, 1979, A1.

¹³⁵ Robert Kaiser, "'Door Open' to Boost Defense Spending in '80s, Brown Says," *Washington Post*, September 20, 1979, A2.

message to Jimmy Carter and his White House was clear: spend more on defense or endanger SALT II.

Following this symbolic vote, the administration cracked; its senate allies lacked sufficient numbers. Nunn and Hollings were too strong. After the vote, Brown publicly stated that the “door was open” to boost defense spending even more in FY81 and 82, alluding to possible acquiescence to the three, five, and five plan.¹³⁶ By the end of the September 1979, Congress agreed to compromise on the defense budget. The defense budget for FY80 was set at \$129.9 billion, less than the \$130.6 billion requested by the Senate but more than the House request of \$128.6 billion.¹³⁷ But, while the total amount may have been a compromise, the specific items in the budget were not. Congress again overruled many of Carter’s proposals, most noticeably by putting the nuclear carrier back in the budget for a second time. This time Carter made no effort to combat the re-prioritization.¹³⁸ The military-congressional alliance had gained significant momentum, and now Carter’s hopes for limiting defense spending in FY81 were nearly dead.

Foreshadowing the Flood: Building the FY81 Defense Budget

Events conspired to end Carter’s efforts to limit defense spending for FY81. First, the 1980 election forced Carter to consider acceding to the mounting public support for higher defense spending. Second, the continued downturn in the economy amply justified supplemental appropriations to offset increasing costs due to inflation, thus further increasing

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Helen Dewar, "Agreement Reached on Hill Budget Total, Not on Self-Discipline," *Washington Post*, November 1, 1979, A9.

¹³⁸ United States Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for FY81* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), 781. Hereafter referred to as SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*.

the budget. Finally, the JCS made it clear during testimony on the FY80 budget that it would support the president's defense budget only if offered substantive increases in FY81. Thus, Carter's final defense budget foreshadowed the flood of the Reagan years.

The specter of the 1980 election strongly influenced Carter to acquiesce to the military-congressional alliance's call for higher defense spending. Despite the strong media attention, pundits noted that "no loud cry of alarm, not from the hawks, not from the doves, not from Capitol Hill and not even from the campaign trail" had emerged in response.¹³⁹ Conversely, public opinion polls now suggested that over 60 percent of Americans wanted an increase in defense spending, with only 9 percent favoring a decrease.¹⁴⁰ Ben J. Wattenburg, head of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, a congressional lobby group, correctly noted that "The shift in public opinion on defense spending is greater than on any other issue in the 1970s."¹⁴¹ Indeed, House Speaker Tip O'Neill (D-MA) concluded that, in the light of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the failure of the April 1980 rescue mission for the hostages in Iran, a "wave of patriotism" was calling for higher defense spending.¹⁴² Facing re-election, Carter and his political advisors realized that continuing to support defense

¹³⁹ Schram, "Defense Spending: Times Change, as Does the Public Mind," *Washington Post*, December 16, 1979, A10. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had led many well-known "doves" within Congress to take pause, with even Senator George McGovern (D-SD) backing a "selective military buildup." See Helen Dewar, "The Doves Sharpen Their New Talons," *Washington Post*, January 30, 1980, A2.

¹⁴⁰ Schram, "Defense Spending: Times Change, as Does the Public Mind," *Washington Post*, December 16, 1979, A10.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. Public opinion polls in May of 1980 indicated that, by a margin of two to one, Americans felt that the Soviet Union was stronger than America. See George C. Wilson, "5-Year Military Buildup to Cost U.S. \$1 Trillion," *Washington Post*, May 19, 1980, A2. By the time Carter would leave office, public opinion polls indicating a desire for increases in defense spending ran at close to 70%. See Melvin R. Laird, "Not a Binge, but a Buildup," *Washington Post*, November 19, 1980, A17.

¹⁴² "Rescue Mission Seen Boost for Defense Advocates," *Washington Post*, April 29, 1980, A5. The bipartisan Committee on the Present Danger, chaired by former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul H. Nitze and former Undersecretary of State Eugene V. Rostow, also urged a massive increase in defense expenditures. See Michael Getler, "Former U.S. Aides, Citing Soviets, Urge \$260 Billion Arms Increase," *Washington Post*, May 13, 1980, A11.

spending increases only half-heartedly would not only further undermine the administration's standing with Congress, but also with the public.

Carter's Republican opponents exploited defense in the upcoming 1980 presidential election. Gerald Ford began an offensive early in the year, detailing how Carter had cut the Ford/Rumsfeld plans for spending by an average of \$9.5 billion per year.¹⁴³ At a White House breakfast for Republican legislators, Senator Jake Garn (R-UT) and his colleagues called plans for defense spending "very inadequate and totally unrealistic."¹⁴⁴ Texas Governor Bill Clemens called the president a "God damn liar" for saying that the American military was stronger than ever.¹⁴⁵ Finally, Ronald Reagan, the Republican front-runner, made defense spending a cornerstone of his campaign. Carter could ignore these challenges from the right only at his own peril.

In response to these challenges and the polls, Carter moved early in the FY81 budget process to signal support for the Nunn-Hollings idea of increasing defense spending beyond 3 percent per year. The president announced late in 1979, soon after the compromise deal in Congress over the level of the FY80 defense budget, that his administration would commit to "a further real increase in defense spending" for FY81 in order to counteract what he saw as concerning "trends" in the U.S.-Soviet balance.¹⁴⁶ Such promises, in the words of one senior

¹⁴³ "Campaign Notes," *Washington Post*, January 24, 1980, A3.; "For the Record," *Washington Post*, January 24, 1980, A18.

¹⁴⁴ George C. Wilson, "Defense Backers Press for Boost in 1981 Budget," *Washington Post*, February 1, 1980, A1.

¹⁴⁵ "Campaign Notes 2," *Washington Post*, October 25, 1980.

¹⁴⁶ United States Congress, House, *Message from the President of the United States Transmitting His Views on Defense Spending, Document 96-184* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 11, 1979), 2.

Washington correspondent, made it clear that Carter planned to “carry a much more pro-military banner into the 1980 presidential campaign than he did four years ago.”¹⁴⁷

Along with political reasons justifying higher defense spending, the economic woes of the late 1970s, including massive inflation and skyrocketing oil prices, also provided the Pentagon reason to demand more funds. Operations and Maintenance (O&M) costs were among the highest ever. When reflecting on the period in his May 1979 Oral History, Marine commandant Louis Wilson lamented 10 percent inflation, as well as the oil shortages brought on by the previous OPEC embargo and the fall of Iran, and complained that he and the Marines would be “drilling with broomsticks” if more money was not allocated in the next fiscal year.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, the cost of fuel and maintenance cut the Air Force’s FY80 flight training hours, in the words of the Chief of Staff, “well below our desired requirement for readiness,” while at the same time forcing withdrawal from several planned NATO exercises that year.¹⁴⁹ Military pay was also shaping up to be a major issue in FY81, with all members of the JCS complaining openly about the level of pay and its effect on the retention of junior officers and senior NCOs.¹⁵⁰ Congress took this into account and debated raising military

¹⁴⁷ Walsh, “Carter Urges Steady Rise in Defense Spending,” *Washington Post*, December 13, 1979, A1.

¹⁴⁸ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 136. Similarly, some administration officials stated that, based on these O&M costs, holding down defense spending would require “heroic assumptions.” See George C. Wilson and Helen Dewar, “Of Budget Cuts, Military Money, Inflation and Moonbeams,” *Washington Post*, March 1, 1980, A6.

¹⁴⁹ For “readiness” see HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 800. For withdrawal from NATO exercises see SAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 688. For impact of maintenance costs, see George C. Wilson, “Shortages of Parts Hamstring Warplanes,” *Washington Post*, March 17, 1980, A1, A14.

¹⁵⁰ United States Congress, Senate Appropriations Committee, *Department of Defense Appropriations, FY81, 96th Congress, 2nd Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), 611-612. Hereafter cited as SAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*.

pay.¹⁵¹ Given all these deficiencies brought about by the ailing economy, the Pentagon had ample arguments when asking for more money from Congress.

The final, and perhaps most compelling, factor in pushing the Carter administration toward higher defense spending in the FY81 was the military's testimony during the FY80 budget hearings. Whereas the FY79 testimony from both military and civilians in the Pentagon had offered qualified support for that year's budget, the testimony in FY80 followed a different pattern. This time Harold Brown found himself almost alone as a defender of the defense budget, primarily due to Carter's efforts during that year to limit spending while still talking about increasing it. Brown, attempting to mediate between Carter and an increasingly hostile Congress, failed to maintain qualified support for the budget within the Pentagon as he had in previous years. Military testimony in FY80 was therefore much less supportive than it had been in FY79; at the same time, Secretary Brown found himself increasingly under attack from various elements in Congress which were trying to raise defense spending.

CJCS David Jones illustrated the reduced level of military support for the FY80 budget. Having gone out on a limb in FY78 by defending Carter's cancellation of the B-1 bomber, Jones was considered by many in Congress to be a defender of the administration's budgets even in hard times. He offered little support in FY80, however, and instead provided what he himself termed a "sobering assessment" of the defense program.¹⁵² His opening statement began "another year has gone by and we continue with the adverse trends," adding that he felt obligated to express "serious concern" about the situation.¹⁵³ To the House

¹⁵¹ George C. Wilson, "Senate to Consider This Week a 3.41 Percent Raise for Those in Uniform," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1980, A3.

¹⁵² For "another year gone by" see HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 356. For "serious concerns" see SASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 29.

¹⁵³ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 354.

Appropriations Committee Jones seemed even more resolute, stating “Our programs for more than a decade have been characterized by the words ‘slip, cut, and cancel,’” warning of a “disappearing cushion of time” to increase defense expenditures.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Senator Harry Byrd (D-VA) was quite correct when he concluded that General Jones’ testimony during the FY80 defense budget hearings had been “not a very reassuring statement” for most Americans.¹⁵⁵

While certainly pessimistic, Jones’ views were rather temperate compared to those coming from the Services. Secretary of the Air Force John Stetson bluntly stated that “our strategic modernization program is not keeping pace with the Soviet Union,” and called the FY80 budget “as lean as we can make it” with “funds . . . sufficient but only just so.”¹⁵⁶ Air Force Chief Lew Allen testified that the budget was “austere” and only covered the “most needed” costs.¹⁵⁷ Secretary of the Army Clifford Alexander admitted that the FY80 proposal provided a budget for his Service that was “adequate—but only adequate.”¹⁵⁸ Bernard Rogers, the Chief of Staff of the Army, was the most optimistic about the budget when he called plans for the Army’s modernization “prudent, supportable, and balanced.”¹⁵⁹ He termed the Army budget “adequate” but admitted under questioning that it did not “satisfy all of our requirements” and that it would “not provide us as a nation the means to insure that we

¹⁵⁴ HAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 362.

¹⁵⁵ SASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 40.

¹⁵⁶ For “not keeping pace” see HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 688. For “as lean as we can make it” and “sufficient but only just so” see HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 427, 430.

¹⁵⁷ SAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 607.

¹⁵⁸ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 1017.

¹⁵⁹ United States Congress, House Armed Services Committee, *Hearings on Military Posture and HR 1872 (HR 4040) and HR 2575 (S429), Part 1, 96th Congress, 1st Session*, 960. Hereafter cited as HASC, *Hearings on Military Posture, HR1872, and HR2575*.

have a mobilization manpower base that is adequate for a major contingency.”¹⁶⁰ The outgoing SACEUR, General Alexander Haig, told Congress that any cuts in the FY80 budget would be a “disaster.”¹⁶¹ Congressman Sam Stratton (D-NY), in criticizing the FY80 defense budget, went out of his way to summarize that the testimony of the Air Force and Army did not “suggest a very reassuring picture of our capabilities as a military power.”¹⁶²

If the Army and Air Force testimony was not reassuring, that from the Navy was even more dire. W. Graham Claytor, perhaps under fire for his open dissent from Carter during the FY79 budget process, testified that he did “fully endorse the President’s budget” but warned “that there is no room for any further cut in our Navy budget if we are to maintain even our present status in the years ahead.”¹⁶³ He attempted to deflect criticism from the administration by arguing that the long-term nature of naval budgets would mean most problems would be left for his successors “10 years or more from now,” although in his last round of testimony to Congress he dropped the time frame to five years.¹⁶⁴ Admiral Hayward’s testimony was even less supportive. The admiral cited Claytor’s own testimony from 1978 to describe the FY79 budget as “low” and then warned Congress, “we now have two data points, 1979 and 1980, which portend a significant and predictable decline in the

¹⁶⁰ For “adequate” and “satisfy all requirements” see *Ibid.*, 961. For quote on “manpower base that was inadequate for contingencies” see HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 72.

¹⁶¹ HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 83.

¹⁶² HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 1064.

¹⁶³ HASC, *Hearings on Military Posture, HR1872, and HR2575*, 805. See also SASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 126.

¹⁶⁴ For ten year estimates see SAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 872. For five year estimate see HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 154.

U.S. naval force levels in the years ahead.”¹⁶⁵ In his appearance before the House Budget Committee, Hayward used some of his most harsh language, saying that he had “very serious concern” about the future and that any cuts in the naval budget could lead to a “rapid and probably irreversible decline in our ability to prevail at sea.”¹⁶⁶ He openly supported a new nuclear carrier for the FY80 budget, despite Carter’s specific resistance to its inclusion.¹⁶⁷ The Marine Corps also joined in opposition to many specific elements in the budget, with Commandant Louis Wilson complaining that his O&M budget had been cut without any consultation from his civilian superiors and agreeing with the assessment that removal of the AV-8B Harrier II from the budget “seriously hurt the Marines.”¹⁶⁸ “I think that is absolutely irresponsible and I am very disturbed to hear that,” Congressman Robin Beard (R-TN), a former marine, replied in response; “I would hope that this committee would see fit in their wisdom to take some form of corrective action on this.”¹⁶⁹ Indeed, in FY80 Congress substantially modified Carter’s proposed naval budget by including both a nuclear carrier and the cancelled AV-8B. When asked jokingly by Robin Beard if he would fight Congress over these modifications, Secretary Claytor replied, “I cannot recall I have fought this committee on anything.”¹⁷⁰ The Navy’s testimony in FY80 clearly emboldened Congress to modify Carter’s final budget submission for that year.

¹⁶⁵ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 826. See also SAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 919.

¹⁶⁶ HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 184.

¹⁶⁷ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 928.

¹⁶⁸ For lack of consultation see HASC, *Hearings on Military Posture, HR1872, and HR2575*, 932. For quote on AV-8B see SAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 940.

¹⁶⁹ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 932. Robin Beard served in the Marines from 1962-1965. See Don Winter, “A Generation of Leaders Sat out Vietnam,” *Washington Post*, April 6, 1980, E4.

¹⁷⁰ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 937.

Carter's veiled efforts to limit defense spending in FY80 also placed the Secretary of Defense in a very awkward position. When members of the House Armed Services Committee questioned what the administration saw as the level of threat from the Soviets, Brown replied that while the current situation was "acceptable militarily," he had "grave concerns about the future balance if trends continue," and that it would be mistake to "panic the American public in order to get through what needs to be gotten through."¹⁷¹ Such equivocation, as well as Brown's almost apologetic tone in some of the hearings, made it clear that the Secretary of Defense saw himself caught in the middle of a political quagmire. At times, Brown clearly showed his frustration and anger.¹⁷² In front of the House Appropriations Committee, he faced criticism from one congressman that Carter's actions, including the FY79 veto, set "a dangerous precedent" in terms of White House interference in the defense budget process because of a complete lack of any "Congressional cooperation or involvement before the fact."¹⁷³ Brown agreed somewhat, noting that "Congress . . . has to exercise its own independent judgment" and admitted that communication between the Legislative Branch and the executive was "not quite so sharp a correspondence as I would sometimes like."¹⁷⁴ Liberal critics who saw Carter's defense budget as too high also questioned Brown aggressively. Thus, the Secretary of Defense found himself devoting considerable time to arguing that the highly criticized unobligated balances held by the Pentagon actually represented "good management," while at the same time making efforts to

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 448.

¹⁷² Richard Halloran, "House Armed Services Panel Sees the New Military Budget as Too Little and Too Late," *New York Times*, January 30, 1980, A6.

¹⁷³ SAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 508.

¹⁷⁴ HAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 501, 508.

point out that increases in defense outlays were still very low relative to other federal government programs.¹⁷⁵ When questioned on the administration's specific intentions for FY81, Brown demurred, stating that the administration remained committed "to a long-term real-growth target of three percent."¹⁷⁶ Under scrutiny from both liberal and conservative elements within Congress, Harold Brown negotiated a difficult path through his testimony in FY80 because Carter's own position on defense spending was unclear.

All of these various events pushed Carter further toward higher defense spending for FY81. Within the Pentagon the overall pattern of civil-military cooperation had continued, with the Service Secretaries and Service Chiefs generally offering unified tepid support and even opposition to the president's defense budget. Harold Brown, however, was finding his position as mediator between Congress and Jimmy Carter increasingly difficult. Carter's concealed and ill-coordinated efforts to limit defense spending in FY80 had failed, and the chief cost was that his own Secretary of Defense's standing with Congress suffered greatly. With his political position weakening and the military-congressional alliance growing stronger, Carter and his White House could see that any pitched battle against higher defense spending in FY81 would be futile.

A Hollow Force: The Military-Congressional Response to the Final Carter Defense Budget

The process of compiling the FY81 defense budget began in October 1979 and reflected the difficulties that the Carter administration faced at that time.¹⁷⁷ The shah had fled Iran,

¹⁷⁵ For defense of unobligated balances see: HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 445-446, 523, 526, 547-548; HAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 12-18; SAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 371-373. For defense outlays low relative to other federal government programs see HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 9-13.

¹⁷⁶ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 541.

¹⁷⁷ For timing of budget relative to other events see SAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 352.

Khomeini had come to power, and later Iranian “students” had seized the American embassy and taken hostages in November of that year.¹⁷⁸ After the administration developed its FY81 defense budget, another world event called into question if the 5 percent increase was even adequate: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on December 27, 1979. Although the level of the FY81 budget had already been set, Carter suffered under renewed criticism for an inadequate defense budget. Trying to deflect the charge of naïveté being surprised into action by Soviet aggression, Carter mounted a public relations campaign to show his commitment to higher defense spending.¹⁷⁹ “In November of last year—well before the Soviet invasion—I presented to Congress the broad outlines of my plans for defense spending in the 1981 budget,”¹⁸⁰ read one statement from the president, with the further claim that:

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made everyone more aware than ever of the importance of a strong defense capability. But since we had begun the process of strengthening our military forces several years ago, last month’s events did not require a 180 degree turn in our defense policy or our military budget.¹⁸¹

The White House media liaison distributed to Congress a statement entitled “National Defense—The Budget and the Record,” arguing that Congress was the real culprit in lowering defense spending from 1968 to 1976, but that Carter had made a concerted effort to

¹⁷⁸ George C. Wilson, “Less Bang for More Bucks: U.S. Buying Fewer, More Sophisticated Weapons,” *Washington Post*, December 30, 1979, D5.

¹⁷⁹ George C. Wilson, “Carter: Shifting, Shoring up Position on Defense,” *Washington Post*, August 19, 1980, A1 and A4.

¹⁸⁰ Charlie Schultze, “Memo to Secretary Brown, OSD, and James McIntyre, Chief, OMB.”

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

raise defense expenditures through all of its defense budgets.¹⁸² The administration naturally pressed Harold Brown into service to sell the idea. In his FY81 Annual Report, Brown stated “the Carter administration has concluded that the defense program must be substantially increased over the next five years and that we must begin the effort now.”¹⁸³ He testified that the FY81 budget would provide a “steady, significant, sustained increase,” something necessary because “in the last couple of years the American public has become increasingly aware” of the Soviet threat.¹⁸⁴ Based on the unified rhetoric of the importance of higher defense spending within the administration, one of the president’s closest aides resorted to hyperbole when he proclaimed that Carter’s FY81 defense budget marked “the end of the Vietnam complex” in America.¹⁸⁵ All of this rhetoric aimed to refute the likely argument of the military-congressional alliance that the FY81 budget would not be enough given recent events in Afghanistan.

The response of the military-congressional alliance to Carter’s charges that he and his administration had been primarily responsible for the increase in defense spending in FY81 proved to be swift and heated. First, Harold Brown faced the wrath of Melvin Price, Sam Stratton, Robin Beard, and most of the House Armed Services Committee. Second, Senators Sam Nunn, John Tower, and Ernest Hollings offered a calmer, but very challenging cross-

¹⁸² “National Defense: The Budget and the Record, Background Report by Office of Media Liaison, White House Press Office, p. 1. The liberal Center for Defense Information, a favorite source of Carter’s pre-election defense budget information, also released a study supporting the administration’s contentions. See “Report Says Democrats Spend More on Defense,” *Washington Post*, August 11, 1980, A4.

¹⁸³ United States Congress, House Armed Services Committee, *Hearings on Military Posture and HR 6495 (HR 6974), 96th Congress, 2nd Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), 53. Hereafter cited as HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*.

¹⁸⁴ United States Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for FY81* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 8 and 10. Hereafter cited as SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*.

¹⁸⁵ George F. Will, “Right Men for the Long Pull?,” *Washington Post*, December 20, 1979, A15.

examination of other Pentagon officials. Finally, the JCS expressed public disdain for Carter's false public relations campaign, withholding support for the FY81 defense budget despite its 5 percent increase. These responses taken together meant that the absolute minimum in defense increases would be 5 percent for FY81, while at the same time highlighting the Carter administration's prior lack of commitment to defense spending in the crucial 1980 election year.

Price, the long-standing chair of the House Armed Services Committee, mounted the first assault against Carter's claim that his administration had always been tough on defense related issues. Following Price's caustic letter to the president regarding the FY79 veto, Harold Brown had expected to face rigorous cross examination from the chairman during the FY80 budget proceedings. Brown got a reprieve in FY80, however, when Price required hospitalization for an infected toe when the Secretary of Defense testified.¹⁸⁶ He would get no such clemency for the FY81 budget hearings. Price opened by setting the record straight: "I would remind the Secretary, and through him, the executive branch, that some of us have been trying for some years" to change public perceptions regarding the need for higher defense spending "but have received only mixed support from the executive branch."¹⁸⁷ He then reminded Brown of the letters which he had sent to the president criticizing the administration's defense spending policies and asking support for important weapons systems. While admitting that he had the "utmost respect for the present Secretary of Defense," Price felt extremely frustrated that "some executive branch officials, including some in the Department of Defense at the time" had gone "out of their way to disparage this

¹⁸⁶ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 1.

¹⁸⁷ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 53.

committee in their comments to support the veto” in FY79.¹⁸⁸ In an effort to heal some of the past ill-will between them, as well as to let Carter know that he had the opportunity to change his relationship with Congress regarding defense spending, Price snidely stated:

I would say to the Secretary, therefore, that we are prepared to work with you to improve our defense capabilities. But I hope that you will carry the message back to those whose wisdom has not always proved infallible in the past that we expect to be treated as a respected partner in the decision process.¹⁸⁹

The chairman ended his formal statement by re-emphasizing the importance of increasing defense expenditures and concluded that, “If the effort had begun sooner, it would not have been so great.”¹⁹⁰ Thus, Price repudiated Carter’s claims of leadership in pushing for higher defense spending, but at the same time signaled the administration that he was willing to work together on the FY81 budget if he was not treated as a second-rate partner.

Other congressmen strongly agreed with Price’s statement and felt compelled to offer their own critique of Carter’s stance toward defense spending. Stratton lauded the chairman’s statement: “I would recommend that we engrave it on the front podium of the committee structure.”¹⁹¹ Bob Wilson (R-CA) agreed; he was “more comfortable in knowing that our President has most recently re-evaluated his arithmetic and evidently discovered what we have known about the Soviet Union for a long, long time.”¹⁹² Statements such as these made it clear that Congress, particularly the House Armed Services Committee, had pre-dated Carter’s rather recent calls for more money in national defense.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 54.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 55.

¹⁹² Ibid.

Despite the restrained tone of the traditionally vocal Price and Stratton, many other members of the committee in both parties took great offense at Carter's claims and attacked the Secretary of Defense. Robin Beard led the assault, saying that he felt "nauseated" by Harold Brown's implication that Jimmy Carter was responsible for bringing about higher defense spending, calling such claims the "ultimate hypocrisy." He blasted the FY81 budget as not doing nearly enough and putting the United States in a position of outright "inferiority" relative to the Soviets. In a heated exchange, Beard also accused the head of the Pentagon of being blatantly partisan and political rather than taking into account the true defense needs of America.¹⁹³ Paul Tribble (R-VA) followed his fellow Republican and bluntly argued that "Soviet tanks are rolling today in large measure because the President has permitted our national defense and our intelligence capabilities to decline so markedly."¹⁹⁴ Robert Daniel, Jr. (R-WV) said that, despite the budget's 5 percent increase, all Americans "stand on a bridge on fire at one end and it is smoldering at the other."¹⁹⁵ And in one of the harshest critiques by the opposition party, Charles Dougherty (R-PA) mocked Harold Brown's characterization of the budget: "I find the word 'adequate' totally inadequate."¹⁹⁶ From the other side of the aisle, Charles Bennett (D-FL) accused Brown of presenting a "horrendous situation" in his FY81 annual report and called the 5 percent increase but a "fraction" of what "most Americans feel should be done this current year."¹⁹⁷ Perhaps being

¹⁹³ For "nauseated" and the exchange between Beard and Brown see *Ibid.*, 435-437. For "ultimate hypocrisy," see *Ibid.*, 863.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 468.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 676.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 716.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 415.

a bit melodramatic, Bob Stump (D-AZ) worried, “If we do not get a little more concerned, there may not be any of us around in the late 1980s to worry about it.”¹⁹⁸ Further, in a stinging rebuke from his own party, Charles Wilson (D-CA) termed Carter’s FY81 defense budget “unrealistic” because it had been developed before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.¹⁹⁹

The Senate Armed Services committee also questioned Harold Brown rigorously. The committee began showing that bi-partisan support for the fact that the FY81 defense budget was not just another “business-as-usual” submission. Chairman Stennis opened by saying that “in many ways this is a crucial year for our defense planning: some hard decisions need to be made. . . .”²⁰⁰ While he acknowledged that the budget did contain a large real increase from the previous year, he openly acknowledged that “we may need more money for hard military capabilities.”²⁰¹ Following Stennis, John Tower, the ranking minority member of the committee, set the tone for the hearings by stating that “the actions taken this year in defense legislation will determine what history will surely record as the most important national security decisions of the postwar period.”²⁰² The choice, he put simply, was “a disastrous period of decline” or “a solid foundation of credible military strength” and that “what is needed is dramatic action and urgent rearmament on a scale unparalleled in our modern history.”²⁰³ The leaders of both parties on the Senate Armed Services Committee

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 437.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 688.

²⁰⁰ SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 6.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 6-7.

thus put this budget on the record in dramatic tone for the Secretary of Defense, the Carter administration, and the American public to hear.

The questioning by the Senate Armed Services Committee proved to be more partisan than that in the House, with many Republicans expressing great displeasure with Carter's overall stance on defense. Prior to preliminary hearings on the FY81 defense budget, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy William Clements held a news conference to attack Carter's proposed increases in defense spending as totally inadequate and, not wanting to understate their position, indicated that a 20 percent real increase could be in order.²⁰⁴ Perhaps bolstered by these claims and by the heightened sense of urgency on the hearings, Senator Roger Jepsen (R-IA) summarized his views on the budget by saying, "The bottom line is our United States of America is in the process of getting caught with its trousers around its ankles."²⁰⁵ Senator Gordon Humphrey (R-NH) claimed not to see "any real addressing of the decline in the military balance" in the FY81 budget and asked Harold Brown, "When are we going to get started?" When Brown responded that the buildup had started when Carter entered office, Humphrey replied that, "My view is that we are not doing nearly enough."²⁰⁶ With Senators Stennis and Tower having set the stage for the importance of the FY81 budget, many conservatives had taken the opportunity to disparage the president's defense policies.

The affair in the senate was not purely partisan, however, since Sam Nunn (D-GA) stepped forward as the leader of the military-congressional alliance to press Harold Brown with

²⁰⁴ "Former Defense Officials Ask 20% More Money for Military," *Washington Post*, November 28, 1979, A19.

²⁰⁵ SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 66.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

several challenging questions. Nunn supported the budget in general, since it contained the 5 percent increase, and so opened his time on the floor by stating for the record that the FY81 defense budget would be “the first budget that moves us out of . . . the period of strategic neglect.”²⁰⁷ In preliminary hearings held on the FY81 budget in December, he had questioned Brown attempting to expose a linkage between the increases in defense expenditures and Carter’s desire to have SALT II ratified in the Senate. Although Brown stated that the 5 percent increase “was not put together to sell SALT,” he did feel that negotiating from a position of strength would be very important. “I applaud your initiative,” Nunn commended, but added “we’re not going to have a SALT II treaty up here every year.”²⁰⁸ In Brown’s second appearance before the committee, Nunn asked Brown if Carter was the man primarily responsible for delaying the rise in defense spending. When the Secretary of Defense argued that the administration had attempted to increase defense spending since 1977, Nunn asked what had happened, then, to make the jump to 5 percent necessary? Brown in response cited many instances of Soviet aggression around the world, including the invasion of Afghanistan.²⁰⁹ Thus, Nunn forced Harold Brown to admit that the Soviet aggression in Afghanistan warranted additional defense expenditure, furthering a major argument of the military-congressional alliance that emerged in the FY81 defense budget hearings.

The military in particular capitalized on the invasion of Afghanistan as a reason for demanding higher expenditures. General Jones testified that in his mind the FY81 budget

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 46.

²⁰⁸ George C. Wilson, "Carter Reversal on Arms Budget Meets Skeptical Hill Reception," *Washington Post*, December 14, 1979, A1.

²⁰⁹ SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 102.

was adequate when it was put together in November of 1979, but that the Soviet invasion in December required the administration “to take another look.”²¹⁰ General Allen indicated a “commonality of views” with Hans Mark, the new Secretary of the Air Force, when he said that he supported the FY81 budget but felt that the invasion of Afghanistan clearly justified additional money being spent for defense.²¹¹ The new Secretary of the Navy Edward Hidalgo said that his attitude toward the budget was “one of reserve, and guarded optimism” but that it left “many issues unanswered for future resolution” due to increased potential for Soviet aggression.²¹² Admiral Hayward’s testimony was far more grim, the CNO stating that he felt the Navy was “stretched thinner today than at any time since the late 1940s,” that the Navy was covering a three ocean commitment with a one and one-half ocean fleet, and that world events such as Iran and Afghanistan should cause Congress to “once again assess how much naval insurance this nation should have,” concluding that he was “keenly concerned” about the monetary allocation for the Navy in FY81.²¹³ When testifying before his allies on the House Armed Services Committee, Marine Commandant Robert Barrow appealed for their aid, saying that the budget for the marines needed to be increased “and I look to this

²¹⁰ Ibid., 58.

²¹¹ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 852, 855. For similar testimony by the Air Force see also SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 955-956, 974; United States Congress, Senate Appropriations Committee, *Department of Defense Appropriations, FY81, 96th Congress, 2nd Session*, 490. Hereafter cited as SAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*.

²¹² United States Congress, House Appropriations Committee, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1981, 96th Congress, 2nd Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), 444. Hereafter cited as HAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*. For other testimony by Secretary Hidalgo along similar lines, see also HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 524-525.

²¹³ For degree of commitment similar to the late 1940s, see HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 540 and SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 785. For “three ocean commitment for a one and a half ocean fleet” see SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 785 and HAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 456. For more naval insurance requirement see SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 784 and SAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 679. For “keenly concerned,” see HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 621.

committee to help make this happen.” In other testimony he claimed that “the need of the Marine Corps has never been greater.”²¹⁴ Secretary of the Army Clifford Alexander admitted that the budget was “a lesser real growth than we had hoped for” and General Meyer testified that, because the budget was put together before Afghanistan, “I personally believe that the Army’s portion of the budget is inadequate in several areas.”²¹⁵ When asked directly if he as a professional soldier was satisfied with the budget, the Chief of Staff of the Army replied, “No. I am not satisfied with it.”²¹⁶ Each of the Services had in some way indicated that they felt defense budget was inadequate because it was created prior to the Afghanistan invasion, thus implying that some form of supplemental appropriations would be needed in the future. All of the FY81 civilian and military testimony from the Pentagon, save for that of Harold Brown himself, had strongly indicted Carter’s claims that he was getting tougher on defense in his last year in office.

Except for the public testimony, the Pentagon’s dissent regarding Carter’s FY81 defense budget did not involve end-runs, perhaps because they were not needed. As an example, William Dickinson (R-AL), the second ranking minority member of the House Armed Services Committee, said that he approached the FY81 defense budget “with more frustration, I believe, than I have experienced ever” because of the difficulties in securing

²¹⁴ For appeals for aid see HAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 550. For “need never greater” see HAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 506.

²¹⁵ For comment by Clifford Alexander see SAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 863. For quote from General Meyer and similar testimony see SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 679 and HAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 99 and 124.

²¹⁶ HAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 123. In a Pentagon letter leaked to the press, both the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff warned Harold Brown that the long term spending program of the administration would result in “the wrong Army, prepared for the wrong war in the wrong decade.” See George C. Wilson, “Carter Budget Plan Would Bleed Army, Leaders Say,” *Washington Post*, October 7, 1980, A17. A subsequent leaked document claimed that with the Carter plan of increasing defense spending the Army would be inferior to the Soviets through 1985. See George C. Wilson, “Budget Document Says Army Can’t Catch up with Soviets by 1985,” *Washington Post*, October 14, 1980, A7.

military support for end-runs on the president's plans.²¹⁷ Likewise, Congressman Floyd Spence (R-SC) lamented that he felt that he often had to fight much of the Department of Defense to get any increases in the military budget. "Last year we passed a nuclear carrier with one hundred votes more than we did the year before when the president vetoed it," he stated, "we have to give the Navy something that they do not officially ask for. That is the position we are in."²¹⁸ Marjorie Holt (R-MD) also spoke of the frustration she experienced as a member of the budget committee due to what she felt was a lack of military support for her desire to increase defense spending. She decried the fact that all other cabinet-level agencies openly lobbied for more money on Capitol Hill while the Pentagon remained stoic and inactive.²¹⁹ Senator Gary Hart (D-CO) correctly indicated that the JCS were "responsible" and "not backdooring their commander-in-chief."²²⁰ Even Harold Brown publicly conceded that the JCS's actions were "within the rules" and that he suffered no "heartburn" because of their straightforward and honest testimony.²²¹ If the Pentagon did in fact conduct behind-the-scenes lobbying during this time period, it remained unseen and unrecorded and certainly failed to impress many important members of Congress.

This relative lack of behind-the-scenes Pentagon lobbying as well as several other factors provided Carter some hope that he might be able to limit increases in defense spending to the

²¹⁷ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 422.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 676.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 696. Likewise, Evans and Novak assessed that the "infamous military-industrial complex did not even growl" during these heated budget debates. See Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Opting for Butter over Guns," *Washington Post*, May 5, 1980, A21.

²²⁰ John M. Berry, "\$6.5 Billion More Than Carter Wants Urged for Defense," *Washington Post*, April 2, 1980, A3.

²²¹ "Joint Chiefs' Money Plea Was within the Rules, Secretary Brown Feels," *Washington Post*, May 31, 1980, A9.

agreed upon 5 percent. The issue of unobligated Pentagon balances remained a major issue during FY81 testimony, with House Budget Chairman Joseph Addabbo aggressively questioning many civilian Pentagon officials concerning the disposition of these funds and whether the defense budget was really a “true priority” budget at all.²²² Senator Jake Garn (R-UT) went so far to say that, from his perspective on the U.S. economy as a member of the Banking Committee, there would probably have to be a “net decrease” in defense spending through FY81.²²³ Additionally, Carter’s likely Republican opponents in 1980—Howard Baker, George Bush, or Ronald Reagan—had already expressed support for Carter’s plan to increase defense by 5 percent.²²⁴ These uncertainties encouraged Carter to hold fast to the 5 percent increase in FY81 and bide his time before seeing if he would need to go any further. Given this policy, Harold Brown, when questioned closely as to whether additional funds would be needed in FY81 because of Iran and Afghanistan, replied that “we want to see whether Congress is willing to support what we have proposed” before going any further.²²⁵

Given the glimmers of hope for keeping the 5 percent increase in place, Carter and his loyal Secretary of Defense embarked on their own lobbying effort, sending a series of letters to key senators and congressmen asking them to limit defense spending. When the House Budget Committee proposed a bi-partisan Holt-Gramm amendment to boost the defense share of the federal budget, Carter wrote to House Speaker Tip O’Neill saying that he was

²²² For importance of unobligated balances see United States Congress, House Committee on the Budget, Task Force on Defense and International Affairs, *Overview of FY81 Defense Budget, 96th Congress, 2nd Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), 63. Hereafter cited as HCOB, *FY81 Defense Budget Overview*. For Cong. Addabbo’s questioning on these unobligated balances see HAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 535.

²²³ SAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 499.

²²⁴ Art Pine, “Arms Outlay Rise Alters Budget Outlook,” *Washington Post*, December 14, 1979, A13.

²²⁵ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 460.

“strongly opposed” to the measure and asking the speaker to defeat this amendment since it provided “far more defense spending than is needed or advisable.”²²⁶ As the JCS testified before Congress regarding the inadequacies of military pay, Carter sent a harshly worded memo to Brown, telling the head of the Pentagon to get the military leaders in-line on the pay raise issue because “a coach would never denigrate his team members by constantly criticizing them.”²²⁷ After his testimony to Congress about the “hollow force,” Army Secretary Clifford Alexander ordered Shy Meyer to retract his statements. Meyer refused, stating “I took my oath to the Constitution, not to the president or this administration.” Alexander backed down and Meyer’s damaging comments remained on the record.²²⁸ In a press conference to a group of prominent editors, Carter stated that his military budget was “adequate” and “approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense.”²²⁹ In a final, bold move to counter a huge \$6.2 billion addition to the defense budget proposed by the House Armed Services Committee, both Carter and Brown wrote letters to Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Stennis asking him to scrap the proposed increases because they posed a “danger” to national security.²³⁰ Carter and Brown wanted almost the entire \$6.2

²²⁶ Evans and Novak, “Opting for Butter Over Guns,” *Washington Post*, May 5, 1980, A21. The amendment was named for Marjorie Holt (R-MD) and freshman Phil Gramm (D-TX), though partisan maneuvering later removed Gramm’s name from the bill.

²²⁷ Richard C. Barnard, “Carter to SECDEF: ‘Don’t Bug Me About Pay,’” *Army Times*, March 17, 1980, 1.; Richard C. Barnard, “Carter Memo on Pay Strikes ‘Em Speechless,” *Army Times*, March 24, 1980, 1 and 22.

²²⁸ James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 202-203.

²²⁹ Clayton Fritchley, “Why up the Pentagon Ante?,” *Washington Post*, June 9, 1980, A21.

²³⁰ The vote to add the \$6.2 billion was an overwhelming 338 to 62. See George C. Wilson, “House Votes to Bust Carter Arms Budget,” *Washington Post*, May 22, 1980, A2. For details of Carter and Brown’s letters see Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Sinking the Navy,” *Washington Post*, May 21, 1980, A23.; George C. Wilson, “President, Brown Attack House Defense Additions,” *Washington Post*, May 23, 1980, A1 and A16. For “danger” see HASC, *FY81 Defense Budget Investigations Hearings*, 2.

billion dollars cut and naval shipbuilding increases under consideration curbed.²³¹ Thus, Carter made it clear that he wanted to hold defense increases to the minimum 5 percent level and that the only time in which he valued the role of Congress in the defense budget process was when it would support his own views.

It was Carter's continued resistance to congressional modifications of his FY81 defense budget that defeated any possible accommodation with the military-congressional alliance. When Price and Stratton heard of the letter objecting to House additions to the budget, they revived their Investigations Subcommittee, calling on the JCS to testify without their civilian counterparts, threatening to subpoena them if necessary.²³² The special hearings, detailed at the opening of this chapter, clearly demonstrated that Carter not only ignored the advice of his military advisors regarding the budget, but also resisted Congress' efforts to modify the defense budget at almost every step. Senate leaders also stepped forward to assail Carter's last-minute efforts to derail further defense increases. Ernest Hollings accused the president of the "height of hypocrisy" and "outrageous and deplorable conduct" for running a public-relations campaign saying that he was primarily responsible for defense increases while at the same time trying to defeat higher defense spending sought by Congress.²³³ Hollings continued pressure on Carter in public speeches, dismissing a Republican call to consider reducing defense spending and calling for the president to "hurry up and catch up" with the

²³¹ Evans and Novak, "Sinking the Navy," *Washington Post*, May 21, 1980, A23.

²³² Helen Dewar, "Carter Accused of 'Hypocrisy' on Arms Budget," *Washington Post*, May 29, 1980, A7. Melvin Price and the House Armed Services Committee also opened an inquiry into the state of the All-Volunteer Army, with Robin Beard indicating that "all the statistics indicate a critical situation at this time." See George C. Wilson, "House Panel Plans Inquiry into All-Volunteer Army," *Washington Post*, May 27, 1980, A6.

²³³ Dewar, "Carter Accused of 'Hypocrisy' on Arms Budget," *Washington Post*, May 29, 1980, A1.

will of the American people for a stronger national defense.²³⁴ William Cohen (R-ME) called the president's positions on defense "totally confusing" and akin to a "maze of mirrors," and Sam Nunn detailed to the press how Carter had changed his position on defense increases at least four different times.²³⁵ Jimmy Carter's final attempt at economy backfired amid bi-partisan disapproval from Congress.

Ultimately, Carter and Brown's stalling efforts only delayed the inevitable increases in defense spending that came later in FY81 and erased the final hope for the administration to cooperate with Congress on the defense budget. Throughout testimony in FY81, both civilian and military members of the Pentagon had called for additional money in the budget, due to both operations and maintenance shortages (O&M) as well as the need to counter Soviet aggression in Afghanistan. An \$800 million supplemental for the FY80 budget made an effort to address the O&M shortages.²³⁶ A later addition to that supplemental allocated additional funding for the burgeoning Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) and increased naval forces to cover the Indian Ocean due to the events in Iran and Afghanistan.²³⁷ By testimony in March of 1980, Harold Brown acknowledged under pressure that with regard to supplemental defense budget submissions, "we will almost certainly have them in 1981 as well."²³⁸ Indeed, Carter eventually submitted two separate supplementals for the FY81

²³⁴ "For the Record 2," *Washington Post*, September 19, 1980. For dismissal of the Republican call to economize on defense see Helen Dewar, "Senate Budget Panel Votes New Defense Outlay Rise," *Washington Post*, August 20, 1980, A10.

²³⁵ George C. Wilson, "Nunn Raps Carter on Defense Flip-Flops," *Washington Post*, June 3, 1980, A2.

²³⁶ SAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 354.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 629.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 243, 437.

budget.²³⁹ Thus, seen as an unusual event in FY79, supplementals had become the norm for Carter's administration in the last two years of his term.

Even as Carter added his supplementals, the military-congressional alliance, emboldened, pressed for even more increases in defense as the 1980 election drew closer. Both the House and the Senate passed defense bills that exceeded Carter's desires by \$5 to \$6 billion.²⁴⁰

Although later reduced, even the lowest budget bills were over \$2 billion more than Carter had requested, with the inclusion of an 11 percent pay raise for the military and increases in military benefits.²⁴¹

In a last effort to reach some level of consensus on defense spending, Nunn and other senators met Carter at the White House in October 1980 in a gathering that illustrated the ultimate victory of the military-congressional alliance. Nunn spoke as leader of the group:

Mr. President, you have only one of two choices: either you support us in our efforts to raise the defense budget sufficiently to meet the needs you say are necessary for this country, or you should go before the country and admit that you do not intend to fund even the minimal defense needs you say are vital to protect our interests.²⁴²

²³⁹ United States Congress, House, *Communication from the President of the United States Transmitting an Amendment to the Request for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1981 for the Department of Defense-Military*, Document 96-316 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, May 21, 1980); United States Congress, Senate, *Communication from the President of the United States Transmitting Proposed Amendments to the Requests for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1981 in the Amount of \$1,384,981,000 for the Department of Defense-Military*, Document 96-69 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 24, 1980).

²⁴⁰ Michael Getler, "Senate Panel Votes \$51.9 Billion to Buy Weapons," *Washington Post*, June 13, 1980, A7; George C. Wilson, "The Quick Fix Arms Bill Nobody Wants," *Washington Post*, June 28, 1980, A1 and A6; Michael Getler, "Conferees Approve \$52.9 Billion Weapons Bill," *Washington Post*, August 2, 1980, A8; Dewar, "Senate Budget Panel Votes New Defense Outlay Rise," *Washington Post*, August 20, 1980, A10.

²⁴¹ "House Committee Approves \$156.9 Billion for Defense," *Washington Post*, September 11, 1980, A7. For pay raise increase see George C. Wilson, "Senate Authorizes 11.7 Pct. Increase for Military Pay," *Washington Post*, July 3, 1980, A1, A4; Helen Dewar, "Votes in House and Senate Show Pro-Defense Mood," *Washington Post*, September 17, 1980, A8. For increased benefits, see the description of the Nunn-Warner amendment in "Pay Increases for the Military Seen Inadequate," *Washington Post*, June 1, 1980, A9.

²⁴² George F. Will, "Wringing out a Mandate," *Washington Post*, October 30, 1980, A23.

Carter remained silent for several seconds, staring at the group. Then he stammered, “Sam, you don’t understand. It’s not my fault. It’s the Republicans’ fault.” Nunn cut his fellow Georgia Democrat off. “Mr. President, *you* don’t seem to understand,” the senator said with conviction, “if we go to war, we’re not going to war with the Republicans.”²⁴³ Presented with the overwhelming force of the military-congressional alliance led by Nunn, this meeting confirmed that Jimmy Carter was unable to stem the tide on increasing defense expenditures.

Before the lame-duck session of Congress came to a close in December of 1980, the Senate voted 73 to 1 for a record \$161 billion budget for defense--\$6.2 billion more than the outgoing president had sought. The one dissenting vote was from a Republican.²⁴⁴ It was the first time in thirteen years that Congress had approved a defense budget higher than the president had submitted.²⁴⁵ Eventually gaining approval for the \$6.2 billion increase, some civilians and military within the Pentagon lobbied Carter to accept an \$8 billion increase for FY81. As one of his last acts in office, Carter refused. The military-congressional alliance hardly raised a voice in protest. They knew that Ronald Reagan would now enter office and raise defense spending even more.²⁴⁶ The Pentagon was satisfied that it was well on its way toward remedying what General Meyer had termed the “hollow” force structure that had plagued it through the 1970s.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ "Senate Votes Pentagon a Record \$161 Billion," *Washington Post*, November 22, 1980, A8.

²⁴⁵ Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency: A Re-evaluation*, 7.

²⁴⁶ George C. Wilson, "Carter, Cutting Pentagon's Budget Request, Grants Extra \$6.2 Billion," *Washington Post*, December 27, 1980, A7; "Senate Unit Plans Arms Bill \$6 Billion over Carter Level," *Washington Post*, November 15, 1980, A15.

A Military-Congressional Alliance: The Overall Pattern of Civil-Military Relations Surrounding the Defense Budget in the Carter Years

Civil-military relations through the four years of Carter's term fit a pattern. First, military and civilian DoD officials within the Pentagon worked together well for the most part, while the Pentagon as a whole fought with the Carter White House on budgets. Second, Jimmy Carter and his staff proved incapable, and apparently unwilling, to work with Congress to develop a consensus on military budgets, thus inviting conflict. The president wanted to re-prioritize military regardless of how important members of Congress viewed the matter. Finally, the patterns of civil-military cooperation and conflict within the Carter administration would lead to a strong alliance between a bi-partisan coalition of pro-defense congressmen and senators and an increasingly complicit Pentagon. Harold Brown, always loyal to the president, found himself squeezed by this contentious relationship and at the brunt of growing criticism from an increasingly hostile Congress. The overall trend when looking at civil-military relations surrounding the Carter defense budgets from FY78 to FY81 can thus best be described as a strengthening military-congressional alliance overtaking a weakening, yet stubborn, chief executive and his Secretary of Defense.

The primary reason for the increasing cooperation between the military and civilian elements of the Pentagon, and the Pentagon's contentious relationship with the White House, was Carter's heavy personal involvement in the first two iterations of the defense budget. Although Carter's direct involvement lessened in his last two years in office, his micromanaging style had set the tone up front and soured his relationship even with the civilians whom he had appointed to run the Pentagon. Carter also proved both unwilling, due to his own belief that he knew best about defense spending, and unable, due to the ineptitude of his White House staff, to work with key members of Congress on his defense budgets.

The result was a series of combative exchanges between the legislative and executive branches over the defense budget, with the veto of the FY79 defense bill being one of the most intense periods of the conflict and Carter's concealed attempts to limit defense spending through the FY80 and FY81 budgets being a natural continuation of the conflict by a politically-weakened president. Many members of Congress, angered by Carter's lack of acknowledgement of their role in setting defense spending priorities, became increasingly hostile and sought to ally with forces inside the Pentagon to raise defense expenditures and acquire more sophisticated weapons systems. Already frustrated by their contentious relationship with the White House, many inside the Pentagon felt more than willing to enter into such an alliance. Harold Brown, always loyal to his boss, remained outside the alliance and often paid the price during his testimony to Congress. These various factors explain why civil-military relations surrounding the defense budgets of FY78-FY81 created a military-congressional alliance.

One important trend in civil-military relations on budget issues in the Carter administration was its increasing politicization. The FY78 and FY79 budgets were strongly colored by Carter's campaign promise to cut defense spending by \$5 to \$7 billion. As the 1980 election approached and it appeared that public perceptions of defense spending had changed, Carter recognized that his plans for economizing defense spending would be very difficult to carry out through FY80 and FY81. He maneuvered fiercely to limit defense spending while at the same time touting his own national defense record, usually enlisting Harold Brown in the effort. When criticized by the left for spending too much on defense, he asked the Commerce Department to pay for military sealift so that he could take that share out of the

Pentagon budget.²⁴⁷ When criticized by the right for not doing enough, Carter ordered Brown to hold a news conference revealing “stealth” technology under development.²⁴⁸ These were just a few of the political decisions that left Congress and political pundits wondering where the president really stood on defense.²⁴⁹ By forcing Harold Brown to justify these spending gyrations, Carter not only left his Pentagon chief open to attack, but also increasingly politicized him. Former Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird recognized this and felt compelled to write an op-ed blasting Brown for lending “the essential non-partisan quality of his office to political distortions.”²⁵⁰ While certainly Laird’s comments had their own partisan bent, the fact remained that from 1977 to 1981 the politics of the defense budget increasingly moved to center stage within the Carter administration, placing great pressure on Harold Brown.

Carter was by no means the first president to politicize the defense budget process through his term, and likewise Carter’s term was not the first time that some within the Pentagon recognized that the defense budget could be used for political gain. The Navy initially proved to be one of the most effective Services in this regard, using a series of press leaks to make it seem that Carter’s FY78 and FY79 defense budgets were dismantling an already

²⁴⁷ Jack Anderson, "Justice Department Faulted on Abscam," *Washington Post*, June 9, 1980, C22.

²⁴⁸ George C. Wilson, "'Stealth' Alters Military Balance, Brown Asserts," *Washington Post*, August 23, 1980, A1 and A14. For Carter’s alleged direct responsibility in inciting the leak see "Carter Blamed in Stealth Leak," *Washington Post*, September 17, 1980, A8.

²⁴⁹ R. James Woolsey, "How Much for Defense?," *Washington Post*, June 5, 1980, A19. Woolsey wondered in his column if perhaps Carter, by opposing the increases to the defense budget proposed by Congress, hoped to “protect his left flank” on defense from the third party candidate John Anderson.

²⁵⁰ Melvin R. Laird, "Defense Secretaries Shouldn't Play Politics," *Washington Post*, August 17, 1980, C7. Reagan’s campaign managers also played up Brown’s role in selling Carter’s positions on defense, claiming that the SECDEF was “injecting partisan political propaganda” into national defense matters. See H. Josef Hebert, "6 Reagan Aides Accuse Administration of Blurring Truth on Defense Fitness," *Washington Post*, October 12, 1980, A5.

crumbling service. In FY80 and FY81, the Army under General Meyer mastered this tactic. In the critical month of October prior to the 1980 election, for example, three separate classified memoranda were leaked to the press detailing the decrepit state of the Army and Carter and Brown's unwillingness to fund the needed remedies.²⁵¹ The military therefore clearly knew how to use the defense budget to weaken Carter politically and gain future concessions even if it meant intervening to a degree in the 1980 election.

The overall level of military lobbying and the frequency of congressional end-runs throughout the four years of Carter's remain difficult to gauge. If any pattern appeared, it seemed to be that military lobbying and end-runs remained more muted than one might expect. Carter had grown considerably weaker politically over this time period, and the military-congressional alliance had grown stronger. The military thus would find end-runs more tempting due to the decreased chances of being punished for such behavior by a weakened commander-in-chief. Yet, the congressional testimony during this time period does not seem to indicate that the military followed this pattern of behavior. Instead, many members of congress increasingly expressed frustration that the JCS and Pentagon seemed not to lobby to overturn the president's decisions despite his weakness. Thus, although there certainly were end-runs and behind-the-scenes lobbying taking place, the JCS under the leadership of General David Jones remained loyal, preferring to offer honest testimony when questioned rather than resorting to back-door channels with Congress to overturn the president's decisions.

²⁵¹ Wilson, "Carter Budget Plan Would Bleed Army, Leaders Say," A17; Michael Getler, "A Combat Readiness Dispute," *Washington Post*, October 11, 1980, A1, A6; Wilson, "Budget Document Says Army Can't Catch up with Soviets by 1985," A7; Michael Getler, "Army, Defense Chief Feud over Budget," *Washington Post*, October 18, 1980, A1, A6. Ronald Reagan also used General Meyer's congressional testimony calling the Army "hollow" several times against Carter during the campaign. See George C. Wilson, "Arms Readiness: Glass Half Empty, Half Full," *Washington Post*, November 1, 1980, A2.

One reason that the JCS and others within the Pentagon may have felt less need to use back channels was the seemingly unshakable commitment of many key congressional leaders to several important weapons systems that were eventually purchased. When Carter lost the 1980 election and Republicans gained control of the Senate, John Tower correctly predicted even higher defense spending and the accelerated development of many costly weapons systems.²⁵² The military-congressional alliance that had been forged during Carter's term indeed helped Tower keep his promise and delivered impressive dividends for all of the Services. For the Army, the M-1 tank, Bradley fighting vehicle, Apache helicopter, and Multiple-Launch Rocket System (MLRS) all survived to become superb combat systems. The Air Force continued with the MX ballistic missile and even the "cancelled" B-1.²⁵³ Despite being debated for hours in Carter's first meeting on the defense budget, the Navy and Marines' CH-53E helicopter gained continued budgetary support. The Navy's intensive lobbying efforts also ensured that the F/A-18 fighter and "Aegis" cruiser survived to enter service. Carter did not think the Navy needed a fifth nuclear-powered supercarrier, but Reagan and Congress clearly disagreed; a fifth through tenth were eventually commissioned—with the eighth being named in honor of Senator John Stennis, who often supported the Navy over Carter, and the tenth being christened the *U.S.S. Ronald Reagan*.²⁵⁴ Carter's budgets, heavily modified by Congress, hardly crippled long-term American military superiority.

²⁵² George C. Wilson, "Tower Predicts an Increase in Defense Funding," *Washington Post*, November 12, 1980, A1, A4.

²⁵³ For controversy on B-1 see George C. Wilson, "Panel Rebuffs President on Scuttling B-1," *Washington Post*, September 29, 1977, A1, A20. For retention and resurrection of the B-1 see Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 88.

²⁵⁴ Chris Bishop, ed., *The Encyclopedia of World Sea Power* (New York: Crescent Books, 1988), 69.

Although heavy presidential involvement and a lack of respect for congressional authority characterized civil-military relations surrounding defense budgets in Carter's administration, a rather different pattern emerged when considering relations involving other defense and foreign policy issues in Carter's administration. While Carter had at times micromanaged Harold Brown and the Department of Defense, he avoided doing so with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and the State Department or with Zbigniew Brzezinski, his National Security Advisor and his staff. The great latitude given to these men contributed to a confused and chaotic policy making process, especially in the final two years of Carter's administration. While Carter downplayed the role of Congress in the defense budgetary process, he similarly minimized the formal role of the JCS in his defense and foreign policy making. The result, especially in the last two years of Carter's term, was a tense civil-military relationship that became further strained by a series of chaotic events.

CHAPTER V

CHAOS: DEFENSE POLICY AND PLANNING IN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, 1979-1981

Interlude: The White House Situation Room, November 13, 1980, 3:00 p.m.¹

Zbigniew Brzezinski glanced quickly around the White House Situation Room. He contemplated how much the faces and circumstances had changed since he had begun his term as National Security Advisor nearly four years earlier. Sitting opposite was Secretary of State Edmund Muskie who had replaced Cyrus Vance in April of 1979 after Vance resigned over the failed hostage rescue mission in Iran. Muskie was the only “principal” member from any of the departments present at the meeting. The rebellious and newly promoted Deputy Secretary of Defense W. Graham Claytor represented the DoD. Frank Carlucci, a veteran beltway insider and Deputy Director of the CIA, represented that organization in lieu of Admiral Stansfield Turner. Even the JCS had sent an acting Chairman to this meeting, as General Edward Meyer stood in for General David Jones. Brzezinski’s assistant David Aaron provided some continuity, having served since the start of the administration. On balance, however, the National Security Advisor could not help but notice how different the individuals at this meeting were from those at the early gatherings of the SCC.

Perhaps one major reason for the changes, as well as the presence of so many deputies, was Jimmy Carter’s loss to Ronald Reagan only a few days earlier. Reagan had repudiated

¹ Time, date, location, and transcript of the meeting taken from Zbigniew Brzezinski, "National Security Council, Special Coordinating Committee Meeting, Subject: Nicaragua," (White House Situation Room: Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 33, Folder: [Meetings-SCC 349A: 11/13/80], November 18, 1980), 1.

most of Carter's defense policies. Many felt that the Carter "lame duck" period was going to be very uneventful. Criticized for being associated with the outgoing administration's rejected policies, Harold Brown, Stansfield Turner, and David Jones apparently preferred to pass on more responsibility onto their deputies at this juncture.

While the administration's days were numbered, these men still tried to bring order out of chaos in the realm of defense policy. The last two years of the administration had been plagued by a series of defense debacles and continuing civil-military tension. Efforts to bring meaningful reform to the Pentagon failed; the president's Korea troop withdrawal policy was finally defeated; and a revolution in Iran toppled the Shah and spawned an fundamentalist Islamic government. Soon after the "fall" of Iran, the American embassy was seized and the occupants taken hostage. A military operation to free the hostages failed miserably, and it was unclear when the Americans, now held for more than a year, would ever come home. While these tumultuous events took place overseas, only a few hundred miles south of the American border a revolution swept a leftist government to power in Nicaragua. The administration had tried to distance itself from the events taking place in Central America, but even as the administration's term came to a close, a major incident seemed imminent.

Brzezinski cleared his throat as he took charge, stating that the meeting would have a three-fold purpose. First, recent intelligence indicated that a counter-coup against the leftist Sandinista government of Nicaragua might be coming, something that the group needed to decide whether to support if it was likely. Second, President Carter wanted a series of diplomatic demarches prepared that could be directed to Havana and Moscow warning them to stay out of the internal events taking place within Nicaragua should a coup begin. Finally,

Carter wanted the group to examine possible military options which could deter or respond to Cuban efforts to stop the potential coup. This group of advisors would present their recommendations to the president in about one hour.²

“The key issue here,” Brzezinski emphasized forcefully, “is armed involvement on the part of Cuba.”³ He felt strongly that the U.S. must prevent any Cuban troop deployments into Nicaragua. He had recommended to the president that military contingencies be prepared, and Carter had agreed that this should be a major focus of the meeting that day.⁴

Brzezinski then turned to Frank Carlucci, seeking an intelligence update. “How does the CIA assess the state of events in Nicaragua right now?” he queried. The Deputy CIA director labeled the situation as “deteriorating rapidly,” and with the Marxists losing power in the government, a right wing counter-coup was “very plausible.” “In summary,” Carlucci concluded, “the additional reporting has lent credence to a coup, and enhanced the chances of success.”⁵

The National Security Advisor leaned forward in his chair, his interest visibly piqued by the opportunity to deal communism a setback in the Western hemisphere. “What are the prospects of Cuban involvement to stop this coup?” he asked in a low voice. “I would expect the Cubans to intervene,” Carlucci replied, adding, “but only if they didn’t expect us to be involved.” The Sandinistas had established a military agreement with Cuba soon after coming to power. Fidel Castro would certainly adhere to this agreement and send some sort

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 2.

of military assistance unless the United States prevented it.⁶ Having been accused of “losing” Nicaragua to communist expansion, Brzezinski sought a chance to redeem the Carter administration’s record.

The eager look on Brzezinski’s face alarmed Secretary of State Muskie. The veteran politician, renowned for his work in the Senate, was far less confrontational than the National Security Advisor. Muskie spoke up, indicating that the coup was much more complicated and not quite as straightforward as Brzezinski might like it. Up to three independent groups were then plotting a coup, none even knowing about the existence of the other. “These three groups share a common goal—to replace the Marxist leadership with a more democratic system,” Muskie interjected, “however, the prospects of any of these groups succeeding is slim.”⁷ The Secretary of State even went so far as to suggest that the administration send a message to the conspirators making it clear that the United States would not under any circumstances support their efforts.⁸ Muskie was not eager to risk another foreign policy setback while the administration was just about to leave office. The Secretary of State wanted to play it safe.

Undeterred, Brzezinski moved the meeting on to the next point of order: the wording of the diplomatic demarche prepared by the State Department. “These drafts look fine in general, but the conclusion on these demarches is weak,” he complained: “it should be made clear to Cuba that the United States will not tolerate any foreign involvement in the internal affairs of Nicaragua.” In an October speech President Carter had firmly stated that he would

⁶ Ibid., 2-3.

⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁸ Ibid., 4.

not permit troops from Cuba to move “in any offensive action against any neighboring countries.” To Brzezinski, the demarches needed explicit reference to this forceful presidential statement of policy. Instead, the draft denied any American role in the coup and objected to any Cuban troop movement except those made out of “reasonable self-defense.” Brzezinski felt that Castro would take advantage of the “self-defense” clause to intervene in Nicaragua.⁹ The National Security advisor therefore wanted the demarche reworded to reflect a more forceful U.S. position against Cuban intervention. “That seems rather strong to me,” Muskie interjected nervously, “perhaps we should just allude to the president’s statement rather than explicitly reference it.”¹⁰

Brushing off the Secretary of State again, Brzezinski moved that the demarche be reworded to be more forceful. “Do you all agree to this change?” the National Security Advisor quickly asked. Muskie sat silently, looking as all other members of the meeting nodded their heads. With Brzezinski’s cold stare still leveled at him, Muskie lowered his eyes and gestured with his hand, indicating his reluctant approval. “Good,” Brzezinski beamed, and sent an assistant outside the room to retype the demarche immediately.¹¹

“Let us talk military contingencies,” the National Security Advisor said as he turned to Graham Claytor. The Deputy Secretary of Defense noted that the aircraft carrier *U.S.S. Forrestal* was in the area and that the 82nd Airborne Division was also ready, but neither had been alerted. “How soon could we put troops onto the ground in Nicaragua?” Brzezinski eagerly questioned. General Meyer responded that the entire 82nd Airborne could land in

⁹ Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

seven to ten days, with the lead battalion being on the ground within 24 hours, provided that the Army was put on alert. “Certainly we’ll put the Army on alert upon the delivery of the demarche,” Brzezinski concluded, preparing to move onto the next topic.¹²

Claytor and Meyer exchanged glances at the table. This was not the first time they had witnessed the National Security Advisor’s hawkishness dominate the NSC meetings in the second half of the administration. Even for these military men, Brzezinski’s tone at times seemed overly aggressive, his solutions too simplistic.

Claytor and Meyer both returned to the conversation, pointing out the logistical and political problems in deploying troops into Nicaragua. Both emphasized the difficulty assembling the required number of aircraft to deliver the troops and supplies. A training exercise in Egypt had absorbed many of the Air Force’s critical transport aircraft.¹³ Meyer emphasized that putting troops and aircraft on alert would be necessary to estimate how long the deployment might take. “There’s no quiet way to put troops on alert,” the general warned Brzezinski, “Everyone would know about it.”¹⁴ The administration had experienced the problems of alerts leaking to the press, and now General Meyer appeared to be warning that it could happen again. Brzezinski became visibly agitated at the fact that the DoD and the uniformed military seemed to be dubious about aggressive action.

“We have to be ready to conduct an airlift,” Brzezinski declared, “General Meyer, why don’t you use the Egyptian airlift exercise as a cover to re-divert the aircraft back to the United States and at the same time put troops on alert.” Meyer nodded, indicating that this

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁴ Ibid., 5.

“might be difficult” but that he could look into it.¹⁵ Thinking that he had spurred the defense establishment into assenting to some kind of action, Brzezinski pushed his views even further on the NSC, completely overwhelming the silent Secretary of State.

In addition to airlifting troops, Brzezinski also wanted the *Forrestal* to interdict any military flights coming out of Cuba, preventing the communist island from quashing the right-wing coup in Nicaragua. Meyer indicated that Admiral Hayward, the CNO, was “confident” that the *Forrestal* could perform this mission. However, the general cautioned that orders to interdict another country’s aircraft over international waters risked a major incident, including the accidental destruction of a civilian airliner.¹⁶

Brzezinski waved his hand in the air, stopping the general. He was growing tired of caveats to his courses of action. “If Cuban pilots disregard our signals, then we could take that as a presumption that they are engaged in sending troops or military material, and they should be shot down,” he declared.¹⁷ The room fell silent for a moment following the National Security Advisor’s guidance to use lethal force to stop Cuban intervention.

General Meyer was the first to break the silence, and he urged caution regarding the possible adverse incidents that could result from Brzezinski’s course of action. “The rules of engagement would have to be developed providing very clear instructions for our pilots,” the general insisted.¹⁸ “Has any work been done on this?” Brzezinski quickly shot back.¹⁹ The military opposition to his plan clearly had the National Security Advisor flustered. “We will

¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

begin work on the rule of engagement immediately,” Meyer assured, “It will take the *Forrestal* twelve to fifteen hours to move into position where it could intercept the Cuban flights in any event.”²⁰

“What?” Brzezinski questioned in a shocked tone, “I thought that the *Forrestal* was already in position! The President had been informed that the *Forrestal* was in position some time ago!”²¹ “Well, we did not want to move it into position too soon because it might be a tip-off to the Cubans that we are aware of the possibility of a coup in Nicaragua,” General Meyer explained.²² Brzezinski visibly fumed in his chair. “The Cubans could have a thousand troops in Nicaragua before we even get the *Forrestal* in place!” the National Security Advisor yelled in frustration.²³ This was not the first time that the administration had experienced difficulty getting an aircraft carrier into position in a timely manner. Nor was it the first time in the last two years when the military had made the decision about where a carrier battlegroup should be positioned. Brzezinski recalled the fiasco associated with the Iranian Revolution when the JCS had moved the *U.S.S. Constellation* toward the Indian Ocean in response to the unrest in Iran. Press reports of the movement surprised the White House which had not been informed.²⁴ This time the JCS’s insubordination was different—the military had chosen not to deploy a carrier that the president wanted in

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 149-150.

position. “Explain to me now why we should not have the *Forrestal* sail immediately to a position where it can interdict these Cuban flights,” Brzezinski challenged.²⁵

Since Brzezinski had rejected Meyer’s argument that the carrier move might precipitate a coup, the general tried another explanation. “Sir,” Meyer responded haltingly, “the carrier is currently in a flight-training mode conducting a practice exercise, so we did not want to move it. We can maneuver it to the important point within twelve hours if need be.”²⁶

Brzezinski exploded in rage. “General, I just don’t understand your answer. To hell with the military exercise, we may actually need to use the *Forrestal* for combat!”²⁷ “Sir, we felt that moving the carrier would tip our hands to the Cubans,” Meyer explained again, “and if the Cubans saw we would be involved it might precipitate the coup.” David Aaron, Brzezinski’s longtime deputy on the NSC, suddenly jumped in, defending the general’s interpretation.²⁸ Secretary Muskie then broke his long silence, concerned that American pilots might be “trigger-happy” and could shoot down planes with innocent civilians in them.²⁹ Frank Carlucci brought up the fact that it would be very difficult for the CIA to determine what would actually be on the Cuban planes—SR-71 overflights would not help, there was little ability to get operatives on the ground to observe the airfields in Nicaragua, and the ability of the CIA to intercept radio signals from Cuba was incomplete at best.³⁰

²⁵ Brzezinski, "National Security Council, Special Coordinating Committee Meeting, Subject: Nicaragua," 7.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 8-9.

³⁰ Ibid.

General Meyer felt relieved that he was now not the only one on the NSC bringing up problems with Brzezinski's plans.

As the resistance to Brzezinski's course of action mounted, the National Security Advisor reluctantly agreed that the issue required further study. The problem could not be solved at this NSC meeting. Brzezinski remained seated as the rest of the meeting participants filed out of the room. With the Situation Room empty, the National Security Advisor realized that the last opportunity for the Carter Administration to deal a setback to world communist influence had probably slipped past.

This lame-duck administration NSC meeting regarding possible military intervention in Nicaragua served in many ways to replicate the course of civil-military relations in the second half of the Carter administration. The JCS, largely excluded from the process of policy making in the first half of the administration, became increasingly involved in the last two years of Carter's term. The influence of the State Department, so prominent in the early years of Carter's defense policy, waned in the second half of the administration. With State increasingly marginalized, Zbigniew Brzezinski stepped forward to become more influential. Despite his hard-line predilections, the Pentagon did not blindly support the hawkish National Security Advisor. As was clearly evident at this meeting, the Pentagon, especially the uniformed military, at times openly opposed his confrontational plans. President Carter, though listening more to his defense advisors than before, was still ambivalent as to what course he should take on defense policy. Perhaps the key difference between the first and second half of the administration in terms of civil-military relations was that a series of tumultuous world events created a more chaotic environment than in the first two years.

The Nature of the Building: Pentagon Resistance to Defense Reorganization in the Carter Years

One point of civil-military conflict that had been constant since the start of the administration, but climaxed in its last two years, was the issue of Pentagon and JCS reorganization. Like other policy decisions earlier in the administration, the JCS was involved only to a limited degree. Carter's first set of Joint Chiefs, however, had not been proponents of change. With the selection of his second set, Carter finally gained a team willing to oversee substantial change in the Pentagon. Ironically, the resistance from the first group convinced Harold Brown, and through him Carter, that no substantial change in the Pentagon could take place during the administration's term.

Carter's presidential campaign alleged Pentagon inefficiency and wastefulness and promised change. Harold Brown used the momentum from the election to begin his reforms early. In his first hearing before Congress, he complained that over two dozen separate elements of the DoD reported directly to the Secretary of Defense or his Deputy. "I have concluded that this span of control is too broad to enable us to give adequate supervision to these functional elements of the Department," Brown determined, and set about making reforms.³¹ Less than four months later, he proposed a "sweeping reorganization" which abolished one deputy secretary of defense position but created two undersecretary positions, thus creating an extra layer of civilian control.³² These early reforms concentrated primarily on the civilian realms of the Pentagon—the higher-level secretary positions.

Brown's next changes, launched later in 1977, more directly affected the military and spawned military opposition. The Secretary began in July of 1977 by proposing massive cuts

³¹ SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 364.

³² "Pentagon Reorganization Is Proposed," *Washington Post*, April 9, 1977, E2.

in Pentagon staffs. All of the services were to experience a portion of these cuts. Brown's plan eliminated more than four thousand civilian and military positions—a reduction of between 20 and 25 percent for most staffs.³³ The military resisted the efforts, first appealing the cuts down to 2,900 personnel, then transferring, only on paper, these individuals to organizations outside of Washington. These units in turn detached the personnel back to the Pentagon. The end result was that Brown's staff reforms physically removed only sixty people from the building. The Army and Navy then requested additional personnel for their depleted staffs, leading one reporter to comment, "Nowhere does the fixation with bureaucratic organization look sillier than at the Pentagon."³⁴ Brown's staff reorganization was therefore deemed almost a complete failure by the end of 1978.

The most controversial set of early reforms, which carried on through the entire administration, were the changes that Brown proposed to the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS).³⁵ Central to these reforms was developing comprehensive "Consolidated Guidance" (CG). This document, the brainchild of Undersecretary for Policy Stanley Resor, integrated both strategic and fiscal guidance for the administration and relied on earlier input from the Secretary of Defense and the president.³⁶ The introduction of Consolidated Guidance was thus a prominent assertion of civilian, especially presidential, authority on defense policy making procedures.

³³ George C. Wilson, "20-25 Pct. Staff Cut Ordered at Pentagon," *Washington Post*, July 22, 1977, A3.

³⁴ Mike Causey, "Puzzling Reorganization," *Washington Post*, October 7, 1978, B2.

³⁵ These changes are discussed in detail in Appendix 1: The Defense Budget Process. Here the focus will be the role of Consolidated Guidance (GG) in the policy making process of the administration and the Pentagon.

³⁶ For "brainchild" role of Stan Resor, see GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 315. For overall description of the CG, see Walter S. Poole, *JCS Special Historical Study: The Evolution of the Joint Strategic Planning System, 1947-1989* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Staff, 1989), 15-16. Hereafter cited as *Evolution of the JSPS*.

When the Secretary of Defense provided the first draft of the administration's Consolidated Guidance to the Chiefs for comment, their appraisal was uniformly negative. They criticized both the strategic and fiscal sections of the document. The vehemence with which the uniformed military resisted this intrusion of civilians into a heretofore military-dominated realm was evident in the comments on the draft. "There is no section which coherently pulls overall policy and military strategy and guidance together," was a major criticism.³⁷ The JCS also felt that the Soviet threat was "portrayed inconsistently."³⁸ In the most stinging criticism, the JCS deemed that "the Draft CG contains overly specific, restrictive guidance which inhibits the JCS/CINCs in their planning."³⁹ General Wilson, as he was leaving his post as Commandant of the Marine Corps, stated that he felt the CG had "no future" and was "useless."⁴⁰ Commenting on the fiscal portion of the guidance, the JCS lobbied for a long term 5 percent increase in defense spending, which they felt could be "easily" passed by the Congress if the administration proposed it.⁴¹ This recommendation, "one of their few unanimous views" in the words of Harold Brown, was seen by the JCS as "solving their most severe problems and as making the difference between a low-risk and a high-risk defense capability."⁴² "They may even be right on both scores," Brown told Carter, in a rather dismissive view of the JCS position. Apparently a copy of the memo reached

³⁷ George S. Brown, "Memorandum from J-5 PP 3-78, January 9, 1978," CJCS Brown Files, 550 Budget, Box 34, NARA II, College Park, MD.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ GEN General Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 315.

⁴¹ Harold Brown, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Consolidated Guidance, March 10, 1978," CJCS Brown Files, 550 Budget, Box 34, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁴² Ibid.

General Brown, whose marginal notations indicated that he was annoyed with the Secretary's dismissal of his advice.⁴³

As Harold Brown pursued these ambitious reforms, Carter ordered him to study improvements in three more major areas in the Pentagon: defense management structure, defense resource management, and the national military command structure. Brown selected veterans from the McNamara Pentagon to lead each of the study groups.⁴⁴ The military had little input in determining its future structure—Brown outsourced the entire project to civilians familiar with defense policy making.

The first study group, termed the Ignatius Study group after its head Paul Ignatius, examined defense management structure inside the Pentagon. Its main recommendation was a call for closer direct coordination between the Chairman of the JCS and the newly established undersecretary of defense for policy.⁴⁵ Harold Brown had recently appointed former Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor to the undersecretary position. One of Resor's primary functions was to control service programs which had previously been the responsibility of the military service staffs.⁴⁶ The new undersecretary for policy was

⁴³ Ibid. Regarding the Secretary's comment that the JCS "may even be right," General Brown circled the word *even* and annotated "nasty!" in the margin.

⁴⁴ Edgar F. Jr. Raines and David R. Campbell, *The Army and the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Evolution of Army Ideas on the Command, Control, and Coordination of the U.S. Armed Forces, 1942-1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1986), 133. Paul Ignatius headed the study group on defense management. Ignatius had held many defense positions within Kennedy and Johnson administrations, culminating with a stint as Secretary of the Navy from 1967-1969. Donald B. Rice headed the study group on defense resources. Rice served as Director of Cost Analysis, OSD, 1967-1969 and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Resource Analysis from 1969-1970. He was a former head of the RAND corporation and later Secretary of the Air Force from 1989 to 1993. Richard Steadman headed the study of the national military command structure. Steadman was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia and Pacific Affairs from 1966-1969.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Louis J. Moses, *The Call for JCS Reform: Crucial Issues* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1985), 30.

considered the third-ranking official in the Pentagon and had been given an even greater authority by the findings of the Ignatius Group.⁴⁷

The uniformed military in the Pentagon resisted the Ignatius recommendations just as they had the other efforts to assert more civilian control of defense policy. By March of 1979, within only nine months of taking his position, Resor resigned his post in frustration. Insiders posited various reasons for the sudden departure, but the level of civil-military conflict at the time seems a likely explanation. One senior defense official seemed to support this, indicating that within the Pentagon it was “the nature of the building” to block any modernization or change.⁴⁸ John Kester, Harold Brown’s special assistant, agreed, lamenting that the organization of DoD was created by “historical accident and bureaucratic stonewalling,” and that little meaningful change was likely in the near future.⁴⁹ The press termed Resor’s resignation “an embarrassment for the Carter administration, which, like previous ones, has accurately diagnosed the Pentagon disease, but failed to impose a cure.”⁵⁰

The second study group, the Steadman group, studied the national military command structure and its recommendations made it the most famous of the three. Press reports anxiously anticipated a major reorganization of the Pentagon and JCS when the study was first commissioned.⁵¹ Somewhat anti-climatically, the Steadman report, presented in July of 1978, recommended no changes. It did, however, criticize the military Joint Staff system within the Pentagon as being too dominated by individual Service perspectives. The group

⁴⁷ "Stanley Resor Plans to Resign; Ranks 3rd in Pentagon Hierarchy," *Washington Post*, March 9, 1979, A20.

⁴⁸ Bernard Weinraub, "Top Aide at Pentagon Is Quitting in Dispute," *New York Times*, March 8, 1979, A1.

⁴⁹ Moses, *The Call for JCS Reform*, 45.

⁵⁰ "A 'Straight Arrow' Quits the Pentagon," *New York Times*, March 11, 1979, E1.

⁵¹ Clayton Fritchley, "A Change of Hats for the Chiefs?," *Washington Post*, November 12, 1977, A19.

argued that under the existing system it was “difficult for the JCS to produce persuasively argued joint papers which transcend Service positions.”⁵² The report also said that the Chief’s obligations to their Services as well as to the administration reduced JCS advice to the “lowest common level of assent.”⁵³ To solve this and other problems, the group recommended providing the Chairman of the JCS greater authority, as well as a greater role for CINCs, as opposed to the Services, in resource allocation decisions.⁵⁴ The hope was that a stronger CJCS and more CINC involvement would reduce inter-service squabbling.

Pentagon correspondent Bernard Weinraub judged that the report indicated that the Chiefs had been playing a “limited role in defense policy” and were “due for a major overhaul.”⁵⁵

The Steadman report’s optimistic press did not coincide with reaction in the Pentagon. Although the Chiefs implemented limited internal reforms to comply with the findings, as a whole they rejected any need for substantive change.⁵⁶ Even the newly appointed Chairman of the JCS, David Jones, who later became a strong advocate of organizational changes, was quick to defend the status quo. “The fundamental organizational structure is sound . . . there is no present need for dramatic change,” he asserted in his official response to the Steadman

⁵² Joint Chiefs of Staff Historical Division, *Organizational Development of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 1942-1989* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), 51.

⁵³ George C. Wilson, "More Policy Sway Is Sought for Joint Chiefs' Chairman," *Washington Post*, July 13, 1978, A2.

⁵⁴ Raines and Campbell, *The Army and the JCS*, 135 and 138-139.

⁵⁵ Bernard Weinraub, "Study for Carter Asks Bigger Role for Joint Chiefs," *New York Times*, July 13, 1978, 1.

⁵⁶ *Organizational Development of the JCS*, 52.

report.⁵⁷ Likewise, the Army only partially agreed with the findings, specifically opposing more power for the CINCs and the Joint Staff.⁵⁸

The last group to complete its project, headed by Donald Rice, focused on the issue of defense resource management within the Pentagon. Reporting in the spring of 1979, the Rice report argued modestly for an increased role for the Chairman of the JCS and the Joint Staff in the resource allocation process.⁵⁹ Brown responded by creating a “Resource Planning Board” consisting of the Secretary of Defense and his service secretaries, to integrate the separate budget submissions of each Service and resolved major issues between them. Brown made the Chairman an ex-officio member of this board, suggesting a preference for uniformed military advice filtered through the Chairman rather than the JCS as a body.⁶⁰

Civilians dominated each of these studies and civilian control pervaded the reforms proposed during the first and second half of the Carter administration. Brown chose knowledgeable, defense savvy civilians to conduct the important studies and, although the Chiefs certainly provided input, they resisted changes. The degree to which civilians independently formulated answers to the studies was unusual. As an example, Army official historians studying the reaction of the uniformed military determined that:

Previously, the Army chief of staff and vice chief of staff played major roles in defining the Army position. The existing evidence . . . suggests that neither General Rogers, nor the vice chief of staff, General Walker T. Kerwin, was much involved. Secretary of the Army Alexander played a much more important role than they.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Raines and Campbell, *The Army and the JCS*, 144.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁶⁰ Poole, *The Evolution of the JSPS*, 18.

⁶¹ Raines and Campbell, *The Army and the JCS*, 145.

While the early efforts to reform the policy making process in the Pentagon had certainly created civil-military tension, it also caused friction between civilians in the Pentagon and the White House which consistently believed the Pentagon to be inefficient, wasteful, and in need of reform. The president even went so far as to direct Harold Brown to develop a physical training program for officers assigned to the Pentagon because Carter felt that many of those in uniform were too fat.⁶² This micro-management—as was the case with budgeting—caused significant Pentagon-White House tension at times. On physical fitness, Harold Brown concluded, “I think he paid too much attention to that sort of thing.”⁶³ When speaking of Carter’s three directed studies, Brown characterized them as “overly ambitious.”⁶⁴ John Kester had an even stronger opinion on the matter. Brown’s special assistant blasted the directed studies as a waste of time and effort and indicated that he fought them every step of the way.⁶⁵ Veteran official “Doc” Cooke also noted this White House-Pentagon tension, indicating that “left to his own devices” Harold Brown probably would not have conducted these reorganization studies.⁶⁶ Though Brown, Kester, and the administration’s team at OSD had their own plans to change they way of doing business in the Pentagon, Carter’s demands for further studies pushed the impetus for reform almost too far even for reformers.

⁶² Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Trask, 4 December 1981, OSD Oral History, 17.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, 28 February 1992, OSD Oral History, 9.

⁶⁵ John Kester, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 26.

⁶⁶ David Cooke, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 16.

Ironically, the one major reform to the structure of the JCS during the Carter years—the elevation of the Marine Corps Commandant to full membership in the JCS—came about not as a result of any of the studies but through military insubordination. The issue came to a head in late 1978 when all other members of the JCS left Washington, but General Louis Wilson, the USMC commandant, remained behind. For that period of time the Chairmanship of the JCS had to pass to the three-star Deputy Chief of Staff of for Plans and Operations because, by law, the USMC commandant was not a full member of the Joint Staff while the three-star general was. David Jones apologized to Wilson for the situation. “Fine. Thank you very much,” Wilson replied, “I’ll take it from here.”⁶⁷ From that point on the Marine Commandant decided to make himself a full-member of the JCS—regardless of what his civilian superiors or military peers might think or the law might state.

As a former Congressional Liaison Officer, Wilson had the contacts in Congress to carry out his plan. “No one knew what I was doing,” including Harold Brown or the other Chiefs, the general recalled later, “I had kept this very quiet. I did tell—not ask—the Secretary of the Navy that day before what I was doing and requested his confidence.”⁶⁸ Getting Graham Claytor’s assurances of secrecy, the Marine General proceeded to call upon his friend Bob Wilson (R-CA), the ranking minority member of the House Armed Services Committee. Congressman Wilson shrewdly suggested that the Marine Commandant speak to Senator Stennis about putting a clause in the FY79 defense bill making the commandant a full member of the JCS. If Stennis would agree and get it through the Senate, then Bob Wilson could get it through the House. When General Wilson approached Stennis, the influential

⁶⁷ GEN General Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 356.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 359.

Mississippi Democrat proved to be “enthusiastic” about the idea. The provision for the Marine Commandant being a full member of the JCS was thus included in the FY79 defense appropriations bill.⁶⁹

The passage of the bill making the Commandant a full member of the JCS “came as quite a blow in the halls of the Pentagon,” Wilson remembered. Harold Brown was “appalled that something that was this important had gone through without any discussion whatsoever” and knew that Wilson was responsible. General Jones called Wilson, indicating that he was “quite surprised” and “sorry” that the commandant had not even informed him of his intentions. Wilson openly challenged the Chairman: “Stand up and be counted. If you don’t want the Commandant as a full member of the JCS, I suggest that you call Senator Stennis and tell him so.” Jones backed down. Even when Carter vetoed the FY79 defense bill, Stennis inserted the provision into the modified defense budget, which Carter could not hope to veto. When the modified bill passed, the Marine Commandant thus became a full member of the JCS. Harold Brown, perhaps having encountered enough military end-runs for one fiscal year, congratulated Wilson on his achievement.⁷⁰ The most significant change in the JCS thus derived not from one of Carter’s civilian staff studies, but from an end-run to Congress.

The failure of the administration to reform the Pentagon stood in stark contrast to Wilson’s coup. Because of uniformed military resistance to the civilian-dominated staff studies and the administration’s weak political standing as it entered its second-half, most major reform efforts fizzled. Back in 1977, Harold Brown and his OSD staff had been able to make

⁶⁹ Ibid., 356.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 359-360.

meaningful changes to the PPBS system—the Consolidated Guidance being the most important and lasting one in the realm of defense policy making. By early 1979, however, when the Carter-directed studies finished, the reform movement had lost most of its momentum.

Change was going nowhere without support from the top. Both David Jones and Harold Brown became vocal proponents of substantial changes to the JCS which eventually led to the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. But in Carter’s administration, Jones felt powerless to press any sort of meaningful reform. Brzezinski’s military assistant Colonel William Odom remembered meeting with the chairman during the latter half of the Carter term. The general bemoaned his lack of authority. “You’ve got to understand, I don’t have clout,” Jones had lamented. “I felt sorry for him,” Odom recalled.⁷¹ Similarly, Harold Brown decided to rest on the laurels of his early reforms. Responding to the findings of the three directed studies, Brown argued that the DoD “works well . . . and that sufficient changes occurred in the Department prior to the commencement of the formal reorganization studies, and the Administration should take credit for these changes.”⁷² In his memoirs he proposed “radical” changes to the Pentagon, very similar to the Goldwater-Nichols reorganization, arguing that advice coming from the JCS as a body was not useful.⁷³ When asking the rhetorical question, “Why did he not propose these changes while in office?” Brown responded, “The answer is simple: Ripeness is all.”⁷⁴ He felt it best to make these suggestions after leaving office and leave the actual reforms to a subsequent administration.

⁷¹ BG William Odom, interview by James Milano, Carlisle Oral History, 93.

⁷² Raines and Campbell, *The Army and the JCS*, 144.

⁷³ Moses, *The Call for JCS Reform*, 10.

⁷⁴ Brown, *Thinking About National Security*, 214.

Had the Carter administration continued for a second term, he and David Jones might have been willing to push these reforms.⁷⁵ But there was going to be no second term—and no substantive reform of the Pentagon until Goldwater-Nichols under Reagan’s administration.

Korea on the Brink: PRM-45, Revising the Decision Nobody Liked and Saving an Ally

The withdrawal of troops from Korea was another issue which provoked military resistance in Carter’s term. It, too, culminated in the second half of the administration. Again military resistance forced the president to back down, demonstrating the power of the military-congressional alliance.

Carter had continued to push troop withdrawal despite the Singlaub fiasco and other military resistance. The first increment of six thousand soldiers was supposed to leave by December of 1978, but only half that number actually left the country because of military resistance, General Singlaub’s testimony, and congressional hesitation to fund needed equipment for South Korean forces.⁷⁶ Bernard Rogers, in testimony before the Congress, admitted that “the Army’s intelligence and security command has focused upon the North Korean capability in recent months to an extent we had never done before” but made it clear that the only options the military was considering was the policy dictated by PD-12.⁷⁷ Carter wrote to Majority Leader Robert Byrd and Speaker Tip O’Neill, confirming his plans for continuing the withdrawals. The president acknowledged, however, that “should

⁷⁵ Locher, *Victory on the Potomac*, 48; Moses, *The Call for JCS Reform*, 45-46.

⁷⁶ HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 88.

⁷⁷ For quote on intelligence efforts, see HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 88. For sole consideration of PD-12 and the president’s policy, see SAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 831.

circumstances affecting the balance change significantly, we will assess these changes in close consultation with Congress,” and, if need be, alter the schedule.⁷⁸

In late 1978, a new intelligence report from the Army indicated that North Korean military strength was 25 percent greater than previously thought.⁷⁹ The report was quickly leaked to the *Army Times*, generating widespread suspicion that this was another thinly veiled effort to oppose the president’s policy.⁸⁰ According to General Rogers, however, there was little unanimity among the intelligence community on the estimates of the North Korean strength.⁸¹ Stansfield Turner believed that some intelligence analysts had attempted to pass off an inflated estimate of North Korean strength in 1977.⁸² Despite the lack of confirmation, the vastly increased estimates of North Korean strength continued to circulate throughout Washington. The White House issued PRM-45 in response, calling for a review to “assess the effect of recent developments on the military balance on the Korean peninsula.”⁸³

Congress soon took a strong interest in the matter, joining the military in opposition to Carter’s policy. After viewing the intelligence report, Senators Sam Nunn (D-GA) and John Glenn (D-OH) met with Cyrus Vance and requested that the administration further delay any troop withdrawals.⁸⁴ Sam Stratton and the House Armed Services Committee in particular focused upon the intelligence reports as a reason to veto the president’s policy. When

⁷⁸ SASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 96.

⁷⁹ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 447.

⁸⁰ Bernard Weinraub, "Opposition Growing on Korea Pullout," *New York Times*, January 21, 1979, A15.

⁸¹ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 1066.

⁸² Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy*, 122.

⁸³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC 45, January 22, 1979," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁸⁴ Weinraub, "Opposition Growing on Korea Pullout," *New York Times*, January 21, 1979, A15.

testifying on the matter before the committee, Bernard Rogers attempted to walk the line between supporting the administration and justifying the JCS opposition to the plan.

Although stating that he felt the withdrawals could continue, the official JCS position was to wait for a full evaluation of the intelligence reports by the Joint Staff. Stratton rejected the general's efforts at loyalty, accusing him of "playing with words" and mounting a "filibuster" of a congressional inquiry. "You mean to say as a Chief of Staff you don't want to have to evaluate the intelligence yourself; you want to let some major or some colonel do it; is that it?" the feisty New York Democrat demanded.⁸⁵ The congressional offensive against Carter's withdrawal policy was in full swing.

The combined opposition at the outset of the second half of Carter's term stalled the withdrawal decision even further. Although Carter continued to pursue it as late as October 1979, his requests focused only on small numbers of support troops.⁸⁶ By the start of 1980, Harold Brown testified that no combat troops would be removed from the peninsula; only a few hundred support personnel would turn over duty to the South Koreans.⁸⁷ The focus on reducing military sales to South Korea due to its poor human-rights record also folded under the pressure. Carter authorized the transfer of sixty-eight F-5 aircraft to South Korea, explicitly contradicting his own policy in PD-13.⁸⁸ Later that same month, Harold Brown announced that American security commitments to South Korea would not be used as

⁸⁵ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 1065-1066.

⁸⁶ Harold Brown, "Memorandum to Zbigniew Brzezinski from Harold Brown, October 6, 1979," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Collection 26 National Security Affairs Staff Material Far East-Platt-Chron File, Box 68, Folder: Platt Chron File 10/79, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁸⁷ SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 86.

⁸⁸ Cyrus Vance, "Memorandum to Jimmy Carter from Cyrus Vance, Subject: Request for Approval of Coproduction of F-5 Fighter Aircraft in the Republic of Korea, October 12, 1979," p. 4, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Collection 26 National Security Affairs Staff Material Far East-Platt-Chron File, Box 68, Folder: Platt-Chron File 10/79, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

leverage to try to bring about human rights changes in the country.⁸⁹ Later that year, in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Brown announced that any further removal of troops had been deferred until 1981, after Carter's first term, another victory for the military-congressional opposition.⁹⁰

One other policy issue relating to Korea arose during the second half of Carter's term. On October 26, 1979 an assassin gunned down South Korean President Park Chung-hee.⁹¹ Less than two months later, a military junta took control of the nation in a bloodless coup, imposed martial law, and proceeded to rule through a civilian figurehead president.⁹² By May of 1980, unrest in the country had reached unprecedented levels as citizens protested against the military government, culminating in what became known as the "Kwangju Tragedy," where South Korean Army units attacked demonstrators in a rebellious city, killing hundreds.⁹³ At the same time, the North Korean Army was increasing its readiness along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and even infiltrated two elite agents into the South.⁹⁴ Ambivalent as to whether to support the military government, the Carter administration now faced the possibility of seeing the government of one of its East Asian allies toppled and the outbreak of a second Korean War.

General John A. Wickham, Jr., the new CINC in Korea, enjoyed cordial relations with many of the administration's Far East officials, including Richard Holbrooke and Michael

⁸⁹ William Chapman, "Seoul to Get More U.S. Arms," *Washington Post*, October 19, 1979, A25.

⁹⁰ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 71.

⁹¹ John A. Jr. Wickham, *Korea on the Brink: A Memoir of Political Intrigue and Military Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2000), 3.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 67.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

Armacost.⁹⁵ The general was impressed with their mastery of East Asian affairs and their understanding of events taking place in Korea.⁹⁶ By and large, Wickham supported the administration's emphasis on human rights and liberalization of South Korean society.⁹⁷ This good relationship within the administration became critical to Wickham later, for the general also became embroiled in a Singlaub-like civil-military confrontation with Carter's White House.

Wickham had to walk a fine line between supporting administration policy and supporting military rule in Korea. After the military coup, he understood that a military junta "was a complete reversal of everything President Carter had tried to accomplish." The general, however, recommended what he termed a "hands-off response" for Washington because he felt that "the era of America's paternal influence over the ROK had passed" and that it was best to be pragmatic and deal with the junta.⁹⁸ The administration largely accepted the Wickham's judgment and recommendations, unlike the case with the previous CINC.⁹⁹

Despite this cooperation, a media performance again created a near civil-military crisis between Carter and his commander in Korea. As part of a public campaign to explain the American position toward the coup, Wickham agreed to a series of interviews. The agreement with the reporters stated that Wickham should be not be quoted for attribution but

⁹⁵ Ibid., xii, 6. This insight comes from Richard Holbrooke himself, who agreed to write the foreword to Wickham's book. Wickham also confirms the good relations within the text.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 177, 179.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 64-65, 71.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 97, 103. Even when rumors circulated among the Koreans that Wickham had fallen out of favor with Washington because of his lack of opposition to the military coup, the general refused to believe them. "I was stunned," he indicated, "I had no inkling of any dissatisfaction with my performance, not from Secretary of Defense Brown, General Jones, Admiral Long, Assistant Secretary of State Holbrooke, Ambassador Gleysteen, or any of the other key officials whom I knew in Washington."

instead as a “senior military official.”¹⁰⁰ The interview covered background surrounding the coup and dealt with nothing controversial until one of the reporters asked if the American government would support General Chun Doo-hwan, the coup leader, if he consolidated his power and became president. Although understanding “it was not my place as a military official to announce U.S. government foreign policy,” Wickham answered the question anyway, speculating that the U.S. might indeed support Chun if he came to power legitimately, gained the support of the Korean people, and did not endanger the security of the peninsula.¹⁰¹ Realizing the value of the quote for a headline, the journalists, in a gross breach of professional ethics, released a taped transcript of their interview to a colleague from *The New York Times* who was not bound by the non-attribution agreement. As a result, the entire tape became public.¹⁰² The government-controlled South Korean press enjoyed a field day with the report. Wickham lamented the bias of Korean press coverage, which ran a non-stop blitz for days. “The three conditions for support that I explicitly outlined in the interview were totally omitted, as were the criticisms of Chun’s repressive policies,” Wickham wrote in his memoirs, “The Korean media reported simply that Chun was a good guy and the United States would support him unconditionally.”¹⁰³

Soon after the media blitz started, the American media joined the fray, casting Wickham as a second Singlaub. The *New York Times* reported that Secretary of State Muskie was “startled” by Wickham’s comments. Another state department official stated that the general

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 155-156.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 156.

¹⁰² Ibid., 157.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

was out of line to grant such an interview in the first place.¹⁰⁴ The *Washington Post* was quickly pointed out that the general's comments differed from the administration's policies, while the *Los Angeles Times* ran a headline that the general had spoken "out of turn."¹⁰⁵

The administration was furious. Richard Holbrooke, trying to support Wickham, characterized the reaction as "dramatic." "Human rights activists went ballistic," he later recalled, citing calls for the general to be "repudiated, or even replaced."¹⁰⁶ Carter was incensed. The president recalled the general to Hawaii. Wickham feared that he would be cashiered like Singlaub. Speaking to Admiral Robert Long, the newly appointed commander of the Pacific Command, Wickham lamented, "This is no way to treat a military officer," and contemplated resignation.¹⁰⁷

Unlike the incident with Singlaub, however, allies within the administration flocked to Wickham's side. The general felt strongly that Admiral Robert Long, David Jones, Dick Holbrooke, Mike Armacost, and Harold Brown all defended him.¹⁰⁸ Knowing that the media would interpret it as a sign of support for the military regime in Korea, Holbrooke pressed for Wickham's immediate return to his command. The administration acquiesced and returned

¹⁰⁴ Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Said to Tell Seoul to Soften Rule by Military," *New York Times*, August 13, 1980, A1 and A13.

¹⁰⁵ "A General Speaks out of Turn," *Los Angeles Times*, August 12, 1980, C4; Don Oberdorfer, "U.S. Not to Protest Korean Power Grab," *Washington Post*, August 16, 1980, A18.

¹⁰⁶ Wickham, *Korea on the Brink*, xii.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 160. General Wickham never compared his own situation to that of General Singlaub. This is quite surprising given the similarities between what happened to the two generals—both from the Korea theater, both "ambushed" by the press and accused of differing with administration policy, both gaining the ire of the president and other officials in Washington. Wickham never even mentioned Singlaub in his book.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

the general to Korea on the pretext of him overseeing a joint U.S.-ROK military exercise.¹⁰⁹

Carter and his White House aides had learned from the fallout of the Singlaub incident to avoid a clash with the military, keeping in mind the upcoming election in November. In this case, giving the appearance of civil-military comity trumped making an example of a general who had publicly differed with administration policy.

In the end, Wickham credited the moderate response of the administration with a desire to protect national security. General Chun later went on to hold democratic elections and consolidate power. Although human rights continued to be an issue in South Korea, they became less so over time. Civil-military relations clearly had shaped U.S. defense policy toward Korea. In this case, the cooperation between the theater CINC, the Pentagon, and Washington led to a policy that many leaders felt may have saved a vital U.S. ally.

All Fall Down: The Iranian Revolution and the Loss of an Ally

While the Carter administration's approach to Korea may have saved an ally, many argued that its approach to turbulent events in Iran in 1979 led to the U.S. losing an even more important ally. Indeed, the "Fall of Iran," is interpreted by many historians as one of the most disastrous events of Carter's term. Like so many previous policy matters related to U.S. national interests, civil-military relations shared a role in shaping administration behavior.

Iran was not seen initially as a likely location for any sort of significant foreign policy problems when Carter took office—not on the list for initial policy review, and no PRM or PD ever called for a U.S. examination of its posture toward Iran. The nation's leader, Shah Rezha Pahlavi, had been installed in a U.S.-backed coup in 1953. The Shah had enjoyed unqualified support under the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy framework, military security

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 162. The media did in fact bill the return of Wickham to his post as administration support for the Chun government in Korea. For example, see Don Oberdorfer, "U.S. To Let Its General Who Backed Strongman Return to Korea Post," *Washington Post*, August 22, 1980, A23.

contracts and arms purchases dominating the relationship. Navy Captain Gary Sick, the NSC officer responsible for Iran, felt that the Carter administration opted to continue this Nixon-Kissinger policy toward Iran almost completely.¹¹⁰

One of the first tests of the relationship turned out to be a direct challenge to Carter's arms sale policy, and the president chose to side with the Pentagon. Early in the administration, the Shah requested ten high-technology AWACS planes built for the U.S. Air Force. This was the first request which required direct approval by the president, given the new guidelines established by PD-13. The State Department argued against the sale because these planes contained sensitive electronic equipment, the loss of which could harm U.S. national security. OSD and the JCS, argued that the AWACS increased Iranian security from potential Soviet incursions and that the risk in transferring the sensitive equipment was thus outweighed by the benefits. Carter ultimately agreed with the DoD and authorized the sale, despite opposition from Congress to the sharing of the technology. The president, however, chose to limit the number to seven.¹¹¹ Later, however, he chose, against the advice of OSD and the JCS, to bar the sale of F-18 aircraft to Iran.¹¹² In so doing, Carter sent a clear signal to the Shah that the days of limitless arms sales from the U.S. were ending and a message to the Pentagon that he was still skeptical of their support for the continuation of heavy arms sales to Iran.

¹¹⁰ Sick, *All Fall Down*, viii, 8-10, 21. Sick's memoir remains the authoritative account of events surrounding the Iranian Revolution. Most of the diplomatic history of the Carter years relies heavily on Sick. For example, see Thornton, *The Carter Years*; Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*. Gaddis Smith calls Sick "the best and most recent account." See Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 266.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

¹¹² Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 57.

Limiting the sale of weapons technology came at a time when Iran faced increasing civil turmoil. Protests against the Shah's repressive government reached significant levels in November of 1977, just as Carter assumed office. The human rights policies of the Carter administration gave the Shah pause when considering how to deal with the increasing protests, mainly from the educated youth in Iran.¹¹³ The Shah wanted some liberalization within the strict structure of Iranian society, so long as it did not threaten his own position as a supreme ruler. As the Shah came under increasing attack from dissidents, he requested tear gas from the U.S. for non-lethal riot control. Patricia Derian, the first Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, blocked the transfer. Pro-arms sale advocates within the administration, including the DoD, objected and eventually won the support of the president.¹¹⁴ Thus, even as the Shah's regime headed toward crisis, Carter had shown a willingness to defer to the judgment of DoD and JCS over the advice from State.

Gary Sick, reflecting on events later, felt that the controversy distracted the administration from the seriousness of the turmoil inside Iran.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the president referred to Iran as an "island of stability in a turbulent corner of the world" during a visit to Tehran on New Year's Day 1978.¹¹⁶ Nine months later this optimistic appraisal came crashing down as Iranian military units opened fire on protesters in the capital.¹¹⁷ The U.S. government, distracted at this point by both the ongoing SALT II negotiations and formulating the final agreements for

¹¹³ Robert E. Huyser, *Mission to Tehran* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 11.

¹¹⁴ For Derian halting tear gas transfer, see Sick, *All Fall Down*, 41. For the victory of arms sale advocates, see Sick, *All Fall Down*, 52-53.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

the Camp David Accords, began to give much closer attention to what increasingly appeared to be a revolutionary situation.

The new policies in the CIA implemented by Admiral Turner, and resisted by the DoD, had played a role in the U.S. being blindsided. Sick called Iran “an intelligence disaster of the first order.” He drafted a memo for Brzezinski, later signed by President Carter, which chastised Turner for providing inadequate intelligence on Iran and the entire Middle East.¹¹⁸ Turner responded that there had been no way to tell how rapidly the Shah would fall.¹¹⁹ Despite the denials, however, a congressional inquiry into the matter, published in January of 1979, concluded that CIA intelligence reporting on Iran had indeed been weak. It also became clearer that, as the Ayatollah Khomeini mounted the revolution from exile in France, hardly anyone in the U.S. government knew the man or his stances.¹²⁰

As it became clear that the Shah would never regain power and that Khomeini might take over the government, civil-military disputes intensified. The first clash came over the deploying the Pacific fleet’s aircraft carriers. As Iran grew more unstable, the JCS ordered the *U.S.S. Constellation* to move from its homeport in the Philippines to Singapore, closer for quick deployment into the Indian Ocean. The Chiefs had not sought presidential approval for such a movement because it was “precautionary” in nature. Unfortunately, one sailor on the carrier breached security and informed his relatives in the United States of the change, and word subsequently leaked to the press. The White House press spokesman denied the report

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 104-105.

¹¹⁹ Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy*, 114-116.

¹²⁰ For findings of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, see Sick, *All Fall Down*, 107. For lack of knowledge regarding Khomeini, see Sick, *All Fall Down*, 13.

but later had to backtrack, embarrassing the administration as well as the military.¹²¹

William Sullivan, the American Ambassador to Iran, protested the military deployment through State Department channels. Carter, shaken by the military's breach of operational security, sided with Sullivan and did not allow the carrier to proceed into the Indian Ocean.¹²² Then, as the Shah left Iran in control of a military government, it was soon replaced by a civilian government headed by opposition politician Shahpur Bakhtiar.¹²³

The administration threw its full support behind the Bakhtiar government, urging other nations to do so as well.¹²⁴ Ambassador Sullivan, as the senior State Department representative in Tehran, made it clear from the outset, however, that he had his own ideas about how events in Iran were going to play out and did not want any "interference" from Washington. Cyrus Vance and the rest of the State Department felt inclined to accept the Ambassador's insubordination and shielded him from criticism.¹²⁵ Sullivan strongly opposed the Bakhtiar government, instead wanting the U.S. to deal directly with Khomeini.¹²⁶ Brzezinski, on the other hand, wanted the Iranian military to initiate a coup.¹²⁷ The JCS sided with Brzezinski, arguing that the Iranian military would remain friendly to the U.S. and could suppress radical dissent within the country. The JCS advised, however, that the Iranian

¹²¹ Ibid., 149-150.

¹²² Ibid., 91-92.

¹²³ Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 14.

¹²⁴ Terence Smith, "Arms Sales to Go on; President Says Monitoring of Soviet Missiles Will Remain 'Adequate'," *New York Times*, January 18, 1979, A1.

¹²⁵ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 70.

¹²⁶ Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 24.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 18, 121. Brzezinski consistently supported this option, even late in the crisis.

military might need help. Harold Brown advocated a middle ground, proposing that a highly qualified military man should visit Iran and get a feel for the situation.¹²⁸

Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles Duncan then selected Air Force General Robert “Dutch” Huyser, the deputy commander of NATO forces in Europe, to journey to Iran in order to gauge whether the Iranian military could support the new civilian government. Huyser was well qualified for his mission. From 1975 to 1979 he had made numerous visits to the Middle East working with the Pentagon’s arms sales program. He had met several times with the Shah and they shared a mutual respect. The general’s mission was to fly to Tehran, urge Iranian military leaders to support to provisional Bakhtiar government, and reassure the Iranian military that the U.S. was behind them.¹²⁹

The selection of Huyser stirred more civil-military tension centering on the theater CINC. Huyser’s superior, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR) Alexander Haig, objected violently to his deputy being assigned the mission to Tehran. “I opposed what became known as the Huyser mission because its objective was ambiguous and because it was preeminently a political and not a military task,” Haig later recalled. Both Huyser and Haig felt that the Carter administration had displayed “feebleness” in responding to the situation in Iran. Haig now feared that Huyser was going to be the fall guy for the failure in U.S.-Iranian relations.¹³⁰ Another theater CINC had stepped forward to oppose the administration.

¹²⁸ For assessment of the JCS see Sick, *All Fall Down*, 103. For Harold Brown’s view, see Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 67.

¹²⁹ For Duncan’s personal selection of Huyser and the general’s mission orders, see Sick, *All Fall Down*, 153-154. Huyser’s agreed in his memoirs that he was probably one of the two most qualified officers in the military to undertake the mission. See Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 7.

¹³⁰ For quote from Haig, see his forward in Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, vii. For “feebleness” see Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 7, 15. See also Haig, *Inner Circles*, 538-539.

The administration responded by circumventing Haig, keeping him out of the loop on almost all information concerning Iran. David Jones spoke directly to Huyser, informing him that Carter had selected him personally to go to Iran. Huyser, wanting to keep loyalty to his commander, requested that Jones inform Haig of the decision. When Jones complied, Haig again exploded.¹³¹ The SACEUR had long opposed the Carter administration's policies relating to the Middle East. Earlier, Haig had met with Carter and recommended that the president lift an arms embargo on Turkey. The president had dismissed the advice, telling Haig, "General, you don't know what you're talking about." Haig stood up, turned his back on the president, and walked out of the Oval Office. Harold Brown, present at the meeting, chased down the general and castigated him on his lack of courtesy.¹³² Carter believed that he should have fired Haig for his constant opposition to administration policies, but Harold Brown talked the president out of it, averting a potential civil-military blowup but at the cost of retaining another CINC that was virtually in open revolt against his civilian superiors.¹³³ As a result, as the crisis in Iran came to a climax, the administration chose to keep its theater CINC in the dark.

Due to Haig's opposition, Charles Duncan telephoned Huyser directly to implore him to take the mission. Huyser hesitated, and contemplated resigning in protest over what he saw as support for a failing administration policy. Ultimately, the general's sense of duty prevailed, although he refused to take the mission until the Pentagon provided written

¹³¹ Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 7.

¹³² Haig, *Inner Circles*, 533-534.

¹³³ Jimmy Carter, interview by James Young, Erwin Hargrove, David Truman, et. al., 29 November 1982, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 15.

instructions detailing the purpose of his mission, which Duncan did.¹³⁴ Cut out of the loop and knowing that his ability to influence policy was now almost completely gone, Haig submitted his retirement paperwork soon after Huyser's mission concluded, but not until leaking the report that Huyser's mission would actually hasten the downfall of the Shah.¹³⁵ Upon retirement, Harold Brown hailed Haig as "the complete professional through his distinctive military career," a comment that symbolized the administration's weakness in dealing head-on with inappropriate military opposition.¹³⁶

Huyser's mission in Iran brought about additional discord within the government. Immediately upon his arrival in Iran, Ambassador Sullivan handed Huyser a telegram from Cyrus Vance directing the general to ignore all previous orders. To Huyser it was obvious that the State Department had one view of the situation and the DoD and the White House another.¹³⁷ Ambassador Sullivan confirmed this when he told Huyser that he felt that the U.S. would do best to skip the Bakhtiar government and deal directly with Khomeini. The ambassador also called the president "stupid" for not directly approaching the Ayatollah while he was exiled in France.¹³⁸ To the general it was now clear that the ambassador openly opposed administration policy. Huyser, however, had been sent to gain Iranian military support for the Bakhtiar government. The tension between Sullivan and Huyser suggested

¹³⁴ Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 15-17.

¹³⁵ For Haig being kept out of the loop for information in Iran, see Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 177. Haig felt that the administration's policy in Iran was "inept" and opted to retire soon after Huyser's return from Iran. See Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 278, 283. For press leak, see Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Who Toppled the Shah?," *Washington Post*, November 26, 1979, A23.

¹³⁶ George C. Wilson, "Former NATO Chief Haig Honored Amid Speculation of Political Future," *Washington Post*, July 4, 1979, A2.

¹³⁷ Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 23.

¹³⁸ For skipping the Bahktair interlude, see *Ibid.*, 24. For "stupid" see *Ibid.*, 99. Incidentally, in this case the general wrote that he agreed with the Ambassador's judgment.

that the two most senior representatives from the U.S. in Iran were working at cross purposes.

The disagreement manifested itself most clearly in their appraisals of the Iranian military. As Huyser conducted his liaison mission with the leaders of the Iranian military, he came to believe that they were indeed loyal to, and capable of, supporting the Bakhtiar government. This appraisal differed fundamentally from that of Ambassador Sullivan, whose reports to Washington constantly portrayed the Iranian military as a “paper tiger,” incapable of helping the civilian government deal with the growing Iranian mobs.¹³⁹ In Washington, the differing reports increased tensions between the White House and the State Department. Vance, perhaps feeling that Carter’s support for Bakhtiar was misplaced, largely absented himself from official policy meetings on Iran, leaving the field mostly to Brzezinski, who teamed with Secretary of Energy James Schlesinger and cited Huyser’s optimistic reports as reason for the U.S. to support a coup.¹⁴⁰ Carter rejected their ideas, responding with “icy repudiation.”¹⁴¹ The differing reports coming into Washington left the president unsure of whose advice he should follow.

Ultimately, Carter lost trust in the independent-minded Sullivan and relied on Huyser, who had the president’s ear as the crisis deepened and the Shah finally departed.¹⁴² The State Department responded by attempting to cut Huyser out of official communications, but

¹³⁹ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 170.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 200-204.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 161.

Harold Brown kept close contact with the general and relayed his views directly to Carter.¹⁴³

When Khomeini returned to Iran and the situation at last became too dangerous for the American general to remain, Carter ordered him to report to the White House immediately upon his return. After a ten minute conference, in which Huyser frankly explained his differences with Sullivan, Carter emerged as “grimly angry” as one aide had ever seen him, outraged over the ambassador’s resistance to administration policies and the lack of cooperation shown to Huyser by the State Department.¹⁴⁴

Ironically, in spite of the president’s trust, Huyser’s optimistic appraisal of the Iranian military proved less correct than Sullivan’s. Soon after Khomeini’s return, forces intent on installing the Ayatollah in power assassinated or arrested several key Iranian generals. Left without firm direction from its leaders, the Iranian military folded in a single day and the Bakhtiar government fell to a theocracy headed by Khomeini.¹⁴⁵

Iran clearly strained civil-military relations in the Carter administration even though the president had placed greater trust in the military than he had in his own State Department. Cutting Haig out as theater CINC was only one factor. The JCS was fully integrated into the decision-making cycle. Huyser had provided vital and trusted input to the commander-in-chief.¹⁴⁶ The primary source of civil-military conflict was instead the perception among members of the military that the Carter administration’s response to events in Iran had been “feeble,” as Alexander Haig had characterized it.

¹⁴³ For attempts to cut Huyser out of official communications see Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 124. For close contact with Harold Brown, see Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 89, 105, and 197.

¹⁴⁴ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 177; Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 273-274.

¹⁴⁵ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 182 and 200.

¹⁴⁶ For integration of the JCS, see *Ibid.*, 135.

Other senior military besides Haig saw Carter's action's on Iran as weak. Huyser agreed before and after his mission. When Charles Duncan approached Huyser after his return to Washington and asked if he would be willing to return immediately to Iran and orchestrate a military coup, the general balked. Huyser wondered why the administration had not suggested that he take such bold action when he was still in Iran before Khomeini had seized control. Now the idea seemed a classic case of "too little, too late." Huyser eventually agreed to return to Iran, but only if Carter accepted four demands: unlimited funding for the operation, a cadre of twelve handpicked U.S. generals to accompany Huyser, ten thousand U.S. troops deployed to Iran to support the coup, and the requirement that the administration rally undivided national support among the American people for the mission. After presenting the demands, Huyser turned to Al Haig, who nodded in agreement. "There was a rather long pause," Huyser recalled in his memoirs, "so I answered the question for them"—in the negative.¹⁴⁷ "My trust and faith in the upper strata of our government was a real weakness on my part," Huyser reflected some years later. "My naiveté in assuming that, if I carried out the tasks assigned to me with the Iranian military, then the political wing of our government would march smartly along in lock-step, was a gross mistake."¹⁴⁸ Other military figures, USMC Commandant Louis Wilson among them, agreed, characterizing Carter's lack of support for the Shah as tantamount to approval of the revolution.¹⁴⁹ Most in the Pentagon

¹⁴⁷ Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 283-284.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 292.

¹⁴⁹ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 343, 345.

failed even to understand Huyser's mission, believing that the general had been sent to prevent a coup rather than bolster the strength of the Iranian military.¹⁵⁰

The view that Carter had been weak flowed in large part from the administration's downplaying the crisis in the press, which seemed to conflict with strategic value that the Pentagon placed on Iran as a buffer to the Soviet threat to the Persian Gulf. The fears of Soviet aggression into Iran arose long before their invasion of Afghanistan. Under a bilateral treaty dating to 1921, the Soviets had the right to send troops into Iran if a third power intervened in the area. Iran had renounced the treaty, but the U.S.S.R. had refused to do so.¹⁵¹ At every step of the crisis, the Soviets attempted to befriend the revolutionary forces and played up the role of outside U.S. interference.¹⁵² The Pentagon became especially concerned about Soviet aggression when the Bakhtiar government announced it was withdrawing from CENTO, the anti-Soviet alliance in the Middle East.¹⁵³ The Carter administration, however, tried its best to downplay the strategic importance of Iran and the aggressive Soviet posture. The president publicly dismissed the idea that Iran was critical to the security of the Middle East, said that he did not expect the Bakhtiar government to

¹⁵⁰ Most of the evidence for this comes from reports leaked to the press, for example: Evans and Novak, "Who Toppled the Shah?," *Washington Post*, November 26, 1979, A23; Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Again Bids Iranian Military Shun Any Coup," *New York Times*, January 13, 1979, A1. Even General Wilson, a member of the JCS, cited this as one of the reasons for Huyser's mission in his oral history, see GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 345. In fact, Huyser never mentioned preventing a coup as one of his mission objectives. He wrote that the Iranian military was incapable of executing a coup and had no plans to do so. See Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 38. Zbigniew Brzezinski asserted that Huyser's memoirs were accurate from his point of view, lending further credence to the fact that many within the military did not really understand Huyser's mission. For Brzezinski's support see, Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview by Robert Trask and Maurice Matloff, 25 February 1987, OSD Oral History, 19.

¹⁵¹ Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 72.

¹⁵² Sick, *All Fall Down*, 111; Warren Christopher, *American Hostages in Iran: The Conduct of a Crisis*, ed. Paul H. Kreisberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 8.

¹⁵³ Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 276.

survive indefinitely, stated that he would like to see long-term stability in the region, and asserted that the Russians felt the same way.¹⁵⁴ When the Bakhtiar government fell to Khomeini, the shockwaves rippled across the region, Saudi Arabia becoming especially fearful that the U.S. would abandon it if a conflict began with the Soviet-supported nation of South Yemen.¹⁵⁵ The administration responded to the crumbling confidence by sending Harold Brown on a whirlwind tour to reassure the shaken nations. In almost a complete repeal of PD-31, Brown was given wide latitude to sell arms to friendly nations throughout the region.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, the Pentagon sent AWACS aircraft to the Saudis and created the 5th Fleet to provide a naval presence in the Indian Ocean.¹⁵⁷ Despite these late efforts to increase the U.S. presence, Carter's lack of concern for Iran and the Shah led many to question his commitment to the region and one historian to conclude hyperbolically that "never previously in U.S. history had an administration acted so decisively or successfully to subvert a major strategic and political ally."¹⁵⁸

Although some in the military, as well as Congress, questioned Carter's commitment to Iran, the administration did in fact view it as an important strategic ally. Carter could not

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 148; "Text of Speech by President Carter at Georgia Tech, Atlanta, February 20, 1979," A4; Smith, "Arms Sales to Go on; President Says Monitoring of Soviet Missiles Will Remain 'Adequate'," A1.

¹⁵⁵ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Secretary Brown to the Rescue," *Washington Post*, February 5, 1979, A21. As General Louis Wilson left the JCS, he indicated that the JCS consensus was that South Yemen could in fact "successfully challenge" Saudi Arabia. See GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 304.

¹⁵⁶ Bernard Weinraub, "Pentagon Chief Plans a Mideast Trip Friday in Light of Iran Crisis," *New York Times*, February 6, 1979, A6.; "Showing the Secretary of Defense," *Washington Post*, February 16, 1979, A14; Bernard Weinraub, "Brown Pledges Aid to Saudi's Defense," *New York Times*, February 11, 1979, A17; Bernard Weinraub, "Yemen, Sudan to Get Added Arms," *New York Times*, February 12, 1979, A4; "Brown: U.S. Would Defend Oil Interests," *Washington Post*, February 26, 1979, A14.

¹⁵⁷ "U.S. Considering Plan to Create a New Fleet for the Indian Ocean," *New York Times*, March 9, 1979, A5; Drew Middleton, "Showing the Flag Isn't What It Used to Be," *New York Times*, March 11, 1979, E2; Dan Morgan, "U.S. Dispatches 2 AWACS Planes to Saudi Arabia," *Washington Post*, March 9, 1979, A22.

¹⁵⁸ Spencer, *The Carter Implosion*, 66.

dismiss Soviet support for the revolution; the fact remained that Iran could serve as a potential invasion route to Persian Gulf oil for the Russians. Since the period after the revolution would be such a formative one for the U.S.-Iranian relationship, the administration opted to keep its embassy in Tehran in place despite an attack in February of 1979 in which a mob briefly held the staff hostage.¹⁵⁹ This decision to keep a skeleton embassy staff on station despite the violence spoke to the importance which the administration placed on Iran. It also led to Carter's greatest crisis when in November of 1979, the 444 day ordeal of the American hostages began.¹⁶⁰

The conflicts over Iran symbolized the chaos in defense policy during the second half of the Carter years. The theater CINC, in open opposition to the administration policy, was circumvented rather than relieved. Carter from the outset of his second term gave military advice more credence, and Iran again showed this pattern. The president continued to take advice from the JCS and trusted General Huyser more than he trusted his own ambassador in Iran. The DoD and State Department worked against each other and Carter did not adjudicate. The trust in a general and cooperation with the JCS, however, could not compensate for such schisms in the government. With respect to Iran, the split developing between the NSC under Brzezinski and the State Department under Vance, intensified. Although the DoD increasingly unified and coordinated its actions with the NSC and White House, the State Department continued a course different from that of the official administration policy. "Discipline within the U.S. government had been deplorable at almost

¹⁵⁹ Harold H. Saunders, "The Crisis Begins," in *American Hostages in Iran: The Conduct of a Crisis*, ed. Paul H. Kreisberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 54.

¹⁶⁰ The issue of the American hostages in Iran will be discussed in the closing chapter of this dissertation since it directly relates to the only operational use of military force during the Carter presidency.

every level,” Gary Sick concluded in his memoir on Iran, “policy was constantly contradicted or undermined by leaks . . . and bureaucratic sniping.”¹⁶¹

The Trouble Down South: PRM-46, PD-52, the Nicaraguan Insurgency, and the Re-crafting of American Policy in Central America

While Iran plunged into revolution, events in nearby Central America also forced a series of defense policy decisions on Carter in early 1979. As an early goal the administration intended to emphasize and respect the diversity of the nations in Latin America. According to the Annual Defense Department Report of 1979, most Latin American nations welcomed this approach, seeing in it a rejection of traditional U.S. paternalism and the beginning of a more mature, normal relationship.¹⁶² The Panama Canal treaty, which relinquished American sovereignty over the Canal Zone, confirmed this optimistic appraisal. The climatic battle over ratification of the treaty had been intense, but the administration prevailed in no small part due to the staunch support of the JCS. Indeed, as 1979 approached, it seemed that the administration had met many of its foreign policy goals in Latin America.

These successes, however, cost much military dissent. Along with the controversies surrounding PD-13 and arms transfer policies, members of the uniformed military often opposed Carter’s policies in this region. In late 1978, the Soviets supplied Cuba with several MiG-23 “Flogger” fighter-bombers which had the capability of striking the Panama Canal. General McAuliffe recommended that his Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) be put in charge of air defense of the canal. He also requested that SOUTHCOM’s obsolete A-7

¹⁶¹ Sick, *All Fall Down*, 179-180. After Carter’s meeting with General Huyser, for example, an individual from the State Department leaked to the press that the administration felt that, due to Huyser’s interference, the Bahktair government was expected to last only a few weeks. Carter responded by calling together all of the highest ranking officers in the State Department and threatening to fire them all if the leaks did not stop. The threat had no effect and the leaks continued.

¹⁶² *FY79 Annual DoD Report*, 26.

“Corsair II” aircraft be upgraded to the more modern F-4 “Phantom” in order to counter the enemy MiGs. David E. McGiffert, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, overruled McAuliffe, indicating that such an upgrade of military technology might convey the impression that the U.S. was trying to intimidate Panama or other Caribbean states.¹⁶³ When the Pentagon leaked reports that the new MiGs were capable of delivering nuclear weapons, Carter declared publicly that the Soviets had provided assurances that the planes posed no nuclear threat to America.¹⁶⁴ The JCS strenuously protested a supposed disregard of Latin American security and, without support from civilians in OSD (Office of the Secretary of Defense), initiated a Joint Staff Study of security in the region. When OSD offered to assist with the study, the Joint Staff refused their support.¹⁶⁵ Others outside the Pentagon held a similar sentiment, noting that U.S. diplomats in Central America seemed to offer “a warm embrace for the left, a cold shoulder to the right.”¹⁶⁶ JCS Historian Steven Rearden argued that these and other developments caused many uniformed military within the Pentagon to see Carter’s policies toward Latin America as “naïve and short-sighted.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Cole, et. al., *The History of the Unified Command Plan*, 53-54.

¹⁶⁴ Jimmy Carter, “The President’s News Conference of November 30, 1978,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1978* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 2100-2101.

¹⁶⁵ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 155-156.

¹⁶⁶ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Carter’s Caribbean Choice,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 1980, A13. It is difficult to confirm the pundits’ interpretation, documentation suggests the inverse—that Carter refused to relieve diplomats who disobeyed orders to support right-wing governments. Carter’s ambassador to El Salvador repeatedly defied administration orders to support the resistance against communist insurgents. Robert Pastor, a Latin American specialist on the NSC, informed the president directly of this recalcitrance. Carter would only say that the ambassador was doing a courageous job. See Robert Pastor, “Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski, Subject: U.S. Policy to El Salvador, December 21, 1980,” Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 33, Folder: SCC 354: 12/11/80, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹⁶⁷ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 174.

The military also objected to Carter's human rights pressure on allied governments in Central America, which peaked under the direction of Patricia Derian, a Human Rights activist and the first assistant secretary for the function in the State Department. Derian felt that economic and military aid should depend on a nation's human rights record. As part of this initiative, when the State Department sent annual offers of aid to Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Uruguay, and Argentina, Derian's staff attached descriptions of each nation's human rights abuses. These governments exploded in response. Each refused the aid offers and denounced Carter for interfering in their internal affairs. Brazil even went so far as to abrogate its mutual defense treaty with the United States.¹⁶⁸ Louis Wilson remembered that: "We are not welcome in Latin America," and that he was unable after these incidents even to visit Venezuela and Chile.¹⁶⁹ When he was invited to Brazil, it was as a personal friend of the Brazilian Marine commandant, not as an official guest. Despite the human rights campaign, or perhaps because of it, the general felt that by 1979 there were serious problems in Latin America that did not "bode well for the future."¹⁷⁰

SOUTHCOM CINC McAuliffe testified that civil-military discord over Latin America increased perceptibly when compared to the relative cooperation manifest during the Panama Canal treaties. In April of 1979, after viewing the Department of Defense Annual Report for 1980, he wrote the JCS to express grave concern. McAuliffe deemed the overall assessment

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 153; Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 51-52, 129; Spencer, *The Carter Implosion*, 58.

¹⁶⁹ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 288.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 288-289.

of Latin America “incomplete and, indeed, unbalanced from almost any perspective.”¹⁷¹ The general went on to offer a scathing critique:

The assessment brings out that: there are no threats in Latin America; Cuba is capable of stirring up problems, but to do so would only hurt itself; . . . the Panama Canal Treaties have created a new spirit of cooperation; Mexico is now a major new energy source; friendship and stability exist throughout the region. What it does not take into account are most of the regional problems that are obvious even to the casual observer.¹⁷²

The CINC identified several other areas in which the FY80 guidance on Latin America proved utterly lacking, including Cuban involvement in terrorist activities, the imbalance in arms transfers, and the lack of attention to Brazil’s growing strength as a regional power. “In sum,” he concluded, “I find this so-called regional analysis woefully deficient.”¹⁷³ He recommended that the JCS “take steps to seek a broader, more balanced assessment for next year’s annual report,” which would correct the deficiencies in the current report so that Congress could use it as a valid guide. He also wanted additional funding for SOUTHCOM in the FY80 and FY81 budgets. “I sense it may take a major effort to achieve this,” he warned.¹⁷⁴

Events in Nicaragua undoubtedly caused much military dissatisfaction with Carter’s Latin American policies. For over forty-six years that country had been ruled by the Somoza family, which had bought, seized, and consolidated great wealth in this largest of countries in Central America. So powerful was the family that in many ways Nicaragua came to

¹⁷¹ D. P. McAuliffe, “Letter from CINC U.S. Southern Command to LTG Richard L. Lawson, Director, J-5, Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 23, 1979,” p. 1, GEN McAuliffe Papers, Military History Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 2.

resemble, in the words of one writer, “less a sovereign nation than it did a huge, family-owned conglomerate.”¹⁷⁵ The country’s seven thousand man National Guard, which had originally been established in the 1930s by departing U.S. Marines, kept the family firmly in power. By the 1970s, however, the National Guard had become increasingly corrupt, engaging in widespread graft and organized crime. Despite the poverty that gripped the nation, a succession of three Somoza’s, all educated at West Point, had little difficulty in holding onto power within the nation—until political unrest began to erupt in the late 1970s.¹⁷⁶

By the time Carter took office, dissent within the country had grown significantly, and the new president was forced to re-evaluate U.S. policy toward the country. Roman Catholic clergy preaching “liberation theology” as well as free-market businessmen equally criticized the harsh rule of Anastasio Somoza. The regime responded harshly and declared martial law. In April of 1977, Carter bypassed Congress and suspended all military-aid to Nicaragua. At various times leading up to 1979, Carter reinstated and then withdrew aid based on Somoza’s human rights record.¹⁷⁷ Administration policy had almost been entirely developed into a dialogue between the State Department and the NSC. The Pentagon, though participating in most of the deliberations, played only a minor role according to NSC member Robert Pastor, confirming Steven Rearden’s assessment that the JCS had been “frozen out” of the decision making process.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Spencer, *The Carter Implosion*, 87.

¹⁷⁶ Robert Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 50-56.

¹⁷⁷ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 163-165.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 163; Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition*, 82.

By 1979, the situation had reached a crisis level and Carter took steps to try to mediate it. The leftist resistance, known as the Sandinistas or FLSN, had coalesced a wide range of moderate anti-Somoza reformists and was now winning a guerrilla war against the National Guard.¹⁷⁹ Military intelligence reports indicated that Cubans were involved in training the Sandinistas.¹⁸⁰ Carter sponsored a fifteen-week effort by a three nation mediation team to try to negotiate a solution, but to no avail. In February of 1979, his efforts to mediate the dispute having failed, Carter terminated all military aid to Nicaragua and withdrew the U.S. military advisory team.¹⁸¹

Carter's Nicaragua policy came under attack from many in Congress which contained a powerful "Somoza Lobby." Representatives John Murphy (D-NY) and Charlie Wilson (D-TX) even went so far as to journey to Nicaragua and sit with Somoza during a televised press conference in which the dictator defended his policies as anti-communist. Wilson even threatened the administration with "rough treatment" on a required House Appropriations bill to finance to the transition of the Panama Canal if Carter continued with policies that would "turn the largest country in Central America over to the Communists."¹⁸² When the president did not relent, Wilson and his allies lived up to the threat, forcing the administration to take action to ensure the passage of the bill.¹⁸³ Congressional resistance to the president's policies

¹⁷⁹ Treverton, *Covert Action*, 108.

¹⁸⁰ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 295.

¹⁸¹ Graham Hovey, "U.S., Rebuffed by Nicaragua, Will Sever Military Ties," *New York Times*, February 9, 1979, A7.

¹⁸² Graham Hovey, "Breakdown in Nicaraguan Talks Creates New Problems for Carter," *New York Times*, January 24, 1979, A2.

¹⁸³ Graham Hovey, "Panama Canal Debate Reopened as U.S. Aides Defend Legislation," *New York Times*, February 19, 1979, A8.

led the *New York Times* editorial page to argue that “Somoza has outgunned and outmaneuvered his opponents.”¹⁸⁴

In May 1979, in response to the military and congressional criticism, Carter directed a reassessment of U.S. policy toward Latin America. Entitled PRM-46, the document reinforced the administrations’ human rights intentions, but also sought “the denial of the region to forces hostile to the U.S.”¹⁸⁵ This time Carter gave greater weight to the advice of the uniformed military, especially General McAuliffe. By June of 1979 it was becoming clear that Somoza could not hold onto power much longer. McAuliffe sent General Jones’ assistant an assessment and recommendations concerning the situation. The general foresaw a “bandwagon” forming to place a Sandinista “provisional junta” in charge of the country when Somoza departed. “To say that I am concerned about this turn of events would be to grossly understate it,” McAuliffe went on, “to avoid what I believe may, in reality, be a Communist government in Nicaragua, and with visions of Iran and Vietnam, I wish to ask the JCS to consider supporting an alternative approach.”¹⁸⁶ McAuliffe then outlined his resolution of the situation: an immediate ceasefire, the departure of Somoza, and the continued support of the National Guard. The general saw the latter as the “key ingredient” in the mix in order to avoid a communist takeover, but acknowledged that leadership changes would be required at all levels of the Guard.¹⁸⁷ McAuliffe asked that his recommendations

¹⁸⁴ “The Choices in Nicaragua,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1979, A18.

¹⁸⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC 46, May 4, 1979,” p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹⁸⁶ D. P. McAuliffe, “SPECAT Exclusive for LTG Pustay, Assistant to CJCS, Subject: Events in Nicaragua, June 29, 1979,” p. 1, GEN McAuliffe Papers, Military History Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-6. General McAuliffe again emphasized the importance of the National Guard in a subsequent communiqué to the JCS and urged the administration to commit a small number of American military advisors to help decide which leaders should remain with the National Guard and create a reproach with the FLSN. See

be forwarded to the JCS and, if the JCS would deem appropriate, the civilians at OSD.¹⁸⁸

The JCS and OSD apparently supported the CINCs recommendations fully and forwarded them to the White House. Near the end of June, Carter ordered Secretary of State Vance to go before a special session of the Organization of American States (OAS) with a proposal which almost precisely matched McAuliffe's recommendations to end the conflict in Nicaragua.¹⁸⁹

Despite following the advice of his military advisors, Carter's efforts failed. The OAS rebuffed Vance's pleas to commit troops and oversee a cease fire. For the first time in its history, the OAS rejected an American proposal for intervention in a member state.¹⁹⁰ Soon after, Somoza's rule came to an end. On July 17, 1979, a joint session of the Nicaraguan Congress accepted his resignation. Two days later FLSN rebels entered the capital city of Managua.¹⁹¹ Within a week, the victorious Sandinista leadership flew to Cuba for personal congratulations from Fidel Castro.¹⁹² Assessing the significance of the events at the time, Marine Commandant Louis Wilson felt that Nicaragua was "gone."¹⁹³ When later asked in February of 1980 how he would assess the American position in Latin America, Wilson

D. P. McAuliffe, "LTG McAuliffe Sends, Subject: Emergency Rehabilitation Assistance in Nicaragua, July 9, 1979," GEN McAuliffe Papers, Military History Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁸⁹ Spencer, *The Carter Implosion*, 93. Note that Donald Spencer did not make the link between Vance's proposal and the recommendations of McAuliffe. He only described the proposals by Vance, indicating that the portion of the proposal that the National Guard be kept intact seemed outrageous. Spencer probably did not know that this was the "key ingredient" in the recommendation that was apparently accepted almost directly from the SOUTHCOM CINC.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 295.

¹⁹² Spencer, *The Carter Implosion*, 93.

¹⁹³ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 296.

called it “very bad.”¹⁹⁴ The marine general then went further, explaining his true feelings on the administration’s policies in this region:

I think the whole Caribbean is a hotbed of Communist-inspired insurgents brought about in large part by our willingness to put up with Castro’s exporting communism to that area and of course the President’s human rights program, which is a disaster. . . . I think the role of the Marine Corps is at an end. I also think the role of the United States is at an end, unless we change our policy. We are losing ground rapidly and in the whole of not only the Caribbean but all of Latin America.¹⁹⁵

If Wilson’s stinging indictment was at all representative, some in the military increasingly blamed Carter’s defense policies for the events in Latin America, even while the president increasingly accepted military advice.

The U.S. still supported Nicaragua even after the FLSN took control. General McAuliffe urged in early August of 1979 that the U.S. supply non-lethal military items and humanitarian assistance to the struggling government as an effort to assure neighboring countries of American commitments. He also asked, that if requested, aid be promptly dispatched to surrounding countries such as Guatemala and El Salvador.¹⁹⁶ The administration again accepted military advice, requesting from Congress a \$75 million dollar aid package in what was deemed “an effort to avoid Marxist, pro-Cuba rule” and to bolster the government of neighboring El Salvador.¹⁹⁷ Yet, the situation seemed to worsen. The Sandinistas moved increasingly toward the Soviet sphere. They doubled the size of the

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 298.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ D. P. McAuliffe, “NOFORN SPECAT Exclusive for LTG Lawson, Director J-5, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Subject: Military Assistance to Nicaragua, August 3, 1979,” p. 2 and 4, GEN McAuliffe Papers, Military History Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA.

¹⁹⁷ “Carter Wants \$75 Million in Aid to Avoid Marxism in Nicaragua,” *Washington Post*, November 28, 1979, A19.; Spencer, *The Carter Implosion*, 97.

Nicaraguan Army, openly accepted Cuban advisors, and, along with Cuba, became the second country outside the Warsaw Pact to support the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in front of the United Nations.¹⁹⁸ Less than a year later, in August of 1980, intelligence reports indicated that Cuba was providing massive arms shipments to the Sandinistas to support a conflict with neighboring El Salvador. Evans and Novak decried that these developments forced Carter to “reconsider his courtship of the left in Central America.”¹⁹⁹

If the events in Nicaragua forced Carter to reconsider his policy toward Central America, perhaps even more influential was the “discovery” of a Soviet army brigade in Cuba on August 31, 1979. Although the brigade had been there since the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, it had been forgotten by the CIA. Cyrus Vance, Harold Brown, and David Jones all claimed that the unit posed “no threat” to America. Satellite reconnaissance revealed, however, that the brigade was not just training Cubans but instead conducting “combat maneuvers” of its own.²⁰⁰

The administration’s handling of the incident quickly created a political crisis. Wanting to keep Congress informed of the matter, a lower level official from the State Department briefed the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Frank Church (D-ID), while the president, Harold Brown, and Brzezinski were all out of town for Labor Day. Church, running that year for re-election and defending himself against charges that he was a “dove,” proceeded to call a major press conference in which he took a bellicose posture and publicly stated that the SALT treaty should not be ratified while the Soviet brigade remained

¹⁹⁸ Spencer, *The Carter Implosion*, 96-97.

¹⁹⁹ Evans and Novak, “Carter’s Caribbean Choice,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 1980, A13.

²⁰⁰ George C. Wilson, “Soviet Troop Unit in Cuba Is Called ‘No Threat’ to U.S.,” *Washington Post*, September 1, 1979, A1.

in Cuba.²⁰¹ Secretary of State Vance took a surprisingly hard-line view as well, issuing a statement that “the status quo is unacceptable.”²⁰² With Carter supporting the view that the presence of the Soviet unit was unacceptable, and with the future of the SALT treaty now embroiled in the matter, the administration had virtually created its own crisis.²⁰³

Comments from retired military officers heightened the importance of the issue. LTG Daniel Graham, former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, insisted that “something new” was going on with the Soviet unit in Cuba, and that many intelligence officials knew this but were being ignored.²⁰⁴ Columnist Jack Anderson claimed that he had access to classified information that the Soviet brigade had doubled to five thousand men and contained Soviet troops who had constructed nuclear reactors in East Germany.²⁰⁵ The most serious allegations came from General Singlaub, who claimed that the purpose of the Soviet unit was to guard nuclear missiles. “I know there are nuclear missiles in Cuba. The U.S. intelligence establishment knows there are nuclear missiles in Cuba. And President Carter knows there are nuclear missiles in Cuba,” he boldly asserted. Singlaub went on to compare the Soviet brigade incident to the Cuban Missile Crisis.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Martin Schram, “Talks Planned on Soviet Unit,” *Washington Post*, September 8, 1979, A1.; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 347.

²⁰² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 349.

²⁰³ Carter picked up on Vance’s comment that the “status quo is unacceptable” and it became attributed to him as well. See Bernard Gwertzman, “Vance Said to Seek a Pledge on Troops from Soviet Envoy,” *New York Times*, October 1, 1979, A1.

²⁰⁴ Wilson, “Soviet Troop Unit in Cuba Is Called ‘No Threat’ to U.S.” *Washington Post*, September 1, 1979, A1.

²⁰⁵ SAPC, *FY81 Defense Budget Hearings*, 439.

²⁰⁶ “Singlaub Says Unit Guarding Missiles,” *Washington Post*, September 12, 1979, A2.

The administration fumbled attempts to solve the Soviet Brigade issue through diplomacy. Carter sent Vance to meet with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on several occasions, but the Russian refused to make any concessions and accused the U.S. of creating a false crisis over a training unit that had been stationed in Cuba for over seventeen years.²⁰⁷ Marshall Bremont, the NSC specialist on the U.S.S.R., concluded that the Soviets would not back down on the issue; the best the administration could hope for was to back away from the problem and issue a "Carter Doctrine" that any Soviet troop movement from Cuba elsewhere in the Western hemisphere would be unacceptable.²⁰⁸ The president rejected the advice of the NSC. Over the strong objections of Brzezinski, Carter convened a panel of retired officials from outside of the administration whom he dubbed "The Wise Men," headed by Clark M. Clifford, from which he hoped to draw advice to end the impasse.²⁰⁹ In the end, Carter issued a statement that Soviet assurances that the brigade would not be used for combat was enough, that the issue was "certainly no reason for a return to the Cold War," and that SALT II should not be tabled.²¹⁰ Correspondent Don Oberdorfer judged that Carter's response was "a tacit admission that three weeks of diplomacy had failed to bring about a negotiated settlement to the dispute."²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Bernard Gwertzman, "Carter Will Speak Monday on Dispute over Soviet Troops," *New York Times*, September 29, 1979, 1.

²⁰⁸ Marshall Bremont, "Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski, Subject: VBB: The Soviet Brigade in Cuba-Where Do We Go from Here?, September 12, 1979," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 33, Folder: Meetings-Vance/Brown/Brzezinski: 8/79-9/79, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²⁰⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 350.

²¹⁰ Excerpts from Carter's speech "We Face a Challenge to Our Wisdom, a Challenge to Our Determination," *Washington Post*, October 2, 1979, A6.

²¹¹ Don Oberdorfer, "Carter Maps Countermoves to Soviet Brigade," *Washington Post*, October 2, 1979, A1.

The Soviet Brigade incident caused chaos within Carter's White House. Hamilton Jordan and Jody Powell quipped to the press that the thirty-day process probably could have been handled in five days.²¹² Brzezinski felt rather differently. He was so incensed by the president's handling of the situation he actually contemplated resignation.²¹³ Louis Wilson, dictating his oral history at the time, captured the attitude of many when he recorded that "this is a continuing series of problems that the president has had, in which he speaks and then has to back down."²¹⁴

While the event may not have unified Carter's White House, it did demonstrate an increasing unity between the Pentagon and the NSC. Brzezinski indicated that through the entire incident he had "collaborated very closely" with Harold Brown. Brown and the JCS both believed that the primary focus of the incident should be the issue of Cuban involvement in Central America and Africa.²¹⁵ The administration's official response to the incident, codified in PD-52, reflected this Pentagon-NSC consensus. The directive ordered that the new U.S. policy toward Cuba should attempt to "reduce and eventually remove Cuban military forces stationed abroad," "undercut Cuba's drive for Third World leadership," and "inhibit the Soviet build-up of Cuba's armed forces."²¹⁶ Indeed, the contrast between PD-6 and PD-52, both dealing with Cuba, was stark. The administration had begun wanting to form a cooperative relationship with Cuba but, by October of 1979, had decided

²¹² Martin Schram, "Carter, as Meetings End: 'Fine--Now I'm Satisfied'," *Washington Post*, October 2, 1979, A6.

²¹³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 351.

²¹⁴ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 296.

²¹⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 349. For view of the JCS see George C. Wilson, "Carter's Military Response: Limited Showing of Flag," *Washington Post*, October 2, 1979, A6.

²¹⁶ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 52, October 4, 1979," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

that the relationship must be almost entirely adversarial. The president also followed almost all of the JCS advice in terms of how to respond to the situation.²¹⁷ On October 2, 1979, Carter established the Caribbean Combined Joint Task Force “to monitor and respond . . . to any attempted military encroachment in the region.”²¹⁸ Unlike his decision in 1977 to cancel a planned naval exercise off of Guantanamo, Carter authorized Harold Brown to “conduct a number of show the flag exercises” including increased naval maneuvers in the Caribbean.²¹⁹ It certainly appeared that Carter opted to follow more closely Pentagon advice as he tried to resolve the Cuban crisis.

Along with PD-52 and the Cuban incident, the administration’s focus on Latin America became increasingly pragmatic as the conflict between Nicaragua and El Salvador intensified. In November 1979, the press reported that Carter was willing to provide “significant” assistance to the rightist government in El Salvador.²²⁰ Gregory Treverton, a member of the NSC, confirmed that the administration also began covert operations inside Nicaragua to support the Salvadorians.²²¹ When it appeared that a right-wing counter coup might be underway in Nicaragua, the administration reacted rather aggressively, sending letters of demarche to Moscow and Cuba warning them against intervention and ordering a

²¹⁷ Wilson, “Carter’s Military Response: Limited Showing of Flag,” *Washington Post*, October 2, 1979, A6.

²¹⁸ Cole, et. al., *The History of the Unified Command Plan*, 60.

²¹⁹ For the January cancellation see Evans and Novak, “Carter’s Caribbean Choice,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 1980, A13. For stepped up naval maneuvers see George C. Wilson, “Brown Pledges U.S. Effort on Soviets’ Cuba Brigade,” *Washington Post*, October 11, 1979, A2.

²²⁰ John M. Goshko, “Salvadorans May Get Aid in Combating Extremists,” *Washington Post*, October 31, 1979, A17.

²²¹ Treverton, *Covert Action*, 17.

carrier battlegroup into the central Caribbean.²²² Even when the right-wing junta in El Salvador murdered three nuns and a lay worker, the administration consented to an internal investigation of the events, supervised by the FBI and foreign observers.²²³ In that same meeting, the DoD recommended sending in fifty military advisors to help the Salvadorians. When Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher objected that this would seem like an “invasion,” Brzezinski overruled him and sided with DoD.²²⁴ It thus became an unofficial administration position to continue to supply limited military aid to the Salvadorians to assist in the struggle “against leftist guerillas.”²²⁵ Later, Carter continued to side with DoD regarding El Salvador, allowing the shipment of helicopters to combat the Sandinistas.²²⁶ Given this evolution of events, Steven Rearden’s conclusion that “by the end of Carter’s presidency, U.S. policy in Latin America was beginning to approximate something closer to what the JCS believed it should be” was correct.²²⁷

²²² Brzezinski, "National Security Council, Special Coordinating Committee Meeting, Subject: Nicaragua." This incident is detailed at the opening of this chapter.

²²³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "National Security Council, Special Coordination Committee Meeting, Subject: El Salvador," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 33, Folder: [Meetings-SCC 345: 12/11/80], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA (December 11, 1980), 1.

²²⁴ Ibid., 5. Carter himself concurred with the consensus reached at the SCC meetings. See "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Summary of the President's Meeting with the Special Presidential Mission to El Salvador and U.S. Policy to El Salvador, December 11, 1980," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 33, Folder: [Meetings-SCC 354: 12/11/80], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²²⁵ Robert Pastor, "Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, Subject: SCC Meeting on El Salvador, December 11, 1980," p. 2, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 33, Folder: [Meetings-SCC 354: 12/11/80], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²²⁶ David Aaron, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Nicaragua and El Salvador, January 12, 1981," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 33, Folder: [Meetings-SCC: 1/12/81], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²²⁷ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 174.

A Grand Strategy Revised: PD-59 and Pentagon Contingency Planning

PD-59 (“Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy”) issued in July of 1980 marked the final maturation of the Carter administration’s policy making process and grand strategy. This directive detailed Carter’s “countervailing strategy” of nuclear deterrence. The document detailed “pre-planned options” for nuclear targeting against the Soviet Union and called for the president to be able to “pursue specific policy objectives” from “general guidelines established in advance.”²²⁸ Overall, it reached a level of specificity and pragmatism not seen in previous directives.

According to Brzezinski, PD-59 departed radically from all previous administrations and put Carter’s mark on deterrence. Brzezinski argued that until PD-59, “American war planning postulated a brief, spasmic [sic], and apocalyptic conflict.”²²⁹ Carter’s strategy, by contrast, called for a deeper analysis of nuclear war, acknowledging that it might “last a few days at most” and involve less than complete destruction of both nations. It targeted Soviet command, military, and industrial structures rather than primarily cities and industrial capacity. The strategy called for a “look-shoot-look” capability to destroy Soviet mobile conventional and nuclear forces.²³⁰ It also sought to give the president more selection from a “menu” of nuclear options and more direct control over targeting. Part of this involved the idea of limiting the possibility of a catastrophic nuclear escalation by informing the Kremlin of the targets of our nuclear weapons after their launch, so that the Soviets could judge the

²²⁸ Jimmy Carter, “Presidential Directive/NSC 59, July 25, 1980,” p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

²²⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 459.

²³⁰ Ibid.

appropriate level of retaliation against us.²³¹ The specificity stood in stark contrast to the generalities and optimistic appraisals of PD-18 from early 1978.

The directive had both critics and supporters within the administration. Although Brzezinski and Harold Brown both strongly supported it, some of those who had criticized PD-41 also vehemently opposed PD-59.²³² Many disagreed strongly with the analytical tone of the directive, which implied that nuclear war could be controlled or even won. Others took particular exception to one of the “pre-planned options,” which supposedly detailed an American nuclear preemptive strike against the U.S.S.R.²³³ Secretary of State Edmund Muskie also objected to PD-59, mainly because he had not even been informed of the change in U.S. strategy until after it was signed.²³⁴ PD-59 had thus completed the transition of the NSC policy making process from one dominated by Vance to one dominated by Brzezinski and Harold Brown.

Congressional reaction to the administration’s change in strategy proved guarded. Both Brown and Muskie defended the change before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The directive had been leaked to the press and speculation ran rampant about the “first

²³¹ BG William Odom, in oral history of Zbigniew Brzezinski and staff, interview by David Truman, Erwin Hargrove, et. al., 18 February 1982, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 32.

²³² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 458.

²³³ Brown, *Thinking About National Security*, 81. The statement in the visible portion of the document that reads “strategic nuclear forces must be able to . . . contribute to deterrence of non-nuclear attacks” alludes to the existence of such a “first strike” option in the classified portion. Among the press, “counterforce” or “countervailing” at times became synonymous with “first strike.” See Robert Kaylor, “Brown Would Widen Range of Russian Military Targets,” *Washington Post*, January 14, 1979, A12; Wilson, “Arms Policy, A Farewell to Nixon Doctrine,” *Washington Post*, December 13, 1979, A33.

²³⁴ Don Oberdorfer, “Muskie Is Distressed by Pentagon’s Role in Foreign Affairs,” *Washington Post*, August 10, 1980, A13.

strike” portion.²³⁵ Some congressmen feared that the heavily analytical nature of the studies leading up to PD-59 virtually made “launch under attack” a policy and might eventually place computers in charge of the use of nuclear weapons—particularly worrisome given the fact that a series of recent computer glitches had falsely indicated a Soviet nuclear attack.²³⁶ Other congressmen questioned the “wafighting” potential of the directive and whether it made nuclear warfare more likely.²³⁷ Obviously, the administration had failed again to consult adequately with the legislative branch on a major change in defense policy.

PD-59 also revealed changing civil-military relationships inside the administration. Like so many of the early studies conducted within the Pentagon, civilian defense analysts almost solely formulated the nuclear targeting options in PD-59. Leon Sloss, a highly-regarded civilian consultant, developed many of the specific concepts in the directive.²³⁸ Sloss had gone out of his way to cooperate with military officers during the study, but the JCS greeted his leading role with skepticism. Although the Chiefs did agree with the tone and overall concept of PD-59, they did not like how Sloss and his assistants had developed the targeting options. The JCS, accustomed to being responsible for employment of weapons systems, thought some of the civilian-developed targeting options “overly ambitious” and offered only qualified support.²³⁹ Accordingly, while PD-59 engendered less public civil-military conflict

²³⁵ Michael Getler, "Muskie Says New a-Strategy Isn't 'War-Fighting' Concept," *Washington Post*, September 17, 1980, A8.

²³⁶ HAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriation Hearings*, 533; Richard Halloran, "Computer Error Falsely Indicates a Soviet Attack," *New York Times*, June 6, 1980, A14.

²³⁷ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 513.

²³⁸ Richard Burt, "The New Strategy for Nuclear War: How It Evolved," *New York Times*, August 13, 1980, A3.

²³⁹ For Leon Sloss' background and efforts to smooth civil-military tension, see Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 317-319. For qualified support and “overly ambitious” see Ibid, 329, 390-391 respectively.

than previous directives, the military still manifested its discontent with what was viewed as civilian intrusion into previously military dominated realms.

Besides the nuclear targeting policy covered in PD-59, another related area in which civilians invaded traditionally military realms was in contingency planning, or the development of theater war plans. Bob Komer, promoted to Resor's vacated Undersecretary of Defense for Policy position, took it upon himself to inject his office into contingency planning. Komer felt that "the non-nuclear war planning process" within the Pentagon was weak and "without much imaginative consideration at CINC or JCS level."²⁴⁰ "When the JCS briefs it is general," Komer complained, "What are we going to do? That is the province of the CINC, they say. We had to relate defense programming better to contingency planning."²⁴¹ John Kester agreed, admitting that Joint Staff plans "often have dismayed outsiders who have had occasion to read them."²⁴² Jimmy Carter happened to be one of those "outsiders." The president therefore remained personally involved in the overall revision of military contingency planning directed by Harold Brown and Komer.²⁴³ In response to the president's concern, Brown issued, in June of 1980, the first annual policy guidance for contingency planning. The Secretary of Defense directed Komer to review all military contingency plans. Komer classified this as a "pioneering effort to give DoD's civilians an insight into what the military are doing in the way of actual war planning."²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Locher, *Victory on the Potomac*, 303.

²⁴¹ Robert Komer, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 54.

²⁴² Locher, *Victory on the Potomac*, 303.

²⁴³ Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, 8 October 1992, OSD Oral History, 3.

²⁴⁴ Robert Komer, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 55-56.

The military resisted this civilian intrusion. Before Komer's arrival, contingency plans had been denied to all civilians save for the SECDEF himself.²⁴⁵ Harold Brown called even David Jones' attitude on further civilian involvement on planning "prickly" and remembered that other members of the JCS were even less cooperative.²⁴⁶ The JCS complained to Komer that too much civilian oversight in military planning risked highly classified war plans being compromised. In response, Komer agreed that his own military aide, Air Force General Pick Boverie, should be intimately involved in the process to help safeguard classified information.²⁴⁷ Unable to keep the civilians from viewing the plans, the military at times clandestinely resisted the modification of their strategies by means of an "end-run" to Congress. The most prominent case of this was the adoption of a naval "swing strategy" for the Pacific theater. This strategy, adopted "against the better judgment" of the military, called for the majority of U.S. naval power in the Pacific to be transferred to the Atlantic in case of war with the Soviets.²⁴⁸ In response, CNO Admiral Hayward invited Senator Sam Nunn to Honolulu for a top-secret briefing. Hayward, opposed to administration policy, proposed to Nunn his own war plan code-named "Sea Strike" which called for a six hundred ship navy to fight on both oceans against the U.S.S.R. simultaneously.²⁴⁹ In other instances, Harold Brown judged that the military services continued to play "substantial" roles through

²⁴⁵ Locher, *Victory on the Potomac*, 442.

²⁴⁶ Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Trask, 4 December 1981, OSD Oral History, 9.

²⁴⁷ Robert Komer, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 55.

²⁴⁸ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "The Secret 'Swing Strategy'," *Washington Post*, October 8, 1979, A21.

²⁴⁹ Gregory L. Vistica, *Fall from Glory: The Men Who Sank the U.S. Navy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 34-40.

the JCS in the realm of strategy and planning.²⁵⁰ Thus, the military successfully resisted on almost every front the Carter effort to increase civilian input in contingency planning.

Harold Brown recognized the challenges to civilian involvement in contingency planning, and thus felt that the administration's efforts to gain control were mixed. "The military, of course, are most jealous of their prerogatives in this area," Brown reflected later, "They think the [civilian OSD] staff has no legal basis for being in these things" and that "they will be second guessed by a whole bunch of amateurs who have no right to do it."²⁵¹ The Secretary of Defense admitted that he had gone to "enormous lengths to organize the OSD to try to minimize the problem," such as labeling Komer's position undersecretary for policy when it really should have been "undersecretary for plans and operations."²⁵² He admitted that at times "Komer and some of his people were really allowed into the planning business as equals," but that, in the end, "We never did get adequate control or influence over military plans and operations."²⁵³ This may be why Senate Armed Services staffer James R. Locher felt that, prior to the Goldwater-Nichols reforms, "the absence of civilian review led to plans based on unrealistic assumptions, sharply limiting their utility."²⁵⁴ The Carter administration had in fact attained civilian oversight of contingency planning well before Goldwater-Nichols, but because of military resistance, with only limited impact.

²⁵⁰ Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Trask, 4 December 1981, OSD Oral History, 21.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 5.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid., 6, 9.

²⁵⁴ Locher, *Victory on the Potomac*, 442.

Strategic Summary: The Evolution of Defense and National Security Policy and Civil-Military Relations, 1977-1981

The controversies surrounding Jimmy Carter's Presidential Directives support most historiography: that Carter's policies evolved from the more idealistic to the more pragmatic. Yet, while many historians argue that it was foreign policy setbacks such as Iran and Afghanistan that led to these changes, these setbacks were not the only reasons for change. Civil-military relations also shaped the substance of the administration's defense policies, making them conform more to Pentagon positions by the end of the administration. Although President Carter listened to his defense advisors and altered policies based on their input, his NSC policy formulation process initially excluded the uniformed military and engendered civil-military tension that lasted throughout his term.

Despite the conflict, the military clearly influenced policy increasingly in the Carter administration. David Jones held a very positive view of the president, saying that "he learned quickly . . . and gained experience in office that helped him a great deal" and that "we [the JCS] were able to convince him to increase the growth percentage" of the defense budget.²⁵⁵ Lew Allen agreed, stating that the military point of view influenced Carter and that "his mind was changed by cold reality."²⁵⁶ The president took advice from the JCS directly at times, but it did not always translate, even in the last stages of his term, into policy. Although military leaders welcomed the overall change in tone of Carter's policies, they still, even during the final days of the Carter term, objected to specific elements of those policies and *how* the NSC developed them.

²⁵⁵ GEN David Jones, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 19.

²⁵⁶ GEN Lew Allen, interview by James Harsdorff, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 184-185.

All of this does not imply that Carter refused to listen to the military—on the contrary he actually listened to them frequently. Carter allowed the JCS direct access to him—he admitted that they never requested a meeting with him that he did not grant within twenty-four hours.²⁵⁷ David Jones, having served as Chairman of the JCS for both Carter and Reagan, agreed that the JCS could talk directly to Carter. Indeed, Carter listened to Jones more than Reagan did.²⁵⁸ George Brown, Bernard Rogers, James Holloway III, and Louis Wilson all publicly attested that they had uninhibited access to the president and that they felt Carter listened to their advice.²⁵⁹ Claims that Carter “muzzled” the military—arising mostly from the Singlaub affair—were mistaken.²⁶⁰

The main complaint early in Carter’s term was lack of JCS representation in the NSC policy-making process. Coming into office vowing to reform the Pentagon and end “Lone Ranger” diplomacy by the NSC and State Department, the administration initially made it clear to the Chiefs that they would no longer play the same role that they had during the Nixon-Kissinger years. PD-2 and the repeal of NSAM-55 made this explicitly clear to the JCS, along with George Brown’s ejection from the White House when he tried to attend an early NSC meeting. At first, Carter wanted to hear only from Harold Brown on defense policy. Brown followed suit at the Pentagon with his efforts to craft a single DoD position

²⁵⁷ Jimmy Carter, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History Collection, 12.

²⁵⁸ GEN David Jones, interview by Poole and Rearden, 4 February 1998, JCS Oral History, 9. For comment on Carter and Reagan Administrations see GEN David Jones, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History Collection, 25.

²⁵⁹ For comments of Holloway and Wilson see HAPC, *FY79 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 593. Holloway and Wilson reiterated their comments in HCOB, *FY79 Defense Budget Overview*, 224. For comments of Brown see George S. Brown, *Address to the Business Council at the Homestead* (Hot Springs, VA: October 14, 1977). For comments of Rogers see HAPC, *FY79 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 96-97.

²⁶⁰ For proponents of this view see: Evans and Novak, “A Muzzle on the Military?,” *Washington Post*, May 25, 1977, A25; Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 425; Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 385. Note that Rearden did not use the term “muzzling,” but stated that “Carter neglected military advice.”

on many issues where the JCS had previously provided independent input. This early exclusion of the uniformed military gradually gave way to a more open relationship in the second half of the administration when a JCS representative attended almost all NSC meetings. Even so, most of the later defense policy studies, most notably PD-59, still represented significantly more civilian control in the policy-making process than had been the case at the start of Carter's term. The overall result of this increase in civilian control and lessening of military influence was civil-military friction.

Although Carter was arguably less personally involved in defense policy than he was in defense budgets, his manner of decision making also maximized civil-military discord. Carter often kept even his closest aides guessing as to how he might decide. Notable examples of this were his sudden decision to cancel the B-1, his quick decision to withdraw troops from Korea, and his last minute scrapping of the neutron bomb. These abrupt decisions poisoned relations with the uniformed military outside the Pentagon, especially the theater CINCs. While the JCS might have seen these decisions coming, CINCs such as Vessey and Haig became increasingly frustrated and alienated from both the Pentagon and the administration. These quick presidential decisions also exacerbated conflict with Congress. When they were not sudden, he seemed to fall back on his engineering background and order voluminous studies. This was certainly the case with Pentagon reform, the PRM-10/PD-18 studies, and the refinement of nuclear targeting. This frustrated even some of his civilian appointees in the Pentagon, and the military exclusion from many of the studies provoked more anger. Where Carter attempted explicitly to integrate military advice and congressional support, such as with the Panama Canal treaty and the Horn of Africa crisis, he minimized civil-military discord.

The second half of Carter's administration was particularly chaotic partly because of a rash of crises in 1979 and after. Even as Carter and his NSC moved to integrate military advice more fully, his policy process came under intense strain. The political turmoil in South Korea, the Fall of Iran, the "discovery" of the Soviet brigade in Cuba, the taking of the American hostages, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan all required extensive civil-military consultation. While there was more cooperation than might be expected given the ongoing fights over the defense budgets, the Carter administration still seemed to lurch from one crisis to the next, unable to recover its equilibrium or deal with the challenges in a sensible, effective manner. This chaos particularly harmed the administration's relations with the theater CINCs and with members of Congress, all of whom increasingly viewed the administration's responses as weak or uncoordinated.

Secretary of Defense Brown limited civil-military conflict less in defense policy than he had in the defense budgets. Many within the Pentagon recognized that Brown felt more comfortable with the details and scientific analysis associated with the budget than he did with broad policy matters. "The problem is that Brown is not policy oriented, but program oriented," said one anonymous DoD official, "He's interested in weapons systems and hardware and the scientific end and, basically, cares very little about the policy side."²⁶¹ Whereas many in the Pentagon believed that Brown fought hard for higher defense budgets, fewer felt that he represented the DoD well in the complex discussions formulating government policies in the Pentagon and White House.

Despite the early exclusion from policy making and the reduced effectiveness of Brown as a mediator, as a whole defense policy in the Carter administration over time came to more resemble the JCS desires. This was certainly the case for policy issues relating to Korea,

²⁶¹ Weinraub, "Top Aide at Pentagon is Quitting in Dispute," *New York Times*, March 8, 1979, A17.

Latin America, Africa, and with the RDF. Theater CINCs, however, did not necessarily share in this view and tended to resist administration policy throughout the four years. For this reason, Carter increasingly bypassed his CINCs on important matters, which culminated in the efforts to forestall the fall of the Shah in Iran. Carter managed to replace the two most recalcitrant CINCs—Haig in Europe and Vessey in Korea—with officers with whom he had better relations: Bernard Rogers and John Wickham. This resolved some civil-military conflict; but, as a whole, theater CINCs did not share the JCS view that Carter learned from his experiences in office and improved in defense policy making.

Although the Pentagon and the NSC formed a natural alliance against the State Department during the second half of Carter's term, the strength of this alliance had limits. While in general the Pentagon preferred Brzezinski's positions to those of Vance and Muskie, the support remained equivocal at best. Civil-military and Pentagon-White House conflict still flared even in the final stages of the policy-making process where Brzezinski had become virtually dominant, best illustrated by the military's limited support for Brzezinski's courses of action during the Horn of Africa, Iranian, and Nicaraguan crises. Despite the increasing influence of the more hawkish National Security Advisor, the Pentagon remained suspicious of and uncomfortable with the administration in general and the White House in particular to the end.

While civil-military conflict certainly dominated the defense policy-making process in the Carter years, it never erupted into a major incident or "blowup" which permanently poisoned the relationship. The increasing willingness of the administration to include—and heed—military advice over the four years tempered military dissent and resistance. It was for these reasons that, despite the chaos of the last years of the Carter term, any sort of civil-military

crisis was averted. The critically important SALT II process taking place throughout the four years even demonstrated that the Carter and his uniformed military advisors could cooperate despite the friction and chaos.

CHAPTER VI

COOPERATION: JCS SUPPORT FOR SALT II

Introduction: White House Cabinet Room, December 19, 1978, 2:45 p.m.¹

Jimmy Carter sat pensively at the head of the long rectangular table in the White House Cabinet Room, but he was not meeting with his cabinet. In fact, it was not a meeting that he had called but was one that had been requested by his military advisors. On his left sat the Joint Chiefs of Staff, standing out in their medal and star bedecked uniforms. General David Jones sat closest to Carter. On the president's right sat National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and his deputy David Aaron, along with their assistant Victor Utgoff. Also present were Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and his deputy Charles Duncan. Since the subject of the meeting was SALT II and the 1980 defense budget, General George Seignious, the newly appointed head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ADCA), was also attending. All of these men focused on the president, who after nearly two full years in office was showing signs of strain.

"Gentlemen," the president began, "I intend to make a number of difficult decisions this week." Carter explained that he was deciding the final figures for the FY80 defense budget and the concluding details of the SALT II agreement with Russia. Turning to the JCS, the

¹ Time, date, location, and account of the meeting is taken from "Memorandum for the Record, Subject: Summary of the Meeting between the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on SALT Two and the FY80 Defense Program, December 19, 1978," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 36, Folder: Serial X's [9/79-12/78], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

president asked them to elaborate on their concerns which had led the Chiefs to ask for this meeting.²

Carter had learned during his first years in office and understood the importance of good civil-military relations. He knew that the JCS probably did not agree with all aspects of his defense budget or the pending SALT II treaty but that, as professional military men, they felt obligated to support their commander-in-chief. He also recognized that they would have to provide frank and full testimony to Congress and that, if he failed to accommodate their concerns, then testimony might undermine the administration's goals. For this reason Carter had maintained a direct dialogue with the JCS. While on matters of policy Carter expected to hear from Harold Brown, when it came to listening to the pulse of the uniformed military the president preferred at times to hear it directly. In fact, in instances such as this where the JCS asked to meet with the president, Carter prided himself in granting such a meeting within twenty-four hours.³

Jones, sitting closest to Carter, began to speak for the Chiefs' concerns. "Mr. President, we have spent many hours in the last two days meeting on both SALT and the defense budget," he began, gesturing to the other members of the JCS. He explained that the JCS was especially concerned with the rising power of the Soviet Union and that many important issues were at stake in the next few days and weeks. The Chiefs' particularly feared the limitations on cruise missiles in the SALT agreement, the future of the MX missile program,

² Ibid., 1.

³ Jimmy Carter, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 12.

and the level of the FY80 defense budget. “We understand the problems that you face, Mr. President, and we want to help,” the general said in closing.⁴

If anybody understood the principles of proper civil-military relations it was David Jones. He was a firm believer in supporting presidential policy even when he personally disagreed with it. While he had excellent relations with many important members of Congress, he never used those contacts to undermine administration positions. Jones firmly believed that the best way to influence defense policy was to work in a cooperative relationship with his boss Harold Brown and, at times, to provide direct advice to the president. If Jones disagreed with an administration policy, then he frankly informed Harold Brown or the president. He also worked to consolidate the views of the other members of the JCS, filtering out parochial service interests when possible, and presenting the issues in a forthright manner to his civilian superiors. Jones had at many times been criticized as being a “political” or a “liberal” general because he supported his civilian superiors over his service. While not overly concerned with these charges, Jones, like Jimmy Carter, was also showing the strain of a difficult two years.⁵

Jimmy Carter thanked Jones for his concern and said that he wanted to make a preliminary statement. He began by pointing out that he had met more with the JCS than many of his predecessors and had tried to honor their suggestions. He emphasized, however, that SALT was the centerpiece to his entire administration and was now in the final stages of twenty-two months of negotiations. “I hope, gentlemen,” Carter implored, “that you can keep in mind

⁴ “Memorandum for the Record, Subject: Summary of the Meeting between the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on SALT Two and the FY80 Defense Program,” JCL, 1.

⁵ For Jones’ support of OSD over the Air Force and other services, see Charles Duncan, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 17-18. For lack of concern and charges of being “liberal” see respectively GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 183, 254.

the challenges that I as the president face in having to balance the importance of our positions on the various outstanding issues with the potential for a breakdown in the entire agreement.”

The president then zeroed in on the issue of cruise missile limitations, pressing hard to make the JCS understand that without the agreement on this issue the Soviets might refuse to sign the treaty. On the issue of the continuation of the MX missile program, Carter assured, “I know of no defense systems that you are deeply committed to that SALT II would prevent.”⁶

Although Jones remained looking directly at the president, Carter noticed that the other members of the JCS were exchanging skeptical glances. The president felt compelled to articulate his position in more detail in order to try to win the support of the Chiefs. First, he pointed out that SALT II would not last indefinitely and felt that this perception was coloring the debate in the press and in Congress. Even if all aspects of the treaty were not fully consistent with the views of the JCS, it did not mean that the U.S. would have to accept the terms of the treaty indefinitely.⁷ Second, the president agreed with the Russian insistence on limitations on all cruise missiles despite the JCS opposition to such limitations. Carter pointed out that nuclear-tipped cruise missiles had to be counted in the allowable weapons totals for each side and, because of this, the Soviets correctly argued that it was nearly impossible to distinguish a nuclear-tipped cruise missile from a conventionally-armed one given the small size of the weapons. Secretly, one side or the other might attach nuclear warheads to conventional cruise missiles and gain nuclear superiority. The Russians

⁶ "Memorandum for the Record, Subject: Summary of the Meeting between the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on SALT Two and the FY80 Defense Program," JCL, 2.

⁷ Ibid.

therefore demanded that all cruise missiles, conventional or not, be limited by the SALT II protocol. Carter agreed.⁸

The Joint Chiefs, although generally willing to allow Jones to speak for their collective interests, were not always enthusiastic about it. Service interests or personal opinions at times still emerged in these meetings, and the cruise missile issue was one such case. The CNO, Admiral Thomas Hayward, felt Jones was weak on this issue and offered his own point of view. “I am not going to introduce any new arguments here,” Hayward began, “but I think I speak for all of my colleagues when I say that I am concerned about the precedent that including conventional weapons in a strategic arms limitation treaty entails.” The admiral was also very concerned that the U.S. delegation was going to agree to major limitations on the range of the cruise missiles. “The future of the naval cruise missile systems would be overly constrained if their ranges were limited to only three hundred miles,” Hayward concluded. General Louis Wilson, the USMC Commandant, interjected that allowing blanket limitations on cruise missiles was detrimental to the U.S. because American technology was already superior in this area. He also pointed out that the JCS saw many problems of verification on the treaty from the Soviet side—for instance it was nearly impossible to tell if a Soviet SS-20 missile had two or three warheads, and the Backfire bomber might well have more range than the Soviets admitted, making it a true intercontinental bomber. The Marine general felt that Carter and his SALT delegation were ignoring these verification issues while going too far to address the Soviet concerns about cruise missiles.⁹

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 3.

His position challenged, Carter fell back on his engineering background. He expressed doubt that it would be cost effective ever to put a conventional warhead on a cruise missile. “At one million dollars apiece, we will want nukes on these valuable vehicles,” Carter concluded. “I think your arguments about conventional versus nuclear cruise missiles are specious,” the president argued; “we aren’t giving up anything real by foregoing conventional cruise missiles on heavy bombers.” Carter also stated that, if he went with the JCS course of exempting conventional cruise missiles from the limits, then SALT II opponents in Congress like as Scoop Jackson might attack the treaty as “unverifiable.” “I hope that you all can accommodate me on this issue,” Carter requested, “I think that if we drop the distinction on cruise missiles then we will win our positions on all of the remaining SALT II positions.”¹⁰

Some members of the JCS were still not satisfied. “Why are the Soviets being so intransigent on the cruise missile issue?” General Wilson demanded. “Because they know that we have the advantage over them in cruise missiles, and we can deploy large numbers by 1985,” Carter responded. “This sounds like an argument to hang tough,” Admiral Hayward broke in; “their interest in this issue suggests we should push them to the wall.” “A long-range conventional cruise missile is simply a waste,” Carter replied, “The agreement does not cover other classes of cruise missiles such as ground and sea launched versions, so I think we lose nothing by agreeing to the Russian position.” Army Chief Bernard Rogers then entered the fray, stating that he was “very upset” and feared that the U.S. was giving up too much by acceding to the Soviet demands. “I understand your positions on these issues,” Carter

¹⁰ Ibid., 3-4.

responded, “but I assure you that I have no intention of letting this treaty set any precedents.”¹¹

General Jones stepped back in to consolidate the JCS position, recognizing that Carter was not going to retreat on the issue of cruise missiles. The Chairman stated that the single most important issue was “to get started on building a survivable ICBM system” with the MX missile. Carter gave his assurance that SALT II allowed this and that his administration would be able to get a costly mobile basing system approved by Congress.¹²

Carter then asked the JCS to think beyond SALT II toward SALT III which could even further reduce nuclear arms between the two countries. He wanted “profound” cuts in the nuclear arsenal, and wanted the Chiefs to think about how they would do that if “they were in his shoes.” Carter also stated confidently that he looked forward to further progress on the Mutually Balanced Force Reduction Treaty in Europe, hoping to scale back conventional forces for each side in Europe. The president’s optimism for reducing future tensions with the Soviet Union met only half-hearted approval from the JCS. Air Force Chief Lew Allen, a nuclear physicist, replied that it was very hard to project ten years into the future and see where each side’s strategic force balance might be.¹³ For these military men it was hard to share the president’s favorable outlook for relations between the two superpowers.

“I do not want you all to feel reticent about coming to me on important issues,” Carter said, as he prepared to adjourn the meeting, “I do not want to see you only when Harold Brown and you disagree.” The president smiled broadly, looking at his Secretary of Defense,

¹¹ Ibid., 4.

¹² Ibid., 5.

¹³ Ibid., 6.

who quickly glanced down at the table and remained silent. “You are truly great Americans, and I have great respect and admiration for you all,” the president complimented.

David Jones nodded, but leaned forward to press the final issue for the meeting, the FY80 defense budget. “We certainly do not feel inhibited coming directly to you with problems or advice,” Jones began, “and we do want to think about SALT III even though it is difficult to do so.” “We do, however, also want to talk about the defense budget,” the general pressed; “we feel that there are a great number of important defense programs left out.”¹⁴

President Carter pushed his chair away from the table. “We’ll be lucky to hold the DoD budget at the level we set,” he said with a laugh. “There is no way that you all can appreciate the problems that I am facing cutting back non-defense programs and budgets,” the president said as he stood up.¹⁵ The rest of the attendees stood as well, and Jimmy Carter turned his back and left the room. The JCS exchanged uneasy glances, and David Jones looked across the table at Harold Brown who quickly busied himself putting his papers back into his briefcase. Carter had made it clear that he saw no link between SALT II and higher defense spending. The Chairman of the JCS had done his best to try to open dialogue on this issue, but had been rebuffed. Jones wondered how this might play out, for clearly many in Congress did see the two issues as inextricably linked. Jones would do his best to try to get the JCS to come to a position of support for the president’s policy, but in this case he knew a rough road lay ahead.

In several ways this meeting symbolized the ongoing saga of SALT II which influenced civil-military relations throughout the Carter years. First, Jimmy Carter placed critical

¹⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵ Ibid.

importance on and viewed SALT II as the centerpiece of his administration. It typified his ambitious goals for arms control and future nuclear disarmament. Second, the JCS wanted to support Carter and his policies and were willing to compromise on many issues in order to do so, but they did not share the president's optimism regarding future relations with the U.S.S.R. Their prime concern was the Soviet military buildup; they felt that the U.S. must respond in kind. For the JCS, increasing military spending was, paradoxically, vital to reducing nuclear arms. Jimmy Carter consistently dismissed this linkage. Finally, the meeting also demonstrated the lack of consideration for Congress' role in the SALT II treaty. Carter, as with the defense budget, underestimated the power of the military-congressional alliance. Although his Chiefs remained remarkably loyal on SALT II, the president's resistance to more spending on defense weakened JCS support. In the end, it was this congressional side of the alliance that blocked ratification of SALT II and brought about Carter's greatest defeat.

The Most Profound Disappointment: The Centrality of SALT II to Civil-Military Relations in the Carter Years

Civil military relations in the Carter years cannot be fully understood without SALT II because it was the single most important civil-military interaction during Carter's administration. Unlike many crisis-oriented events, the extensive SALT II process lasted virtually throughout Carter's term. It was among the first issues covered in the preliminary talks which Carter had with the JCS.¹⁶ Carter's initial "deep cuts" proposal in March of 1977, although a failure, resulted in some of the most detailed studies of the nation's strategic posture yet conducted. Even while the controversial Panama Canal treaty was ongoing, Carter still engaged in substantial dialogue with the JCS about SALT. Even major events

¹⁶ Brown, "SALT Briefing to the President-Elect by the JCS," CJCS Brown Files, NARA II.

such as the plans for the Korea troop withdrawals and the revolution in Iran took place within the ongoing SALT II process. SALT II was not officially withdrawn from consideration by the Senate until after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—but even then SALT became inextricably linked with the administration’s final two defense budgets for FY80 and FY81.

The SALT process had occupied, in the minds of Carter’s advisors, “the central role in U.S. Soviet relations since the end of the Johnson administration.”¹⁷ Few, if any, advisors questioned the central role of nuclear arms in maintaining the balance between the U.S. and Soviets. “No one can win a thermonuclear war,” stated an early policy memo from the Carter White House; “therefore, preventing it—by deterrence—remains overwhelmingly our most important strategic goal.”¹⁸ Strategic arms reductions for both sides remained the primary means by which the risk of a thermonuclear war could be averted while still maintaining deterrence. The entire future of détente, in Carter’s mind, rested with negotiating continued arms reductions with the Soviets.

President Carter felt that it was critical to have JCS support for SALT II and dedicated much of his dialogue with them in efforts to secure their support.¹⁹ Strategic arms treaties had always been hotly contested issues between presidential administrations and Congress. Although some in Congress, most notably Les Aspin (D-WI), charged that the threat of Soviet nuclear superiority was greatly exaggerated, many others such as Senator Scoop Jackson (D-WA) insisted that the U.S. was being railroaded into a permanent position of

¹⁷ Blechman, “Memo to Eizenstat on SALT II, 20 Aug 1976,” JCL, 1.

¹⁸ Ibid., 6. JCS Historian Steven Rearden also called SALT II the most important and highest priority matter on the JCS agenda during the Carter years. See Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 267.

¹⁹ Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, 223-228, 245.

strategic inferiority.²⁰ The support of the JCS in testimony to Congress was therefore crucial to any hopes for strategic arms reductions. The JCS also viewed SALT II with similar importance. The director of the Joint Staff in the Pentagon confirmed that SALT II was one of the most significant and time-intensive events taking place in the Pentagon during Carter's term.²¹

Finally, Jimmy Carter cared deeply and personally about SALT. The new president truly wished to eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. SALT II would be just the first step along that path and his ambitious "minimum deterrence" and "deep cuts" proposals revealed his ultimate intentions. Although Brezhnev rejected most of his ideas, Carter still wanted desperately to reach a nuclear-arms limiting accord with the Soviets. The president focused extensive personal and political effort into crafting and seeking ratification for the treaty. He was purported to be able to cite from memory chapter and verse of any of the nineteen articles of the treaty and the associated 300 page statements of understanding.²² He told the JCS that it was his "most cherished hope" to leave office having signed a strategic arms reduction treaty with the Soviets.²³ In his memoir he listed the failure of his administration to gain ratification of SALT II as "the most profound disappointment" of his presidency.²⁴

²⁰ For Aspin's views, see John W. Finney, "U.S. Challenged on Arms Estimate," *New York Times*, March 8, 1976, 11. For Jackson's views see Blechman, "Memo to Eizenstat on SALT II, 20 Aug 1976," JCL, 3.

²¹ LTG Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 269.

²² Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 3.

²³ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 270.

²⁴ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 271.

Deceptions and Backfires: Reasons for JCS and Congressional Hesitation on Arms Control

Despite Jimmy Carter's commitment to arms reduction and the SALT II treaty, the JCS and Congress were hesitant to rush into further arms control agreements with the Russians in view of what had transpired between the two countries in the past. Arms control was integrally linked with each side's defense expenditures. A failure to negotiate arms control treaties required each side to spend more and more on costly nuclear weapons systems in order to maintain a strategic balance. The U.S. had held the clear lead in the balance in 1964, with more modern nuclear delivery systems, but later that decade the expenditures for the war in Vietnam cost the U.S. significantly. By 1976 many defense analysts argued that the Soviets had surpassed the U.S. in terms of military power, building more and better nuclear weapons, and were still continuing to out-produce the U.S. in conventional forces. While magnitude of the Russian military buildup was certainly debatable, it was widely believed that the Soviets had more than doubled their defense outlays relative to the U.S. by 1976.²⁵

By the 1970s the increase in Soviet military strength, combined with the price of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, had led the Nixon and Ford administrations to take the initiative on arms control with the Soviets. By 1972, in the SALT I treaty, the U.S. and Soviets had agreed to two different types of arms control. First, under the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty, each side was allowed only one site for these anti-ballistic missile installations. Second, the treaty known as the "Interim Agreement" limited the number of nuclear delivery systems for each side. While the ABM treaty had generally been heralded as a success, the

²⁵ Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon*, 147-149.

Interim Agreement was criticized by many in Congress because it allowed the Soviets to field a greater number of land-based missiles.²⁶

In response to the disagreements about SALT I, the Ford Administration negotiated the Vladivostok accords in 1974, which limited each side to 2,400 strategic launchers—ICBMs (Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles), SLBMs (Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles), or bombers—for nuclear weapons. The only exception to how the sides could distribute their arsenals was that the number of land-based missiles could not go above the number from in 1972 Interim Agreement. This left the Soviets with a greater number of land-based missiles while allowing the U.S. to have many more strategic bombers. The accords also restricted each side to 1,320 Multiple Independently-targeted Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) weapons. These were considered particularly deadly because a MIRV missile carried several nuclear warheads capable of hitting different targets while still counting as only one delivery system under the agreements. In the 1970s, the U.S. clearly appeared to have a more advanced program for MIRV missiles, so the rather high ceiling on these weapons was seen as advantageous to the Americans.²⁷

Two major issues remained unresolved as a result of the Vladivostok accords. First, the status of newest Soviet bomber, dubbed the “Backfire,” remained undecided. The Soviets argued that the plane should not count as a strategic delivery platform because it lacked intercontinental range and its primary mission was support of the Russian navy. The JCS argued that the plane was capable of carrying nuclear bombs and cruise missiles and if

²⁶ Blechman, “Memo to Eizenstat on SALT II, 20 Aug 1976,” JCL, 1-2.

²⁷ For specific provisions of the accords, see *Ibid.*, 3. For details on MIRVs, see Bishop and Drury, eds., *The Encyclopedia of World Military Weapons*, 25.

refueled in the air could strike targets anywhere in the United States.²⁸ Since most of the U.S. continental air-defense had been dismantled in the early 1970s, the JCS deemed any significant deployment of the Soviet bombers as disruptive to the strategic balance.²⁹ The second issue was the status of cruise missiles according to the treaty. Since the U.S. was far ahead of the Soviets in terms of cruise missile technology, the Russians argued for heavy restrictions on cruise missiles, while the Americans fought for fewer restrictions. The interim decision that missiles with a range over six-hundred kilometers should count toward the nation's total number of strategic delivery kept open the controversy. The Soviets felt that this must apply to cruise missiles while the U.S. argued that it only limited much larger (and yet undeveloped) air-launched ballistic missiles. The Chiefs vehemently opposed such a short-range limit for cruise missiles, deeming it totally advantageous to the Soviets. Most American population centers were within six-hundred kilometers of the seaboard and therefore more vulnerable to sea and air attack by such short range missiles.³⁰

Besides the controversy over SALT I and the Vladivostok accords, several other issues endangered JCS support for any further arms control measures. First, the JCS pointed out was that Soviet MIRV technology was ahead of schedule and posed a grave threat to the U.S. strategic deterrent. In 1975, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger revealed that the Russians had deployed at least sixty new MIRV missiles ahead of schedule and that these

²⁸ Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon*, 143-144.

²⁹ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy Vol. XII*, 272-273. The JCS calculated that additional AWACS procurement, combined with capabilities of the new F-15 interceptor, could counter up to 100 Backfires. For this reason the Chiefs strongly favored the Backfire being explicitly limited by any SALT proposal.

³⁰ Blechman, "Memo to Eizenstat on SALT II, 20 Aug 1976," JCL, 5.

weapons demonstrated a “reasonable degree of accuracy” for attacking U.S. missile silos.³¹ Such a capability from the massive Soviet ICBM force was extremely disconcerting. At the end of the Ford Administration, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated that “before the mid-1980s the Soviets could possibly have the capability, with a small fraction of their ICBMs, to destroy the bulk” of U.S. land-based missiles.³²

The second major issue with arms control was the fact that Soviet technology in other areas appeared to be erasing the U.S. advantage. This remained true throughout Carter’s term. Initially, the director of the Pentagon Joint Staff revealed that Soviet ballistic missile submarines had begun patrolling as close as three-hundred miles off the American coast. He warned that the Soviets also had the potential to develop “depressed trajectory” SLBMs that could quickly destroy B-52 bombers before they could leave their bases. This, combined with the threat of MIRVs to U.S. land-based missiles, gave potential for two-thirds of the U.S. deterrent to be destroyed in a first strike.³³ The Russians deployed new “third generation” ballistic missiles, and, in late 1977, Harold Brown publicly admitted that the Soviets were then in the process of deploying four new types of ICBMs. These “fourth generation” missiles appeared “almost uniformly first class in terms of their accuracy and payload.”³⁴ By 1979, the Soviets had developed and tested Anti-Satellite Weapons ahead of the U.S. and, in the first six months of 1980, had deployed 200 to 300 more new missiles than the U.S. predicted was possible. There was also information that indicated that the Russians

³¹ John W. Finney, "U.S. Says Russians Now Have Deployed 60 MIRV Missiles," *New York Times*, June 21, 1975, 1 and 8.

³² Hedrick Smith, "Shift in U.S. Arms Stance," *New York Times*, April 5, 1977, 1.

³³ LTG Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 187-188.

³⁴ George C. Wilson, "Brown Cites Discovery of New Soviet ICBMs," *Washington Post*, September 16, 1977, A12.

had tested long-range cruise missiles.³⁵ Given these trends, David Jones clearly enunciated the concerns of the JCS when he stated that, “The span of time in which SALT I has been in force has been a period of rapid, unmistakable progress in the growth and capabilities of the Soviet strategic arsenal.”³⁶

A final issue which clouded U.S.-Soviet arms control was the perception that the Soviets were already cheating on previous agreements. A CIA report detailed extensive Soviet deception efforts during the SALT I negotiations.³⁷ An example was the position of the Russian SS-19 missile in the ongoing arms negotiations. The Soviets consistently refused to divulge the capabilities of the missiles, leaving the U.S. guess at those capabilities, and then refusing to confirm or deny the American estimates.³⁸ The Russians also demanded the right to conceal telemetry information about all of their missiles in order to make it impossible for the U.S. to judge Soviet accuracy.³⁹ Finally, in violation of the SALT I agreement, intelligence sources indicated that the Soviets were continuing to keep older ICBMs, rather than dismantle them as they phased in newer missiles.⁴⁰ This perception of Soviet chicanery made the JCS and Congress dubious about arms control.

³⁵ For anti-satellite development and new missiles, see George C. Wilson, "Brown Cites Risk for U.S., Soviets in Third World Conflicts," *Washington Post*, January 2, 1979, A12. For long-range cruise missile tests, see HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 527.

³⁶ GEN David C. Jones, "Statement of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on SALT II, July 11, 1979," p. 3, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 36, Folder: Serial X's [5/79-9/79], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. Hereafter cited as Jones, "Statement of the JCS to the SFRC," JCL.

³⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Soviet Negotiating Deceptions in SALT I, 1978," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 36, Folder: Serial X's [9/77-8/78], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

³⁸ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "The SS19 Loophole," *Washington Post*, July 27, 1979, A19.

³⁹ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 116.

⁴⁰ Evans and Novak, "A Pattern of Selective Cheating," *Washington Post*, October 3, 1979, A23.

Unilateral Disarmament?: The Genesis of Carter's SALT II Proposal

As with most of his defense and foreign policy, Carter had begun to formulate his ideas concerning SALT II before he assumed office. The assessments of Art Wood of the Brookings Institution had particular influence on Carter's pre-presidential views. Wood asserted that the capabilities of the Russian nuclear arsenal were grossly overstated by the Pentagon and that in fact none of their 2,400 missiles were truly MIRV capable. He emphasized that force levels on both sides were so large as to constitute tremendous "overkill." According to Wood, even one-third of the U.S. strategic arsenal could destroy the entire Soviet Union's industrial capacity.⁴¹ Carter seized upon this theme in his Princeton address, calling for "prompt action" to keep the Vladivostok accords from becoming a "charade" and vowed that his taking office was "the time for bold initiative . . . to offer an incentive to both sides to reduce the maddening arms race."⁴² Jimmy Carter's proposal to reduce the U.S. strategic arsenal to 200 missiles in his first meeting with the JCS reflected his belief in the "overkill" thesis.

Soon after his initial meeting with the JCS, Carter again called on the Chiefs as a body and arms control again featured prominently in the discussion. General Brown emphasized the wariness of the JCS, stating that "the unfavorable trend between U.S. and Soviet strategic nuclear forces" was of "grave concern and will continue to worsen until the early 1980s" when new U.S. systems such as the B-1 bomber and MX missile would restore the balance.

⁴¹ Eizenstat, "Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Subject: Notes on Visit to Brookings Institution on January 28, 1975," JCL, 10.

⁴² Eizenstat, "Notes on Princeton Address," JCL, 5.

Carter pressed the JCS for detailed information on the strategic balance, but remained firm in his desire to move boldly forward with a “deep cuts” proposal for the Soviets.⁴³

Upon taking office, Carter ambitiously called for talks with the Soviets within three months. He stated that he saw the negotiations with the Soviets advancing in two stages: (1) “rapid ratification” of SALT II, the (2) a subsequent agreement which would result in a “much more substantive reduction in atomic weapons as the first step to complete elimination in the future.” When questioned at a press conference as to the difficulties associated with the Backfire bomber and cruise missiles in the previous negotiations, Carter dismissed the problems: “I would not let those two items stand in the way of some agreement.”⁴⁴ By the start of February 1977, Carter appointed Walter Slocombe, one of his campaign advisors and a former member of the NSC, as the head of a DoD task force on strategic arms limitations.⁴⁵ Clearly, Jimmy Carter intended to move full speed ahead on arms control.

Harold Brown sympathized with Carter’s ideas on rapid arms reductions and at the same time JCS concerns about moving too fast. Before even becoming Secretary of Defense he had drafted a tentative proposal for SALT II. Brown proposed reducing the Vladivostok accord weapons ceilings by 10 percent. Additionally, he proposed trading half of the Soviet “heavy” ICBMs for an agreement to limit the range of the American Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM). The second half of the proposal was particularly contentious. The JCS had long resisted any move to limit the range of the ALCM, but also viewed the Soviet heavy

⁴³ Brown, “SALT Briefing to the President Elect by the JCS,” CJCS Brown Files, NARA II.

⁴⁴ Bernard Gwertzman, “Carter Looks to New Arms Talks with Russians within 3 Months,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1977, 1.

⁴⁵ “Johnson Security Adviser Chosen Army Secretary,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1977, 10.

ICBMs as the greatest threat to the strategic balance.⁴⁶ These massive missiles were initially fitted to carry a huge 25-megaton nuclear warhead, but in the early 1970s the Soviets began refitting them to accommodate up to ten smaller yield MIRVs. With the 308 heavy missiles in their arsenal allowed by treaty, by the 1980s the Soviets in theory could target each of America's 1,054 ICBM silos with up to three warheads while only launching a fraction of their total missile force.⁴⁷ Harold Brown was acutely aware of this impending threat and concentrated his initial plans for SALT II on reducing these heavy missiles.

Brown and the JCS also supported the development of a new generation of American ICBMs that would be significantly more accurate and less vulnerable to a Soviet first strike. Dubbed the MX, this new missile was slated to replace the existing stock of Minuteman ICBMs, but was also extremely costly.⁴⁸ The Ford administration had touted the MX, calling it the "heart of the ICBM modernization plan."⁴⁹ The mode of basing for the new missile remained undecided as Carter took office, and Harold Brown opted to slow down development of the missile in order to study the best method for deployment.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 97.

⁴⁷ For view of the heavy ICBMs as a threat and number and capability of Soviet missiles see United States Department of Defense, *Report of the Secretary of Defense Harold Brown to the Congress on the FY 1982 Budget, FY 1983 Authorization Request, and FY 1982-1986 Defense Programs, January 19, 1981* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 45; Bishop and Drury, eds., *The Encyclopedia of World Military Weapons*, 21-24. The dispersion pattern of the Soviet MIRVs, observed by U.S. intelligence, was too wide to be useful for targeting a single city but too narrow for targeting multiple cities. This led to the American deduction that the MIRV warheads were being constructed specifically to target the dispersed Minuteman silos in the American Midwest. See Talbott, *Endgame*, 26-27.

⁴⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview by Trask and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 7. Brzezinski felt that Brown, however, was less supportive of the MX than himself, Charles Duncan, and David Jones at meetings of the NSC. Brown, however, seems supportive of the system in his memoirs. See Brown, *Thinking About National Security*, 66-71.

⁴⁹ *FY78 Annual DoD Report*, 125.

⁵⁰ *FY79 Annual DoD Report*, 109.

While Harold Brown remained sympathetic to JCS concerns, Carter and his White House staff remained much more skeptical. In June of 1977, the president enthusiastically commented on the work of a junior NSC staffer which downplayed the Soviet nuclear buildup.⁵¹ A July 1977 paper from Brzezinski reported that the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff felt that U.S. ICBM casualties would be “essentially zero losses under all Soviet attack conditions.”⁵² Later, Brzezinski indicated that a “panel of distinguished scientists” argued in November of 1977 that the current stock of U.S. Minutemen ICBMs would not be “significantly vulnerable” until the late 1980s.⁵³ Carter apparently accepted these interpretations and, even as late as January of 1979, pressed Harold Brown to consider the “minimum deterrence” posture of reducing the U.S. arsenal to a few hundred weapons. It was not until Harold Brown took a forceful stand on the issue that Carter abandoned his hope of “minimum deterrence.”⁵⁴

Although abandoning the idea of minimum deterrence, Carter did not alter his idea of proposing significant arms reductions to the Russians early in his term. Contrary to his historical portrayal as a hardliner, Brzezinski was actually in full agreement with Carter on this point, giving a remarkable degree of unity to this decision among the civilians in the

⁵¹ Brzezinski, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #18," JCL. The president's reception to the weekly report, by William Hyland of the NSC staff, is gauged from his favorable marginal comments on the report.

⁵² Brzezinski, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #22," JCL, 4.

⁵³ Brzezinski, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #36," JCL.

⁵⁴ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Unheeded Warnings About the ICBMs," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1979, A23. Evans and Novak quoted Brown as telling Carter that such a reduction in the U.S. nuclear arsenal would have “disastrous consequences.” Pentagon spokesman Thomas R. Ross later issued a denial regarding the wording of this statement, but did not deny that Brown did have such concerns. See George C. Wilson, "Pentagon to Push MX Missile Work," *Washington Post*, January 13, 1979, A7.

administration.⁵⁵ The president appointed Paul Warnke to head the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and be the chief American negotiator for SALT II. Many in the military, most vocally John Singlaub, felt that Warnke was a poor choice because he had advocated for many years what some considered to be unilateral American nuclear disarmament.⁵⁶ The Senate narrowly confirmed Warnke to the positions, indicating that any negotiations reached under his watch would be even more intensely scrutinized than usual.⁵⁷ From early in Carter's term it must have been obvious that administration civilians were firmly united in their desire to proceed quickly with negotiating deep cuts in nuclear arms.

Damage Control: General Rowny and the Role of the JCS in Early SALT Proposals

Given the civil-military distrust in the president's first meeting with the JCS prior to his inauguration, George Brown procured an unauthorized copy of Harold Brown's tentative SALT II proposal before the new administration even took office. CJCS Brown handed the proposal over to Lieutenant General Edward Rowny, who was going to serve as the JCS representative to the SALT II negotiations. Rowny looked over the proposal and reported back to the chairman that he found it "bold, reasonable, and fair" and a "major improvement" over the Vladivostok accords. George Brown accepted Rowny's judgment.⁵⁸ The JCS thus tentatively endorsed Harold Brown's plan even as the administration took office.

Congress also remained vigilant on the SALT II process from the outset. During January 1977 hearings on the FY78 defense budget, Senator John Tower warned Harold Brown that

⁵⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Memorandum to Stuart Eizenstat, Subject: Suggested Speech for Governor Carter, September, 1976," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Pre-Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Issues Office-Stuart Eizenstat, Box 17, Folder: Foreign Policy, 9/76, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁵⁶ Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 411.

⁵⁷ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 100-101.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

“public statements made by the new administration concerning SALT have appeared to some to be a little long on eagerness and a little short on caution.”⁵⁹ Congress continued to be a key player throughout the SALT negotiations, but in a different way from the Panama Canal treaties. Whereas during the Panama Canal negotiations Carter and his congressional liaison staff had kept key Senators informed at all stages of the negotiating process, they did not follow the same approach with SALT II. The result was that Congress increasingly pried into Carter’s handling of the process and tried to entice the JCS into open opposition to Carter’s policies. This happened only over time, however, and for most of 1977 and 1978 Congress remained relatively uninvolved and the Carter administration sought little advice or support from the legislature.

The civil-military accord over the initial agreements only went so far, however. Rowny remained the primary JCS representative throughout the negotiation of SALT II. Reflecting on the initial stages of policy development, the general remembered first noticing that arms control would take a different turn at an NSC meeting in February of 1977 where Cyrus Vance submitted two options for SALT II. “None of us in the Pentagon had been consulted,” Rowny recalled. As the meeting progressed, Rowny objected strongly to Vance’s proposals but was overruled.⁶⁰

Carter was aware of the growing military opposition to his arms control plans. A memo from Brzezinski in early March of 1977 indicated that the White House made a deliberate effort to separate Harold Brown from the JCS. The National Security Advisor proposed three possible SALT II options, noting that on the first two Harold Brown and the JCS stood

⁵⁹ SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 7.

⁶⁰ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 103.

firm on demanding that the Backfire bomber be included in the Soviet weapons count but that on the third option “only the JCS” insisted on “counting the Backfire in the aggregate.”⁶¹ Carter thus realized early on that the Chiefs viewed the Backfire bomber as a significant issue and knew that they objected strongly to any course of action that would not address it.

Despite objections from Rowny and the JCS, Carter wanted to move boldly and quickly with his proposals to the Soviets. By March of 1977 he decided, with pressure from Brzezinski and congressional advice only from Senator Scoop Jackson, to propose a limit of 1,800 to 2,000 strategic systems for each side with a limit of 150 heavy missiles and limits on cruise missiles with a range in excess of 2,500 kilometers. Backfire was not included in the deal pending Soviet assurances that its capabilities not be improved. A second proposal, known as the “fallback,” was to put off the issue of cruise missiles and the Backfire until later.⁶² This first proposal mirrored almost exactly Harold Brown’s initial proposal for SALT II, so Carter did in fact heed the advice of his Secretary of Defense. However, it was not Brown who led the negotiations with the Soviets. Instead, Cyrus Vance spearheaded the effort, with Carter sending him twice before mid-September of 1977 to meet with Soviet Foreign Minister Andre Gromyko.⁶³

The first meeting turned into a fiasco. Rowny, reflecting later on the incident, wrote that he was “astonished” as Vance opened the negotiations by submitting the American “fallback” proposal as the first of two options. Apparently, Vance had at the last minute

⁶¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Memorandum to the President: Weekly National Security Report #4, March 11, 1977," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Subject File, Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President 16-30: 6/77-9/77, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁶² Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 7, March 23, 1977," Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁶³ James T. Wooten, "Carter Says Vance Will Meet Gromyko," *New York Times*, May 29, 1977, 4.

developed fears that the Soviets might find Harold Brown's proposal too bold. Gromyko responded offensively, frothing at the mouth and swearing in Russian as he lambasted both proposals as American ploys. Vance sat through the entire tirade without responding, rejecting a passed note from Rowny urging him to respond to the attack. "It was bad enough he served up our fallback position on a silver platter," Rowny recalled. "Now it appeared he was being verbally assaulted for presenting such a gift."⁶⁴ The Russians derailed Carter's ideas for "deep cuts" by rejecting both offers.

In May of 1977 Vance and Gromyko met again and established a three-tier plan for concluding SALT II. The first part of the plan stuck to Harold Brown's 10 percent reduction from the Vladivostok ceilings. The second tier proposed yet undecided limits on the Backfire bomber and the ALCM. The third tier agreement was to be a joint statement of each country's intent for an even more comprehensive SALT III agreement. By September of 1977 the Carter administration had finalized this three-tier approach, effectively replacing the framework of the Vladivostok accords.⁶⁵

The modified three-tier approach carried with it the potential for strong civil-military disagreement. No definitive administration position had emerged on the issues of Soviet heavy missiles, restrictions on the ALCM, or including the Backfire bomber. These issues, of primary importance to the JCS, seemed almost completely in the hands of the American negotiating team in Geneva—and Rowny reported that Vance had not taken a hard-line on any of them. Beyond this, many of the civilians in the State Department and in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency blamed Harold Brown for the failure of first stages of the

⁶⁴ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 105.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

negotiations because of the ambitious nature of his proposal. As a result, they kept “Brown’s boys,” including the JCS, out of the phases of the negotiations leading to the three-tier plan.⁶⁶

The word that Vance was being weak on the U.S. SALT position had definitely made it back to Congress by late 1977. In November, Brzezinski authored a memo to Carter stating that he was “concerned with the continuing attacks” on the administration’s SALT II position. Senator Robert Byrd worried Brzezinski that SALT was going to be a more difficult ratification contest than the Panama Canal treaty. Brzezinski recommended that Carter begin a strong lobby effort during the time Congress was out of session, but that the president not meet with key leaders—particularly Scoop Jackson. Although Carter had taken the senator’s initial advice on the SALT proposals, Jackson felt that Vance had given up too much too early at Geneva and was now opposing the treaty. “Since we are not planning on changing our SALT position,” Brzezinski wrote, any meeting with the influential Jackson “would do no good.”⁶⁷

Although the early stages of the SALT II negotiations involved little input from Congress and most of Rowny’s advice was rejected, Carter did keep in contact with the Chairman of the JCS. Carter met in early February and March with George Brown at the White House and twice in September as Cyrus Vance’s negotiations proceeded in Geneva.⁶⁸ Carter was very concerned with an early NSC weekly report which indicated that the JCS leaked objections to his arms control process to the press, calling a meeting with General Brown the next day.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Talbott, *Endgame*, 85.

⁶⁷ Brzezinski, “Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #36,” JCL, 2.

⁶⁸ George S. Brown, “Daily Logs, 1 Jan 77 to 30 Jun 77 and 1 Jul 77 to 28 Dec 77,” CJCS Brown Files, Box 64, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁶⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Memorandum to the President, Subject: Weekly National Security Report, February 19, 1977,” p. 5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski

Brzezinski acknowledged in his memoirs that he was impressed by Carter's ability to "massage" the JCS and alleviate their tensions during the SALT process.⁷⁰ While it cannot be confirmed from the record, Carter's claim in his OSD oral history that "every item put forward in nuclear arms negotiations leading to SALT II was directly approved by the Joint Chiefs," can hardly be judged disingenuous.⁷¹ The civil-military conflict over SALT resulted not so much from a lack of consultation between Carter and his military advisors, but rather from the manner in which the American negotiating team finished its business in Geneva.

Endgame: The Final Agreements Leading to SALT II

Negotiations in Geneva dragged on into 1978, much longer than Carter had hoped. The administration became increasingly eager to produce a final treaty, especially once a very effective Soviet propaganda campaign began to circulate in the West through the Russian newspaper *Pravda*.⁷² In Rowny's assessment, as the negotiations wore on the Russians interpreted American "flexibility and over eagerness as signs of weakness" and responded "with stiffer and more unreasonable demands that more often than not were met with acquiescence."⁷³

The issues of the Backfire bomber and the ALCM remained unresolved through 1978, and two other major issues also arose which greatly concerned the JCS. First, the American negotiating team jettisoned demands for a reduction in Soviet heavy missiles, the cornerstone

Collection, Subject File, Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President 16-30: 6/77-9/77, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

⁷⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 160.

⁷¹ Jimmy Carter, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 3.

⁷² Rowny, *One to Tango*, 113.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 106.

of Harold Brown's initial proposal. The Soviets refused to accept the American classification system of heavy, medium, and light ICBMs and called for only two classes— heavy and light. This was very advantageous to the Soviets because America possessed nothing akin to the Russian heavy missiles and would therefore have to classify the medium weight MX as a “heavy” type ICBM. In response to the Soviet stalling, Vance offered a “compromise” proposal that allowed the Soviets to keep all 308 of their heavy missiles.⁷⁴ The second major issue was that of encryption of missile telemetry information which the U.S. used to measure the accuracy and carrying capacity of Russian missiles. The Soviets demanded the right to encrypt all information associated with their missile tests. The JCS, through Rowny, lodged a strenuous objection to this, telling Vance that reading Russian missile telemetry was vital to national security. Vance forwarded the issue to the NSC, which responded, in Rowny's words with “a masterpiece of bureaucratic fence-straddling.” The NSC replied that the Russians could encrypt half of their missile telemetry, or five out of ten performance measures. The Soviets consequently chose to disclose five measurements which the U.S. could already read by other means. The remaining five, which the U.S. had no way to measure, could be encrypted.⁷⁵ As the Carter team in Geneva negotiated away Harold Brown's initial proposal, the Pentagon grew increasingly concerned with the results of the negotiations.

Harold Brown conveyed his concern to Carter in July of 1978. In response, the NSC met with Brown and Charles Duncan, asking them how they felt a “more positive Congressional

⁷⁴ Ibid. The U.S. planned to have only light and medium ICBMs in their arsenal. The existing Minuteman III ICBM was classified as a “light” missile while the planned MX would fall into the “medium” category. The Russians had in service the SS-11 (roughly equivalent to the U.S. Minuteman), SS-17s and SS-19s (seen as MX equivalents), and the monstrous SS-18 (equivalent to about six Minutemen or three MX missiles).

⁷⁵ Ibid., 116.

climate for SALT” might be developed. Brown in particular indicated that he “welcomed this initiative” and emphasized that he saw the “overall size” of the defense budget as being critically linked to the success of SALT. Brown pleaded that it would be “extremely helpful” if Carter “could indicate at least privately” his preferences regarding the MX missile and other strategic weapons systems. Such information, said the Secretary of Defense, would enable him to “better control the Defense bureaucracy and project a more orderly and systematic image to enhance confidence” at the Pentagon.⁷⁶

Following an upsurge in Carter’s popularity after the Camp David Accords in September of 1978, the administration began a concerted public relations effort to gain conservative support for SALT II. Carter replaced the liberal Paul Warnke with retired Army general George Seignious as the head of the ACDA in October of 1978. Carter’s move was widely seen as an effort to gain conservative senators and military support for SALT II.⁷⁷

With Seignious in the lead, Carter ordered a strong push to conclude the negotiations for SALT by November of 1978. The negotiations lasted into December, with the Soviet delegation standing firm on demands that the Backfire bomber not be counted in weapons totals and that the U.S. restrict production of both conventional and nuclear cruise missiles. The U.S. delegation hoped to be home in time for Christmas and looked to broker some kind of deal on the matter.⁷⁸ In response, Carter convened the JCS where David Jones broached the issue of higher defense budgets in FY80 and FY81 to offset agreeing to so many Soviet stipulations within SALT. Carter, as indicated in the chapter opening, rebuffed this idea and

⁷⁶ Aaron, “Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #68,” JCL, 1-2.

⁷⁷ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 114.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

then took JCS deference as tacit support for agreeing to the Russian proposals.⁷⁹ Soon after his meeting with the JCS, Carter issued a statement to the press that there remained some “minor but important issues” but that a SALT II treaty was to be concluded without delay.⁸⁰ The president assured listeners on television that the Russians had “negotiated in good faith” and that they had not “hardened” their position on the treaty.⁸¹

As the treaty was still being finalized, the administration opened a second major media campaign to gain support for SALT. Brzezinski released reports that he felt that the treaty was important enough to be considered without the traditional détente “linkage” argument tying it to other aspects of U.S.-Soviet relations.⁸² Carter promised that even if SALT was not ratified he was prepared to “willingly match” restraint offered by the Russians.⁸³ Harold Brown loyally “took up the baton” to defend the administration position, speaking in support of the treaty in several forums and warning that a rejection would result in an “open invitation” for each side to conceal nuclear arms from the other.⁸⁴ Jody Powell issued what reporters termed a “carefully deliberated statement” about a new Russian tactical nuclear missile which the administration claimed made arms control more urgent.⁸⁵ The

⁷⁹ "Memorandum for the Record, Subject: Summary of the Meeting between the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on SALT Two and the FY80 Defense Program," JCL.

⁸⁰ Don Oberdorfer, "Carter Explains SALT Delay," *Washington Post*, January 14, 1979, A8.

⁸¹ "A Transcript of President's News Conference on Foreign and Domestic Matters," *New York Times*, January 27, 1979, A6.

⁸² Walsh, "Carter Seeks to Sway GOP on SALT II," *Washington Post*, February 6, 1979, A3.

⁸³ Terence Smith, "Carter to Act If Arms Treaty Fails," *New York Times*, February 24, 1979, A4.

⁸⁴ Dan Morgan, "Brown Cites Security Factors in Administration SALT Drive," *Washington Post*, April 6, 1979, A1, A28; George C. Wilson and Robert Kaiser, "Brown Says Time Needed to Adequately Verify SALT Compliance," *Washington Post*, April 18, 1979, A16; George C. Wilson, "Defense Chief Says SALT Would Prevent Cheating," *Washington Post*, April 28, 1979, A20.

⁸⁵ Edward Walsh, "Carter Bids for Arms Plan Support," *Washington Post*, April 25, 1979, A2.

administration also urged NATO countries to support the treaty publicly while the FY80 defense budget hearings were underway.⁸⁶ The *Washington Post* called the administration's efforts to sell the yet to be finalized treaty indicative of "a very difficult time" with Congress.⁸⁷

Despite the public relations blitz, Harold Brown's fear of a congressional backlash to the events in Geneva was realistic. Congress increasingly resisted the SALT process as it wore on in secrecy and Carter neglected to consult key senators and congressmen. Charlie Wilson (D-TX) summarized congressional feelings best when he railed that the administration was "trying to sell the SALT treaty as if it was already a fact and that everything had been agreed to" when in fact many outstanding issues still remained.⁸⁸

As the treaty neared completion in Vienna, Rowny informed the JCS that Cyrus Vance had made "too many concessions" and that SALT II would "undercut" national security. He asked to resign from the negotiating team in Geneva and retire from the Army. David Jones replied that the JCS agreed with Rowny's assessment but that it would "prove embarrassing to the president" if the general left while the treaty was still being negotiated. Jones asked Rowny to remain until the end, continue his "mission of damage limitation," and quietly leave at the end if the treaty was still not satisfactory. Rowny reluctantly agreed, informing the Secretary of State that if he did resign he would testify against the treaty before Congress if called to do so.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Michael Getler, "NATO Defense Ministers in Brussels Offer Strong Support for SALT Pact," *Washington Post*, May 16, 1979, A20; John Lawton, "Turkey Says U.S. Use of U-2s Depends on Soviet Approval," *Washington Post*, May 16, 1979, A20.

⁸⁷ "SALT Talk," *Washington Post*, April 6, 1979, A14.

⁸⁸ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 787, 920.

⁸⁹ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 114.

After a final round of negotiations, SALT II was scheduled to be signed on June 14, 1979. Rowny excused himself from the festivities and cabled his resignation to CJCS, saying he could not in good conscience support the treaty. He was excused from going to Vienna for the signing with Carter and Brezhnev, but was informed eight hours after he sent his cable that his retirement date was going to be at the end of the month. “It was Washington’s way of expressing displeasure,” Rowny recalled, “I was given two weeks to bring to a close a U.S. Army career of 38 years.”⁹⁰ Shaken by Rowny’s rebuff, Carter ordered the JCS to report to the White House for what a presidential aide termed a “hand holding session” just before boarding his helicopter for Andrews Air Force Base.⁹¹

As Carter left Andrews for Vienna to sign the treaty, Scoop Jackson spoke to an audience of conservative democrats, likening Carter’s trip to Neville Chamberlain’s journey to Munich. The president was so angered by the affront from his fellow Democrat that he refused to use an umbrella—one of the most remembered pieces of Chamberlain’s attire—despite the pouring rain when he arrived in Vienna.⁹² Carter wanted not only to sign SALT, but also to engage Brezhnev on other matters. The Soviet leader had other ideas, however, registering objections to restrictions on the production rates of the Backfire at the last minute. Carter responded by demanding that verbal Soviet agreements on the Backfire be codified in writing. The Soviet Premier refused, but Carter held firm on this issue as it was of great

⁹⁰ Ibid., 121.

⁹¹ Talbott, *Endgame*, 6.

⁹² Ibid., 5, 7.

importance to the JCS. Finally, Brezhnev agreed to provide the agreement in writing, and on the strength of that promise Carter signed the treaty on June 18, 1979.⁹³

Changes Unacceptable: Carter Presents SALT II to the Senate

Rowny remembered wrongly in his memoirs that Jimmy Carter expected to “return triumphantly” from the signing of SALT and was shocked by the level of congressional opposition to the treaty.⁹⁴ In fact, the FY80 Defense Budget testimony from early 1979 demonstrated to the administration that SALT II was going to be a tough sell. The military testimony during the FY80 defense budget was often redirected towards SALT. Although not making many comments about the treaty itself, the military often responded to questions about SALT II by testifying that higher defense expenditures were necessary for FY80 and beyond.

David Jones’ opening testimony outlined the JCS position well. When questioned by Senator Tower whether the SALT treaty as of January 1979 was equitable, Jones responded that the JCS had reserved “judgment . . . until there is a treaty in hand.” He outlined three “conditions:” First, it must be fair and equitable; Second, it must allow the U.S. to pass technology to its allies; Third, it must provide “essential equivalence” between the U.S. and Russian strategic forces.⁹⁵

Air Force Chief Lew Allen and Navy CNO Thomas Hayward expressed skepticism about SALT throughout their FY80 defense budget testimony. Allen told Congresswoman

⁹³ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 122. Rowny contended that Brezhnev’s letter was deceitful, promising only to not increase Soviet production of the Backfire bomber beyond their “current production levels.” Carter, however, forced the Soviet premier to clarify the production levels as 30 per year—the JCS stipulation for Russian production—during secret meetings prior to the signing. Thus, Brezhnev was perhaps less dishonest and Carter less gullible than Rowny felt at the time. See Talbott, *Endgame*, 14-15.

⁹⁴ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 122.

⁹⁵ SASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 921.

Marjorie Holt (R-MD) that limits being considered within the treaty would still allow the Russians to continue programs “that put our ICBMs in jeopardy” while not doing “enough in relieving the threat” and that there were still “serious matters” needing to be resolved. He agreed that Soviet nuclear forces were postured to fight and win a nuclear war with the U.S. His skepticism of the treaty was so strong that Congressman Charles Wilson (D-CA), cautioned Allen that he might be “chastised” by his civilian superiors for his testimony.⁹⁶ Admiral Hayward was less skeptical, but indicated that he saw problems with the treaty and that he hoped the JCS position was going to be supported in the final rounds of the treaty negotiations.⁹⁷ Even David Jones stated that the Backfire bomber, if its numbers were not constrained by the SALT treaty, could provide the Soviets with an equivalent megatonnage of 1,300 nuclear missiles and that JCS advice on restrictions for the bomber had been rejected.⁹⁸ The lack of restrictions on the Backfire, Jones stated, necessitated greater defense procurement including additional F-15 fighters and E-3 AWACS aircraft.⁹⁹ The JCS thus remained guarded in their opinions of the unfinished treaty in early 1979.

Harold Brown’s statements on SALT during the FY80 defense budget hearings generally agreed with the JCS. He emphasized that SALT II would “not result in any reduction in resources that we allocate to strategic forces during the life of the treaty.” He called for greater defense expenditures, but argued that the cost might be even greater without

⁹⁶ For “jeopardy,” failing to relieve the threat, and “chastised” see HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 776. For “serious matters” see *Ibid.*, 787. For Soviets being postured to fight and win a nuclear war see *Ibid.*, 790.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 920.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 455.

⁹⁹ HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 527.

ratification.¹⁰⁰ “Even with SALT,” Brown stated, “we will need to and we will be permitted to expand our strategic nuclear efforts.”¹⁰¹ He assured the Senate that all of the planned U.S. strategic weapons were allowed under SALT II.¹⁰²

Throughout the FY80 defense budget testimony, verification of SALT provisions were also a major issue. Several congressmen questioned if the “loss” of Iran and the associated monitoring stations along the Russian border made the treaty “unverifiable.”¹⁰³ Both Harold Brown and Stansfield Turner publicly acknowledged this problem.¹⁰⁴

Finally, one of the most important and contentious provisions in the final SALT II treaty was Article XVIII which declared that each side could propose amendments. This was a special provision inserted to assure Senate ratification. These modifications had to be approved by both sides. Amendments to certain controversial issues—such as the Backfire bomber and cruise missile portions of the treaty—were already being dubbed “killer amendments” because of the likelihood of Soviet rejection.¹⁰⁵

The FY80 defense budget testimony, combined with the recognized potential for “killer amendments,” certainly warned Carter of controversy to come. What became more surprising was the contrast between his earlier approach to the Panama Canal treaties and the manner in which he pursued ratification of this agreement. While Carter had made extensive

¹⁰⁰ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 500.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰² SASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 55, 79.

¹⁰³ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 543; HAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 597-598; Drew Middleton, “Loss of Devices Watching Soviet a Serious Casualty of Iran Crisis,” *New York Times*, January 18, 1979, A14.

¹⁰⁴ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “How the Hard Sell on SALT Backfired,” *Washington Post*, April 30, 1979, A21.

¹⁰⁵ Talbott, *Endgame*, 15.

efforts to consult key senators during the critical stages of the Panama Canal treaties, he made no such effort during the final stages of the SALT II negotiations. He took personal offense at Congress not approving pro-forma his hard-negotiated treaty. Even before the administration finished the treaty, twelve Republican senators held a press conference and demanded that the president address their concerns.¹⁰⁶ “He acts as if we are calling him a liar just because we ask questions,” reported one. Others agreed, saying that the president was treating the upcoming debate on SALT “like an anti-Carter plot.”¹⁰⁷ For Jimmy Carter, given his emotional attachment to arms control, the effort to ratify SALT was the climactic battle in his war with Congress over defense policy and foreign relations.

Upon returning from Vienna, the president sent the treaty to the Senate with the message that any modification of the treaty was “unacceptable.”¹⁰⁸ This bold stance also flew in the face of the long process of compromise and consultation that the president has pursued during the Panama negotiations. As Carter made his defiant announcement to the Senate, some of the same senators who had allied with the military during the FY79 and FY80 defense budget hearings began to line up against SALT.

The administration opened its formal defense of SALT II on July 9, 1979. Harold Brown and Cyrus Vance adopted what the press termed a “bare bones” defense of SALT. Both admitted that the treaty would not guarantee “essential equivalence” with the Soviets and that billions must still be spent on making new weapons, but that without the treaty the U.S. defense would become even more expensive. Backing down from Carter’s hardline

¹⁰⁶ Robert Kaiser, “12 GOP Senators Air Reservations on SALT II Pact,” *Washington Post*, April 6, 1979, A1, A28.

¹⁰⁷ Evans and Novak, “How the Hard Sell on SALT Backfired,” *Washington Post*, April 30, 1979, A21.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Kaiser, “SALT Hearings under Way,” *Washington Post*, July 10, 1979, A1.

presentation to the Senate, Vance urged no amendments to the treaty, but acceded that “President Carter will have to accept” whatever the Senate does. Senators Howard Baker, Jr. (R-TN) and Richard Lugar (R-IN) grilled Brown about the superiority of the Soviets heavy ICBM force. Brown responded emotionally with a “lecture on the arithmetic of nuclear strategy” indicating that the threat from the Soviet force would exist even without the new SS-18 missile. Senator Jacob Javits (R-NY), accused Vance of making too many concessions to the Soviets. On the other side of the line, George McGovern (D-SD) confessed that he was on Carter’s side for the treaty and was bothered by too much talk of increasing defense spending.¹⁰⁹

While at first the lines seemed fairly partisan, Howard Cannon (D-NV) also stepped forward to oppose the treaty. Cannon cornered Harold Brown during the early hearings on the FY81 Defense Budget, lambasting the Secretary of Defense for supporting SALT in the face of continued Soviet “adventurism” in Iran and Afghanistan. He also attacked the administration record on defense spending, saying that administration officials had not authorized any increases in FY79 and FY80 until Congress “held their feet to the fire.”¹¹⁰ Soon other Democrats followed. Joseph Biden (D-DE) and John Glenn (D-OH) questioned Brown extensively on the allowance of the Soviets to build new missiles under the agreement.¹¹¹ Senator William Proxmire (D-WI) stated that even with SALT II he felt the U.S. would still have to spend billions more on building up its strategic arsenal.¹¹² In the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., A1, A14.

¹¹⁰ SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 32.

¹¹¹ Robert Kaiser, "Brown Defends Salt's 'New-Type' Missiles Rule," *Washington Post*, July 19, 1979, A8.

¹¹² "Proxmire Says SALT II May Cost U.S. \$100 Billion or More in New Weapons," *Washington Post*, July 6, 1979, A9.

lower chamber, Sam Stratton, Melvin Price, and most of the House Armed Services Committee attacked the treaty as lacking “any balance.”¹¹³

Scoop Jackson (D-WA) wanted to shape the debate in the Senate to his more defense-conservative leanings. Jackson pressed for the Senate Armed Services Committee to hold extensive debate on the SALT treaty during the FY81 defense budget process in order to influence the ratification fight. Normally the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Frank Church (D-ID), would be at the center of any ratification debate. Yet Jackson viewed Church and his committee as too “soft” on the Russians, fearing that the liberal George McGovern held too much sway over Church and Muskie, the other two key senators on the committee. Jackson knew that involving the Armed Services Committee intensified an already heated debate. He consulted with Chairman Stennis of the SASC and the two agreed that the more conservative committee should be the battlefield for SALT as well as the upcoming FY80 and FY81 defense budgets.¹¹⁴

The Armed Services Committee pursued the matter with a bipartisan vigor. On July 23, 1979, Harold Brown endured extensive questioning. The Secretary admitted from the outset that his FY81 defense budget projections assumed that both sides adhered to the SALT II protocol.¹¹⁵ Scoop Jackson offered the most vocal criticism, declaring that SALT II was completely disadvantageous to the United States. Barry Goldwater actually sided more with Brown, saying that he was reasonably confident from closed testimony that Soviet compliance could be verified. Chairman Stennis was cordial to Brown throughout the

¹¹³ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 861.

¹¹⁴ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 124.

¹¹⁵ SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 37

testimony. Sam Nunn, whose vote was considered critical because of its influence on other conservative Democrats, asked hard questions but did not tip his hand one way or the other.¹¹⁶

Selling SALT: Trading Fewer Nuclear Arms for More Defense Dollars

Finally, during testimony on July 25, 1979, Nunn dropped a bombshell. In what the press termed a “stroke that may have redrawn the battle lines in the SALT II debate,” Nunn declared that the Carter administration could gain his vote for the treaty by committing to increased defense spending. The Senator boldly requested \$7 billion on top of what was already slated for defense in FY80 and FY81. Beltway insiders judged that Nunn’s promise was a “substantial boost to the treaty’s prospects.” Nunn also established himself as the principle spokesman for the large number of moderate senators who were uncommitted on SALT II.¹¹⁷ Cyrus Vance accepted that there would have to be “substantial” increases in the FY81 defense budget.¹¹⁸

In large part due to Nunn’s qualified support and Vance’s acquiescence, by early August many in the Senate felt that SALT II stood a good chance of ratification if it was linked with higher defense spending. “I smell ratification,” declared one longtime Senate staffer; “I wouldn’t have said that five or six weeks ago.” According to press reports, high officials in the Carter administration felt “a sense of relief and some optimism.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Robert Kaiser, "Brown Defends SALT II before Its Critics on Senate Panel," *Washington Post*, July 24, 1979, A6.

¹¹⁷ Kaiser, "Nunn Ties Vote on SALT to More Defense Spending," *Washington Post*, July 26, 1979, A1.

¹¹⁸ Robert Kaiser, "Vance Says U.S. Will Seek Rise in '81 Arms Budget," *Washington Post*, July 31, 1979, A1.

¹¹⁹ Robert Kaiser, "SALT Prospects Enhanced by Hearings, Both Sides Feel," *Washington Post*, August 3, 1979, A1.

Vance's statements and the reported sense of relief and optimism clashed sharply with Carter's response to Nunn's offer. The president rebuffed Nunn, stating that he would never increase defense spending "just to get" votes for SALT II. He stubbornly blamed Congress for cutting defense expenditures anyway, claiming that there was no mandate for any defense increases.¹²⁰ Andrew Young, the administration's Ambassador to the United Nations, echoed Carter's position, saying that the president could "not afford" to increase defense spending at all given the tenuous state of the economy.¹²¹ The president and many of his more liberal advisors defied the military-congressional alliance.

Just as was the case with the Panama Canal Treaties, the conservative elements in Congress gained support from members of the retired military. Early in 1979, over 170 retired generals and admirals had sent the president a letter opposing SALT.¹²² Fresh from retirement, Alexander Haig testified that if he were a Senator he would "refuse to vote" on SALT II, but would not give his own opinion on the treaty.¹²³ Admirals Elmo Zumwalt and Thomas Moorer also lined up in opposition.¹²⁴ Moorer railed that SALT II proved that America had "the world's worst negotiators."¹²⁵

The most influential retired officer opposing SALT II was Edward Rowny. Although on the negotiating team for SALT for the administration, he fought to block ratification. Rowny recognized that Senate Minority Leader Howard Baker had been largely shunned by the

¹²⁰ Joanne Omang, "Carter Won't Boost Arms Outlays for SALT Votes," *Washington Post*, July 29, 1979, A16.

¹²¹ "Young Sees SALT Spending Dilemma," *Washington Post*, July 30, 1979, A3.

¹²² Drew Middleton, "Carter Warned on Russian Power," *New York Times*, January 12, 1979, A9.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Robert Kaiser, "Senators Hear Retired Brass Endorse SALT, 3 to 2," *Washington Post*, July 18, 1979, A12.

¹²⁵ Robert Kaiser, "SALT Critics Hone Their Objections," *Washington Post*, July 30, 1979, A3.

administration, despite having been one of the few Republicans who supported SALT I and the Vladivostok Accords. Also slighted were several moderate Democrats, including John Glenn (D-OH), whom Carter thought would fall in by party line when the chips were down. Recognizing this, Rowny showed his political savvy by outflanking the Carter administration and embarking upon a one-man mission to secure these senators' opposition to SALT II.¹²⁶

Rowny testified that SALT II failed to "meet minimally acceptable standards" and would "threaten [American] security for the years to come."¹²⁷ He attacked the administration, stating that the JCS alone were responsible for the treaty not being much worse and that a much better treaty was possible if the negotiating team had more closely followed military advice.¹²⁸ He called the treaty against the national interest, inequitable, and unverifiable. According to the general, the Soviet promises regarding the Backfire bomber were "worthless" and the treaty, if ratified, would weaken NATO and undermine deterrence.¹²⁹

Former Deputy Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Navy Paul Nitze surprised many by weighing in with Rowny and strongly opposing SALT II. Serving as a contemporary of Harold Brown in the LBJ Pentagon, Nitze's opinion carried clout inside the Beltway. He insisted that the Senate should add four amendments to the treaty in order to make it equitable and verifiable.¹³⁰ Nitze's dissent was very damaging because he had been a strong

¹²⁶ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 126-128; Don Oberdorfer, "Sen. Jackson Rebuked on Arms Views," *Washington Post*, June 14, 1979, A1.

¹²⁷ United States Congress, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Soviet Union, *The SALT II Treaty: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Ninety-Sixth Congress, First Session*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 537. Hereafter cited as SFRC, *Hearings on SALT II*.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 538-542.

¹³⁰ Robert Cullen, "Former Pentagon Official Suggests Changes in SALT," *Washington Post*, May 16, 1979, A20.

supporter of Carter during his presidential campaign and was a close advisor to the president on arms control.¹³¹ The elder-statesman made an impassioned plea before the Senate Foreign Relations committee that ratification of SALT would “incapacitate our minds and wills for doing the things necessary to redress the strategic balance.”¹³² Rowny’s and Nitze’s testimony and lobbying seriously imperiled the treaty.

Civilians in the Carter administration responded. Rowny maintained contact with a lawyer in the Pentagon, Harry A. Almond, who continued to feed the general information on the ongoing SALT deliberations. When the contact between the two men became public, Almond’s supervisor, supported by Harold Brown, fired Almond the same day. Almond was branded “an enemy of the president’s policy” and was told that it was “unconscionable” for him to have given any information to Rowny. The backlash against Almond’s firing was swift, led by Nitze, who, along with the Dean of Yale’s Law School, wrote letters to the editor in the *Washington Post* likening Almond’s treatment to that of dissidents in Russia.¹³³ Although Almond was never re-instated, the fallout over his firing in the press—similar to the Singlaub incident—further weakened the administration’s influence.

Just as the administration was dealing with the fallout from the Almond controversy, a major obstacle to U.S.-Soviet relations occurred. In September 1979, a Soviet “combat” brigade was revealed to be in Cuba. Though the CIA had known of the unit since the end of the Cuban missile crisis, the intelligence reports had been overlooked and forgotten for many years. Recent activity of the brigade revealed that it might have the capability not just to

¹³¹ Reston, “A Strange Arms Debate,” *New York Times*, January 21, 1979, E21.

¹³² SFRC, *Hearings on SALT II*, 438.

¹³³ “Pentagon Lawyer Fired for Aiding SALT Foe,” *Washington Post*, November 9, 1979, A19; Myres S. McDougal and W. Michael Reisman, “The Almond Affair,” *Washington Post*, November 18, 1979, C6; Paul H. Nitze, “an Enemy of the President’s Policy,” *Washington Post*, November 26, 1979, A22.

train Cuban soldiers but also to conduct combat operations in the Western Hemisphere. The revelation took place over Labor Day weekend in 1979 when most of the principle White House and State Department Staff members were on vacation. When Frank Church (D-ID), the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, heard the report he immediately called his own press conference and demanded the removal of the Soviet brigade before SALT II be given any further consideration in the Senate.¹³⁴

The administration scrambled to control the damage, but it was too late. Carter and his advisors mulled the issue for weeks, calling in a council of “wise men” and treating the matter like the Cuban missile crisis. At last, on October 1, 1979, the president spoke to the nation, stating that the brigade posed no threat and that the Soviets had given assurances that it would not be used in a combat role. The speech appeared to soften some alarm in Congress, but for the most part it did little to change already hardening opinions on the treaty. John Tower (R-TX) responded to the president’s address by stating that the treaty should not be considered for ratification unless the Soviets demonstrably changed their behavior on the world scene.¹³⁵

A few days later, on October 5, 1979, the president bowed to Nunn’s requests and released a preview of the administration’s five year defense plan. Although only accepting a reduced rate of growth (3 percent in FY80-81, and 5 percent in FY82 as opposed Nunn’s request for 3 percent in FY80 and 5 percent in years beyond), it was clear that Carter increased defense expenditures in order to gain approval for the faltering SALT treaty.¹³⁶ As

¹³⁴ Schram, “Talks Planned on Soviet Unit,” *Washington Post*, September 8, 1979, A1; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 347.

¹³⁵ Edward Walsh and Richard Lyons, “Hill Is Relieved, SALT Prospects Gain,” *Washington Post*, October 2, 1979, A1.

¹³⁶ Robert Kaiser, “Selling SALT: A Defense Plan Preview,” *Washington Post*, October 5, 1979, A1.

the House Budget Committee examined the new defense plan, most members saw Carter's proposal as being clearly linked to SALT, with little other justification for the proposed increase in defense spending.¹³⁷ Years later, Harold Brown admitted that the increases in defense spending in the second half of the Carter years were to get approval for SALT II.¹³⁸ In this sense it appeared that Jimmy Carter purchased support for SALT II from the military-congressional alliance. The full story, however, was more complex.

A Unified Front: The JCS Support SALT II Ratification

The military-congressional alliance did not stand as firm on SALT II as it had on defense budgets. When it came to SALT II, the Chiefs supported the administration despite intense pressure from conservatives in Congress to oppose it. While the Chiefs dissented on the adequacy of defense budgets, once Carter decided to increase defense spending they offered their support for SALT. JCS support was slow in coming and developed only after close contact between Harold Brown and Jimmy Carter himself. Unanimous JCS support also required the selection of a new Marine Commandant because Louis Wilson refused to endorse the treaty until the end. When the time for congressional testimony arrived, however, David Jones managed to pull all of the Chiefs in line with administration policy and get them to endorse the treaty. The Chiefs' testimony was frank and honest. They were not enthused about the treaty but they endorsed it as being in the best interest of the nation—as being “modest but useful.”

¹³⁷ HCOB, *FY81 Defense Budget Overview*, 63, 76.

¹³⁸ Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 29.

Carter lobbied the JCS arduously on SALT. Jones testified to that, saying that the Chiefs were “fully consulted in all the negotiations” and “a full part of the process.”¹³⁹ Even Louis Wilson admitted that it was the single most important event during his tenure as Marine Commandant and that he spent several hours each day dealing with SALT.¹⁴⁰ On April 28, 1979, as the SALT II negotiations neared an end, the JCS met. Jones instructed each to cast his vote for or against SALT. Jones, Hayward, Allen, and Bernard Rogers all voted in favor. Rogers’ affirmative vote surprised many, especially Wilson who was alone in refusing to endorse it.¹⁴¹ Apparently, the JCS decided to conceal Wilson’s dissent. Wilson would retire before he had to testify on SALT, and since the other Chiefs supported it, as a body they drafted a memo to Carter pledging their support just prior to the president’s departure for Vienna.¹⁴²

Before their testimony, Harold Brown predicted that the Chiefs would take “a constructive attitude” on SALT, but the issue was in doubt. The Chiefs had consistently refused to make their views public, so there were rumors that they would dissent from the administration.¹⁴³ The JCS did have many differences with Secretary of State Vance on the treaty, and General Jones had worked hard to try to work through these and keep the other Chiefs in line.¹⁴⁴ LTG Ray Sitton, director of the Joint Staff at the time, reported that the JCS felt that several

¹³⁹ SASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 45.

¹⁴⁰ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 130.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹⁴² George C. Wilson, “Meyer Installed as New Army Chief of Staff,” *Washington Post*, June 23, 1979, A2.

¹⁴³ George C. Wilson, “U.S. Missile Accuracy Predicted High by 1990s,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 1979, A2.

¹⁴⁴ GEN David Jones, interview by Poole and Rearden, JCS Oral History, 5.

of the provisions in SALT were not advantageous to the U.S.¹⁴⁵ Jones privately classified the treaty as “fatally flawed” but “better than nothing.”¹⁴⁶

Whatever their doubts, the JCS supported SALT in testimony to the Senate. Jones began his statement to the Foreign Relations Committee by emphasizing that the JCS were in favor of even deeper cuts in strategic weapons than SALT II offered, but that the cuts provided by the treaty enhanced national security.¹⁴⁷ He was frank about JCS concerns, including the lack of restriction on the Backfire and the numbers of Soviet heavy ICBMs. In the end, however, he argued that the treaty was favorable to the U.S. because it allowed the continued development of the Air-Launched Cruise Missile, the MX, and a new Trident Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile. The JCS, he said, felt the treaty was “adequately verifiable.”¹⁴⁸ With Jones leading, the JCS endured many hours of detailed questioning from Senators. At one point in the testimony Senator Jackson became frustrated with the Chief’s stoicism and tried to imply that the Chiefs were under orders not to oppose the treaty, which they all denied.¹⁴⁹

The JCS testimony proved convincing. When Edward Rowny testified in opposition to the treaty, many senators aggressively questioned why he would differ with the JCS in his opinion. Jacob Javits (R-NY) asked Rowny point-blank if his opposition amounted to nothing more than second guessing the JCS. The retired general admitted that this “struck a

¹⁴⁵ LTG Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 270-271.

¹⁴⁶ GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 197.

¹⁴⁷ GEN David Jones, “Statement Before the SFRC,” JCL, 2.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-9.

¹⁴⁹ Kaiser, “SALT Critics Hone Their Objections,” *Washington Post*, July 30, 1979, A3.

nerve” and left him shaken in his response.¹⁵⁰ Soon after retirement, Louis Wilson also testified at the behest of Sam Nunn, stating that he felt the treaty was not in the best interests of the nation. He refused, however, some twenty-five other invitations to speak out against SALT, stating that as a retired member of the JCS he would not campaign against the treaty.¹⁵¹

In addition to the JCS, SAC Commander General Richard H. Ellis also supported SALT. “I would rather be Commander with SALT than without it,” he declared in special testimony before the House Armed Services Committee.¹⁵² When Robin Beard (R-TN) attacked the general’s support of the treaty, implying that it was coerced, Ellis retorted that he based his answers on military, not political, considerations. “From a military point of view it is desirable” for the treaty to be ratified, he insisted.¹⁵³

The JCS, and even some civilians in the Pentagon, were explicit about their support for SALT being contingent on increased defense expenditures. Jones stressed this point clearly, consistently speaking in terms of American “strategic inferiority” and the “deteriorating strategic balance.”¹⁵⁴ He cautioned the Foreign Relations Committee that the Soviets had been out-investing the U.S. for more than ten years and that, even with SALT, the JCS was “unambiguous” on the need for greater defense expenditures.¹⁵⁵ Air Force Secretary Hans Mark was the most vocal supporter of this position, emphasizing that the Russians were on

¹⁵⁰ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 130.

¹⁵¹ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 371-373.

¹⁵² HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 19.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

¹⁵⁴ For “strategic inferiority” see *Ibid.*, 417. For “deteriorating strategic balance” see SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 27.

¹⁵⁵ GEN David Jones, “Statement of the JCS to the SFRC,” JCL, 1.

the verge of strategic superiority unless America made “the necessary investments to match their power.”¹⁵⁶

The JCS testimony linked SALT II support not only with increased defense expenditures, but also with the deployment of the MX missile. Carter and his White House had long opposed the MX, reducing funding for it in the original FY78 defense budget.¹⁵⁷ Later the program was held up by acrimonious debates over how to base the missile.¹⁵⁸ When it became clear that the JCS would only support SALT if it included the continued development of the MX, Carter agreed to the ultra-costly Mobile Protective Shelter (MPS) system of basing, despite being “nauseated” (as he remembered later) by having to do so.¹⁵⁹ General Allen then supported SALT strongly, but closely linked it with the MX in MPS, calling the missile “the highest priority and the most important need.”¹⁶⁰ As a consequence, by the time the FY81 defense budget hearings arrived, Harold Brown declared that the administration commitment to MX in MPS was “very close to being irrevocable.”¹⁶¹

The supportive testimony by the Chiefs allowed the more liberal Senate Foreign Relations Committee to recommend ratification of SALT II. In a rather weak statement of support, the Committee concluded that “this Treaty is better for the United States at this point than no Treaty at all.” The statement bowed to the more conservative forces at work with the

¹⁵⁶ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 803.

¹⁵⁷ Richard Burt, “Carter Budget Aides Seek a Missile Curb,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1978, A8.

¹⁵⁸ *FY79 DoD Annual Report*, 109.

¹⁵⁹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 137-138, 365; George C. Wilson, “Some Kind of Mobile Land Missile Needed in U.S. Arsenal, Pentagon Leaders Conclude,” *Washington Post*, May 9, 1979, A14. For “nauseated” see Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 247.

¹⁶⁰ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 854; HAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 296.

¹⁶¹ SACP, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 384.

military-congressional alliance, however, noting “recognition” that “additional defense efforts by the United States will be necessary to preserve deterrence” was “one of the most important results of the SALT II debate.”¹⁶²

Even with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December of 1979, the Chiefs still supported the treaty. When pressed by Sam Stratton, Lew Allen responded that “it is my personal judgment that this country is well advised to attempt to continue a policy that includes negotiations with the Soviets on strategic arms whenever that is possible to do.” He conceded that he did not trust the Soviets, but that his support of the treaty was not based on trust, but on the belief that SALT was “a useful thing for the United States” and “a sound policy for the future.”¹⁶³ When asked in January of 1980 about the SALT II treaty, if it had changed from “modest but useful,” Jones felt it was “not a favor to the Soviets.” “I believe that the agreement is in their best interest and I believe it clearly is in our best interest,” he concluded.¹⁶⁴ Ironically, the highest-ranking members of the military remained supportive of the treaty even as the Soviet’s aggressive actions spelled its ultimate doom in the Senate.

“Modest But Useful?”: What JCS Support of SALT II Meant

Conservative columnist George Will forecast the doom of SALT in August of 1979 while others were predicting its ratification. His theory was that Carter would resist Nunn’s calls for increased defense expenditures. “Carter cannot comply without further diminishing his

¹⁶² United States Congress, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *The SALT II Treaty: Report of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Together with Supplemental and Minority Views* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 81-82. Hereafter cited as SFRC, *SALT II Treaty with Supplemental Materials*.

¹⁶³ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 899.

¹⁶⁴ SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 58-59.

much-diminished authority,” he concluded.¹⁶⁵ While Will’s reasoning behind the demise of SALT II was not entirely correct, his forecast for Carter’s behavior was remarkably accurate. As shown by the events surrounding the FY81 Defense Budget, Carter did indeed resist Nunn’s demands for as long as he could, fighting the increases at every turn.

Carter’s approach to treaty ratification, calling for no modifications, also backfired. Defying the president, the Senate recommended a reservation specifically allowing for the development of the MX missile. Some senators also wanted an amendment stating that SALT II would be void after 1985 without Senate approval for extension.¹⁶⁶ The Senate Foreign Relations Committee even promised that any ratification of the treaty must include a statement increasing defense spending to maintain “essential equivalence” with the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁷

As the battle over defense expenditures raged on and Carter became increasingly intransigent, Scoop Jackson and the Senate Armed Services Committee declared that SALT was “not in the national security interests of the United States.” General Rowny, reflecting on this moment in his memoirs, believed Jackson’s declaration made the treaty “effectively dead.” Five days later the Soviet Army invaded Afghanistan. Carter, knowing that SALT would now never be ratified, withdrew the treaty from consideration by the Senate.¹⁶⁸

In the end, Jimmy Carter’s inability to deal with Congress overshadowed JCS support for SALT II. Contrary to what many in the Pentagon thought, JCS support was not assured—it

¹⁶⁵ George F. Will, “The Nunn-Kissinger Test,” *Washington Post*, August 5, 1979, B7.

¹⁶⁶ Robert Kaiser, “SALT Reservation Voted to Permit MX Missiles,” *Washington Post*, November 1, 1979, A17.

¹⁶⁷ SFRC, *SALT II Treaty with Supplemental Materials*, 82.

¹⁶⁸ Rowny, *One to Tango*, 130.

came only with much debate.¹⁶⁹ In the words of the architect of the compromise, David Jones, the Chiefs “etched in marble the words ‘modest but useful.’ I tell you, it took a long time before we could come up with the agreed words. Those were finally the words we could coalesce around as to our position on SALT II.” “Overall,” the general recalled, “it didn’t accomplish a great deal.”¹⁷⁰

One thing that SALT did accomplish was to give the military-congressional alliance its leverage to force Carter to increase defense expenditures and commit to costly weapons projects. In fact, the president’s bid to reduce nuclear arms and even eradicate them from the face of the earth led to one of the biggest peacetime military buildups in the nation’s history. This was the supreme irony of SALT II and civil-military relations in the Carter years.

David Jones remained the main force behind the military leverage placed on Carter. LTG Howard Fish, who served as the Pentagon Arms Sales Director during the first part of the Carter years, summarized the situation. The President wanted SALT II ratified but the JCS had problems:

Now what are you going to do if you are the CJCS? Take a hard stand that there are certain fundamental elements about it that were unacceptable and, therefore, that it should not be ratified and . . . lose effectiveness with the Commander-in-Chief or do you recognize that the ratification is inevitable and try to get as much out of it as you can? And that’s exactly what he [Jones] did. [Get the] MX, increase the budget.¹⁷¹

While Jones understood many of the tenets of proper civil-military relations, he also knew how to get his way with his civilian masters and used SALT II as a means to do so.

¹⁶⁹ Harold Brown said of the Chiefs and SALT II that their endorsement was “not overwhelming” but that “They went along; that was not a problem.” See Brown, interview by Goldberg and Landa, 1 Mar 93, OSD Oral History, 29. Bob Komer felt that the JCS “accepted SALT II unanimously so the nuclear arms race would not drain off other needed resources.” See Komer, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 76.

¹⁷⁰ GEN David Jones, interview by Poole and Rearden, JCS Oral History, 13.

¹⁷¹ LTG Howard M. Fish, interview by Edgar F. Puryear, Jr., USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 7.

While Jones and the JCS used SALT II to force MX and higher defense budgets on Carter, the JCS for the most part followed proper military subordination. Carter's weakness with Congress, made him extremely vulnerable to end-runs—but these came mostly from the retired military. Many key members of Congress, like Scoop Jackson, did all they could to encourage JCS opposition to SALT II. Carter, already hobbled by the Singlaub incident, the Almond controversy, the fall of Iran, and the Soviet Brigade in Cuba could have done little to suppress JCS dissent to SALT. Still, the JCS held firm in their support for the president and his treaty.

The compromise that the JCS made in their support of SALT II did not go unnoticed by Carter or his White House. Zbigniew Brzezinski, reflecting on the JCS testimony, declared that the Chief's support was "critical" to the early success of the treaty and advised the president, "You should take an early opportunity to express your appreciation to General Jones and the other Chiefs for their support."¹⁷²

Following the testimony on the Hill, Harold Brown stood with General Robert Barrow at the Marine Corps Ball on a rainy night. A reporter overheard the Secretary of Defense approach the general. "I must say," Brown remarked, "that the Chiefs deserve a great deal of credit for their SALT testimony. You said what you felt, you preserved your integrity and you didn't let anybody shake you."¹⁷³ In many ways this small exchange captured the essence of the JCS relations with their civilian superiors and Congress not only with SALT, but throughout the Carter years.

¹⁷² Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: JCS Assessment of SALT II, July 11, 1979," Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 36, Folder: Serial X's [5/79-9/79], Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

¹⁷³ Carlin Romano, "Raindrops Semper Fidelis," *Washington Post*, August 4, 1979, B5.

CHAPTER VII

CRISIS AND CONCLUSION: OPERATION EAGLE CLAW AND THE EVOLUTION OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN CARTER'S TERM

Epilogue: White House Situation Room, April 16, 1980, 6:30 p.m.¹

Colonel Charles Beckwith sat nervously in his chair. As the commander of the Army's top-secret anti-terrorism unit known as the "Delta Force," Beckwith was one of the most respected officers in the military. Just a few hours earlier, General Jones had informed Beckwith that President Carter wanted a briefing from the field commander on the upcoming hostage rescue mission in Iran, code named Operation Eagle Claw. Dressed in a sport coat and slacks, the career special operations officer felt even more awkward and unprepared. So much secrecy surrounded the mission that all of the officers that night were dressed in civilian clothes so as not to make it seem that there was an unusual level of military presence at the White House.

Beckwith looked around the room at the others present for this critical meeting. All of the highest ranking members of the administration were present. The colonel stared with some disdain at Hamilton Jordan, dressed in Levis. Jordan seemed too young and informal to be a White House Chief of Staff. As those in the room began to file into their seats, Vice President Walter Mondale finally entered. Beckwith gaped with disbelief at the Vice President's attire—he was wearing sweatclothes and expensive running shoes. The only

¹ Date and location of the meeting taken from Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 494-495. Conduct and events of the meeting are compiled from Charlie A. Beckwith and Donald Knox, *Delta Force* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 3-10.

remaining seat was right next to Charlie Beckwith, and Mondale took it.² The Delta Force commander could hardly have felt more out of place.

All in the room stood as Jimmy Carter entered. “He looks good,” thought Beckwith to himself, noting that the president was wearing a blue blazer and grey slacks. The president walked to the head of the Situation Room table and sat down. General David Jones stood and began the briefing, introducing Army General James Vaught, who had been responsible for the inter-service training, coordination, and planning for the mission.³ The president listened intently as the general briefed the overall concept for the rescue attempt. Beckwith was impressed by both Vaught’s mastery of the material and the president’s demeanor.

As Vaught reached the critical portion of the plan surrounding the infiltration into Tehran, Mondale elbowed Beckwith. “What are those?” the vice president queried, pointing to a pair of plastic handcuffs sitting on the table in front of the colonel. “Sir, those are ‘flex-cuffs.’ We will use them to detain any Iranian prisoners my team captures,” Beckwith whispered. “Let me see them,” Mondale demanded. Beckwith handed the plastic cuffs over. To the colonel’s astonishment, Mondale began playing with them. The intermittent sound of the vice president loosening and tightening the zip-ties on the cuffs sounded throughout the remainder of the briefing.⁴

As Vaught finished, he introduced Colonel Beckwith. “Mr. President,” Hamilton Jordan interceded, “Colonel Beckwith is from your neck of the woods—he is a Georgian from Schley County.” Carter beamed in approval, “That is right next to Plains, we must have been neighbors, Colonel.” Beckwith smiled and nodded. He felt more comfortable now as he rose

² Beckwith, *Delta Force*, 4.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

and began briefing his portion of the mission—securing the embassy compound in Tehran and rescuing the hostages. Beckwith spoke informally but in great detail, looking directly at the president. He explained the Delta Force plan down to the position and types of machineguns that would be covering the assault. Carter listened silently but intently throughout the entire brief.⁵

Beckwith finished and asked for any questions. “How many casualties do you see here?” the president asked. General Vaughn intervened before Beckwith could answer. “Mr. President, we don’t honestly have an answer for you. Perhaps six or seven Delta men might be wounded. Two or three hostages might be injured.” The president nodded and looked Colonel Beckwith in the eye. Despite his superior’s reply, Beckwith did not feel it was as candid an answer as Carter wanted, so he spoke up. “Mr. President, my men are trained to kill anyone carrying a weapon. Odds are that when we assault, one of those hostages will overpower a guard and get hold of a weapon. And my men will kill him by mistake, sir. We have to count on that happening.” “I understand. And I accept it,” Carter replied.⁶

Warren Christopher, the acting Secretary of State, raised his hand and asked a simple question: “What will happen to the Iranians guarding the embassy?” “Mr. Christopher, it is our intent to take the guards out,” Beckwith quickly answered. “Take them out? You mean you will shoot them once in the shoulder or something?” Christopher questioned again, confusion and worry filling his voice. “No sir, we’re going to shoot each of them twice—right between the eyes,” the colonel said sternly, “we’re going to kill any of the guards who put up resistance.” “You can do that? In a dark room with hostages, running?” Christopher

⁵ Ibid., 5-6.

⁶ Ibid., 7.

stammered. Hamilton Jordan broke in, “Colonel Beckwith, in your training exercises, did your men ever shoot a hostage target instead of a terrorist target?” “Sir, Delta is playing in the Rose Bowl, not the Toilet Bowl,” Beckwith quipped.⁷

W. Graham Claytor, the veteran Deputy Secretary of Defense, broke in to stop the questioning. “Gentlemen,” he began, “I’ve been down to Delta and seen these men train. They can do everything Colonel Beckwith says they can. They are quite good shooters.”⁸ The tension in the room subsided a bit, although Hamilton Jordan and Warren Christopher continued to exchange worried glances. Christopher had been the only remaining member of the cabinet to object to the rescue and his doubts lingered on the eve of the operation.⁹ His boss, Cyrus Vance, had already resigned in protest over the matter.

Following Beckwith, Air Force General Phillip Gast stood and explained the air-movement part of the operation. It was complicated. Six CH-53 helicopters were necessary to ferry the Delta Force and the hostages out of the embassy and to an airfield for evacuation. In case some helicopters were damaged, the JCS had recommended eight be sent. These helicopters were to fly from an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf, but they did not have the range to reach Tehran. They would have to land at a location designated Desert One and be met by several C-130 aircraft carrying fuel. After re-fueling, the helicopters would continue on to a hiding point outside of Tehran to wait for the rescue to begin. Other aircraft, the

⁷ Ibid., 7-8.

⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 492-493.

much larger C-141 transports, would evacuate the freed hostages and Delta operators from a nearby airfield secured by Army Rangers.¹⁰

Beckwith was still worried as General Gast spoke. General Pustay, the assistant to David Jones, leaned over to Zbigniew Brzezinski during the brief and whispered, “We need to take a closer look at the helicopter part of this mission.”¹¹ Beckwith agreed. He knew Gast was a superb fighter pilot. “But he’s a ‘jet jockey’,” thought Beckwith, “I should have left a few Delta Force men with him to ensure the helicopter pilots were properly trained.”¹² Even more troubling than the complicated helicopter movement was tactical air cover for the mission. Despite all of the planning and meetings leading up to this point, Charlie Beckwith did not really understand if American fighter planes were going to cover the operation and protect the transports as they left Iranian airspace. Why go through the entire rescue only to be shot down by an Iranian pilot at the last minute?

Almost on cue, Jimmy Carter asked, “What about tactical air coverage for the operation?” General Gast demurred, stating that some things were still unresolved about this. “No, it is resolved right now,” the president interjected, “there will be tactical air cover all the way out of Iran.” Beckwith gave a sigh of relief.¹³

Stansfield Turner leaned forward in his chair. “Mr. President, my agency now needs to know what your decision will be. Should we pre-position our agents for this operation?” Jimmy Carter looked around the room at the generals and his cabinet. “It is time for me to

¹⁰ Gary Sick, “Military Options and Constraints,” in *American Hostages in Iran: The Conduct of a Crisis*, ed. Paul H. Kreisberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 154-156.

¹¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 495.

¹² Beckwith, *Delta Force*, 254.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

summarize,” the president began, “I do not want to undertake this operation, but we have no other recourse. There is not going to be just ‘pre-positioning’ forward. We are going to do this operation.” Beckwith’s stomach leapt, and he clenched his fist. “I never thought Jimmy Carter had the guts to do it, but he does,” the colonel thought to himself.¹⁴

Jimmy Carter then continued, looking at General Jones. “David, this is a military operation. You will run it. By law you will keep the Secretary of Defense informed and I’d appreciate if you do the same for me.” The president then gestured to the rest of the room, “I don’t want anyone else involved, and I will not be involved from this point forward. It is your show.” Beckwith was proud to have a president who had decided as he just had done.¹⁵

Everyone in the room came to their feet as the president ended the meeting. “Colonel Beckwith, I’d like to see you before you leave,” Jimmy Carter called. The others left the room, and Carter approached the colonel in the silence. “I want you to do two things for me, Colonel,” the president began, “First, assemble your team and explain to them that in the event this operation fails, it will be entirely my fault and responsibility, not theirs. Second, I want you to bring back the body of any American who is killed as long as it does not jeopardize another life.” Beckwith choked back emotion, but some crept into his voice as he responded, “Sir, I give you my word on both counts.”¹⁶

A Tragic End: Operation Eagle Claw and the Course of Civil-Military Relations in the Carter Years

Less than ten days later, on April 24, 1979, Colonel Beckwith was recommending to Jimmy Carter over the phone that Operation Eagle Claw be aborted. Only six helicopters had

¹⁴ Ibid., 9-10.

¹⁵ Ibid., 10.

¹⁶ Ibid.

arrived at Desert One. While there, another had developed a hydraulic leak and was unable to fly. With only five helicopters Beckwith judged he could not complete the mission—six was the minimum number allowed when planning the rescue. Carter acceded to the ground commander and concurred that the operation be aborted. Several minutes later, General Jones called to inform the commander-in-chief that a helicopter and a refueling plane had collided while leaving Desert One and seven American servicemen had been killed.¹⁷ The operation was a total and embarrassing failure for the nation and the president.

In the last pages of his memoir, Jimmy Carter recounts taking great pride in receiving a plaque with a quote from Thomas Jefferson: “I have the consolation to reflect that during the period of my administration not a drop of the blood of a single citizen was shed by the sword of war.”¹⁸ While the plaque may be true in word for Carter, his reaction to the tribute is also telling. Jimmy Carter wanted peace. Yet, unlike many presidents, Jimmy Carter did send American troops to fight in a foreign country. He did authorize an operation that resulted in the deaths of seven soldiers. The bloody failure of the hostage rescue mission may very well have crippled an already weakened administration. In this way Operation Eagle Claw was a tragic end to the only use of military force during the Carter years.

Based on the civil-military discussions surrounding Operation Eagle Claw, one would hardly have predicted such a tragic outcome. The mood of the White House meeting on April 14, 1979 and Charlie Beckwith’s reaction to the president clearly demonstrated accord between the president and the military on this operation. Unlike the conflict surrounding defense budgets and some decisions on defense policy, it cannot be said that Jimmy Carter’s

¹⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 498-499

¹⁸ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 604.

micromanagement led to civil-military discord. Tutored by Brzezinski that John F. Kennedy's "interference with military planning" in the Bay of Pigs invasion led to failure, Carter vowed to be completely hands off when it came to executing the hostage rescue in Iran.¹⁹ Harold Brown stayed out as well, calling it "a military operation with military decisions."²⁰ A post-action investigation into Eagle Claw directed by former CNO James Holloway termed Carter's leadership a "textbook case of the proper relationship between a commander-in-chief and his military subordinates."²¹ The president and his civilian advisors stayed out of the military's affairs. Unfortunately, the military returned the favor by failing their commander-in-chief miserably with a plan that had only marginal chances for success.²²

Somewhat hypocritically, some members of the JCS decried Carter's handling of the hostage situation despite endorsing his policies. In his oral history, Marine Commandant Louis Wilson referred to Carter's initial approach to freeing the hostages through negotiations as "an appalling lack of fortitude on the part of this administration."²³ Conservatives charged that Carter's decision to launch the rescue was for "political reasons" and a desperate attempt by "a president with deep political problems." Some of these same

¹⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 495.

²⁰ Brown, interview by Goldberg and Trask, December 4, 1981, OSD Oral History 11.

²¹ Abraham A. Ribicoff, "Lessons and Conclusions," in *American Hostages in Iran: The Conduct of a Crisis*, ed. Paul H. Kreisberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 389.

²² Charles Beckwith certainly felt that the plan stood a good chance of success and some rehearsals beforehand went well. Other senior officers disagreed, including Colin Powell, who called the operation's chance of success "a hundred to one, foolhardy odds for a military operation." See Powell, *My American Journey*, 249. JCS Historian Steven Rearden's analysis of classified documents surrounding the operation reveal "the possibility of success of the rescue mission was not as optimistic as public statements suggested." Doubt thus lingered even among the JCS about their own plan. See Rearden, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, Vol. XII*, 385-386. Similarly, Congressional staffer James Locher III felt that "the chaos and confusion at Desert One epitomized the Pentagon's lack of proficiency in joint operations." Locher, *Victory on the Potomac*, 47.

²³ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 296.

critics accused Harold Brown and the JCS of going along as “good soldiers” merely trying to help their crippled commander-in-chief.²⁴ In fact, while Carter had preferred to take a diplomatic path to resolving the situation, he did consider the use of force from the earliest points of the crisis and the JCS concurred with his assessment. The president did, however, agree with military advice to increase military presence in the Persian Gulf and to use the threat of retaliation to deter Iran from conducting “espionage” trials of the diplomats.²⁵ Even Wilson was forced to admit that calls to “send in the Marines” to rescue the hostages were “not realistic at all. There’s no way we could have gone in to seize the hostages.”²⁶

Carter’s relationship with Congress soured even further as a result of the failed rescue mission. Although he did have Cyrus Vance give almost daily briefs on the state of the hostages to key congressional leaders, the president refused to consult key senators on the rescue plan, despite meeting privately with Majority Leader Robert Byrd on the eve of the operation.²⁷ Some accused Carter of violating the War Powers Resolution of 1973 and bypassing the legal role of Congress in deploying troops in foreign countries.²⁸

²⁴ For “political reasons” and “good soldiers” see Joseph Kraft, “Whose Political Gain . . .,” *Washington Post*, June 15, 1980, D7. For “deep political problems” see Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Why Vance Quit,” *Washington Post*, April 30, 1980, A19.

²⁵ Bernard Gwertzman, “Carter Shifts Stand,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1979, A1, A12; Don Oberdorfer and Martin Schram, “The Crisis Escalates,” *Washington Post*, November 21, 1979, A1, A15; Edward Walsh and John M. Goshko, “U.S. Hints at Use of Arms against Iran,” *Washington Post*, November 21, 1979, A1, A14; George C. Wilson, “Military Studies Options Open to the President,” *Washington Post*, November 21, 1979, A14; Michael Getler, “Brown Presses NATO Allies on Iran, Missiles Buildup,” *Washington Post*, December 12, 1979, A34.

²⁶ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 300.

²⁷ For keeping Congress informed see Vance, *Hard Choices*, 14. Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 513-514.

²⁸ Ribicoff, “Lessons and Conclusions,” in *American Hostages in Iran*, 379; Norman Podhoretz, “Lesson of Failure,” *Washington Post*, April 30, 1980, A19.

Following the failure of the mission, recriminations surfaced that Carter's "micro-management" had been overly constrictive to military planners and was a major reason for the failure. David Jones later had to defend the president of these charges, calling them a "bum rap."²⁹ Despite all of the evidence to the contrary, some could just not believe that a president who went line by line through the annual defense budget would give the military free reign in planning and executing a complicated rescue operation.

In some ways, Colonel Beckwith's reaction to the final briefing on Operation Eagle Claw typified the evolution of the relationship between the president, his military advisors, and the civilians in the Pentagon. A newly promoted colonel, Beckwith was not far removed from some of the "iron majors" who stood at the edges of the room during Carter's initial meeting with the JCS. Like them, he was skeptical of the new Democratic president. His doubts were confirmed by many of the decisions Carter had made while in office—he did not think that Jimmy Carter had the "guts" to go ahead with the rescue. Once he had close contact with Carter, however, his opinion changed. He admired the president's intelligence, dedication, and willingness to listen to and trust his military advisors. Yet problems remained. Beckwith still viewed many of those in the Carter administration—such as Walter Mondale, Warren Christopher, and Hamilton Jordan—with disdain. The sparring between these more liberal advisors and Deputy Secretary of Defense Graham Claytor highlighted the Pentagon-White House tension that had begun with and continued during the course of the administration. No key members of Congress were called into the final briefings for the rescue, creating executive-legislative conflict later. In all of these ways, Operation Eagle Claw symbolized civil-military relations in the Carter years.

²⁹ GEN David Jones, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 19.

Protecting the National Interest: The Carter Doctrine, PD 62, PD 63, the Rapid Deployment Force, and the Military Legacy of the Carter Years

Although the failure of the rescue attempt often dominated critiques of Carter's defense and foreign policy, Carter actually left a much more enduring legacy for the future use of military force. Two final Presidential Directives, put into effect just before Carter left office, articulated this legacy which gave increased importance to the Middle East in American defense policy and created a force rapidly able to project power into this region. Both the Carter Doctrine and the Rapid Deployment Force were the most salient parts of this effort to protect the national interest abroad.

The development of the Carter Doctrine and the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) provoked less military resistance than some of the administration's early efforts to change defense policy and military contingency planning. The military generally supported both the increased emphasis placed on the Middle East and the development of a quickly deployable force to intervene in that area. Both the military and Congress, however, disputed the means which the administration provided to reach its desired ends with the Carter Doctrine and RDF. Despite less military resistance, the Carter administration still implemented two of its final and most far reaching defense policy decisions amid much civil-military tension.

The ideas behind the Carter Doctrine and the RDF grew slowly in the administration. The concept of the RDF had been discussed since the early days of the PRM-10 studies which were the comprehensive studies undertaken on national defense soon after Carter took office. As early as January 1979 the administration talked publicly of creating a force capable of responding to worldwide crises.³⁰ Given the turmoil caused by Cuban and Russian

³⁰ Wilson, "Brown Cites Risk for U.S., Soviets in Third World Conflicts," *Washington Post*, January 2, 1979, A12.

surrogates in Central America and Africa, Harold Brown argued in February of 1979 that the U.S. must “find a way” to help allied countries combat this threat. As part of the effort Brown traveled to the Middle East, taking along with him the new Pentagon Arms Sales Chief, LTG Ernest Graves. At the same time, reports indicated that the JCS was equally concerned about these developments and was conducting several staff studies on how to better combat these surrogate forces.³¹ Initial work on the concept of an RDF pointed at the Middle East.

In June, Brown directed the JCS to review the Unified Command Plan and assess capabilities to defend U.S. interests in the Middle East, spawning the studies that led to the RDF. Brown put Army Chief of Staff, Edward “Shy” Meyer, in charge of the effort.³² The development of the RDF was marked by significant difficulties in the areas of logistics, service conflicts, timing, politics, and civil-military relations.

The logistical problems and inter-service rivalry that plagued the RDF spawned in large part from Carter’s efforts to restrain defense spending. General Meyer, working on the plans for the RDF, openly decried a lack of airlift for the force, and others in the Pentagon supported him, calling for a new, long-range transport aircraft. With the administration’s efforts to cut defense spending, each service worried that sustaining the RDF might pull away needed resources from future procurement.³³ The Navy in particular was described as being “cool” toward the entire concept because of a fear that building the required cargo

³¹ George C. Wilson, "Brown Backs Countering Soviet Surrogate Forces," *Washington Post*, February 8, 1979, A14.

³² Cole, et. al., *The History of the Unified Command Plan*, 57; George C. Wilson, "Army Is Drafting Plans for 'Quick-Strike' Force," *Washington Post*, June 22, 1979, A2.

³³ Joseph Kraft, "Defense Numbers Game," *Washington Post*, November 18, 1979, C7.

ships for the force would take away money from an already strained shipbuilding budget.³⁴ Manpower shortages also proved to be significant for the military, and Carter went so far as to ask Congress for authorization to call up one hundred thousand reservists in order to buttress the RDF in case of emergency.³⁵ All of these logistical and inter-service challenges placed a great strain on the ongoing efforts to construct the RDF.

The pressure to make the final revisions in the administration's grand strategy and the RDF came on December 27, 1979 when the Soviet military invaded Afghanistan. Soon after, in his January 1980 State of the Union Address, the president finally accepted his advisors recommendations and articulated what became known as the "Carter Doctrine," namely:

Any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States. It will be repelled by the use of any means necessary, including military force.³⁶

The president fully articulated this idea in his last two directives, PD-62 and PD-63, the final installments in the administration's "grand strategy." Both demonstrated increased military influence in the policy making process. PD-62 stated that greater military readiness was required "given the increased risk of major local or regional conflict involving key U.S. interests." PD-62 replaced PD-18, which had identified NATO as the primary U.S. security interest, by naming the RDF as the "highest priority" for the next Five Year Defense Plan.³⁷ PD-63 placed military measures ahead of diplomacy in dealing with confrontations in the

³⁴ George C. Wilson, "New Long-Range Plane Sought for U.S. Fast Reaction Forces," *Washington Post*, November 6, 1979, A2.; George C. Wilson, "Carter Budget Envisions a Force for Quick, Long-Distance Reaction," *Washington Post*, November 27, 1979, A8.

³⁵ George C. Wilson, "Carter Asks to Double His Call up Power: More Troops Sought for Crisis Force," *Washington Post*, June 19, 1980, A1.

³⁶ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 62, January 15, 1981," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

³⁷ Jimmy Carter, "Presidential Directive/NSC 63, January 15, 1981," p. 1, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

Persian Gulf region—in both order and emphasis within the directive.³⁸ These final directives demonstrated not only the importance that the administration placed on the RDF, but also how much the policies within the administration had changed.

The Pentagon clearly took the opportunity that the Afghanistan conflict and Carter's change of policy provided to call for not only increased defense expenditures, but also an even greater bolstering of the RDF. "In Afghanistan we have a new kind of signal," Harold Brown declared in testimony before Congress, "The Soviets are willing to use their own military power outside the Soviet Bloc countries for the first time since World War II."³⁹ The military testimonials were certainly along the same lines. When asked if he felt anything would stop the Soviets from continuing south into the oilfields of Iran and to the Indian Ocean, Louis Wilson replied, "Not a thing. I think it is inevitable that the United States will lose."⁴⁰ Lew Allen cited the move as proof that the Soviets were confident that they possessed a "relative military balance" with the United States and that it would force the U.S. to re-examine its defense posture.⁴¹

In fact, the Pentagon did hastily re-examine its defense posture which contributed even more to the controversy surrounding the RDF. A practice mobilization exercise conducted in October of 1978, entitled "Nifty Nugget," had shown significant problems with the capability of the military to mobilize and move substantial forces to Europe quickly. In the words of a *Washington Post* report, the exercise made it clear that "existing mobilization plans were a hodgepodge of old and unconnected presidential emergency orders, policies, regulations, and

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 65.

⁴⁰ GEN Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 303.

⁴¹ HAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 295; SAPC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 490.

procedures.”⁴² Immediately after Afghanistan, the JCS directed the CINCs and services to submit proposed changes to the Unified Command Plan by mid-February in order to determine how to better support mobilization of the RDF and project American power into the Middle East.⁴³ The resulting study on how to better support mobilization led to significant disputes among the services and between Harold Brown and the JCS. Brown initially assigned operational control of the RDF to U.S. Readiness Command. Several members of the JCS, especially the CNO and Marine Commandant, objected because they felt U.S. Readiness Command, based in Atlanta, was not suited to control a deploying force as far away as the Middle East. In response, Brown agreed to assign operational control of the RDF to European Command once the forces deployed. U.S. Readiness Command remained responsible for mobilizing and equipping the RDF. The JCS also adopted a “compromise” position between all of the services regarding the Unified Command Plan—they supported no changes to the plan itself, but the commander of the RDF would be designated as CINC of a “special region” within the Middle East should he deploy his force.⁴⁴ Former Secretary of Defense, and recently resigned Energy Secretary, James Schlesinger, attacked the compromise and ad-hoc nature of the RDF, arguing that it was fatally weakened by poor command arrangements and inter-service bickering.⁴⁵ Responding to the criticism, the Pentagon launched a hasty effort to bolster support for the RDF, but even

⁴² Michael Getler, "Make-Believe Mobilization Showed Major Flaws," *Washington Post*, July 24, 1980, A6.

⁴³ Cole, et. al., *The History of the Unified Command Plan*, 57.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 57-59.

⁴⁵ James R. Schlesinger, "Rapid (?) Deployment (?) Force ()," *Washington Post*, September 24, 1980, A27.; Stephen S. Rosenfeld, "Too Rapid Deployment," *Washington Post*, December 21, 1979, A13.

ranking military leaders felt that the effort was “politically motivated and would not last through another Carter term.”⁴⁶

Congress was critical of both the Carter Doctrine and the RDF as the tool to implement it, in part because of military testimony on the matter. Newly instituted Marine Corps Commandant Robert Barrow, while agreeing with the administration’s change of strategy, testified before Congress that the RDF was “a very catchy title,” but judged its ability to quickly deploy was “more an objective than a reality.”⁴⁷ LTG Paul X. Kelley, the decorated marine chosen to command the RDF, rejected the characterization of “a paper tiger,” proclaiming that he was “comfortable going to war tomorrow.” Yet, he admitted to serious deficiencies in air and sealift.⁴⁸ When asked in writing by Congress what one area of national defense should receive more military funding if available, the Chiefs replied it should be the RDF.⁴⁹ Even when the administration had changed policy to be more in line with military advice, the uniformed military complained about the resources.

A similar pattern of civil-military interaction occurred over military registration for a draft, which some claimed would be necessary should the RDF be deployed. Through 1979, the administration had opposed both registration and any revival of the draft.⁵⁰ Since the transition to the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973, the armed forces had suffered serious

⁴⁶ George C. Wilson, "Effort Is Launched to Beef up U.S. Rapid Deployment Force," *Washington Post*, September 28, 1980, A17.

⁴⁷ HAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 506.

⁴⁸ Richard Halloran, "Head of Deployment Force Denies It Is 'Paper Tiger'," *New York Times*, October 2, 1980, B15; "New U.S. Crisis Force Lacks Adequate Air, Sea Lift, Chief Says," *Washington Post*, October 2, 1980, A24.

⁴⁹ SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 75.

⁵⁰ SASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 33-34. See also Felicity Barringer, "Carter Opposed to Draft Registration," *Washington Post*, July 26, 1979, A5.

recruiting shortages.⁵¹ An Army recruiting scandal in 1979 provoked a critical *Washington Post* editorial which suggest that while the scandal was not “proof that the volunteer army doesn’t work . . . it certainly is a signal of trouble.”⁵² Robert Barrow was less guarded in his testimony before Congress, openly opposing administration policy and boasting that the Marine Corps maintained itself “in spite of the All-Volunteer Force and not because of it.”⁵³ Bernard Rogers lamented that “we should have brought the Selective Service out of deep standby sometime ago.”⁵⁴ Senator Stennis called for a revival of the draft, calling the AVF “the weakest link” in the nation’s defense.⁵⁵ Senator Sam Nunn published a scathing editorial in the *Washington Post*, arguing that registration was absolutely necessary and that the administration’s plans for mobilization were completely inadequate. Nunn commented:

If our nation remains at peace while we continue our reliance on the current unworkable scheme, we will simply look back on it as politically motivated nonfeasance. If, however, we have a war or emergency mobilization during this period, those in the chain of command responsible for basing our nation’s security on this hoax and who know better but sit silently will be held accountable, by an enraged nation, for their gross negligence.⁵⁶

Congressional and military opposition to the administration policy in the case of the draft was united.

⁵¹ George C. Wilson, "Military Lags Further in Recruiting," *Washington Post*, August 21, 1979, A1; George C. Wilson, "Marines to Reduce Manpower," *Washington Post*, September 11, 1979, A6; Robert Kaylor, "Recruiting Goals Elude Services in 4th Quarter," *Washington Post*, February 14, 1979, A10.

⁵² "The Recruiting Scandal," *Washington Post*, November 18, 1979, C6.

⁵³ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 509. This was the general’s first appearance before the committee, and his comment was greeted by applause. The official administration policy, articulated by Harold Brown, was to support registration but reject a return to the draft.

⁵⁴ HCOB, *FY80 Defense Budget Overview*, 85.

⁵⁵ "Stennis Says It Is Time to Reimpose the Draft," *New York Times*, February 11, 1979, A53.

⁵⁶ Sam Nunn, "The Case for Peacetime Registration," *Washington Post*, July 27, 1979, A19.

The administration finally buckled to the continual congressional and military pressure following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In July of 1980, Carter ordered four million men to register.⁵⁷ Even then the Pentagon was only partially supportive, the Secretary of the Navy claiming that a restoration of the draft would not solve the loss of senior personnel facing the Navy.⁵⁸ The JCS followed suit as well, warning Carter, even as he signed a 7 percent pay raise for the military, that this would not “stem the exodus of essential people from the armed services.”⁵⁹ Even in the twilight of his administration, while more fully accepting congressional and military advice, Carter only possessed limited support in national defense.

Beyond the Carter Years: What We Can Learn from the Civil-Military Interaction from 1977-1981

Dale Herspring’s ranking of the Carter administration as being somewhere in the middle of an invisible civil-military conflict/cooperation continuum is correct. There have certainly been many administrations where the civil-military tension was much worse—Nixon and his deceitful relationship with the JCS; LBJ and his escalation strategy, and then micro-management of the Vietnam air war; Clinton having to contain the damage of an open revolt over “gays in the military”—and administrations where the tension was relatively less—Reagan, giving the military huge defense budget increases and George H.W. Bush giving the military overwhelming force to fight the First Gulf War.⁶⁰ The Carter administration

⁵⁷ Helen Thomas, "Carter Signs Controversial Draft Registration Measure," *Washington Post*, July 3, 1980, A2.

⁵⁸ Richard Halloran, "Armed Forces Chiefs Say Defense Is Weakened by Personnel Losses," *New York Times*, March 22, 1980, A2.

⁵⁹ George C. Wilson, "More Pay Urged to Keep Skilled People in Military," *Washington Post*, November 13, 1979, A6.

⁶⁰ Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 409.

contained both elements of both cooperation and conflict. Yet, an in-depth examination of the Carter years also reveals how simplistic this characterization is because it ignores the incredibly complex and changing relationships between the president, his military and civilian advisors, and Congress.

Perhaps, at least for the Carter years, one should consider how much worse the relationship could have been. As the opening chapter discussed, Jimmy Carter took office at a time when civil-military relations were especially strained following the Vietnam War. He entered office as an outsider, totally alienating even his own party in Congress, and made it immediately clear to the JCS that he planned to cut the defense budget and reduce the nation's nuclear stockpile massively, perhaps unilaterally. As his first act in office he pardoned draft evaders from Vietnam. His Secretary of Defense, a "whiz-kid" from the McNamara years, entered the Pentagon and immediately began to interfere in areas of defense policy previously controlled only by the military. The initial policies from the NSC and White House called for good relations with Cuba, distanced American support for traditional friends in Central and South America, and ordered the withdrawal of all American ground forces from Korea. Carter scrutinized every service's budget, personally pouring through it line by line for two years. His administration sought to cut military retirement pay and refused military bonuses. When Congress modified his defense budget requests, the fight became so intense that it culminated in a nearly-overridden veto. He killed two major programs at the last minute without consulting anyone—production of the Air Force's crown-jewel B-1 bomber and the deployment the neutron bomb for the European theater. He resisted calls to link increased defense spending with ratification of SALT II furiously—defying both Congress and the advice of the JCS. The Iranian Revolution and the Soviet

invasion of Afghanistan swept through the Middle East and the administration seemed unable to react. When Carter did decide to use military force to try to resolve the hostage crisis, his attempt failed miserably. Ronald Reagan exploited all of these conflicts to make Carter appear even softer on defense, heightening tensions as the 1980 election approached. With all of this, civil-military relations in the Carter years could have been a total catastrophe—but they were not.

An important factor in limiting civil-military conflict was Jimmy Carter's personal willingness to listen to the advice of his military leaders. Even before he took office, the time that he spent in meetings and briefings signaled to the JCS that he took his role as commander-in-chief seriously and was willing to hear advice directly from military leaders. While his initial reorganization of the NSC system cut the JCS out of some areas where they had been more active participants under Nixon, over the course of the four years the involvement of the Chiefs in the policy making process increased. He prided himself on his openness with the Chiefs, always seeing them within twenty-four hours of their asking for a meeting. Both Admiral James Holloway and General Louis Wilson confirmed Carter's openness, with the former making the claim that he did not "know of any president who has offered the chiefs of service greater opportunity to provide advice on military matters."⁶¹ Bernard Rogers termed the president's willingness to meet directly with the Chiefs "unprecedented."⁶² General Jones admitted that getting Carter to follow their advice "took a lot of work" and that "part of it was external," but that overall the Chiefs' "quiet, calm

⁶¹ HCOB, *FY79 Defense Budget Overview*, 224 and HAPC, *FY79 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 593. General Wilson also confirmed this more privately in his oral history, see Louis H. Wilson, Jr., interview by Edwin H. Simmons, USMC Oral History, 208, 226.

⁶² Bernard Rogers, "Memorandum for Record, Subject: Luncheon Meeting of JCS with President Carter, 30 Nov 77," General Bernard Rogers Papers, Box 192, File: JCS Luncheon Meeting with President, 1 Dec 77, National Defense University, Washington, D.C.

manner helped in convincing him that the cutback in defense ought to stop.” As Jones put it, “I felt that during the four years our influence increased considerably.”⁶³ The Chiefs knew that even if their advice was not always being heeded it was at least being heard and considered by the president.

Despite the importance of Carter’s open communication with the JCS, this was far from a panacea for the difficulties involved with the civil-military relationship. The president failed to engage Congress in defense policy and budgets, creating significant conflict and leaving himself vulnerable to end-runs. The ritual of getting military advice from the JCS failed at certain times to assuage the concerns of theater CINCs. More distant from Washington and surrounded by their own staffs the CINCs, felt less confident that Carter was taking military opinions into consideration. The House and Senate Armed Services Committee began to have even greater doubts over time despite the fairly restrained testimony of the JCS during this time period.

Harold Brown also played an important role in facilitating the civil-military interaction of the Carter years. Charles Stephenson is certainly correct in classifying Brown as a “team player.”⁶⁴ In many ways he was a model Secretary of Defense. Despite the stigma of association with McNamara’s Pentagon, Brown formed a good working relationship with the Chiefs and with most of the CINCs. Introverted and analytical, he made an effort to be personable—for example, he was the only serving SECDEF to visit and talk with the personnel in the OSD Historical Office.⁶⁵ Harold Brown was also unswervingly loyal to

⁶³ GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 209, 217-218.

⁶⁴ Stephenson, *SECDEF*, 119-120.

⁶⁵ Alfred Goldberg, Chief OSD Historian, discussion with the author, 20 March 2003. Goldberg was Chief Historian at OSD from 1973 to 2008.

Jimmy Carter. He supported Carter publicly on many issues where he privately differed with the administration. Brown understood the bureaucratic nature of the Pentagon and, despite his wishes for a massive overhaul of the advisory and command systems, he tempered his desires and settled for very modest changes.

Despite Harold Brown's strengths, he also had weaknesses which increased tension between the Pentagon and the White House and between the administration and Congress. While he made a great effort to cooperate with and influence the JCS, he failed to do the same with key members of Congress. He was often criticized and attacked, even by members of his own party, while testifying. Brown did not react well to this, at times becoming emotional and refusing to build the political bridges necessary to advance the administration's defense policies and budget priorities. He was a master of the details of defense programs and budgeting, but at times lacked as much focus on larger issues of policy. This led some in the Pentagon to describe him as "not policy-oriented, but program oriented" and as a SECDEF who "basically, cares very little about the policy side."⁶⁶ He never fully overcame his introverted nature. Even as the administration left office, Colin Powell, having worked for John Kester in the Pentagon, still felt Brown "preferred paper to people." The young military aide "always had the impression that Brown would be just as happy if we slipped the paperwork under his door and left him alone to pore over it and work out his theorems."⁶⁷ Such views articulated the uniformed military's fear that their defense policy interests were not being protected within the administration. It also increased friction between the Pentagon and White House, where the more forceful leadership of Brzezinski

⁶⁶ Weinraub, "Top Aide at Pentagon Is Quitting in Dispute," *New York Times*, March 8, 1979, A17.

⁶⁷ Powell, *My American Journey*, 237.

overshadowed Brown's more quiet approach. Finally, while Brown was completely loyal to the president, Jimmy Carter did not always return the favor. In areas related to the budget, Carter's micromanagement undercut Brown's authority. Harold Brown never effectively addressed this problem. This led veteran Pentagon insider David Cooke to conclude that "Harold was the right secretary of defense, but for the wrong president."⁶⁸

The personalities of the JCS were also a major factor in determining the course of civil-military relations in the Carter years. George S. Brown, hobbled from the outset by his previous public relations gaffes, proved unwilling to offer much resistance to Carter or Harold Brown even though he strongly objected to decisions such as Korea troop withdrawals, the B-1 bomber cancellation, and the cutting of the defense budget. He voiced his objections in private and with Congress and never fully gained the confidence of his civilian superiors who tended to leave him out of more decisions than they did with his successor. Still, he strongly supported the administration on the Panama Canal treaty, offered qualified support for the Korea troop withdrawals during his congressional testimony, and reacted strongly against those who accused the JCS of being overly docile.⁶⁹

David Jones, who replaced Brown, dominated the JCS by personality during the Carter years. The president classified Jones as "the most extraordinary leader I have ever known," and the praise was not misplaced.⁷⁰ As both Chief of Staff of the Air Force and Chairman of the JCS, Jones effectively managed the complicated web of politics and bureaucracy surrounding the Pentagon. He gave direct advice to the president when necessary but

⁶⁸ David O. Cooke, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 5.

⁶⁹ GEN George S. Brown, "Address to the Business Council at the Homestead."

⁷⁰ Carter, interview with Goldberg and Matloff, OSD Oral History, 12.

generally preferred to work through Harold Brown with whom he got along well. He became well-integrated into the decision making process in the Carter administration. Often the administration made decisions with which he disagreed, but he refused to end-run to Congress and remained frank and honest in his sworn testimony. He exerted leadership over his fellow chiefs, best exemplified by his ability to garner unanimous JCS support for SALT.

The other members of the JCS also remained publicly loyal to the president but offered frank testimony before Congress. At times they feuded fiercely with their civilian masters—Bernard Rogers and Edward Meyer especially—but the conflicts rarely spilled out into the public light. The CNOs tended to be more willing to end-run the administration on policy and budget issues, but despite Carter's insistence on cutting the Navy budget most of these conflicts remained relatively low-key. One must read Marine Commandant Louis Wilson's private oral history in order to get a sense of how much he disapproved of some of the Carter administration's policies—he simply refused to voice his objections in any forum other than testimony in front of Congress and was very restrained even then. These Chiefs never derided the administration, but they also told Congress what they believed when it came to defense spending. They simply did not think that Carter was spending enough on defense and they made that clear when asked during the later two years of his term.

Perhaps the greatest factor limiting civil-military tension was the active role that Congress played during the Carter administration, especially with regard to defense budgets. The JCS and theater CINCs recognized that they had an appropriate forum to voice their dissent because they would be asked tough questions about policies and budgets during congressional hearings. Sam Nunn, Scoop Jackson, Ernest Hollings, Melvin Price, Sam Stratton and others made it clear that, when it came to defense policy and budgets, they did

not intend to give their fellow Democrat a blank check. Early on they attacked Harold Brown when there was even a hint that he might return to the ways of the McNamara Pentagon where military advice was ignored. The military saw that there was serious and substantive debate taking place on defense budgets and policies and were willing, for the most part, to use appropriate forums to express their opinions. This certainly reduced frustration for the uniformed military and deterred end-runs to Congress.

Congress, especially the Armed Services Committees, truly embraced their constitutional role in providing for the common defense. Many more defense-oriented congressmen and senators disagreed with Carter's approach. Of course the usual politics of defense spending prevailed—many congressmen opposed B-1 cancellation simply because it would cost their districts jobs, senators fought over where the new navy ships they were authorizing would be built, and defense industry lobbyists certainly purchased votes for their programs—and the administration took much unfair criticism in its laudable effort to economize national defense. Yet, one must recognize the sincerity and seriousness that pervaded much of the dialogue taking place before Congress at this time. The Pentagon and the administration were both asked very tough questions and many of these senators and congressmen were deeply committed to doing what they thought was right when it came to national defense. Longtime congressional staffer James Locher has noted the strikingly non-partisan nature of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees and their willingness to debate many challenging issues associated with national defense during the period.⁷¹ A quotation from Senator Stennis, spoken in earnest as the chair of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, summarized much of the conduct of Congress during these years: "This is not a partisan

⁷¹ Locher, *Victory on the Potomac*, 187.

subcommittee. We don't have party lines on this subcommittee. We argue about the majority and the minority, but we are not a party subcommittee. We are looking at the defense of the nation.”⁷²

Given the path that Congress took in modifying the defense budget, it could be said that a rant by Armed Services Committee member Robin Beard summarized their view of defense policy in the Carter years:

Our definition of détente is different from their definition of détente. So it does disturb me that while we embrace détente, we as a committee have been told that we have experienced superiority in nuclear strategic capabilities, that superiority has gone to equality, the equality has now gone to parity, the parity has been described as rough parity, and now we are talking about an imbalance . . . So I would hope that this administration would now take a very, very frank look and start working with this committee and members of Congress in letting the American people know that there is a sacrifice to be made.⁷³

The same Congress that worked against Carter's efforts to economize defense spending sided with Reagan in crafting a massive peacetime buildup. The military, through its testimony and the occasional end-run, was more than willing to help in the effort. Were it up to Jimmy Carter himself, the military buildup would never have taken place.

The Politics of Military Appointments: Carter and Brown's Approach

From the outset of their administration, Jimmy Carter and Harold Brown made it clear that they did not see the JCS as political appointees. Just as they took office there was strong pressure from some in the administration to remove George S. Brown as Chairman of the JCS because of his intemperate remarks at Duke University. Vice President Mondale had even declared during the campaign that the general “shouldn't be dogcatcher.” Harold

⁷² SAPC, *FY80 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 279.

⁷³ HASC, *FY81 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 16.

Brown opposed Mondale, arguing that replacing the CJCS based on political considerations would “set a very bad precedent.” His staunch defense of the general ensured that George S. Brown would serve out his second two-year term and kept the CJCS from becoming an overtly politicized position.⁷⁴

Jimmy Carter and Harold Brown were able to replace almost all members of the JCS and took a somewhat unique approach to doing so. In broad terms, they chose to replace the first set of Chiefs with officers more supportive of the administration’s defense priorities. When General George Brown, stricken with cancer, stepped down in June 1978, Carter replaced him with David Jones who had been publicly supportive of many of the president’s decisions, including the B-1 bomber and the Panama Canal. Lew Allen, considered a “surprise appointment” and a scientific expert like Harold Brown, replaced Jones as Chief of Staff of the Air Force. He too proved to be supportive of Carter, stating that much of the military animus toward Carter was “misplaced because he had really changed his views a good deal.”⁷⁵ When Harold Brown slated General John Vessey, who had spoken out publicly against Carter’s Korea withdrawal policy, to replace General Rogers as Army Chief, Carter stopped the move. He instead brought in General Edward C. Meyer who had been scheduled to take command of the U.S. Army in Europe.⁷⁶ When James Holloway, the CNO who had publicly lobbied for the nuclear supercarrier, retired from his post, Carter denied him the

⁷⁴ Harold Brown quoted in Puryear, *George S. Brown*, 255.

⁷⁵ For “surprise” see Charles Duncan, interview by Goldberg and Trask, OSD Oral History, 36. For Gen. Allen’s quote see Lew Allen, interview by James Hasdorf, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 127.

⁷⁶ For Vessey’s opposition to Carter’s Korea policy see Saar, “Background on the Singlaub Affair,” *Washington Post*, June 4, 1977, C1 and Saar, “U.S. General: Korea Pullout Risks War,” *Washington Post*, May 19, 1977, A1, A14. Note that the “U.S. General” referred to in the first article is actually Major-General John Singlaub, who Carter relieved for his comments. Vessey, although not quoted, was attributed in the article as opposing the policy, and Singlaub confirmed his opposition to the plan in his memoirs. For the rejection of Vessey and sudden move of Meyer see Frederick Kroesen, interview by Jerry Frost, 1987, Vol. II, Box 1, Carlisle Oral History Collection, 374.

traditional honorary visit to the White House. Carter replaced him with Thomas Hayward, who worked hard to try to suppress open dissent in the Navy and as a result, according to press reports, became “rocked by criticism” for his “capitulation.”⁷⁷ Carter clearly made deliberate choices as to which flag officers he placed in high offices.

Despite the political pressures and civil-military tension that Carter and Harold Brown generated, it would be inaccurate to say that they “purged” the JCS and appointed only “yes-men” to replace the outgoing chiefs. Carter and Brown succeeded in taking control of the military promotion system to the consternation of the JCS. This power of promotion was largely concentrated in the office of John Kester, special assistant to the Secretary of Defense. Yet, when interviewed for the position of Kester’s own military assistant, Colin Powell was impressed by the fact that “he was not looking for a yes-man.”⁷⁸ Likewise, the same could be said for the selection officers of the JCS. What Carter, Brown, and Kester sought were forward-looking officers willing and open to change in the defense establishment. Their pattern of selection and officer management supports this contention. General Jones, selected as the new Chairman of the JCS, had not only supported Carter on the B-1 but, perhaps more importantly, described himself as a “creature of change and an advocate of change” willing to oversee and mediate Carter’s plans for the military.⁷⁹ Rogers, leaving his post as Army Chief of Staff, was appointed SACEUR despite his serious clashes with Kester and Secretary of the Army Clifford Alexander. Based on the revisions in Carter’s defense policy, this move placed Rogers in a position where he would continue to

⁷⁷ Evans and Novak, “Washington’s Naval Battle,” *Washington Post*, September 4, 1978, A15.

⁷⁸ For success in Kester getting control of promotions, the conflict it created with the JCS, and Powell’s opinion of Kester see Powell, *My American Journey*, 234-237.

⁷⁹ David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 160.

give strong input into the defense budgetary and planning process, for Brown had succeeded in greatly increasing this role for the CINCs.⁸⁰ It would be difficult to classify Rogers as being completely deferential to civilian authority, yet he was considered at the time a “new breed” of intellectual officer willing and open to change.⁸¹ Similarly, his replacement, Meyer, was a very young appointee—a three-star at the time of his elevation to chief—who was, like Carter, a strong advocate of readiness and who had headed Carter’s efforts to create the Rapid Deployment Force.⁸² The same pattern emerged in the selection of the Air Force Chief of Staff. While Brzezinski recommended General Robert Huyser to Carter based on the general’s popularity and his ability to “deliver the Air Force . . . on important arms control issues,” the president refused.⁸³ He instead appointed the scientist with a PhD in nuclear physics, Lew Allen, who Brown had worked with before and who had done much research into pioneering space, missile, and “stealth” technology for the future. Allen, considered “the most learned missile expert in JCS history,” would often argue toe to toe with fellow physicist Harold Brown—and Brown was the strongest advocate of Allen over Huyser.⁸⁴ Admiral James Holloway consistently opposed the administration on shipbuilding

⁸⁰ “The DoD Reorganization Studies,” 6.

⁸¹ Bernard Weinraub, “Allied Leader and a Scholar: Bernard William Rogers,” *New York Times*, March 6, 1979, A6. See also Charles Mohr, “Carter Said to Name Army’s Chief as Haig’s Successor in NATO Post,” *New York Times*, February 25, 1979, A1 and A7.

⁸² For Meyer’s position as RDF pioneer see Wilson, “Army is Drafting Plans for ‘Quick-Strike’ Force,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 1979, A2. For youth and emphasis on change and readiness see Wilson, “Meyer Installed as New Army Chief of Staff,” *Washington Post*, June 23, 1979, A2.

⁸³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #49, March 3, 1978,” p. 1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Papers, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, Folder: Weekly Reports to the President 52-52: 1/78-3/78, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA. Hereafter cited as “NSC Weekly Report #49.”

⁸⁴ For Brown’s preference see “NSC Weekly Report #49.” For “most learned missile expert” and willingness to argue with Harold Brown see Perry, *Four Stars*, 271.

budgets and strongly opposed any reform of the Pentagon.⁸⁵ The successor CNO, Thomas Hayward, represented the very aviation-carrier wing of the Navy Carter fought against during his budget battles. Hayward was, however, considered a “maverick” and a technologist, open to Carter’s “total force” concept in the Navy.⁸⁶ There is no evidence that Carter thought he would support smaller carriers. The overall pattern, then, seemed to be one of Carter and Brown selecting officers willing to oversee substantial change and provide expert technical advice, rather than officers who would simply “go along.” This second set of Chiefs reduced, but by no means eliminated, the resistance to stronger civilian control of defense policies and budgets.

A similar pattern emerged for the selection of most of Carter’s CINCs. Despite his conflicts with several of them, Harold Brown convinced the president to work with most of them rather than try to relieve those who opposed administration policies. Carter listed SACEUR Alexander Haig as one of two people he should have fired. Indeed, Haig clashed strongly with the administration over many policy decisions, especially in regard to NATO and Iran. Harold Brown talked Carter out of firing him and the general instead opted to retire later in his term.⁸⁷ Vessey publicly opposed Carter’s Korea withdrawal policy but was later assigned as Vice-Chief of Staff of the Army in 1979. SOUTHCOM CINC Dennis McAuliffe cooperated on the Panama Canal treaties but opposed the administration’s overall approach to Latin America. Even so, Carter appointed the general as the first administrator of the Panama Canal Commission which took over operation of the Canal Zone following the

⁸⁵ Robert Previdi, *Civilian Control Versus Military Rule* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1988), 32-33.

⁸⁶ For classification as a technologist see Perry, *Four Stars*, 271. For openness to total force policy see changes implemented in measuring Navy strength in “Navy Is Planning to Count Reserve Ships as Part of Fleet,” *Washington Post*, January 19, 1979, A13.

⁸⁷ Carter, interview with Young et. al, November 28, 1982, JCL, 15.

ratification of the treaty.⁸⁸ None of these CINCs were pliable—each of them vocally resisted the administration at least one turn—yet the president and his SECDEF opted to try to work with them rather than risk a head-on civil-military confrontation.

Carter and Brown, to their credit, never retaliated against the JCS or theater CINCs for their sometimes dissenting testimony before Congress, nor did they limit their selection of chief's and CINCs to “yes men.” They were able to change out all four chiefs and several CINCs, and to the end the Chiefs remained willing to give frank advice and testimony. The Chiefs respected their commander-in-chief's approach and proved more willing to work with him and support SALT II, the cornerstone of his hopes for nuclear disarmament.

Although Carter's relations with his military chiefs improved, his relations with the military as a whole remained troubled. Most members of the military still viewed Carter's budgets, despite their increase over time, as a “step backward” from what Ford had planned.⁸⁹ Indeed, Carter's first defense budget was a net real decrease of 3.5 percent from the Ford FY77 budget.⁹⁰ Many less-senior members of the military, perhaps some of those aides attending Carter's first meeting at Blair House with the JCS, never altered their negative opinion of Carter and his administration. According to General Lew Allen, the attitudes of some of these younger officers toward the civilian leadership of the Carter administration bordered on “unacceptable insubordination.”⁹¹ These “iron majors” significantly affected civil-military relations since they populated the staffs that supported senior policy and decision makers. Harold Brown was so conscious of the impact of these

⁸⁸ Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 683.

⁸⁹ Rearden, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 366-367.

⁹⁰ *Department of Defense Key Officials*, 86.

⁹¹ GEN Lew Allen, interview by James Hasdorf, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 127.

“iron majors” that he chose to consult members of the JCS when they were alone. Brown complained that, in the official meeting room for the JCS known as “The Tank,” there was “always one of the ‘iron majors’ watching to make sure” that the Generals “toed the line.”⁹² General Jones described these officers as “zealots” and lamented that some of these officers “down below” always argued “that the Chief ought to resign, the country was going to hell, and the President doesn’t know what he is talking about.”⁹³ Colin Powell, serving as an “iron major” at the time, confirmed these sentiments, saying that, “on the whole, the vibrations coming out of the Carter White House were not comforting to the military profession.”⁹⁴

Conflict, Cooperation, or Chaos?: The Verdict On Carter’s Civil-Military Relations and How It Changes How We View His Presidency

An understanding of the civil-military interaction during the Carter years offers several critiques of the existing historiography of the Carter administration as a whole. It has been an area too often overlooked when trying to explain why things happened the way that they did during this time period. In many cases this study of civil-military relations validates existing conclusions, but in a few instances it definitely offers a new appraisal.

The course of civil-military relations in the Carter years is in keeping with the findings of the primary Carter historian Edwin C. Hargrove. His evaluation of Jimmy Carter’s leadership style is stinging:

Carter did not manage the seamless web of purpose, politics, and process smoothly. His strategic leadership had a disjointed character in which discrete decisions jarred and jostled each other. He fastened too much on particular decisions that had come before and that would follow.⁹⁵

⁹² Harold Brown, interview by Goldberg and Matloff, 28 February 1992, OSD Oral History, 20.

⁹³ GEN David Jones, interview by Maryanow and Kohn, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 183.

⁹⁴ Powell, *My American Journey*, 250.

⁹⁵ Erwin C. Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President: Leadership and the Politics of the Public Good* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 190.

Hargrove believes Carter thought of himself as Wilsonian—moralistic in nature and inclined towards a factual analysis of problems. Once Carter reached a decision, he was supremely confident that his decision was the correct one--a decision that was morally correct and for the “public good.”⁹⁶ Part of the reasoning that created Carter’s decision-making process stemmed from the view that he took of himself as president. Carter viewed himself as an “outsider”—a president who was divorced from politics as usual, a president who could bring morality back to politics. For this reason he sought to personally create “comprehensive solutions” to problems without building coalitions behind those decisions. Whenever possible he would leave politics out of his calculations.⁹⁷ The result of this decision-making process, according to Hargrove, was that Carter tried to make too many decisions himself.⁹⁸

Hargrove’s findings very well classify much of the interaction between the administration, the military, and Congress. The decision to cancel the B-1 bomber project is perhaps the single best example that fits well with Hargrove’s assessment. Based on solely on cost benefit analysis, Carter made a logical and correct choice regarding the B-1. In fact, B-1 project completion proved to be even more costly than expected, and the plane ended up having a very bad operational history. Each successive problem generated millions of extra dollars in program cost and the first B-1 bomber was not employed in combat until retaliatory strikes on Iraq in late 1998.⁹⁹ Thus, Carter’s decision maximized the cost-

⁹⁶ Edwin Hargrove, "Politics of Public Goods," in *Leadership in the Modern Presidency*, ed. Fred Greenstein (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 233-234.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 230-231.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁹⁹ Timothy M. Laur and Steven L. Llanos, *The Army Times, Navy Times, Air Force Times Encyclopedia of Modern U.S. Military Weapons*, ed. Walter J. Boyne (New York: Berkley Books, 1995), 21.

effectiveness of our nation's defense systems with his ideas of modernizing existing B-52s with "swarms" of cruise missiles at a reasonable cost of only \$750,000 per aircraft.¹⁰⁰ Yet, despite the logic and prudence of his decision, Carter's surprise announcement generated needless frustration and anger. Carter's approach to the Korea troop withdrawals and the ERW cancellation took a very similar course. In the end all of these last-minute decisions made without full consultation of Congress or advisors heightened discord, just as Hargrove finds in his overall analysis of the Carter presidency.

The findings of Richard Thornton in *The Carter Years* are not fully supported when doing deeper analysis into civil-military interaction within the administration. Thornton's work is the second of three volumes analyzing American strategy and foreign policy from 1968-1988. His thesis was that Carter entered office fully intending to carry forth the Nixon-Kissinger policy of détente, but "a major Soviet strategic weapons breakthrough almost immediately forced its reconsideration." The result, according to Thornton, was a "heated debate over the viability of Kissinger's strategy" which resulted in "strategic indecision and policy vacillation."¹⁰¹ There are several problems with this interpretation.

First, the idea that a "major Soviet strategic weapons breakthrough" forced Carter and his advisors to reconsider their entire foreign policy is not borne out by the declassified documents and congressional testimony of this time period. In November of 1977, Brzezinski advised Carter that the U.S. ICBM force would "not become significantly vulnerable until the late 1980s [emphasis in original]."¹⁰² Likewise, the Air Force confirmed

¹⁰⁰ Famiglietti, "Carter Halts B-1," *Air Force Times*, 11 Jul 77, 3.

¹⁰¹ Thornton, *The Carter Years*, xiii.

¹⁰² Brzezinski, "Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #36," JCL.

these findings, predicting that Minuteman missile losses would be “essentially zero” during any kind of Soviet attack.¹⁰³ Harold Brown took office testifying to Congress that “there is no reason for immediate or grave alarm about our ability to deter major military actions by the Soviet Union.”¹⁰⁴ Later testimony in early 1979 repeated these findings.¹⁰⁵

Second, it does not seem that the Carter administration was as committed to continuing the approach of the Nixon-Kissinger framework as Thornton suggests. Many of the early PDs coming from the Carter White House were significant and rapid changes of course. Even the Carter administration overhaul of the NSC system was a massive departure from the past. While arms control remained a central part of both administrations’ approach to détente, Carter had radically different ideas—as his initial “deep cuts” and “minimum deterrence” proposals suggested. The uniformed military were particularly apprehensive about many of these changes, particularly in the first two years. Korea, Latin America, and Africa were all areas where the military objected to many of the new administration’s initiatives.

Finally, Carter’s foreign policy was not as vacillating or incoherent as Thornton suggests. Thornton is not alone in thinking this, however; Steven Rearden also states that the Carter administration lacked “any clear-cut, high-level consensus on the nature of the Soviet threat.”¹⁰⁶ John Lewis Gaddis also reached a similar conclusion regarding Carter’s approach to containment.¹⁰⁷ While this may seem the case at first, when examining the interaction

¹⁰³ Brzezinski, “Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Weekly Report #22,” JCL, 22.

¹⁰⁴ SASC, *FY78 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 602.

¹⁰⁵ HASC, *FY80 Defense Authorization Hearings*, 7. Brian J. Auten is thus correct in pointing out the timing problems associated with Thornton’s thesis. See Auten, *Carter’s Conversion*, 27.

¹⁰⁶ Rearden, *The JCS and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 385.

¹⁰⁷ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 347.

between Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House in the Carter years a more coherent picture emerges.

First, Carter largely adhered to the ideas espoused in his Princeton Address before he took office. He believed that America had reached a limit of its power and could no longer use only its might to protect the free world. He advocated shouldering American allies with greater responsibility for their own defense. He wanted to withdraw American forces from the Far East and focus on development of the NATO alliance. By pursuing this course, which would eventually include normalization of relations with China, Carter hoped to press the Soviets to accept deeper arms reductions than even the initial deep cuts proposal of SALT. After a brokered settlement between Israel and Egypt in the Middle East, Carter expected that region to remain relatively stable. The human rights campaign, combined with the return of the Panama Canal, would help American standing in the Third World while at the same time put pressure on the Russians to reform their own political system.¹⁰⁸

Second, there was a degree of consensus among high-level civilians in the Carter administration that the Soviet threat had been overblown in the past. Carter and Vance did not really think of the relationship between the two nations as a “Cold War.” Harold Brown’s rhetoric when taking office was so muted that some called it a “flute against [war] drums” and decried that the “Cassandra calls” about the Russian threat were ending.¹⁰⁹ Even as late as June of 1979, Brown was “worried” about a Pentagon study which he felt

¹⁰⁸ Brzezinski’s views also mirrored these, as evidenced by his well-known essay written before he became Carter’s National Security Advisor. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, “America in a Hostile World,” *Foreign Policy* 23 (Summer, 1976): 65-96.

¹⁰⁹ Grelder, “U.S.-Russian Arms Debate at a Crossroads,” *Washington Post*, February 20, 1977, A1; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “The Pentagon’s New Voice,” *Washington Post*, January 15, 1977, A19.

exaggerated the Soviet threat.¹¹⁰ Brzezinski was the most hardline advisor, but even he felt that the administration could cooperate with the Russians and avoid “excessive preoccupation with the U.S.-Soviet relationship.”¹¹¹ The curtailment of defense spending dovetailed naturally from these views.

Finally, the administration’s changes in policy flowed not so much from vacillation as from recalibration of their initial opinions—and the interplay between Congress and the military had much to do with this. There was no vacillation when it came to how much to spend on defense—Jimmy Carter consistently tried to hold the line, but the military-congressional alliance forced his hand, using SALT II as leverage. The military influenced Harold Brown when it came to defense spending, leading to a united Pentagon call for higher budgets. In terms of overall foreign policy, Carter also made some conscious decisions to shift stances. Several of his PDs called for reassessment of relations with Latin America and events in the Middle East encouraged a change of outlook for that area. He changed his mind on Korea troop withdrawals after continued resistance from the military. PD-59 overhauled nuclear war planning and took a detailed look at how to confront the Russians in a global conflict. All of these changes resulted in large part due to the increasing weight that Carter gave to military advice and the fact that the political strength of the military-congressional alliance overpowered his ability to resist it.

¹¹⁰ “U.S. Officials Report Shift in Military Edge toward Soviet Union,” *New York Times*, June 6, 1979, A11. This appraisal also differs from the famous “decade of neglect” thesis posited by Gray and Barlow in their essay. They argue, “It is difficult to feel the sympathy for an administration that recognized in words the scope and depth of the problem posed by the momentum in Soviet defense investment, yet which chose to respond in so minimal a fashion.” Their primary source for this conclusion are Harold Brown’s *DoD Annual Reports* which tended to avoid understating the case to the more conservative HASC and SASC. These reports were also more muted compared to Rumsfeld’s *FY77 DoD Report*.

¹¹¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 148-149; Charles Mohr, “Carter Orders Steps to Increase Ability to Meet War Threats,” *New York Times*, August 26, 1977, 1.

The analysis of civil-military relations in Carter's term also calls into question the strength of the argument advanced by historian Gaddis Smith that the Vance-Brzezinski split was primarily responsible for Carter altering his foreign policy.¹¹² This argument holds that during the first two years of his administration, Carter listened more to Vance, whose more liberal views dominated foreign policy. Following the setbacks of Iran and Afghanistan, Brzezinski's hard line gained increasing influence and, by 1980, almost entirely held sway with Carter. The result was the transition to a militant Cold War foreign policy accompanied by a military buildup. When looking at Carter's relationship with his military advisors, the Pentagon, and Congress, however, this interpretation falls short. It neglects the role of Congress in converting Jimmy Carter's foreign policy and assigns too much agency to Carter himself in the process. As much of the debates surrounding defense budgets and SALT II demonstrated, Jimmy Carter wanted to limit defense spending even as late as 1980. It was the military-congressional alliance that forced his hand and precipitated the military buildup which Reagan later completed. This larger political scene had at least as much influence on the president as his Secretary of State and his National Security Advisor.

Finally, even the most recent interpretation of Carter's defense policy offered by Brian Auten is not entirely correct. When looking only at the programs and levels of the 1977-1980 defense budgets it does indeed seem that Carter and his advisors gradually precipitated a massive nuclear modernization and a conventional forces buildup. When considering the interplay between the Pentagon, Congress, and the White House, however, the story is not so straightforward. If Carter and his advisors truly recognized the Soviets as such a great threat, it is unclear why they would have fought so fiercely against proposed congressional defense-

¹¹² Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 35, 49.

increases while publicly bolstering their image as strong on defense. Auten is correct when he speaks of Carter's conversion to a harder defense policy, but it was more of a forced conversion than it was a completely "self-correcting policy change."¹¹³

The Carter years also provide some new interpretations for the existing stock of civil-military relations literature. In particular, the Carter presidency additional insight on three important issues: (1) partisanship among military officers, (2) the rise of the military as a special interest group in politics or the "politicization of the military," and (3) control of the military through successful civilian influence in policy and warfighting.

The origins of the much discussed findings of Ole Holsti and Morris Janowitz concerning the increasingly Republican partisanship of the Army officer corps can be seen in the Carter years.¹¹⁴ A public opinion poll a few weeks before the 1980 election revealed that less than one percent of military officers supported Carter over Reagan.¹¹⁵ No doubt this had much to do with the chaotic foreign policy from 1977-1981 and the failure of Operation Eagle Claw. It would be unfounded, however, to place the blame for this officer partisanship on Carter. Holsti's study does not chart prior to 1976, so more than likely this trend in officer identification with the Republican party was gradually taking place anyway. Carter's policies and conflict with the military may have hastened the shift, but little evidence exists

¹¹³ Auten, *Carter's Conversion*, 3. Likewise, what Auten terms the *innenpolitik* model offered by David Skidmore. See Skidmore, *Changing Course*, 55, 180. Skidmore perhaps over-emphasizes the role of domestic politics in his model, especially the role of conservative political groups such as the Committee on Present Danger in forcing Carter to take a harder stance on the Soviets. As shown by his stance on defense budgets, Carter was willing to carry the fight against the military-congressional alliance even into the 1980 campaign.

¹¹⁴ Holsti, "A Widening Gap between the U.S. Military and Civilian Society?" in *International Security* 23, no. 3: 5-42; Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1971), lii, 391-392.; Raymond, *Power at the Pentagon*, 187.

¹¹⁵ Perry, *Four Stars*, 277.

to support more than this.¹¹⁶ The battles over the military budget in FY1950 raged much hotter than FY1980.¹¹⁷ One must also note that the military-congressional alliance in the Carter years was more of an alliance between conservative Democrats and the Pentagon than it was between the uniformed military and the Republican opposition.

Samuel Huntington, Dale Herspring, Edward Kolodziej, and Adam Yarmolinsky have all spoken of the politicization of the military since World War II.¹¹⁸ Herspring especially has argued that the military has become its own special interest group on Capitol Hill. Again, the Carter presidency provides qualified support for this conclusion. As Huntington pointed out, “Congressional appropriation of more money than the Administration requests usually reflects a significant policy divergence between the Administration and Congress.”¹¹⁹ This was definitely the case during the Carter years—and the statements and letters of key members of Congress attest to this. The Pentagon at times circumvented Carter, using end runs to alter his policies and expenditures. Yet, as the testimony surrounding the FY80 and FY81 defense budgets revealed, many in Congress had hopes that the military would have done more to press their own interests. On the critical SALT II treaty, the military compromised and risked offending the military-congressional alliance that it would have been so much in their interest to support. Thus, in the Carter years the military acted like a

¹¹⁶ Based on Holsti’s study, one interesting note is that those officers identifying themselves as “strong Republicans” actually decreased from 48 to 32 percent from 1976 to 1980 while the civilian statistic remained constant at 20 percent. Officers identifying themselves as “Republican” rose from 33 to 46 percent over the same period. See Holsti’s raw data presented in Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 45.

¹¹⁷ Walter Millis referred to the FY50 budget as the “Great Debate” in his work. The services asked for close to \$30 billion, but Harry Truman set his cap at \$14.2 billion, much more significant than the \$2 billion difference between the Ford and Carter FY78 budgets. See Walter Millis, *Arms and the State: Civil-Military Elements in National Policy* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1958), 239, 345.

¹¹⁸ Huntington, *The Common Defense*, 384-385; Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 1; Kolodziej, *The Uncommon Defense*, 219, 420; Yarmolinsky, *The Military Establishment*, 39-41.

¹¹⁹ Huntington, *The Common Defense*, 145.

special interest group but at times was willing to do things against its own interest in order to limit civil-military discord and support their commander-in-chief.

Louis Smith and Elliot Cohen's studies suggest a sustained role for civilians in defense policy making and warfighting.¹²⁰ In many ways the Carter administration provided a very good example of how this can be done without creating excessive civil-military conflict. The President took an active role in both defense budgets and policy but was willing to limit that direct control over the course of his term as he gained confidence with his subordinates. The president also kept an open dialogue with his military advisors, making it clear that they could come directly to him on matters of great importance. When it finally came to the use of military force with Operation Eagle Claw, Carter fully trusted his subordinates in the Pentagon to execute a plan after he gave them his specific guidance.

Harold Brown accepted this arrangement as Secretary of Defense. He had many ideas about how to reform the Pentagon and how to change defense policy, but he was pragmatic about how much he was willing to try to accomplish. When resistance from the military stiffened, Brown did not try to railroad reform through, nor did he cave in and backdoor his boss. He increased civilian control within the Pentagon but did so gradually and with an even-hand.

Jimmy Carter, with his bold plans for world peace and nuclear disarmament, has by some been associated with the Reagan's return to militancy in the Cold War. If he had only his own way, however, this would not have been the case. Carter envisioned a post-Cold War, multi-polar world before the Cold War was really over. He saw the future but was limited by the constraints and reality of the present. The military-congressional alliance that formed

¹²⁰ Cohen, *Supreme Command*, 206, 264; Smith, *American Democracy and Military Power*, 12.

over the course of his four years led his administration to abandon its plans for reducing defense spending and limiting U.S. global commitments. It was indeed a conversion-like odyssey for Jimmy Carter—but it was a forced conversion.

Civil-military relations during Carter's administration improved over time. Carter's term demonstrates how conflicts, cooperation, compromises, mistrust, and end-runs can all occur within an administration's civil-military relationship, even at times simultaneously. It also shows how even in times of virtual chaos this relationship can still function to provide for the national interest. There is probably no model or formula that can capture all of the complicated interactions involved and predict or prevent civil-military discord. In the end much of it comes down to personalities and professionalism. Although many of the "iron majors" never overcame their disdain for Carter, the most experienced and professional officers in the military performed their duty and acceded to civilian control.

In the end, the thirty-ninth president found a naval vessel named in honor of him—the *USS Jimmy Carter*, the final Seawolf class nuclear-powered submarine commissioned in February 2005. This may indicate that even the embittered Navy was willing to cede that the Carter years inflicted no permanent damage to the American civil-military relationship.¹²¹ Then again, Senator John Stennis, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush all had the largest aircraft carriers ever built bear their namesakes. So perhaps the Navy, after their successful end-runs, delivered a parting shot to Jimmy Carter—faint praise as a note of disdain—just for the sake of posterity.

¹²¹ See <http://www.csg2.navy.mil/Jimmy%20Carter/JimmyCarterFacts.html> (accessed 8 February 2007) for information about the *USS Jimmy Carter*.

Appendix 1

The Annual Defense Budget Process

The annual defense budget is one of the most complicated processes within the federal government. In his first appearance testifying as Secretary of the Navy, Edward Hidalgo admitted with understandable frustration that the defense budget process was “an endless labyrinth.”¹ The following discussion is a brief overview of the process during the Carter years. While the general pattern remains the same today, each presidential administration adjusts the defense budget timeline somewhat to fit into its overall planning cycle. The Carter administration was no different in this regard and, upon taking office, began to institute changes in the defense budget drafting process. As is often the case, different agencies and organizations fail to meet recommended budgetary timelines, thus altering the course of the defense budget drafting process. Again, the Carter administration was no exception—struggling to meet timelines on its first two iterations of the budget as it attempted to implement its new systems.² Significantly, the annual defense budget process is cyclical in nature and attention to the defense budget is constant—so, as soon as one year’s ends, work begins on the next.

According to improvements made during Robert S. McNamara's tenure as Secretary of Defense (1961-1968) which were known as the Planning, Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS), the annual defense budget process began roughly in March of a given year. The process then ended in February of the next year with the finalized budget submission to Congress. In between this time, Congress modifies the budget through a series of committees: the House and Senate Budget Committees, the House and Senate Appropriations

¹ HAPC, *FY81 Defense Appropriations Hearings*, 443.

² Poole, *The Evolution of the JSPS*, 15.

Committees, and the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. These committees each have different functions and agendas based on their composition, but all seek input from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the Service Secretaries, and the Secretary of Defense during open and closed testimony. Based on their own discussions and the testimony before them, the various committees modify the budget and vote on it through Congress in a series of bills. Generally, by the end of March, the congressional stage is complete, Congress votes, and submits a defense authorization bill to the president for his signature. The president can then either sign the bill into law or veto it.

During the Carter administration, the process began with the JCS submitting the Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP). The plan "outlined the threats which jeopardized the security of nation and recommended the military forces which the Chiefs believed were necessary to counter the threat."³ Taking into account the information in the JSOP, civilians in the administration then formulated guidance documents for the military. In 1976, prior to Carter's first budget, these documents consisted of Defense Guidance (DG), Planning and Programming Guidance (PPG), and Fiscal Guidance (FG). Carter and his Secretary of Defense Harold Brown felt these three documents were cumbersome, redundant, and failed to integrate fully foreign policy into the defense budget process. Therefore, Brown grouped these three separate documents into a single one known as Consolidated Guidance (CG).⁴ In the words of the JCS official historian, this was a "watershed event" which brought significant changes to the annual defense budget process.⁵

³ Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon*, 85.

⁴ Harold Brown, "Memorandum for Service Secretaries and the CJCS, Subject: Improvements in the PPBS, October 25, 1977," CJCS Brown Files, 550 Budget, Box 34, NARA II, College Park, MD. Hereafter cited as "Memorandum for Service Secretaries and the CJCS: Improvements in the PPBS."

⁵ Poole, *Evolution of the JSPS*, 15.

Brown did not feel that starting the process in March for completion in February of the next year was adequate, so he requested the JSOP from the JCS in October and proposed several modifications to the PPBS. Following the issuing of the JSOP, the Chairman of the JCS would then meet with the Secretary of Defense at the start of November to “suggest key features of the CG.”⁶ By the start of January, the draft CG would be sent to the JCS for review. From this document, which in theory revealed how far the administration was willing to go in meeting the threats detailed in the original JSOP, the JCS would develop a document known as the JSOP II. This document detailed how the JCS proposed to meet the threats to the nation based on the limited means of the administration laid out in the draft CG. The JSOP II would then be returned to the Secretary of Defense with only a one week suspense for completion.⁷

After reviewing the JCS comments for almost two weeks, Harold Brown would meet with the JCS in the third week of February to discuss their comments. The Office of the Secretary of Defense staff would then revise the CG based upon this discussion, and the revised draft CG would be sent to President Carter for his signature at the end of the month. In the first week of March, the president would then meet with Secretary of Defense Brown and the JCS to discuss the CG and make his recommendations, from which the final draft of the CG would be prepared by the third week in March. Each service would then submit a Programming Objectives Memorandum (POM), a rough draft of how the service planned to meet the CG and a tentative list of its costs associated with doing so--again with only a one week suspense. Through a process of meetings and negotiations, with periodic status reports

⁶ Brown, "Memorandum for Service Secretaries and the CJCS, Subject: Improvements in the PPBS."

⁷ Ibid.

sent to the president, the OSD and JSC would work together to determine which programs would receive funding. By the start of August, each service would then meet individually with the Secretary of Defense to "reclama" (appeal) any cuts which they strongly opposed. After decision on all of the reclamas, the individual services would then submit their budgets by the end of September, when they would then be compiled into the Department of Defense budget for approval by the president and his Office of the Management of the Budget staff.⁸ The process of the administration developing its own defense budget was then essentially complete.

The changes proposed by Secretary Brown, although resisted by the military and Congress, were eventually implemented with minor modifications.⁹ The JCS finally adapted by making several important changes in their own Joint Strategic Planning System that would make the overall process more efficient. In the judgment of the official JCS historian the reforms during the Carter Administration "clearly enhanced the utility of the Joint Strategic Planning System."¹⁰ Thus, in some ways, the legacy of Carter and Brown's changes to the annual defense budget process carry on to the present day.

⁸ Timeline taken from "Memorandum for Service Secretaries and the CJCS, Subject: Improvements in the PPBS."

⁹ For military and congressional resistance to the plan see Price, "Letter to ASD L&L, Subject: Request for Explanation Regarding Changes in PPBS."

¹⁰ Poole, *Evolution of the JSPS*, 16-17.

Appendix 2

Civil-Military Timeline of the Carter Years

Pre-Presidential

- 12 Dec 74: Carter announced candidacy
- 28 Jan 75: Carter's advisors met with Brookings Institution on defense strategy and budget
- 08 Feb 75: Carter's "Princeton Address" Drafted
- 17-20 Feb 76: SASC Hearings on FY77 Defense Budget, Air Force argued for critical need of the B-1
- 16 May 76: Carter's interview with Bill Moyers promised Korea troop withdrawals
- 14 Jul 76: Carter nominated as Democratic presidential candidate
- 13 Sep 76: Carter's *U.S. News and World Report* interview dismissed possibility of war in the Pacific theater
- 02 Nov 76: Jimmy Carter elected president
- 05 Dec 76: St. Simon Meetings, agreement to reorganize the NSC
- 10 Dec 76: First Meeting with JCS and President-Elect Carter (Ch. 1 Opening Vignette)

1977

January 1977

- 05 Jan 77: First tentative NSC meeting setting primary goals as Panama and Middle East
- 11 Jan 77: Nomination Hearings of Brown and Duncan with SASC
- 13 Jan 77: JCS Meeting with Carter (9 hours 15 minutes). Carter suggests idea of "minimum deterrence" again
- 20 Jan 77: Carter's Inauguration
- 20 Jan 77: *PD-1 Establishment of PRM/PDs, PD-2 NSC System* changed the structure of the Nixon-Kissinger NSC to the Carter-Brzezinski system as agreed at St. Simon
- 21 Jan 77: *PRM-1 Panama, PRM-3 Middle East, PRM-4 South Africa-Rhodesia, PRM-5 Cyprus/Aegean, PRM-6 MFBR* called for significant changes from the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy approach. Carter issued Presidential Pardon for Draft Evaders from Vietnam
- 24 Jan 77: *PRM-2 SALT* set forward ideas for significant movement toward a SALT II ratification, followed by a much more significant SALT III
- 25 Jan 77: Secretary Brown and CJCS Brown presented unmodified FY78 Defense Budget to SASC in their first joint appearance before Congress
- 26 Jan 77: *PRM-12 Arms Transfer Policy Review, PRM-13 Korea* (Initiated studies on Korea troop withdrawal), *PRM-14 Philippine Bases, PRM-17 Latin America Review* further outlined Carter's plan for limited global commitments
- 27 Jan 77: Bert Lance and Harold Brown met with Carter regarding FY78 Defense Budget
- 31 Jan 77: "Marathon" Meeting with Carter, OSD, OMB, CJSC on the FY78 Defense Budget (Ch. 2 Opening Vignette)

February 1977

- 18 Feb 77: *PRM-10 Military Overview* initiated a massive review of U.S. military strategy from which the JCS later claimed to be largely excluded

23 Feb 77: Carter held firm to promise of \$5-7 billion in defense cuts at press conference
24 Feb 77: SECDEF Brown and CJSC Brown re-submitted FY78 Budget to SASC with cuts of only \$2-3 billion.

March 1977

01 Mar 77: President Carter visited the Pentagon and was questioned on his pardoning of Draft Evaders by an Air Force Sergeant, but cited the need for the nation to “move on” from the Vietnam War
05 Mar 77: “Ask President Carter” on CBS, Carter denied Vietnam Veterans Bonus
09 Mar 77: *PD-5 Southern Africa* (Called for promotion of change in South Africa)
15 Mar 77: *PD-6 Cuba* (Called for normalization of relations with Cuba)
17 Mar 77: *PRM-21 Horn of Africa* initiated studies on how to address Cuban and Soviet incursion into this region.
30 Mar 77: First SALT II proposals rejected by USSR

April 1977

05 Apr 77: *PRM-24 China Policy* initiated studies on Normalization with China

May 1977

03 May 77: JCS complained to SECDEF that the NSC was tabling information to gain consensus, but SECDEF Brown declined to forward the memo to Brzezinski
05 May 77: *PD-12 U.S. Policy in Korea* initiated troop withdrawals from Korea
13 May 77: *PD-13 Conventional Arms Transfer Policy* stated that the U.S. would not be the first nation to introduce new arms into a region. This later brought significant objection from the JCS and the SOUTHCOM CINC.
19 May 77: John Saar article cited MG Singlaub as saying Carter’s troop withdrawal policy will lead to war in Korea
21 May 77: Carter fired MG Singlaub as Korea Chief of Staff
28 May 77: Singlaub awarded Chief of Staff position with FORSCOM

June 1977

06 Jun 77: Walter Pincus’ article exposed existence of ERW
10 Jun 77: *PD-14 Disposition of NSAM and NSDMs (Major Policy Continuity/Changes)* (Rescinded NSAM 55 “Relationship of the JCS to the President in Cold War Operations” which called for “direct and unfiltered” JCS advice to the president)
15 Jun 77: SECDEF Brown took exception to many of the PRM-10 findings in a letter to Carter, supporting JCS concerns
24 Jun 77: NSC Weekly #18 on U.S.-Soviet Tensions predicted a general “warming” of U.S.-Soviet relations
30 Jun 77: Carter announced B-1 cancellation in a surprise decision

July 1977

14 Jul 77: HCOB hearing on 5 year defense plan for the administration
22 Jul 77: NSC Weekly Report #22 reports Minuteman missile losses expected “zero” under all Soviet attack conditions

August 1977

- 04 Aug 77: *PD-17 Reorganization of Intel Community* initiated many of Stansfield Turner's reforms within the CIA and DIA, Department of Energy established
- 11 Aug 77: Harold Brown recommended continuation of ERW program to the president
- 12 Aug 77: JCS publicly endorsed Panama Canal Treaty
- 23 Aug 77: Meeting between CJCS Brown and Carter on Panama Canal
- 24 Aug 77: *PD-18 U.S. National Strategy* outlined the administration's "grand strategy" but was criticized as being "big on abstractions and short on specifics," especially in regard to the Soviet threat

September 1977

- 07 Sep 77: Panama Canal Treaty signed by Carter and Torijos, CJCS Brown went to the White House for breakfast upon the president's return
- 08 Sep 77: SECDEF Brown missed deadline for submission of FY78 defense guidance
- 09 Sep 77: *PD-20 U.S. SALT Position* clarifies the "three-tier" approach dominated by the State Department, moving away from Harold Brown's initial proposal that was supported by the JCS
- 20 Sep 77: Carter directed SECDEF Brown to study DoD organization
- 21 Sep 77: Bert Lance resigned as head of OMB amid a personal financial scandal
- 22 Sep 77: JCS reported concern with no delivery of defense guidance for FY78
- 27 Sep 77: Compromise with Gromyko on SALT II, CJCS testified before Congress on Panama Canal, supporting the treaty
- 29 Sep 77: Carter meeting again questioned role of ICBMs in the triad, calling for minimum deterrence. Following this Harold Brown told the president that continuing to pursue minimum deterrence created "fundamental risk" for American security
- 30 Sep 77: *PRM-32 Civil Defense* initiated studies on civil defense in America in case of nuclear attack by the U.S.S.R.

October 1977

- 26 Oct 77: SECDEF Brown proposed changes to the PPBS to the JCS, generating resistance from the military-congressional alliance
- 28 Oct 77: Carter calls for more NSC supervision of defense budgets and defense policy in NSC Weekly #34
- 31 Oct 77: "Halloween Massacre" at the CIA fired many espionage agents

November 1977

- 01 Nov 77: Services, CJCS met with SECDEF to suggest key features of CG
- 11 Nov 77: NSC Weekly Report #36 reports Minuteman may not be vulnerable until late 1980s, possibly negating the need for the MX missile

1978

January 1978

- 03 Jan 78: SECDEF reviewed the first draft of CG, sent to the JCS for comments
- 09 Jan 78: CJCS Brown strongly criticized first draft of the CG

10 Jan 78: OSD revised CG, comments sent to JCS and services
17 Jan 78: JCS, services reviewed CG, sent comments and JSOP II to SECDEF
20 Jan 78: Carter submitted FY79 Budget to Congress, Melvin Price requested explanation on Brown's proposed changes to the PPBS, saying that Brown's proposed changes would leave out uniformed military advice until it was too late to consider

February 1978

01 Feb 78: JCS complained of lack of notice and preparation for important NSC meetings
14 Feb 78: SECDEF reviewed second set of JCS comments on CG
15 Feb 78: CJCS Brown again heavily criticized CG in memo to SECDEF
17 Feb 78: *PD-30 Human Rights* defined an important aspect of Carter's foreign policy
21 Feb 78: SECDEF Brown and Charles Duncan met with all services on CG, Congressional Testimony began for the FY79 Defense Budget
24 Feb 78: *PD-32 Horn of Africa* followed most of the JCS recommendations of how to respond to the war between Somalia and Ethiopia
28 Feb 78: OSD Staff revised CG, draft sent to President Carter for his comments

March 1978

07 Mar 78: President reviewed CG, met with SECDEF and CJCS to hear their views
10 Mar 78: Memo from Brown to Carter asserting the JCS feeling that a 5 percent defense increase could be "easily" passed by Congress
16 Mar 78: Senate ratified 1st Panama Treaty
28 Mar 78: Services prepared POMs for the FY80-81 Budget Cycle

April 1978

7 Apr 78: Carter unilaterally deferred ERW in another surprise decision
11 Apr 78: NSC Meeting on Korea withdrawal (Ch. 3 Opening Vignette)
15 Apr 78: Carter sided with OMB in debate over final FY79 budget totals
18 Apr 78: Senate ratified 2nd Panama Treaty

May 1978

10 May 78: JCS lunch at White House with the JCS re: Consolidated Guidance
23 May 78: *PRM-36 Cubans and Russians in Africa* called for more detailed studies of Soviet and Cuban "adventurism" in Africa

June 1978

07 Jun 78: Carter's speech at Annapolis on "conflict or confrontation" is criticized as being a stapled-together draft of Vance and Brzezinski's opposing views on foreign policy
30 Jun 78: JCS Chairman changed to from Gen. Brown (USAF) to Gen. Jones (USAF), Adm. Tom Hayward as CNO, Gen. Lew Allen, Chief of the Air Force

July 1978

19 Jul 78: OSD Staff drafted FY80-81 POMs, SECDEF sent to services
25 Jul 78: Services reviewed FY80-81 POMs and sent requests back to SECDEF
28 Jul 78: Service requests reflected "goldwatching" according to NSC Weekly Report #68
31 July 78: Steadman Report published, criticized quality of JCS advice

August 1978

- 07 Aug 78: FY80-81 service reclama meetings with SECDEF and CJCS
- 17 Aug 78: Carter vetoed FY79 Defense Budget
- 18 Aug 78: President met with SECDEF, CJCS regarding the veto
- 31 Aug 78: Letter from Melvin Price blasted Carter on his veto and defense spending

September 1978

- 01 Sep 78: Services prepared and submitted Defense Budgets for FY80-81
- 04 Sep 78: Camp David Conference began
- 07 Sep 78: Jaleh Square Massacre in Iran signals beginning of the fall of the Shah
- 17 Sep 78: Camp David Accords signed
- 29 Sep 78: *PD-41 Civil Defense* called for much greater investment in civil-defense efforts to respond to potential nuclear attacks, Final Defense Budgets for FY80-81 from services sent to SECDEF

October 1978

- 18 Oct 78: U.S. announced decision to produce neutron weapons components despite Carter's earlier unilateral deferral

November 1978

- 21 Nov 78: Preliminary CG Drafted for FY81-82

December 1978

- 15 Dec 78: U.S. normalized relations with China
- 19 Dec 78: Meeting between JCS and Carter regarding SALT II where Carter refused to acknowledge any link between SALT ratification and increased defense spending (Ch. 6 Opening Vignette)
- 20 Dec 78: Paul Warnke resigned as head of the ACDA

1979

January 1979

- 01 Jan 79: General Seignious appointed as head of the ACDA
- 05 Jan 79: General Huyser arrived in Iran
- 12 Jan 79: Letter from 170 retired generals and admirals sent to Carter opposing SALT II
- 16 Jan 79: Shah fled Iran
- 22 Jan 79: *PRM-45 U.S. Policy Toward Korea* ordered re-evaluation of troop withdrawals in light of intelligence reports of greater North Korean military strength
- 25 Jan 79: FY80 Annual DoD Report Published, Testimony on FY80 Defense Budget began

February 1979

- 1 Feb 79: Khomeini returned to Iran
- 2 Feb 79: General Huyser left Iran, meets with the president upon his return
- 7 Feb 79: Hearings on FY79 Supplemental Defense Request began
- 9 Feb 79: U.S. severed ties with Somoza regime in Nicaragua due to human rights violations
- 9-19 Feb 79: Harold Brown's Middle East arms selling trip to assure allies in that region
- 11 Feb 79: Iranian government toppled by massive uprisings

14 Feb 79: U.S. Embassy staff briefly held hostage, then released by Iranian “students”
20 Feb 79: Carter’s Georgia Tech Speech emphasizes military preparedness and higher defense budgets

March 1979

01 Mar 79: Carter added “Iranian Fire Sale” material to FY79 supplemental
07 Mar 79: 3rd FY79 Supplemental Hearing before SASC (Iranian Fire Sale Testimony)
11 Mar 79: Stanley Resor resigned as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, cited a lack of support for reform within the Pentagon
28 Mar 79: Three Mile Island Incident

April 1979

Early April 79: SECDEF Brown created Defense Resource Board IAW Rice study recommendations
23 Apr 79: Gen. McAuliffe, SOUTHCOM CINC, criticized FY80 defense guidance

May 1979

04 May 79: *PRM-46 U.S. Policy Toward Central America* called for a re-evaluation of U.S. policy toward Latin American countries in light of Cuban support for insurgencies
Late May 79: FY79 Defense Supplemental passed Congress

June 1979

18 Jun 79: Carter signed SALT II with Brezhnev in Vienna
22 Jun 79: SECDEF Brown ordered JCS to review entire command arrangement for the Middle East, but the JCS eventually rejected any need for reform in the Unified Command Plan and instead called for additional resources for the RDF

July 1979

03 Jul 79: Camp David Meetings on state of the administration, all cabinet members submitted resignations and Carter decided which to accept or reject
15 Jul 79: Carter’s “Malaise” Speech
17 Jul 79: Carter Announced Cabinet and Staff Changes including firing James Schlesinger as Secretary of Energy
19 Jul 79: Somoza fled Nicaragua, Sandinistas assumed power
20 Jul 79: Carter announced suspension of U.S. troop withdrawals from Korea
26 Jul 79: Senator Nunn publicly linked ratification of SALT II to higher defense spending in FY80 and FY81

August 1979

02 Aug 79: Senators Nunn, Tower, and Jackson sent letter to Carter calling for the “3-5-5” plan for increasing defense spending
15 Aug 79: Andrew Young resigned as UN Ambassador
31 Aug 79: Soviet BDE “discovered” in Cuba

September 1979

07 Sep 79: Carter approved mobile basing system for the MX missile

- 10 Sep 79: Carter met with SECDEF Brown and JCS regarding his plans for the FY80 and FY81 defense budgets
- 11 Sep 79: Carter submitted increase to the FY80 Defense Budget and further increases in FY81, but short of the 3-5-5 plan
- 14 Sep 79: Carter sent letters to key senators clarifying his commitment to a 3% defense increase, but no more
- 19 Sep 79: Senate voted for approval of Nunn's "3-5-5" plan for defense spending

October 1979

- 04 Oct 79: *PD-52 U.S. Policy Toward Cuba* abandoned earlier hope for "normalization" of relations with Cuba in light of actions in Africa and Central America
- 20 Oct 79: Shah admitted to U.S. for medical treatment
- 26 Oct 79: South Korean president Park Chung-hee assassinated, initiating a military coup in that country

November 1979

- 4 Nov 79: Hostages seized at embassy in Tehran
- 9 Nov 79: Foreign Relations Committee approved SALT II Resolution of Ratification
- 14 Nov 79: President froze Iranian assets

December 1979

- 12 Dec 79: NATO agreed to theater nukes, military junta took control of South Korea
- 18 Dec 79: HASC preliminary look at FY81 Defense Budget
- 21 Dec 79: James Schlesinger editorial piece criticized RDF planning as ineffective
- 27 Dec 79: Soviets invaded Afghanistan

1980

January 1980

- 4 Jan 80: President announced sanctions on USSR for Afghan invasion
- 20 Jan 80: Iowa Caucuses, Carter offered weak showing relative to Senator Kennedy
- 23 Jan 80: State of the Union, Carter Doctrine articulated
- 25 Jan 80: Testimony began on FY81 Defense Budget

February 1980

- 20 Feb 80: Decision to Boycott 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow
- 21 Feb 80: Final SASC hearings on FY81 Defense Budget

March 1980

- 03 Mar 80: Final HASC hearings of FY81 Defense Budget

April 1980

- 11 Apr 80: President gave go ahead to Operation Eagle Claw rescue mission
- 21 Apr 80: Secretary of State Vance resigned in protest of the rescue mission
- 24 Apr 80: Operation Eagle Claw failed (Ch. 7 Opening Vignette)

May 1980

- 05 May 80: Carter requested allies in Congress defeat defense increases in the Holt-Gramm amendment, including Navy shipbuilding increases
- 19 May 80: Mt. St. Helens eruption
- 21 May 80: Submission of Supplemental increase for the FY81 defense budget
- 27 May 80: “Kwangju Tragedy” in South Korea increases uproar against the junta
- 29 May 80: HASC Investigation Hearing on FY81 Defense Budget (Ch. 4 Opening Vignette)

June 1980

- 13 Jun 80: Congress called for defense budget greater than Carter’s FY80-81 plans

July 1980

- 16 Jul 80: Ronald Reagan nominated for Republican presidential candidate
- 25 Jul 80: *PD-59 Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy* considered a revision of PD-18, examining detailed nuclear targeting options against the U.S.S.R.

August 1980

- 11-16 Aug 80: Gen. Wickham interview interpreted as supporting the junta in South Korea, leading to his recall to Hawaii
- 13 Aug 80: Democrats nominate Carter, defeating the Kennedy challenge
- 22 Aug 80: Gen. Wickham returned to his command in South Korea after being supported by many within the Pentagon and State Department

September 1980

- 22 Sep 80: Iraq invades Iran

October 1980

- 27 Oct 80: Carter met with key senators at the White House regarding the defense budget and was openly challenged by Sam Nunn

November 1980

- 04 Nov 80: Reagan defeated Carter in presidential election
- 13 Nov 80: NSC discussed military intervention in Nicaragua (Ch. 5 Opening Vignette)
- 24 Nov 80: Second additional FY81 defense budget increase for Persian Gulf RDF

1981

January

- 15 Jan 81: *PD-62 Modifications in U.S. National Strategy*, *PD-63 Persian Gulf Framework* articulated the final versions of Carter’s “Grand Strategy.”
- 16 Jan 81: Final terms for hostage release negotiated
- 19 Jan 81: FY82 Annual DoD Report published
- 20 Jan 81: Hostages released 20 minutes after Reagan’s inauguration, Reagan sent Carter to meet returning hostages in Germany

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