

Conflict, Cooperation, and Congressional End-Runs: The Defense Budget and Civil-Military  
Relations in the Carter Administration, 1977-1978

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## **ABSTRACT**

JOHN D. MINI: Conflict, Cooperation, and Congressional End-Runs: The Defense Budget and Civil-Military Relations in the Carter Administration, 1977-1978  
(Under the Direction of Richard H. Kohn)

President Jimmy Carter became commander-in-chief at an important juncture in American civil-military relations. This study adds to the largely neglected historiography of civil-military relations during the Carter years by examining the administration's first two years, using the civil-military dialogue surrounding the fiscal year 1978 and fiscal year 1979 defense budgets as its primary category of analysis. The study demonstrates that 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 in the first two years of the Carter administration. This pattern of civil-military relations prevailed primarily due to early and intense presidential involvement in the defense budgetary process and because of the administration's attempts to re-prioritize defense spending. The culmination of this pattern of civil-military relations in the administration's first two years was the presidential veto of the fiscal year 1979 defense appropriations bill.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AFHRA—Air Force Historical Research Association

AUSA—Association of the United States Army

CDI—Center for Defense Information

CG—Consolidated Guidance

CINC—Commander of a Military Theater of Operations

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

FG—Fiscal Guidance

FY—Fiscal Year

HR—House (Congress) Resolution

ICBM—Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile

JCS—Joint Chiefs of Staff

JSOP—Joint Strategic Objectives Plan

JSPS—Joint Strategic Planning System

MLRS—Multiple-Launch Rocket System

NATO—North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NARA II—National Archives and Records Administration, Site II

NSC—National Security Council

OMB—Office of the Management of the Budget

OSD—Office of the Secretary of Defense

POM—Programming Objectives Memorandum

PPBS—Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System

PPG—Planning and Programming Guidance

SACEUR—Supreme Allied Commander, Europe

SALT—Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty

SECDEF—Secretary of Defense

SLBM—Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile

USAF—United States Air Force

USMC—United States Marine Corps

ZBB—Zero-Based Budgeting

## **Conflict, Cooperation, and Congressional End-Runs: The Defense Budget and Civil-Military Relations in the Carter Administration, 1977-1978**

### ***Introduction: Blair House, 10 December 1976, 1:00 p.m.*<sup>1</sup>**

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. This 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."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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 and 147-148.

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

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).<sup>4</sup> 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. This was the first meeting between the president-elect and his top military advisors who eagerly awaited Carter’s comments at the conclusion of the briefing.

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

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> “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.



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?”<sup>5</sup>

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.”<sup>6</sup> The military considered all three mutually supporting and necessary. They had come on line during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations with full 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.”<sup>8</sup> Stunned by the boldness

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<sup>5</sup> Perry, *Four Stars*, 265.

<sup>6</sup> United States. Dept. of Defense., *Annual Defense Department Report* (Washington,: Dept. of Defense; for sale by the Supt. of Docs. U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1978), C-5. Hereafter cited as *FY78 Annual DoD Report*.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Perry, *Four Stars*, 266.

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

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.<sup>10</sup> 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.”<sup>11</sup> 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

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<sup>9</sup> Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Nuclear 'Blockbuster'," *Washington Post*, January 27, 1977, A23.

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

<sup>11</sup> 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.

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 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.<sup>12</sup>

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 civil-military relationship during the Carter Administration 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 Historiography***

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 official end of 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."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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 and 607.

Works dealing with the broader 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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."<sup>16</sup>

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

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<sup>14</sup> Mark Perry, *Four Stars* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency : Civil-Military Relations from FDR to George W. Bush*, Modern War Studies. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Charles A. Stevenson, *SECDEF: The Nearly Impossible Job of Secretary of Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006), 5.

became a relationship based on trust and cooperation.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.

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

This study adds to the historiography of civil-military relations during the Carter years by examining the first two years of the administration, using the civil-military interaction during the fiscal year 1978 and fiscal year 1979 budget deliberations as its primary subject for analysis. Broadly, the study assesses civil-military relations in the Carter Administration in 1977 and 1978. What was the political-military situation as Carter came into office and how did it affect civil-military relations? What were the incoming administration's goals in defense budgets, and how did the military and Congress perceive these goals? Finally, what patterns of civil-military relations shaped the defense budget process through FY78 and

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<sup>17</sup> Steven Rearden, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy Volume XII 1977-1980*, ed. Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint History Office, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, Vol. XII (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Gov't Printing Office, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Martin Blumenson, "Can Official History Be Honest History?," in *Military Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 4, (Winter 1962-1963), 153-161.

FY79? Answering these questions will fill a lacuna in the current historiography of post World War II civil-military relations and offer further explanation and insight into a relationship within the government which has powerful national security implications.

The thesis of this study is that civil-military relations in the first two years of 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 spending and the president's early, intense involvement in the defense budgetary process. Carter and his staff had conducted extensive research into national defense policy prior to assuming office. Their desire to economize 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 civilian control, specifically presidential control, over the department of defense budget, but met resistance from a military-congressional alliance. Conflict was not the only aspect of the civil-military relationship during this period of 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 spending. The military, cooperating with civilians in the Pentagon, sought to circumvent Carter's control of the budget 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 unpolished nature of Carter's staff and the President's increasing attempt to usurp Congress' role in formulating the defense budget. The conflict culminated in the presidential veto of the FY79 defense appropriations bill.

In supporting its conclusions, this study first reviews alternative methodologies for studying civil-military relations and then explains why using the annual defense budget process as the primary category of analysis is appropriate. Next, the study charts the political-military situation in 1976 and demonstrates that Carter's assumption of the presidency came at an important juncture for the future of American civil-military relations. Having established the significance of Carter entering office, the study then examines Carter's initial plans and expectations, his civilian advisors, high-ranking military leaders, and Congress with regard to national security and the defense budget process. Thereafter, substantial analysis reveals the characteristics of civil-military relations within two subsequent iterations of the annual defense budget in FY78 and FY79. Finally, this study establishes the relevance of using the FY79 defense budget as an ending point to evaluate civil-military relations in the first half of the administration, briefly reflects on how these budgets were different from the last two in FY80 and FY81, and concludes by demonstrating why civil-military relations in the Carter years deserve continued study.

### ***Evaluating Civil-Military Relations: Previous Approaches and This Study's Methodology***

Historians and political scientists have studied civil-military relations in America using a variety of methodologies or approaches and, as a result, their contributions to the historiography reveal much diversity. Some have focused on important, 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).<sup>19</sup> Paul Hammond took a similar approach in *Organizing for Defense* (1961), an "administrative history" of the military focusing on key events from 1945-1960.<sup>20</sup>

A second approach has analyzed the civil-military dialogue created by the evolution and crafting of defense policy. The best example of such a work is Eliot Cohen's *Supreme Command* (2002), which used case studies of national leaders from Lincoln to Ben-Gurion to demonstrate successful civilian control over military leaders in wartime, even to the point of *how* war would be waged.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup>

A third approach has been to study the "politics of defense resource allocation" by examining the civil-military interaction involved in crafting annual defense budgets. One study that focused upon the defense budget as the primary category of analysis for civil-military relations is Edward Kolodziej's *The Uncommon Defense and Congress, 1945-1963*

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<sup>19</sup> Demetrios Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification: A Study of Conflict and the Policy Process* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

<sup>20</sup> Paul Y. Hammond, *Organizing for Defense: The American Military Establishment in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).

<sup>21</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Sam Charles Sarkesian, *Defense Policy and the Presidency: Carter's First Years*, Westview Special Studies in National Security and Defense Policy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979).



(1966).<sup>23</sup> Similarly, political scientist Alex Mintz focused exclusively on the budget in his study of civil-military interaction in *The Politics of Resource Allocation in the U.S.*

*Department of Defense* (1988).<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup>

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

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<sup>23</sup> Edward A. Kolodziej, *The Uncommon Defense and Congress, 1945-1963* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1966).

<sup>24</sup> Alex Mintz, *The Politics of Resource Allocation in the U.S. Department of Defense: International Crises and Domestic Constraints* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988).

<sup>25</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

<sup>26</sup> Stephen K. Scroggs, *Army Relations with Congress: Thick Armor, Dull Sword, Slow Horse* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, "The Paradox of Professionalism: Eisenhower, Ridgway, and the Challenge to Civilian Control, 1953-1955," *The Journal of Military History* Vol. 61 No. 2, April 1997, 305.

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.”<sup>28</sup> Douglas Kinnard truncated Huntington’s definition, describing it as “the relationship between the military and society” and “the politics of defense policy and resource allocation.”<sup>29</sup> 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.”<sup>30</sup> 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.”<sup>31</sup> 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 discursive 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 primarily discursive because it is built upon communication—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

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<sup>28</sup> 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.

<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> Richard H. Kohn, "The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today," *Naval War College Review* LV(3), Summer 2002, 9 and 17.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2-3.

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.<sup>32</sup>

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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> There has always been some degree of doubt as to whether their testimony is full and frank, since military careers may be at risk if public statements prove damaging to official policy.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> 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 and 19-20. Note that this study most closely follows the definition of civil-military relations proposed by Richard H. Kohn because its focus is on the highest levels of government and also includes the role of Congress.

<sup>33</sup> Edward A. Kolodziej, *The Uncommon Defense and Congress*, 26.

<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> 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: U.S. Gov't. Printing Office, 1977), 18. Hereafter cited as *Brown Nomination Hearings*.

<sup>36</sup> 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), 236.

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 utilized the press as means to influence public opinion.

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."<sup>37</sup> 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 brief 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.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> Increasingly, congressmen have visited the

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<sup>37</sup> 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."

<sup>38</sup> 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 Scroggs, *Army Relations with Congress*, 17 and Adam Yarmolinsky, *The Military Establishment: Its Impacts on American Society*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 42. Yarmolinsky called the CLL the "most visible lobbying arm" of the military.

<sup>39</sup> Jack Raymond, *Power at the Pentagon*, 1st ed. (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.

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 talk directly to soldiers.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, political scientist Dale Herspring’s conclusion that “the military is now a bureaucratic interest group much like others in Washington”<sup>43</sup> seems very accurate. 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 utilize the annual defense budgetary process as its category of analysis because this process involves sustained, day-to-day contact among civilian and military personnel in the government and also draws the full involvement of Congress. As

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<sup>40</sup> Raymond, *Power at the Pentagon*, 203.

<sup>41</sup> See Jack Anderson, "The Lobbying for the B-1 Bomber," *Washington Post*, April 3, 1977, C7. 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.

<sup>42</sup> For examples of the power of the military industrial-complex with Congress and in the Pentagon see George Wilson, "Aircraft Engine Sparks Fierce Lobbying," *Washington Post*, March 12, 1979, A1 and 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.

<sup>43</sup> Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 1.

one retired general who worked in the Pentagon expressed, “attention to the budget never ceases throughout the year.”<sup>44</sup> 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.”<sup>45</sup> 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.”<sup>46</sup> 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 primary category of analysis for this research project will be the annual defense budget process.<sup>47</sup> The study will examine the Carter administration’s first two defense budgets, fiscal year 1978 and 1979, and will begin by explaining why Jimmy Carter’s ascendancy to the presidency came at an important time for the future of American civil-military relations.

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<sup>44</sup> Frederick Kroesen, interview by Jerry Frost, 1987, Vol. II, Carlisle Oral History Collection, Project 87-14, Box 1, 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.

<sup>45</sup> David Jones, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 21 October 1987, OSD Oral History, 9.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Goldberg has been the Chief OSD Historian since 1973.

<sup>47</sup> See Appendix 1 for a discussion and typical timeline of the annual defense budget process.

***A Time of Dynamic Uncertainty: The Military-Political Situation as Carter Took Office***

President Carter recognized that he was taking office at a time of political turmoil, when the scars from Vietnam and Watergate had not yet healed. 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.”<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup> 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 pardon for all those with outstanding warrants for draft evasion during the war.<sup>50</sup>

Clearly, Jimmy Carter viewed his term beginning in 1977 as a pivotal point in the nation’s history. For several additional reasons the eve of Carter’s inaugural proved to be an important point for the future of the military. Analysis of five different areas indicates that this time stood out as a dynamic period of uncertainty for the future course of post-Vietnam 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

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<sup>48</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 21-22.

<sup>49</sup> United States. President. (1977-1981: Carter), *Inaugural Address of President Jimmy Carter* (Washington: U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1977), 3.

<sup>50</sup> United States. President. (1977-1981: Carter), *Presidential Proclamation of Pardon, Proclamation 4483 January 21, 1977* (Washington: U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1977), 5.

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.”<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> 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.”<sup>53</sup> 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 accuracy and power than even the best American model.<sup>54</sup> 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.”<sup>55</sup> 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

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<sup>51</sup> *FY78 Annual DoD Report*, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Lawrence J. Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon: American Defense Policies in the 1970's*, Contributions in Political Science, No. 27. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 147-149.

<sup>53</sup> *FY78 Annual DoD Report*, 26.

<sup>54</sup> *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.

<sup>55</sup> *FY78 Annual DoD Report*, 111.



“depressed trajectory” submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) which would provide “almost nothing” in the way of warning against a pre-emptive strike.<sup>56</sup> 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.”<sup>57</sup> 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.”<sup>58</sup> 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 military initially appeared to have stabilized its recruiting patterns. However, the 1974 recruiting year saw a significant drop in volunteers and by 1975 most services, the Army especially, found themselves with significant personnel shortages. 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.”<sup>59</sup> 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

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<sup>56</sup> Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, transcript, K239.0512-1570, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 7-8 February 1984, 187.

<sup>57</sup> *FY78 Annual DoD Report*, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Leslie H. Gelb, "Pentagon Will Seek \$130 Billion Budget," *New York Times*, September 15, 1976, A1.

<sup>59</sup> Robert K. Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968-1974*, ed. Jeffrey J. Clarke, Army Historical Series (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.”

three eligible service-age males to meet “total force requirements.”<sup>60</sup> The Air Force, in what was termed its period of “retrenchment,” also faced manpower shortages.<sup>61</sup> 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 component of any military force in the world; yet, the roles that these female soldiers would fill were still under debate, leading to much uncertainty within all of the services as to how they might have to adapt.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Congressional hearings concluded that in 1977 the military was “at something of a crossroads in regards to the cost of defense manpower.”<sup>63</sup>

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.<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup> Beyond the impact of

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<sup>60</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Budget. Task Force on National Security and International Affairs, *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: U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1977), 1. Hereafter cited as *Defense Manpower and AVF Hearings*.

<sup>61</sup> 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.

<sup>62</sup> *Defense Manpower and AVF Hearings*, 170.

<sup>63</sup> *Defense Manpower and AVF Hearings*, 17.

<sup>64</sup> United States. Bureau of the Census., *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1981*, 102nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1981), 467. The Consumer Price Index (CPI), used by economists as the best measure of inflation, rose 6.5% in 1977, 7.7% in 1978, 11.3% in 1979, and a record 13.5% in 1980. For comparison, the “Bush Recession” of 1990 saw the CPI rise at 6.1%, while the average rise in the CPI from 1994-2000 was 2.6%. See [http://www.bls.gov/schedule/archives/cpi\\_nr.htm](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.

<sup>65</sup> For the impact of this on the Air Force, see Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, transcript, K239.0512-1570, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 7-8 February 1984, 209.

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 one-hundred and fifty percent increase from a decade earlier.<sup>66</sup> In FY1964 overall personnel costs accounted for only 28.7% of the defense budget, but by FY1976 rose to 36.5%, with projections close to fifty-seven percent for FY1978.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup> Longtime Department of Defense (DoD) official William Perry, then chief of 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.<sup>69</sup> 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 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 the base of our fighting forces, but in 1976 many were hanging by a thin fiscal

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<sup>66</sup> Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon*, 32.

<sup>67</sup> United States. General Accounting Office and United States Dept. of Defense, *Urgent Need for Continued Improvements in Enlisted Career Force Management in the Department of Defense: Report to the Congress by the Comptroller General of the United States* (Washington: General Accounting Office, 1977), 1.

<sup>68</sup> Mintz, *The Politics of Resource Allocation in the DoD*, 37. Mintz indicated 1975 as the nadir of procurement spending, with less than 20% of the defense budget allocated to this effort. 33% 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% in 1964 to 8% in 1977.

<sup>69</sup> William Perry, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 9 January 1981, OSD Oral History, 7.

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 regard to national defense was undergoing significant transition during the mid-1970s. In one aspect this seemed to bode well for the military, since some polls were indicating that public opinion had shifted in favor of higher defense spending. One such poll indicated that, while in 1972 only forty-nine percent of Americans felt that military defense spending should be increased or maintained, by 1976 seventy-one percent of Americans felt that way. Similarly, in the same period, those calling for reduced military spending fell from thirty seven percent to twenty percent.<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup> One senior Pentagon correspondent expressed his view of the situation by stating that Jimmy Carter would "take office enjoying an unusually wide agreement

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<sup>70</sup> 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.

<sup>71</sup> David S. Broder, "Mayors' East Defense Stance," *Washington Post*, July 10, 1975, A2.

among hawks and doves that the Soviet military buildup is real and that the U.S. dare not cut its defense spending.”<sup>72</sup>

Despite the trend of increasing public support for defense spending, the political composition of several key committees in Congress, many of which would directly impact the military, had changed significantly in 1976. Congressman Edward Herbert (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), Charles 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.”<sup>73</sup>

***Taking the Helm: The Evolution of Carter’s Defense Plans, the “Browning of the Pentagon,” and the Initial Reactions***

Amid this uncertainty, the Carter administration entered office with an ambitious plan to increase civilian control over the military, especially over the defense budget.<sup>74</sup> Carter

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<sup>72</sup> George Wilson, "Carter's Pentagon Expected to Focus on Better Management," *Washington Post*, December 17, 1976, A11.

<sup>73</sup> George Wilson, "Pentagon Will Confront More Critical Congress as Old Warhorses Quit," *Washington Post*, November 5, 1976, A12.

<sup>74</sup> 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

himself wanted to pursue this course of action based partly on his own personality and partly on, in his own words, “serious reservations about what happened during the Vietnam War.”<sup>75</sup> 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.”<sup>76</sup> His hero was Harry Truman, and Carter greatly admired the former president’s “strength in the face of the inevitable popularity 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.<sup>77</sup> 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.”<sup>78</sup>

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further indications of the ambitiousness of the plans, see the opinion of the veteran chairman in United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Budget. Task Force on National Security and International Affairs., *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: U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1977), 30.

<sup>75</sup> David Jones, interview by Maurice Maryanow and Richard H. Kohn, transcript, K239.0512-1664, IRIS# 01105219, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 210-211.

<sup>76</sup> Jimmy Carter, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 12 March 1986, OSD Oral History, 7-8.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 and 6.

<sup>78</sup> David Jones, interview by Maurice Maryanow and Richard H. Kohn, transcript, K239.0512-1664, IRIS# 01105219, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 210-211.

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 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.<sup>79</sup> 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.”<sup>80</sup> 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 agreement with the U.S.S.R. reached during Ford’s tenure.<sup>81</sup> This was seen by some as a “political gamble” which challenged “grim predictions about Soviet military superiority.”<sup>82</sup> President Carter came into

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<sup>79</sup> Jimmy Carter, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 12 March 1986, 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.

<sup>80</sup> 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.

<sup>81</sup> Stu Eisenstat, “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.

<sup>82</sup> William Greider, “U.S.-Russian Arms Debate at a Crossroads,” *Washington Post*, February 20, 1977, A1.

office seeking peace and, when reflecting on his military service, assured listeners on television that he felt “no aspect of militaristic inclination now on my part.”<sup>83</sup> Jimmy Carter felt strongly about these ideals and sought to put them into practice when he assumed the presidency.

Although Carter may have dismissed of his “militaristic inclination” and prided himself on his peanut farming, 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.”<sup>84</sup> Soon afterward, Carter’s staff requested background papers from the Center for Defense Information (CDI), an organization often skeptical regarding 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 related material. The staff began to compile such information into a series of

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<sup>83</sup> Don Richardson, *Conversations with Carter* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 10.

<sup>84</sup> 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 Eisenstat, Box 17, Folder: Foreign Policy 5/6/75 to 1/23/76, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.



“discussion papers” which were sent to Carter to expand his knowledge of national defense policy issues.<sup>85</sup>

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.<sup>86</sup> He maintained close correspondence with Air Force Colonel Jim 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.”<sup>87</sup> This

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<sup>85</sup> 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.

<sup>86</sup> 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."

<sup>87</sup> 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," and Jim A. Donovan, "Memorandum to Jimmy Carter: The Military Budget and National Priorities, April 8, 1976," 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.; 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 Sterrett, 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 Sterrett, 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 Eisenstat, Box 17, Folder: Foreign Policy 9/76, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, GA.

personal research into different areas of defense policy and strategy provided the future president with much background information and many facts that he would later use to argue against further American military buildup.

Carter did not ignore the factors bearing on the future of the defense budget as he had conducted his campaign; 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.<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile, Carter sent his aide Stuart Eisenstat 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 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 call for cuts in defense

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<sup>88</sup> Donovan, "Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Subject: The Artificial Crisis of American Security," 1.

<sup>89</sup> 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 Eisenstat, 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.

spending.<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup> 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 five to seven billion dollars, commented often about "Pentagon wastage," and stated that he wanted personally to assert control of, and "discipline" over, the Pentagon and its budgetary process.<sup>92</sup> He sought to gain more control over military officer promotions and assignments. In particular, he saw military retirement pay, taking up to seven percent of the 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.<sup>93</sup> He promised to

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<sup>90</sup> Stu Eisenstat, "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.

<sup>91</sup> Barry Schneider, "Letter to Steve Clark, 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.

<sup>92</sup> For defense cut promises see: Gelb, "Pentagon Will Seek \$130 Billion Budget," *New York Times*, 15 September 1976, A1 and A13; Wilson, "Carter's Pentagon Expected to Focus on Better Management," *Washington Post*, 17 December 1976, A11; and Eisenstat, "Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Re: Princeton Address--Defense Posture," 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.

<sup>93</sup> 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.

institute rigorous “zero based budgeting” (ZBB) throughout the federal government, but especially in the Department of Defense, immediately after taking office.<sup>94</sup> 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.”<sup>95</sup> 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.<sup>96</sup> 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 his 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 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

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<sup>94</sup> 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.

<sup>95</sup> George 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 Eisenstat, “Memorandum to Jimmy Carter, Re: Princeton Address--Defense Posture,” 5.

<sup>96</sup> 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 “Memo, Gen. Dixon to Gen. DePuy, 11 December 1976.”

among different military services.”<sup>97</sup> 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.”<sup>98</sup> This school of “systems analysis” carried a highly negative connotation for the military. Many military officers considered McNamara’s reliance on systems analysis—to the exclusion of military experience and judgment—as responsible for the failed military strategy in Vietnam.<sup>99</sup> High-ranking military officers saw Harold Brown and McNamara as similar and worried as Brown took over the Pentagon’s highest post.

The military was apprehensive about the administration’s plans for defense for several additional reasons.<sup>100</sup> One major reason was that 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,

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<sup>97</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 57-58.

<sup>98</sup> 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.

<sup>99</sup> 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.

<sup>100</sup> 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.

substantiated by some intelligence reports, that the Soviets cheating on the agreements.<sup>101</sup>

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 trends."<sup>102</sup> 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.<sup>103</sup> As Chairman, Brown had more joint service in the Pentagon than any general officer in the military at the time, and the JCS had high hopes that he would have strong positive influence on Congress and help reverse what was seen as a steady weakening of U.S. strategic power.<sup>104</sup>

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, Brown 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

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<sup>101</sup> 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.

<sup>102</sup> 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.

<sup>103</sup> 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 Lemnitzer, 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.

<sup>104</sup> For unique qualifications due to joint service experience, see 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.

“Congress in their hip pocket,” and implied that a potential solution to the problem might be a military coup of the federal government.<sup>105</sup> The event sparked an immediate political firestorm. Joseph Califano, Jr., a prominent Washington lawyer who would later serve as Carter’s Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, wrote an editorial in the *Washington Post* calling for Brown’s resignation because he had “irreparably damaged his ability to serve effectively as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”<sup>106</sup> Brown apologized publicly and President Ford, despite considerable political pressure, refused to dismiss him. Yet the damage was done. 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.<sup>107</sup> 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 of 1977.<sup>108</sup> Given these misstatements and his political vulnerability, many high-ranking military officers saw General Brown as weakened and unable to risk strongly opposing any plans of the civilian leadership.<sup>109</sup>

Beyond the fear that the highest-ranking officer in the military would be unable to fulfill his advisory role 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

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<sup>105</sup> 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.

<sup>106</sup> Joseph A. Califano, Jr., “Gen. Brown and Foreign Policy,” *Washington Post*, 25 November 1974, A20.

<sup>107</sup> Jim Herblock, “(Cartoon) “--and Here Is the Head of--I Mean the Chairman--”,” *Washington Post*, March 30, 1977, A20.

<sup>108</sup> 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.

<sup>109</sup> Perry, *Four Stars*, 261.

changes—retirement pay, officer promotions, and personnel assignments—were the areas where the military had in the past most actively resisted civilian “interference.”<sup>110</sup> 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 General Ray Sitton, Director of the Joint Staff, always generated decisions that were “a compromise position.”<sup>111</sup> Carter’s “adversarial approach” was so unusual that it alarmed several high-ranking officers, one of whom wrote simply 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 see if we can stop it from happening.”<sup>112</sup> Military apprehension of Carter’s plans for managing the DoD were great, but were not yet widely known.

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<sup>110</sup> Harold Brown attested to these areas of resistance and his arguments with the JCS over them. 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, and 23. Harold Brown’s special assistant John Kester also attested to the military resistance over these areas—see John Kester, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 15 April 1998, OSD Oral History, 5. General Brown’s assistant Lieutenant-General William Y. Smith confirmed retirement pay as a contentious issue, see 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 Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, transcript, K239.0512-1570, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 7-8 February 1984, 278. See also Colin L. Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 236-237.

<sup>111</sup> Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, transcript, K239.0512-1570, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 7-8 February 1984, 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, OSD Historical Office, Arlington, Virginia, 66. Somewhat prone to hyperbole, Komer asserted that the JCS spent “98% of their time” negotiating and lobbying each other for single-service issues. General William Y. Smith, who served as General Brown’s assistant, noted the prevalence of this manner of negotiation between services, see William Y. Smith, interview by Edgar Puryear, Jr., transcript, K239.0512-1501, IRIS#01053446, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 25 April 1979, 12.

<sup>112</sup> Memo, Gen. Dixon to Gen. DePuy, 11 December 1976, cover page.



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 in the Pentagon had been more junior officers 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.'"<sup>113</sup> 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, but never fully overcome, this "problem."<sup>114</sup> 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, he had "obviously studied carefully what McNamara did right and wrong, and had consciously tried to handle himself differently than Bob McNamara."<sup>115</sup> 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 an "outsider," thus negating some of his advantage in the Democratically-controlled Congress. He vowed to avoid "Washington habits which had made it possible for the American people

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<sup>113</sup> Harold Brown, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 20 April 1990, OSD Oral History, 8.

<sup>114</sup> Harold Brown, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Maurice 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." Powell "always had the impression that Brown would be just as happy if we slipped the paperwork under the door and left him alone to pore over it and work out his theorems." See Powell, *My American Journey*, 237.

<sup>115</sup> Robert Komer, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 25 March 1981, transcript, OSD Oral History, OSD Historical Office, Arlington, Virginia, 100.

to be misled” and, in emphasizing this, placed even members of his own party in a defensive position from the start.<sup>116</sup> 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.”<sup>117</sup> 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 in the defense budget.<sup>118</sup> Even the Brookings Institution, having advised Carter in early 1975 of waste in the Pentagon budget, had taken note of these trends and declared that the FY77 defense budget should increase.<sup>119</sup> Thus, as Carter prepared his first defense budget, Congress also 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 and later during his appearance before Congress when submitting the unmodified Ford/Rumsfeld FY78 defense budget. Brown expected a difficult confirmation, keeping a note in front of him reading: “Keep Cool. Say Less. Stop.”<sup>120</sup> 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

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<sup>116</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 29 and 71. The Democratic majority in Congress was significant: 292 to 143 in the House and 61 to 38 with one independent in the Senate.

<sup>117</sup> Alexander M. Haig, *Inner Circles: How America Changed the World* (New York: Warner Books, 1992), 531.

<sup>118</sup> Bernard Weinraub, "Where Is the Great Debate over Military Spending?," *New York Times*, 15 January, 1978, E5.

<sup>119</sup> Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon*, 162.

<sup>120</sup> *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.

overwhelming approach of Robert McNamara. He downplayed Carter's proposed \$5-7 billion reduction in the defense 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.<sup>121</sup>

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."<sup>122</sup> While such a statement might be expected from an opposition party member, Senator Sam Nunn's (D-GA) 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," was much more unusual. Although General Brown seemed surprised by the request, he agreed that "we are certainly willing to do that."<sup>123</sup> The hearings ended with Secretary Brown

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<sup>121</sup> For level of examination and unanimity of his confirmation see United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services, *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: U.S. Gov't. Printing Office, 1977), 8. Hereafter cited as *FY78 Authorization Hearings*. For demeanor during testimony see Don Oberdorfer, "Brown Sees Rise in Defense Budget in Coming Years," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1977, A1 and A14. For Senator Strom Thurmond's comments see *Brown Nomination Hearings*, 83.

<sup>122</sup> United States. Congress. Senate. *FY78 Authorization Hearings*, 7.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.

proposing to modify and resubmit the FY78 defense budget by the end of February—only a three-week deadline for such a major undertaking.<sup>124</sup>

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

The process of modifying the FY 1978 budget provided the first opportunity for the Carter Administration to implement its plans for increased civilian control over the defense budgetary process. In doing so, Carter and Brown immediately confronted a quandary. Carter had made his campaign promise of five to seven billion dollars in defense cuts before Ford and Rumsfeld had finalized their defense budget for FY78. 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 faced the unsavory choice of having to break his campaign promise or break the NATO alliance’s agreement that all members’ defense expenditures would have an above-inflation (real) increase of three 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.<sup>125</sup>

Carter did not shrink from the challenge and strove to remain personally involved in crafting the defense budget. As one of his first acts in office, he directed Harold Brown and Bert Lance, Director of the Office of the Management of the Budget (OMB), to work together to make the five to seven billion dollars in cuts. Carter instructed them to “eliminate

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 365. The chairman of the committee was willing to give him until March 15.

<sup>125</sup> 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.

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.”<sup>126</sup>

After three days of virtual “round the clock negotiation,” Brown and Lance, working with input from the military, settled on only three billion dollars in cuts.<sup>127</sup> Both men met with President Carter on January 27, 1977 and explained their proposal for the cuts. Unsatisfied, Carter deferred a decision on the matter and requested a briefing with more information.<sup>128</sup>

The president demonstrated the level to which he personally planned to be involved in the defense budget process at the briefing held at 4 p.m. on January 31, 1977. All of the top civilian defense advisors in the administration attended, as well as General Brown representing the JCS. Richard Stubbing, a defense budget analyst in OMB from 1962 to 1981, helped to prepare the briefing and recalled its content and the course of the meeting. Staff members at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and OMB had worked to compile briefings on forty-five separate issues. They felt that a series of five viewgraphs representing the “major areas” should be sufficient for the president’s briefing, but they also made a viewgraph for each of the forty-five issues on the assumption that the president “might wish to explore one or more selected issues in greater depth.” What transpired at the meeting surprised Stubbing. One by one President Carter plodded through each of the forty-five issues in detail, seeking input at various times from those present. Russell Murray, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Programming Analysis and Evaluation, recalled that

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<sup>126</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Budget. Task Force on National Security and International Affairs., *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: U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1977), 148.

<sup>127</sup> Perry, *Four Stars*, 266.

<sup>128</sup> Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 343.

Carter had examined a single helicopter program for almost an hour. The seven-hour meeting adjourned at 11 p.m. with the president indicating that he would make a decision later.<sup>129</sup> At least with regard to the defense budget, Assistant Director of OMB James McIntyre could be accused of an understatement when he said, “it’s accurate to say that for the first year Carter immersed himself in budgetary details.”<sup>130</sup>

Carter did finally approve the majority of the OSD/OMB budget proposal, and Harold 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 a prized “nuclear strike cruiser” cut along with a submarine, two frigates, and additional A-7E aircraft; 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.<sup>131</sup>

Publicly, the military acquiesced and supported these changes to the budget. General Brown, in testimony on the new budget, stated that, “It will come as no surprise to the Chairman or other members of the committee that the judgment went against me,” but that

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<sup>129</sup> Account of the meeting taken from Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 343-344. For the quotation about the helicopter problem see Russell Murray II, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 23 July 1998, OSD Oral History, 13.

<sup>130</sup> James McIntyre, interview by James Young, Donald Raider, et. al., 28 October 1981, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 42.

<sup>131</sup> 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 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 United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services, *FY78 Authorization Hearings*, 589.

the new budget would “provide adequately for the immediate security needs of our country.”<sup>132</sup> 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.”<sup>133</sup> 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 or in part.<sup>134</sup> Even usually vitriolic military-affiliated 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.”<sup>135</sup> 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 dissension in 1977. Many high ranking Pentagon officers seemed willing to

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<sup>132</sup> United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services, *FY78 Authorization Hearings*, 606.

<sup>133</sup> For Air Force statement see United States. Congress. House. Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on Military Posture, Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1978, 95th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington: U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1977), 548. For statement of CNO see p. 575.

<sup>134</sup> United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services, *FY78 Authorization Hearings*, 671 and 676-678.

<sup>135</sup> “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.

work with the new administration, perhaps hoping for a change after several months of experience in office.

Clearly, however, the administration's modifications to the FY78 defense budget were indicative of a fundamentally different policy of defense spending. Carter had shifted defense procurement away from quickly acquiring new high-cost, high-technology systems to sustaining older, less costly alternatives. The budget, in taking away from new systems, had added over \$600 million to deferred maintenance and modification programs for older equipment.<sup>136</sup> 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, such as training people and maintaining existing equipment). The military had traditionally viewed force structure as the most important of the three, followed by modernization, with readiness least important. Military thinking espoused the view that if they could get enough people and weapons, then they would receive more money for modernization, and they could put off readiness until a crisis would force 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.<sup>137</sup>

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

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<sup>136</sup> United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services, *FY78 Authorization Hearings*, 589.

<sup>137</sup> Harold Brown, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 8 October 1992, OSD Oral History, 8.



Congress. Senator Howard Cannon (D-NV) of the Senate Armed Services Committee admitted that he had received a call from a 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.”<sup>138</sup> 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.<sup>139</sup> Air Force officials from the Pentagon 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 B-1.<sup>140</sup> Although publicly supportive of the budget, the military clearly had leverage and influence to lobby quietly for important programs, and many congressmen and senators proved more than willing to help in this effort.

The military lobbying and congressional desire to assert control of priorities in defense spending resulted in a completely revised FY78 budget. Although Congress retained the monetary value of the cuts as proposed by Carter, they 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, the Air Force’s additional F-15 fighters and new cargo aircraft, and the Navy’s A-7 aircraft as well as some additional

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<sup>138</sup> United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services, *FY78 Authorization Hearings*, 498.

<sup>139</sup> George Wilson, "Carter's Pentagon Cutbacks Face Tests on Hill This Week," *Washington Post*, March 1, 1977, A2.

<sup>140</sup> 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.

shipbuilding.<sup>141</sup> 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."<sup>142</sup>

### ***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 remained personally involved from the start. He also increasingly 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.<sup>143</sup>

The early involvement by the president in the 1979 defense budget process created 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 his special assistant Hamilton Jordan, he arrived well prepared for every meeting so that "the Joint

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<sup>141</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1978. Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations. 95th Congress, 1st Session.* (Washington: U.S. Gov't. Printing Office, 1977), 11.

<sup>142</sup> Harold Brown, interview by Alfred Goldberg & Maurice Matloff, 28 February 1992, OSD Oral History, 34.

<sup>143</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Budget. Task Force on National Security and International Affairs, *Five Year Defense Plan Hearings*, 30 and 44. For specific orders to involve the NSC directly with the defense budget see Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Memorandum to 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.

Chiefs couldn't go in there and bedazzle him with either budget figures or technical talk.”<sup>144</sup>

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.”<sup>145</sup> 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.” Budget Committee Chairman Robert Leggett (D-CA) demurred, 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.”<sup>146</sup> Leggett's prediction, while overstated, was in some ways 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 the average age of the White House staff had dropped about twenty years.”<sup>147</sup> 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

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<sup>144</sup> Hamilton Jordan, interview by James Young, Erwin Hargrove, et. al, 6 November 1981, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 65.

<sup>145</sup> Burt, “Officials Say Carter Has Won Unparalleled Sway Over Def. Policy,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1978, A7.

<sup>146</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Budget. Task Force on National Security and International Affairs, *Five Year Defense Plan Hearings*, 44.

<sup>147</sup> William J. Jorden, *Panama Odyssey* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 343.

accused of drug use and lewd behavior.<sup>148</sup> Many senior military officers in the Pentagon questioned if the members of Carter's White House staff had "the competence to get deeply involved in military issues."<sup>149</sup>

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 control of the budget. 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 a letter to Secretary Brown requesting a full explanation of the new 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 the 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

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<sup>148</sup> 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."

<sup>149</sup> Burt, "Officials Say Carter Has Won Unparalleled Sway Over Def. Policy," *New York Times*, January 28, 1978, A7.

can testify in complete candor” because this “unfortunately, is not now the case.”<sup>150</sup> The Congress was now becoming allied with the military in opposing Carter and his staff’s attempts to impose greater civilian control on the defense budget process.

A military-congressional alliance was not the only opposition to Carter and his staff’s involvement with the defense budget. By early 1978, the civilians and military in the Pentagon adapted and worked with each other to oppose 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 indicated, “We (the JCS) welcomed the assignment of Harold Brown as Secretary of Defense” and added that the JCS was able to have deep “substantive discussions with Harold Brown and understanding of our concerns, and greater accommodation on his part.”<sup>151</sup> 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.”<sup>152</sup> It appeared that what the press was calling the “Browning” of the Pentagon was working out well for the civil-military relationship inside the building.

The 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

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<sup>150</sup> 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. Declassified copy of letter in possession of the author.

<sup>151</sup> For quote regarding welcome of Brown see David Jones, interview by Maurice Maryanow and Richard H. Kohn, transcript, K239.0512-1664, IRIS# 01105219, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 208. For good relationship between JCS and Brown see David Jones, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 21 October 1987, OSD Oral History, 30.

<sup>152</sup> Weinraub, *The Browning of the Pentagon*, 58.

military officers as a “player.” According to Kester’s executive assistant, then Colonel Colin Powell, Kester employed a “hard-nosed style,” and those who worked with him respected his direct approach and his candor.<sup>153</sup> 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.”<sup>154</sup> A technical consultant to the Pentagon since 1966, William Perry assumed the role of Under-Secretary 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.<sup>155</sup> 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 “Godfather 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 already served in his position 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.”<sup>156</sup> These experienced, savvy bureaucrats provided a stark contrast to Carter’s White House staff and assisted Harold Brown in forging a strong civil-military relationship in the Defense Department.

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<sup>153</sup> Powell, *My American Journey*, 233-234 and 237.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 239-240.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>156</sup> 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. Gov’t 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.<sup>157</sup> General Bernard Rogers, the Chief of Staff of the Army, had “very tense relations” with Clifford Alexander, the Secretary of the Army, and even contemplated resignation.<sup>158</sup> 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.<sup>159</sup> 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.<sup>160</sup> One Pentagon reorganization study commissioned by Brown even considered recommending the abolishment of the Service

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<sup>157</sup> For Jones’ quote see David Jones, interview by Maurice Maryanow and Richard H. Kohn, transcript, K239.0512-1664, IRIS# 01105219, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 223. For Hans Mark’s quote see Hans Mark, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Richard Landa, 4 August 1999, OSD Oral History, 31. For Gen. Allen’s quotes see Lew Allen, interview by James Hasdorf, transcript, K239.0512-1694, IRIS# 01105260, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 184-185.

<sup>158</sup> John Kester, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 15 April 1998, OSD Oral History, 2.

<sup>159</sup> 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 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, 223.

<sup>160</sup> 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 Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 15 April 1998, OSD Oral History, 2-3.

Secretaries with their positions being taken over by the uniformed chiefs.<sup>161</sup> 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 and thus maximize civil-military cooperation.

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. Analysis of three major areas demonstrates this trend toward civil-military cooperation in the Pentagon and conflict with the White House: 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.<sup>162</sup> OMB director James McIntyre acknowledged that the Pentagon was already “one of the most organized submitters of the budget.”<sup>163</sup> In short, explained Cooke, “we did not need the discipline or extra work of ZBB.”<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> "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.”

<sup>162</sup> For “cumbersome” description see Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 362. For effectiveness of PPBS system see David Cooke, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 20 November 1989, OSD Oral History, 11.

<sup>163</sup> James McIntyre, interview by James Young, Donald Raider, et. al., 28 October 1981, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 59-60.

<sup>164</sup> David Cooke, interview with Alfred Goldberg & Maurice Matloff, 20 December 1989, OSD Oral History, 9.



For the Pentagon, Carter's attempt to impose ZBB proved to be "the ultimate in micro-management."<sup>165</sup> Carter himself acknowledged that Harold Brown and the Pentagon resisted ZBB "vociferously" but that he still insisted upon forcing them to use the system.<sup>166</sup> Brown acknowledged 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."<sup>167</sup> In the end, the civilians in the Pentagon largely ignored the policy. Hearings which were convened to discuss alternative DoD budgets criticized 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."<sup>168</sup> United Pentagon resistance to ZBB had 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

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<sup>165</sup> Stubbing, *The Defense Game*, 361.

<sup>166</sup> Jimmy Carter, interview with Alfred Goldberg & Maurice Matloff, 12 Mar 86, OSD Oral History, 6 and 23.

<sup>167</sup> Harold Brown, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 8 October 1992, OSD Oral History, 23. For quote by Murray see Russel 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. Hereafter cited as Russell Murray Memo to Sec. Def. 5 May 1978.

<sup>168</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Budget. Task Force on National Security and International Affairs, *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: U.S. Gov't. Printing Office, 1977), 14 and 22. Hereafter cited as *Alternative DoD Budgets*.

budget in 1979, something that the Pentagon dreaded after the “fiasco” of the 1978 budget.<sup>169</sup> Secretary Claytor criticized Lance and his organization, saying that “the staff at OMB considers themselves the super-secretaries of defense and they’d like to make all decisions internal and external on defense.”<sup>170</sup> 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.”<sup>171</sup> Clearly, key leaders in the Pentagon objected to what they deemed over-involvement by an outside agency in their area of expertise.

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 *New York Times* Pentagon correspondent 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 as he graduated from 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

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<sup>169</sup> 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.

<sup>170</sup> W. Graham Claytor, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 8 January 1981, OSD Oral History, 22.

<sup>171</sup> Russell Murray Memo to Sec. Def., 5 May 1978.

FY79.<sup>172</sup> Carter had solidly placed his support with OMB over the Pentagon during the final stages of the FY79 defense budget.

The attitude inside the Pentagon about 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, had continued not only to 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."<sup>173</sup> "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."<sup>174</sup> 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."<sup>175</sup> General David Jones, the Air Force Chief of Staff 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

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<sup>172</sup> Bernard Weinraub, "Young Aide Shapes Defense Policy," *New York Times*, April 15, 1978, A9.

<sup>173</sup> John Kester, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 15 April 1998, OSD Oral History, 6 and 15.

<sup>174</sup> David Cooke, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 20 December 1989, 5.

<sup>175</sup> John K. Singlaub and Malcolm McConnell, *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), 396.

that they failed to understand how to operate in Washington.<sup>176</sup> 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 government” because of his prior service.<sup>177</sup> 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.”<sup>178</sup> 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, 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.”<sup>179</sup> 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

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<sup>176</sup> David Jones, interview by Walter Poole and Steven Rearden, 4 February 1998, JCS Oral History, 6-7.

<sup>177</sup> Harold Brown, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 8 October 1992, OSD Oral History, 29.

<sup>178</sup> 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. He later in newspaper and television interviews 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 aids scrambling to find out just who Carter was and when he had served.” See Perry, *Four Stars*, 264.

<sup>179</sup> John Kester, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 15 April 1998, OSD Oral History, 10.

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.”<sup>180</sup> In the opinion of historian 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.”<sup>181</sup>

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 his criticism of the president, stated that he had “nothing but high praise for Harold Brown.”<sup>182</sup> 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.”<sup>183</sup> 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.”<sup>184</sup> 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

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<sup>180</sup> 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, 179 and 207.

<sup>181</sup> Stevenson, *SECDEF*, 125.

<sup>182</sup> 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, 216.

<sup>183</sup> David Jones, interview by Maurice Maryanow and Richard H. Kohn, transcript, K239.0512-1664, IRIS# 01105219, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 209.

<sup>184</sup> John Kester, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 15 April 1998, OSD Oral History, 14 and 19.

to Harold's efforts."<sup>185</sup> Likewise, Harold Brown returned the favor, indicating that General George Brown had always given him frank advice and was "very supportive, very helpful."<sup>186</sup> 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 White House plans.

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."<sup>187</sup> 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."<sup>188</sup> 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

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<sup>185</sup> Russell Murray II, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 23 July 1998, OSD Oral History, 37.

<sup>186</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on Armed Services., *Hearings on Military Posture, Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1979, 95th Congress, 2nd Session* (Washington: U.S. Gov't. Printing Office, 1978), 20. Hereafter cited as *FY79 Authorization Hearings*.

<sup>187</sup> Sarkesian, *Defense Policy and the Presidency*, 23.

<sup>188</sup> M. Glenn Abernathy, Dilys M. Hill, and Phil Williams, *The Carter Years: The President and Policy Making* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 145.

Congress, stating that Carter “didn’t do a lot of the oiling and stroking activity” that was required in the presidential-congressional relationship.<sup>189</sup> 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.”<sup>190</sup>

The combined effects of the contested FY79 budget process, the military “end runs” to Congress, the increasing civil-military cooperation in the Pentagon, the tension between the Pentagon and the White House, and Carter’s unfavorable standing with Congress weakened the administration’s ability to assert its own prerogatives 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.<sup>191</sup> 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

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<sup>189</sup> 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.

<sup>190</sup> Hamilton Jordan, interview by James Young, Erwin Hargrove, et. al., 6 November 1981, Jimmy Carter Library Oral History Collection, 7.

<sup>191</sup> For robust nature of the Navy CLL, see Scroggs, *Army Relations with Congress*, 23.

below the Ford projection.<sup>192</sup> 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 twenty percent.<sup>193</sup> 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 Democratic nominee.<sup>194</sup> Discontent spread within the walls of 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.”<sup>195</sup> 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 likened Harold Brown to Robert McNamara in letters to Congressmen.<sup>196</sup> Two other generals contacted House Budget Chairman Robert Leggett (D-CA) and told him, with perhaps too much alarm to be convincing, that the

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<sup>192</sup> United States. President (1977-1981: Carter), *Message to Congress Transmitting the Fiscal Year 1979 Budget. January 20, 1978.* (Washington: U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1978), 187.

<sup>193</sup> “Carter Defense Budget Asks \$126 Billion; Navy’s Shipbuilding Plans Are Cut Sharply,” *Washington Post*, December 24, 1977, A6.

<sup>194</sup> Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “The Defense Budget’s Message to the World,” *Washington Post*, December 29, 1977, A19.

<sup>195</sup> Bernard Weinraub, “President Approves \$126 Billion Budget for Military in 1979,” *New York Times*, December 23, 1977, A1 and A10.

<sup>196</sup> Bernard Weinraub, “2 Officers Protest Plan to Strengthen Civilians in Pentagon,” *New York Times*, February 6, 1978, A17.



defense budget should be “fifty times” higher.<sup>197</sup> The Navy League, one of the oldest and most effective military special interest groups, published a statement to members of Congress stating they were alarmed with the “downward spiral of U.S. naval strength.”<sup>198</sup> Admiral Rickover again applied his back-channel pressure on Congress to overturn Carter’s shipbuilding cuts and restore the nuclear-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.”<sup>199</sup> In contrast to the FY78 budget, the military’s lobbying effort appeared overt. It was also extremely effective and seized upon by many members in Congress who wanted to challenge Carter’s national defense policy.

While retired and active duty military utilized the “end run” to Congress 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 reputedly only smiled in response.<sup>200</sup> 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

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<sup>197</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Budget. Task Force on National Security and International Affairs., *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: U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1978), 285. Hereafter cited as *FY79 Defense Budget Overview*.

<sup>198</sup> George 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.”

<sup>199</sup> John Finney, "The Military Has Always Known Who Was in Charge," *New York Times*, May 29, 1977, E4.

<sup>200</sup> Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "A Defeat for the Navy," *Washington Post*, March 27, 1978, A25.

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.<sup>201</sup> This approach worked and may provide insight into 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. It may also help explain why Carter actually *promoted* Claytor to Deputy Secretary of Defense later. What remained certain was that the military-civilian alliance in the Pentagon had strengthened throughout the 1979 budget process to the point that the senior Service Secretary felt capable of openly challenging the commander-in-chief.

Not only did the military and civilians in the Pentagon make statements 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. 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 additionally 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.”<sup>202</sup> Army Chief of Staff General Bernard Rogers stated that he wanted the Bradley

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<sup>201</sup> 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.

<sup>202</sup> For “cut insurance” and lack of padding see United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Budget. Task Force on National Security and International Affairs., *FY79 Defense Budget Overview*, 316-317 and 336. For statement about very slim margin over Soviet threat see United States. Congress. House. Committee on

fighting vehicle retained and felt that the current budget had “major shortfalls” in the realm of Reserve readiness. Contrary to Admiral Holloway’s FY78 testimony about a “balance” in the Navy budget, in FY79 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.<sup>203</sup> The Service Secretaries provided similarly reserved support for the budget. Secretary Claytor told Congressman Les Aspin (D-WI) that he was “concerned about the future” because the Navy “could very well be in trouble.” Secretary Stetson’s statement expressed qualified support for the budget and admitted that the Air Force saw “potential problems ahead.”<sup>204</sup> 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.<sup>205</sup> 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.<sup>206</sup> 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.

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Appropriations., *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1979. Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations. 95th Congress, 2nd Session.* (Washington: U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1978), 568. Hereafter cited as *FY79 Appropriations Hearings*.

<sup>203</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on Appropriations, *FY79 Appropriations Hearings*, 97 and 609. For Admiral Holloway’s statement on continuing with the carrier see United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Budget. Task Force on National Security and International Affairs., *FY79 Defense Budget Overview*, 234.

<sup>204</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on Armed Services, *FY79 Authorization Hearings*, 644 and 879.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 881, 924, 939, 948, 956.

<sup>206</sup> David Jones, interview with Alfred Goldberg & Maurice Matloff, 26 August 1987, OSD Oral History, 20.

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.<sup>207</sup> 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.”<sup>208</sup> Ultimately, Congress reworked the budget again and approved more high-technology items, including the Navy’s fifth nuclear carrier costing two billion dollars.<sup>209</sup> 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, such a defense authorization bill had never before been vetoed.<sup>210</sup> The press characterized the move as Carter’s “most serious challenge to Congress

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<sup>207</sup> United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services., *Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1979, Hearings on S.2571, 95th Congress, 2nd Session* (Washington: U.S. Gov’t. Printing Office, 1978), 8.

<sup>208</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Budget. Task Force on National Security and International Affairs, *Alternative DOD Budgets*, 1 and 59.

<sup>209</sup> Don Oberdorfer, "President Weighs Veto of Weapons Procurement Bill," *Washington Post*, August 17, 1978, A1 and A14.

<sup>210</sup> 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.

in sixteen months in office.”<sup>211</sup> 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.<sup>212</sup> Carter’s veto message made it clear that he resented the congressional alterations of 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” while another deemed Carter’s action “irresponsible.” Congressman Melvin Price (D-IL), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, sent a scathing letter to President Carter criticizing the veto. Price lectured the President 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 two billion dollar nuclear carrier did not equate to cutting funds from other areas of the defense budget. Having made his point, Price chastised, “I can only conclude, Mr. President, that you have been ill-advised on the process of Congressional authorization and appropriation.”<sup>213</sup> He went on to blast 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

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<sup>211</sup> Edward Walsh and Mary Russell, "Weapons Bill Vetoed," *Washington Post*, August 18, 1978, A1 and A6.

<sup>212</sup> United States. Congress. House., *Presidential Veto of HR 10929, Document 95-377* (17 August 1978).

<sup>213</sup> 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.

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.<sup>214</sup>

Price then went on to assail 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.<sup>215</sup>

He further noted opposition to Carter's veto in the Senate, including resistance from Senator Gary Hart (D-CO), who "despite being one of the most vigorous spokesmen in Congress for going to smaller carriers," had called on his colleagues to override the veto. Price then closed with a promise that he would ask the House of Representative to override Carter's veto in one week. Congress had clearly responded to Carter's challenge and offered conclusive evidence that several influential members disagreed with his defense budget priorities.

Carter, having fully committed himself and his administration, waged a pitched political battle 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

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

for a purpose that is not time-critical” and recommending that Carter promise a conventionally-powered carrier in the FY80 budget.<sup>216</sup> Harold Brown, who was reported to have “mixed feelings” about the veto in the first place, was forced to become one of the public spokesmen selling it and at the same time conducted a behind-the-scenes lobbying effort with influential Senators.<sup>217</sup> The White House 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.”<sup>218</sup> The concerted effort paid off, and by August 25, 1978 Carter’s staff celebrated the fact that newspaper editorials were running nine to one in favor of the veto.<sup>219</sup> When Congressman 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 he needed. 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

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<sup>216</sup> 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.

<sup>217</sup> For congressional comments see Walsh and Russell, “Weapons Bill Vetoed,” *Washington Post*, August 18, 1978, A1 and 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.

<sup>218</sup> "The Defense Appropriation Authorization Act, the President's Veto: Background Report by the Office of Media Liaison," White House Press Office, 2.

<sup>219</sup> 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.

override.<sup>220</sup> Carter and his staff were correct. The veto was not overridden. Furthermore, 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 the military-congressional alliance and at the sacrifice of any hope for a future executive-legislative defense policy consensus during his administration.

### ***After the Battle: The Significance of the Veto and the Evolution of Civil-Military Relations***

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.<sup>221</sup> First, the president was locked in an overall struggle with Congress at the time over asserting his executive authority. Carter threatened to veto up to thirty other bills “to conform to the administration’s program of budget restraint.”<sup>222</sup> Second, linking the veto only to the carrier and naval shipbuilding disregarded the fact that Carter’s message proposed a plan for defense spending that was consistent with his policy of investing in maintenance and readiness. The veto of HR 10929 was in fact a final presidential assertion of authority over the defense budgetary process. Finally, the adverse impact of the veto on the relationship between Carter and Congress in the realm of defense policy has been understated. The final result of the veto was consistent with the ongoing patterns of civil-

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<sup>220</sup> 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.

<sup>221</sup> For historiography indicating limited conflict over the carrier see Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 248-249. Perry, *Four Stars*, 269-270. These works focus on the veto as a conflict with the Navy to the exclusion of other factors.

<sup>222</sup> 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.



military cooperation in the Pentagon, the military-congressional alliance, and the military conflict with the White House.

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 seem to be a logical breaking point in examining the first half of the administration. Although civil-military relations continued to evolve, many changes took place that made the second half of Jimmy Carter's administration different from the first.

First, Carter's views on defense and foreign policy changed over time. 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."<sup>223</sup> William Odom, then a colonel serving in the White House, concurred that the administration "sailed in one direction for two years and slowly came back around the other direction in the last two."<sup>224</sup> Overall, much of the secondary literature concerning the Carter Administration agrees, often emphasizing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as an important turning point.<sup>225</sup> At least one senior Defense Department official agreed, alluding to the invasion as a conversion-like experience when he said that Carter was "reborn after Afghanistan."<sup>226</sup> Yet, one should not overstate the impact

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<sup>223</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1985), iv.

<sup>224</sup> 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.

<sup>225</sup> For example see: Abernathy, Hill, and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 66; Thornton, *The Carter Years*, 480; and Donald S. Spencer, *The Carter Implosion: Jimmy Carter and the Amateur Style of Diplomacy* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 109.

<sup>226</sup> Russell Murray II, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 23 July 1998, OSD Oral History, 37.

of Afghanistan to the exclusion of other factors. Carter had promised to increase defense spending long before the Soviet invasion.<sup>227</sup> Several smaller incidents, such as the issue of a Soviet combat brigade being “discovered” in Cuba, the taking of American hostages in Tehran, and polls indicating a sharp rise in the popularity of defense spending in late 1978 probably had more of a causal influence on Carter’s change of mind.<sup>228</sup> Very possibly, the president simply began to give more weight to the advice of the JCS and Harold Brown.

Second, 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.<sup>229</sup> Carter himself began to emphasize publicly plans to increase the defense budget rather than decrease it, even while making cuts in social programs.<sup>230</sup> The president did this despite strong attacks from the liberal wing of his party.<sup>231</sup> David Cooke, who felt that the

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<sup>227</sup> 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. 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.

<sup>228</sup> For influence of public opinion see Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Memorandum to 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.

<sup>229</sup> Bernard Weinraub, “Jordan and Rafshoon Said to Back Pentagon Head in Debate over Budget,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1978, A1.

<sup>230</sup> 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.

<sup>231</sup> 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; and 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

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.”<sup>232</sup> General 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.”<sup>233</sup> This assertion proves quantitatively correct because of the remarkable contrast between the administration’s FY78-79 and FY80-81 defense budget proposals.<sup>234</sup> Indeed, by 1980 the public relations emphasis of Carter’s staff was entirely on how much the administration had boosted military spending in its last two years.<sup>235</sup> Regardless of the motivation, Pentagon correspondent George Wilson correctly assessed that by 1979, Carter had “chosen a far different path” than the campaign promises that he had made in 1976.<sup>236</sup>

Third, Carter became less personally involved in the FY80 and FY81 budget processes than in the past. Harold Brown later admitted that Carter’s “strong personal role in defense

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spending was a threat, Senator Edward Kennedy ousting him for the Democratic nomination was probably a more immediate threat for Carter at the time.

<sup>232</sup> David Cooke, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 20 December 1989, OSD Oral History, 6.

<sup>233</sup> Lew Allen, interview by James Hasdorf, transcript, K239.0512-1694, IRIS# 01105260, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 109.

<sup>234</sup> *Department of Defense Key Officials*, 86. From FY78 to FY79 the defense budget saw a net 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. Thus from the high watermark of FY82 the Reagan budget actually saw an average real loss of a little over 2% per year.

<sup>235</sup> "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.

<sup>236</sup> George Wilson, "Arms Policy: Farewell to Nixon Doctrine," *Washington Post*, December 13, 1979, A33.

decisions” had tapered off by the last two years of the administration.<sup>237</sup> 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. Carter had always provided the JCS direct access to him and granted them meetings whenever they wished to discuss an important issue.<sup>238</sup> Both Admiral Holloway and General Wilson confirmed this, with the former making the claim that they did not “know of any president who has offered the chiefs of service greater opportunity to provide advice on military matters.”<sup>239</sup> 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 JCS’s “quiet, calm 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.”<sup>240</sup> As Carter distanced himself from the defense budget process, he therefore proved more willing to listen to his advisors.

Finally, and most importantly, Carter was able to change almost all members of the JCS, replacing them with officers more supportive than the first set of chiefs. When General George Brown, stricken with cancer, stepped down in June 1978, Carter replaced him with General David Jones who had been publicly supportive of many of the president’s decisions. General Lew Allen, considered a “surprise appointment” and a scientific expert like Harold

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<sup>237</sup> Harold Brown, interview by Alfred Goldberg & Maurice Matloff, 28 February 1992, OSD Oral History, 29.

<sup>238</sup> Jimmy Carter, interview with Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 12 March 1986, OSD Oral History, 12.

<sup>239</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on the Budget. Task Force on National Security and International Affairs., *FY79 Defense Budget Overview*, 224. and United States Congress. House. Committee on Appropriations, *FY79 Appropriations Hearings*, 593. General Wilson also confirmed this more privately in his oral history, see 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, 208 and 226.

<sup>240</sup> David Jones, interview by Maurice Maryanow and Richard H. Kohn, transcript, K239.0512-1664, IRIS# 01105219, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 209 and 217-218.

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.”<sup>241</sup> 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 at the end of that week.<sup>242</sup> When Admiral Holloway, the CNO who had publicly lobbied for the nuclear supercarrier, retired from his post, Carter denied him the traditional honorary visit. Carter replaced him with Admiral 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.”<sup>243</sup> Carter had clearly made some deliberate choices as to which generals he would place in the highest offices.

Despite the political pressures and civil-military tension that Carter and Harold Brown faced, it would be inaccurate to say that they “purged” the JCS and appointed only “yes-men” to replace the outgoing generals. Certainly 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. Yet, when interviewed for

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<sup>241</sup> For “surprise” see Charles Duncan, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 17 May 1996, OSD Oral History, 36. For Gen. Allen’s quote see Lew Allen, interview by James Hasdorf, transcript, K239.0512-1694, IRIS# 01105260, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 127.

<sup>242</sup> For Vessey’s opposition to Carter’s Korea policy see John Saar, “Background on the Singlaub Affair,” *Washington Post*, June 4, 1977, C1. and John Saar, “U.S. General: Korea Pullout Risks War,” *Washington Post*, May 19, 1977, A1 and 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.

<sup>243</sup> Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Washington’s Naval Battle,” *Washington Post*, September 4, 1978, A15.

the position of Kester's military assistant, Colin Powell was impressed by the fact that "he was not looking for a yes-man."<sup>244</sup> Likewise, the same could be said for the selection officers of the JCS. What Carter, Brown, and Kester sought, however, 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.<sup>245</sup> General Bernard Rogers, leaving his post as Army Chief of Staff, was appointed SACEUR despite his serious clashes with Kester and Clifford Alexander. Based on the revisions in Carter's defense policy, this move placed Rogers in a position where he would continue to give strong input into the defense budgetary and planning process, for Brown had succeeded in greatly increasing this role for the CINCs.<sup>246</sup> 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.<sup>247</sup> Similarly, his replacement, General Meyer, was a very young appointee who was, like Carter, a strong advocate of readiness and had headed Carter's

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<sup>244</sup> 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.

<sup>245</sup> David Jones, interview by Maurice Maryanow and Richard H. Kohn, transcript, K239.0512-1664, IRIS# 01105219, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 160.

<sup>246</sup> "The DoD Reorganization Studies," 6.

<sup>247</sup> 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.

efforts to create the Rapid Deployment Force.<sup>248</sup> 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.<sup>249</sup> He instead appointed the scientist, General 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 scientist Harold Brown—and Brown was the strongest advocate of Allen over Huyser.<sup>250</sup> When selecting the successor CNO, Admiral Hayward was the first Naval Aviator chosen to the post and considered somewhat of a "maverick." He was, however, considered a technologist, open to Carter's "total force" concept in the Navy, and his opinion regarding aircraft carriers would carry considerable weight with Congress.<sup>251</sup> Nothing indicates 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 were simply going to be "yes-men." This second set of Chiefs would therefore facilitate—although by no means eliminate—the

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<sup>248</sup> For Meyer's position as RDF pioneer see George Wilson, "Army Is Drafting Plans for 'Quick-Strike' Force," *Washington Post*, June 22, 1979, A2. For youth and emphasis on change and readiness see George Wilson, "Meyer Installed as New Army Chief of Staff," *Washington Post*, June 23, 1979, A2.

<sup>249</sup> 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."

<sup>250</sup> 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.

<sup>251</sup> 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.

resistance to the efforts in the second half of the administration to assert stronger civilian control of defense policies and budgets.

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.<sup>252</sup> Indeed, Carter's first defense budget was a net real decrease of 3.5% from the Ford FY77 budget.<sup>253</sup> 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."<sup>254</sup> These "iron majors" significantly impact civil-military relations since they populate the staffs that support senior policy and decision makers. Harold Brown was so conscious of the impact of these "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."<sup>255</sup> General Jones described these officers as "zealots" and lamented some of these officers "down below" always argued "that the Chief ought to resign, the country was going to hell,

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<sup>252</sup> Rearden, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy*, Vol. XII, 366-367.

<sup>253</sup> *Department of Defense Key Officials*, 86.

<sup>254</sup> Lew Allen, interview by James Hasdorf, transcript, K239.0512-1694, IRIS# 01105260, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 127.

<sup>255</sup> Harold Brown, interview by Alfred Goldberg & Maurice Matloff, 28 February 1992, OSD Oral History, 20.



and the President doesn't know what he is talking about.”<sup>256</sup> 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.”<sup>257</sup> Together, these factors moderated the improvement in civil-military relations ending with the FY79 budget process.

***Conclusion: What the FY78/79 Defense Budgets Reveal about Civil-Military Relations and Why it Matters***

The FY78 and FY79 defense budgets 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 had taken office during a period of great uncertainty about the future of the military. Carter's campaign promises and his initial intervention in the Department of Defense budget process demonstrated his far-reaching ambition to re-prioritize defense spending. The military, apprehensive about the increasing civilian control and loss of their own prerogatives of prioritization, utilized behind-the-scenes lobbying in 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. Carter's relationship with Congress continued to deteriorate through 1978, and the

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<sup>256</sup> David Jones, interview by Maurice Maryanow and Richard H. Kohn, transcript, K239.0512-1664, IRIS# 01105219, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 183.

<sup>257</sup> Powell, *My American Journey*, 250.

military, along with some civilians in the Pentagon, sought an even stronger military-congressional alliance to oppose Carter's efforts to reshape and reduce the military establishment. The veto of the FY79 defense authorization bill was the end result of these prevailing patterns in civil-military relations.

Clearly, the primary point of contention for the military was presidential involvement early in the budgetary process and his desire to re-prioritize defense spending, even more than the actual budget cuts. While the military certainly wanted to keep all of their 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 General Jones who knew that cutting the defense budget was not unique to the Carter administration.<sup>258</sup> 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."<sup>259</sup> The source of conflict was larger than any one program—it lay in Carter's effort to reshape the allocation of resource 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 minute details of defense spending.

Despite their controversy, the FY78 and FY79 budgets kept in development many of the systems that now define the modern American military. For the Army, the M-1 tank, Bradley fighting vehicle, Apache helicopter, and MLRS all survived to become superb combat systems. The Air Force continued with the MX ballistic missile, and even the "cancelled" B-1, regarded by long-time defense correspondent George Wilson as Carter's

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<sup>258</sup> Memo, Gen. Dixon to Gen. DePuy, 11 December 1976, 1.

<sup>259</sup> David Jones, interview by Maurice Maryanow and Richard H. Kohn, transcript, K239.0512-1664, IRIS# 01105219, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 210-211.

“most controversial weapons decision since taking office,” remained alive in a research and development phase to be resurrected by the Reagan Administration.<sup>260</sup> Despite being debated for hours in Carter’s first meeting on the defense budget, the Navy and Marines CH-53 helicopter gained continued budgetary support—only to fail miserably in the attempt to rescue the American hostages in Iran due to poor maintenance practices. The Navy’s intensive lobbying efforts also ensured that the F/A-18 fighter and “Aegis” cruiser survived to enter service. If Carter did not think the Navy needed a fifth nuclear-powered supercarrier, then President Reagan and Congress clearly disagreed; a fifth through tenth would be 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 *USS Ronald Reagan*.<sup>261</sup> Thus, Carter’s budgets hardly crippled long-term American military superiority.

Civil-military relations during Carter’s administration, probably like that of many administrations, evolved over time. Carter’s first meeting with the Joint Chiefs, reported as cataclysmic by some, did not undermine the fundamental basis of the civil-military relationship in the U.S. government. Although many of the “iron majors” never could overcome their disdain for Carter, and although Carter and Brown never fully gained the loyalty and support of his first set of Chiefs, the most experienced and professional officers in the military performed their duty and acceded to civilian control of the military. In fact, in the end, the thirty-ninth president would find a naval vessel named in honor of him—the *USS Jimmy Carter*, a Seawolf class nuclear-powered submarine commissioned in February

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<sup>260</sup> For controversy on B-1 see George Wilson, "Panel Rebuffs President on Scuttling B-1," *Washington Post*, September 29, 1977, A1 and A20. For retention and resurrection of the B-1 see Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 88.

<sup>261</sup> Chris Bishop, ed., *The Encyclopedia of World Sea Power* (New York: Crescent Books, 1988), 69.

2005—perhaps indicating that even the embittered Navy was willing to cede that the Carter years inflicted no permanent damage to the American civil-military relationship.<sup>262</sup>

While civil-military relations during the Carter years may in some ways be characteristic of the course of other administrations, certain factors make them unique and worthy of continued study and emphasis. As a broader category of civil-military relations, the period since the end of World War II has demanded more study of how the military interacted with its 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.”<sup>263</sup> The stalemate in Korea and the debacle of Vietnam provide modern examples of failed civil-military coordination. Some critics would argue that the current conflict in Iraq will yield a similar result. Now, more than ever, the understanding of the civil-military relationship since World War II has a particular value in the context of twentieth-century military history. For several additional reasons the Carter years in particular deserve attention in this scholarly examination.

First, extreme distrust between the president and his generals characterized the last years of the Nixon Administration, often cited as the nadir of American civil-military relations.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> See <http://www.csg2.navy.mil/Jimmy%20Carter/JimmyCarterFacts.html> (accessed 8 February 2007) for information about the *USS Jimmy Carter*. It is currently the most advanced submarine in the world.

<sup>263</sup> Smith, *American Democracy and Military Power*, 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 Kolodziej, *The Uncommon Defense and Congress*, 30.

<sup>264</sup> 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 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

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 chose an unusual course in the post-Vietnam era with its desire to assert a strong and direct civilian control over the Department of Defense. Not all administrations came into office with plans to increase civilian control of the military as a matter of principle and process; some commanders-in-chief and their Secretaries of Defense have taken a "hands-off" approach from the start. The administrations of Nixon, Ford, and Reagan generally adopted such a strategy.<sup>265</sup> 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 decision making as much as possible" while "delegating to the Military Departments more responsibility to manage development and procurement programs."<sup>266</sup> Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger (1973-1975), although held in high regard by the military, was fired when the Nixon White House 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

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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 Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 409 and 415.

<sup>265</sup> Trask and Goldberg, *The Department of Defense*, 86 and 91-93. Political scientist 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.

<sup>266</sup> Trask and Goldberg, *The Department of Defense*, 86.

Reagan, never regarded as a “details president,” had this image confirmed by his first Chairman of the JCS, General Jones, who stated that Reagan simply did not want to get involved in the intricacies of the Defense Department.<sup>267</sup> Thus, the Carter administration chose a unique course in the immediate post-Vietnam era with its desire to assert a strong and direct civilian control of the military, or at least of its budgetary and procurement process.

Third, even beyond budgetary issues, the Carter administration 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 is not so straightforward. Harold Brown, for instance, asserted more direct control over officer promotions and assignments than any previous Secretary and stood in sharp contrast to James Schlesinger in this regard.<sup>268</sup> Additionally, Secretary Brown, though doing so to ease civil-military tension, increased the authority of his assistant secretaries over the Service Secretaries, thus consolidating civilian control at an even higher level in the Pentagon.<sup>269</sup> The PPBS process, installed by McNamara as a means to increase civilian control of the budget, was still in use and Carter wanted to place ZBB on top of it as an additional layer of control.<sup>270</sup> These

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<sup>267</sup> David Jones, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 21 October 1987, OSD Oral History, 31.

<sup>268</sup> Ray B. Sitton, interview by Marcus J. Boyle, transcript, K239.0512-1570, USAF Oral History Collection, AFHRA, 7-8 February 1984, 278.

<sup>269</sup> 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.”

<sup>270</sup> Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon*, 85-88.

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. Although ZBB is gone, the assertion of civilian control in these previously military-dominated areas has proved to be Carter's long-term legacy to the defense establishment.

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, as Carter entered office in 1976, sixteen percent of all military officers characterized themselves as “liberal” and sixty-one percent as “conservative.” By the end of Carter's term in 1980, only four percent would classify themselves as liberal, with conservatives increasing to seventy-two percent.<sup>271</sup> 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.<sup>272</sup> While many scholars have noted the unique dynamics of 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.<sup>273</sup>

Fifth, the transformation and recovery of the U.S. military after the Vietnam War, so often credited to Reagan's buildup of the military, cannot be fully understood without emphasis on

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<sup>271</sup> Ole R. Holsti, "A Widening Gap between the U.S. Military and Civilian Society?: Some Evidence 1976-1996," *International Security Vol. 23 No. 3*, Winter 1998-1999, 13.

<sup>272</sup> Peter Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*, BCSIA Studies in International Security (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 31 and 92. Ole Holsti confirmed in his article in this work that many 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.”

<sup>273</sup> 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 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*, December 2002.

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 vis-à-vis the Soviets had declined significantly.<sup>274</sup> 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 that administration which are not available in the current historiography 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 Senate in order to gain their support for ratification of SALT II.<sup>275</sup> Such an analysis certainly has merit—Carter himself admitted his intentions in this regard.<sup>276</sup> Closer analysis, however, indicates that the rise in defense budgets may also have been in large part due to the evolutionary course of civil-military relations throughout the administration. 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

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<sup>274</sup> 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 Vol. 10 No. 2*, Autumn 1985. Gray and Barlow held the Carter Administration primarily responsible for the decline of U.S. military power during the 1970s.

<sup>275</sup> For example see Abernathy, Hill, and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 96-99.

<sup>276</sup> Jimmy Carter, interview with Alfred Goldberg & Maurice Matloff, 12 March 86, OSD Oral History, 25-26.



Ronald Reagan's stateside public relations assignment during World War II relative to Jimmy Carter who served with distinction in the U.S. Navy.<sup>277</sup> As this study has shown, 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 service issue was less of an advantage for Carter over Reagan in 1980. Overall, these two points illustrate the value of further in-depth analysis of civil-military relations during the Carter administration.

Much work remains to be done, and the study of the second half of the Carter administration is just as important as is the first. This work has provided a framework to approach the next study and perhaps broaden the intellectual curiosity about civil-military relations in general while filling an important gap in the existing historiography. The future security of our nation and our appreciation of history can only benefit from a better understanding of this critical area of interaction within our government.

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<sup>277</sup> Feaver and Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians*, 30-31.

## **Appendix 1**

### **The Annual Defense Budget Process**

The annual defense budget process is one of the most complicated processes within the federal government bureaucracy. The following discussion is a brief, broad overview of the process during the Carter years. While the general pattern remains the same, 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 governmental agencies and organizations fail to meet recommended budgetary timelines, thus altering the course of the defense budget drafting process. The Carter administration was again no exception--struggling to meet timelines on its first two iterations of the budget as it attempted to implement its new systems.<sup>278</sup> Significantly, the annual defense budget process is cyclical in nature and attention to the defense budget is constant--so, as soon as one iteration is finished, 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 begins roughly in March of a given year. The process then ends in February of the next year with the finalized budget submitted to Congress. Congress, in between this time, modifies the budget through a series of committees. These committees are the House and Senate Budget Committees, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, and the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. These committees each have different focuses and agendas based on their composition, but

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<sup>278</sup> Walter S. Poole, *JCS Special Historical Study: The Evolution of the Joint Strategic Planning System, 1947-1989* (Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Staff, 1989), 15. Hereafter cited as *Evolution of the JSPS*.

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 and 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."<sup>279</sup> 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).<sup>280</sup> In the words of the JCS official historian, this was a "watershed event" which brought significant changes to the annual defense budget process.<sup>281</sup>

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

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<sup>279</sup> Korb, *The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon*, 85.

<sup>280</sup> 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."

<sup>281</sup> Poole, *Evolution of the JSPS*, 15.

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.”<sup>282</sup> 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.<sup>283</sup>

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 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

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<sup>282</sup> Brown, "Memorandum for Service Secretaries and the CJCS, Subject: Improvements in the PPBS."

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

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.<sup>284</sup> The process of the administration developing its own defense budget was then essentially complete.

These changes proposed by Secretary Brown, although resisted by the military and Congress, were eventually implemented with minor modifications.<sup>285</sup> 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."<sup>286</sup> Thus, in some ways, the legacy of Carter and Brown's changes to the annual defense budget process carry on to the present day.

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<sup>284</sup> Timeline taken from "Memorandum for Service Secretaries and the CJCS, Subject: Improvements in the PPBS."

<sup>285</sup> For military and congressional resistance to the plan see Price, "Letter to ASD L&L, Subject: Request for Explanation Regarding Changes in PPBS."

<sup>286</sup> Poole, *Evolution of the JSPS*, 16-17.

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