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The Surge – Collective Memory Project

Interviewee: Richard B. Cheney
Vice President of the United States, 2001-2009

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[Begin Transcription]

FEAVER: Are we taping?

O'SULLIVAN: Yes.

FEAVER: My name is Peter Feaver. I'm a professor of political science at Duke. It is August 6th, and we're in Jackson Hole.

O'SULLIVAN: This is Meghan O'Sullivan, and I'm a professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School.

ENGEL: I'm Jeffrey Engel. I direct the Center for Presidential History at SMU.

CHENEY: And I'm Dick Cheney, the victim.

FEAVER: So, we want to get your reflections on the decision-making that led up to President Bush's announcement in January of 2007, to authorize the new strategy and the new resources.

CHENEY: Right.

FEAVER: We want to take you through that process, but as a scene-setter for those who will be reviewing this many decades from now, what was your office's role in Iraq strategy, particularly in the 2005 on timeframe, and how that fit in [00:01:00] to what eventually became the Iraq strategy. What was your day-to-day responsibilities in that period?

CHENEY: Well, I, of course, was involved from the beginning, in the whole process, the decision-making to go into Iraq in the first place. I was strongly supportive of the President's decision then, back in '03, and generally a strong supporter of the

policy throughout that period of time. By the time we got up to -- oh, I guess it was especially '06, by then we'd been involved for about three years, the level of violence was significant. We'd had the success of getting Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, as I recall, in June of '06. We'd had three elections, as I recall, the constitution, parliament, president, and so forth. [00:02:00] So the program was going along with success in many areas, but we had a growing insurgency, an increased level of violence, increased casualties, and by the summer of '06, I think there were a number of us who were concerned about that state of affairs.

I had been involved - as a vice president you're not in charge of anything - but I was involved in a lot of the policy discussions and debates. I met with the President frequently and the national security staff or National Security Council. We used to do periodic closed circuit SVTS [Secure Video Teleconference System] with our people in Iraq, I usually participated in those, with Ambassador Crocker and so forth. In terms of thinking back on what ultimately led to the changes in policy, in terms of my personal involvement, it would be such things as, [00:03:00] and again, let me refer to sort of the bible, from my standpoint, was the record that --

FEAVER: And you're pointing to?

CHENEY: Pointing to my memoir, *In My Time*, that I wrote, and I guess it was published in August of 2011. It is the most authoritative account of the events and the sequence and so forth, that we went through. But I talked to, from time to time,

for example, with Paul Wolfowitz. Paul was the undersecretary of defense at the time, he'd been my undersecretary for policy at Defense, back when I was Secretary of Defense in the first Bush administration. Paul and I kept in touch. I would frequently hear from him a recommendation, and he, I think, is the first one who urged me to go get to know this guy Petraeus, General Petraeus. So I made it a point to travel to Fort Leavenworth, where he was stationed at the time, and this [00:04:00] was during the period when he was rewriting the counterinsurgency doctrine. I got a draft of the doctrine as they were going through the document eventually. That had whetted my appetite, the fact that he was doing that, and he came highly recommended, as I said, by Paul. When I went out and spent an afternoon with him at Fort Leavenworth, that furthered my interest in that general subject matter. It raised questions about what needed to be done to be successful in Iraq.

FEAVER: Let me take you back to the fall of 2005, when the administration released the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, NSVI, which was a white paper explaining the strategy. Some of the people that we've interviewed said they viewed the effort of drafting that as itself an opportunity, perhaps, to reconsider the existing strategy. [00:05:00] Other people we've interviewed saw that more as an exercise in explaining an existing strategy, rather than reconsidering it. How did you view that exercise, if you recall? Was it an explanation of a strategy or was it an effort to revise and tweak or even change the strategy?

CHENEY: I think that's something that probably was focused on at the staff level, but I don't recall it being raised to my level. I mean, being involved in any conversations or discussions is possible, but I don't recall any specific debate or discussion about it.

FEAVER: OK. And then in the spring you mentioned, I believe, the Samarra bombing, which produced for some people, sort of a change and an opportunity. There's also the arrival of Josh Bolten, the new chief of staff, [00:06:00] which also was a time for the administration to take a fresh look at it. How did you view those efforts and those moments in the spring leading up to the Camp David meeting, which we'll get to in a moment? I'm just trying to get a sense of your thinking in the spring of '06, leading up to Camp David.

CHENEY: My recollection is that as we went through '05, a couple of things stand out. One were the elections, worked basically on the theory that if we could get elections, a democratically elected government, turn things over to the Iraqis as soon as they were able to put together a government, a functioning government. That was a significant progress, that was an important dimension. The other thing though, that had happened, that was driven, [00:07:00] as I recall, by Zarqawi as much as anything, was we had intercepted a letter, as I recall, that he was sending back to the home office, where he talked about trying to foment civil strife between Shia and Sunni. His basic approach was to commit outrages on the Shia population, in the hopes that he could provoke a retaliation by the Shia, against

the Sunni. That had been going on for a period of time, but we'd been generally successful at the Shia holding back and not taking the bait. Blowing up the Golden Dome and the mosque at Samarra sort of ended that. It seems to me that was the period, the trigger, if you will. After that, the Shia jumped in in a big way in terms of responding, retaliating, attacking the Sunnis. He had some success [00:08:00] with that basic strategy, pitting Sunni against Shia, and that helped precipitate, if you will, the concerns then, as we got into later on in '06, when we were trying to deal with an increased level of violence: violence against our troops, violence against Shia and Sunni and so forth. So those two items, in my mind, were significant elements of the developments then of '06.

FEAVER: One last follow-up and then I'll hand it over to Meghan. Of course, General Casey was evaluating the strategy on a daily basis, revising and tweaking it on a daily basis.

CHENEY: Right.

FEAVER: Back in Washington, officials were monitoring it closely and making judgments on a daily basis. But still, something like a full-blown blank sheet review was not happening until the fall of '06. [00:09:00] But it might have happened in the spring; it didn't. What factors do you think were holding it back from being a full -- answer the historical question: why didn't the review get launched in the spring?

CHENEY: Does that affect your sound? [referring to the sound of the air unit]

FEAVER: No. What factors prevented the full-blown strategy review from happening in the spring of '06, during this period when, as you said, the violence was escalating.

CHENEY: Well, we had a strategy in place that we were working by, and we had troops deployed and we had objectives for the forces. We were trying to stand up the Iraqi government and Iraqi security forces, so that they could take over responsibility so we could leave. The normal way that would operate [00:10:00] once the President signed off on a strategy, then everybody else better be out there pulling their fair share of the load, following the President's instructions and executing on his strategy. So, I didn't see it so much as resistance, but a lot of people trying to do their job, to do what they thought the boss wanted. Gradually, over a period of time, it became clear that that wasn't adequate to the task. We weren't winning.

I think from the standpoint, as I remember some of the debates, there was a feeling on the part of the military, that State wasn't doing enough. There was an argument that really went back to Afghanistan. And the view the Defense Department had was that they ended up having to do things that were more of a civilian nature, in terms of working with the locals, [00:11:00] things that should have been done by AID [Agency for International Development]or by the State Department, and so there was controversy there.

There was the view in the Defense Department that the key was to turn things over as quickly as possible and reduce the U.S. presence. I think John

Abizaid, I can recall talking about that, or General Casey, George Casey, also held similar views, that the key was the transfer of power, the transfer of responsibility. And as we talked about that, it became increasingly clear that some of us believed that that wasn't the right objective; the right objective was to do that, but after the Iraqis were in position to carry forward on the mission, to be able to secure their own territory, to be able to cope with al-Qaeda and so forth. So you ended up with differences of opinion [00:12:00] within the government, but I didn't find that surprising at all, having been through Desert Storm. There were always, once you get into the business of use of military force, there are going to be differences of opinion, depending upon where you sit, depending upon what your background and experience is, whether you're military or civilian, whether you're conventional military or special ops. Those things are to be expected in the normal course of events.

O'SULLIVAN: Just building on what you were saying about, we did have a strategy in place. And again, I'm in the time period of the first half of 2006, right before Camp David, that Camp David conversation. A big part of that strategy, as I remember it, was that the politics were kind of the fulcrum, that we had to get the politics right and if we got the politics right, the security would fall into place.

CHENEY: You mean the politics in Iraq.

O'SULLIVAN: In Iraq, yeah, the politics in Iraq, meaning bring the Sunni [00:13:00] community into the political space and having them be more represented, that

that would defuse the violence. Do you remember having a view on that particular sequence, you know politics first, security will follow, and if so, was there a time when you started to question whether that sequence was really the right strategic underpinning?

CHENEY: Well, to some extent, those kinds of concerns -- I believe now, I'm trying to keep the calendar straight -- came up during Bremer's time in Baghdad, and sort of the dissolution of the Iraqi military. Arguments being made that if -- there was an inconsistency between what you needed to create a democracy and the role of the military, having a strong military. [00:14:00] From the perspective of that view, that the military was a negative, the military was a force not for good, but something you had to make certain didn't interfere with the political process domestically, inside Iraq. Some of the early debates, as we look back on them, began to take place around that subject. We ended up with the belief, for example, as I recall, in the interior ministry, and if we just go through and get rid of the bad guys at the top, the Ba'athists, the Saddam Hussein lovers, pull them aside, then you'd have a bureaucracy there and you could get good people in charge, and that unit would begin to function the way it should in the government. It turned out that wasn't valid. So there was an inherent conflict to some extent, and when we got into this debate of what comes first, the military or the [00:15:00] civilian, and then if you go back to the original arguments, I think some of those occurred in that first year, and in the immediate aftermath of that, with this

debate that wasn't really much of a debate, the military ended up being basically disbanded and the troops went home. At the same time, we're trying to make progress on the political front, but they were viewed as inconsistent or incompatible somehow, and we had to get around that obviously, if we were going to solve the problem.

O'SULLIVAN: And then back in Washington, there was a real focus on the political strategy in this 2006 period, where for the first half, there was no government after the election. Was there a big effort to remove Jaafari, because he didn't have the support of other political factions. This may bring back bad memories, but all these back-and-forths about who would be prime minister, who had the support of the Sunnis and the Shias and the Kurds. There's so much focus on the [00:16:00] political side, but not a similar focus on the military side. Do you disagree with that or do you think that this was reflective of what was our strategic thought at the time, that if we could get the politics right, that Iraq would become -- and the security situations would improve? Do you think we were scrutinizing both parts of our strategy adequately at the time, the military and the political?

CHENEY: Part of the problem -- and they were so intertwined -- part of the difficulty was we were having to deal with the Iraq, Shia-Sunni conflict, and we were in a position where, because of the progress we were making politically, elections, you end up in a situation where you have the country that had been governed by the Sunnis, power shifting to the Shia. There were more of them, they won the

elections, [00:17:00] and that complicated progress towards our objectives, and I don't think that we went into it with as comprehensive an understanding of the politics inside Iraq. I think sometimes that was reflected in the military view, as our military view, that the State Department or the civilians in the business couldn't get it right and, therefore, they were having to deal with a very difficult situation. I think our military, based on tradition, based upon the way they're trained and what their focus is, they win wars. They don't have a heavy emphasis on setting up and running governments, and so I think there was a natural built-in conflict there.

But the other thing that was significant was this issue of -- [00:18:00] and I have vague memories of internal debates -- of how we treat the Shia. For a period of time, we had Muqtada al-Sadr, radical Shia, strong loyalties, as I recall, to Iran, tied in to the Iranians, who oftentimes ran vicious terrorist campaigns against some of our people, but also against other Iraqis. I sensed a reluctance on the part of some of our officials, I think including in the military as well as some civilians, that putting the Shia in charge was not a welcome strategy. I think some of our State Department experts in the region [00:19:00] were very much in tune with the old Sunni view of the world. Those were the regimes and the governments they'd worked with over time and all of a sudden they're faced with this problem of having to deal with a Shia-run proposition. The Shia weren't used to governing. They'd always been the majority population but minority from the standpoint of

politics and government, and that created problems that our people had to deal with. It was difficult, it wasn't clear-cut, and I think there were those who believed that certain sympathy for the Shia and the fact that they won the election, and that we ought to be true to our principles. And on the other hand, a view that the Sunnis were the ones who'd run the government in the past, they were the ones that dominated to some extent, in the region.

I remember there were conflicts between us and some of our friends and allies. [00:20:00] I can remember sessions that I had with King Abdullah, Crown Prince and then King, over --

O'SULLIVAN: Of Saudi Arabia.

CHENEY: Of Saudi Arabia. Trying to get him to come around on recognizing and dealing with a Shia government in Iraq. He didn't want to do it, and it was very strong, very deeply held feelings on his part. And on more than one occasion, when we got to be close friends and we used to have sessions where he'd kick everybody else out, and Gamal and I would sit down and have a long talk with the king, but he would express sentiments that what the Shia were really after, was to take control of the Two Holy Mosques, and that was a very, very deep consideration for him. After all, he was the king of the two, holy guardian of the Two Holy Mosques; Mecca and Medina, and [00:21:00] he was convinced that at bottom, what was happening here was the Shia were trying to get their hands on holy sites, religiously significant sites in Saudi Arabia. You can just look at that and say, how

can that be? He believed it. It was a deep, deep part of his worldview and he cared very deeply about it. So, with those kinds of cross-cutting pressures as well too, there was a great deal of complexity and it's not surprising that it was an increasingly difficult time, trying to sort out. We'd like to look at it like a nice neat package; here's the military, here's the political, the civilians do this, the military will do that, and away we go. It was never that simple.

FEAVER: Let me bring you back to spring, 2006, and ask you about one other potentially significant development that spring, the so-called [00:22:00] "Revolt of the Generals." You recall, a number of retired generals.

CHENEY: Formers.

FEAVER: Formers, who came out and spoke publicly about their views. What role, if any, did that play? What was your view of that and what role did that play in internal evaluations of the Iraq strategy?

CHENEY: Not much. I remember when they wrote a letter or something, to send to the President, or released a statement of some kind, but I don't remember any of the details or even who was involved in the generals.

FEAVER: So not as significant from your point of view.

CHENEY: Not from my standpoint.

ENGEL: Let me ask you a question on that same time period, just to go back and try to understand, from your perspective, something that you mentioned a couple questions ago. Over the course of this period, we're still in spring of 2006, there is,

I believe you said a growing sense that the strategy is inadequate. [00:23:00] When did you, if you did, when did you come to believe that yourself and walk us through, if you will, for the record, a little bit of what your thoughts were during this time period, about the strategy, because obviously as you mentioned, people are pulling in the direction of the strategy. What was in the back of your mind? How did you perceive the likelihood of success for the current strategy at that point?

CHENEY: Well, again, I refer you to the book. This is the authoritative account and you're asking me to go back and self-analyze what was going through my mind at the time. I think over a period of time, there developed the view that we weren't winning, I guess would be the way I described it. That doesn't mean we were going to be defeated, but as we went into the spring of '06 [00:24:00] and then the summer, and I think I recall in here, and mention in the book, this meeting where General Casey briefed the NSC or a group of us, and I came away from that meeting with the feeling that he was executing on the basis of his objective is transfer of authority as soon as possible, to the Iraqis. Given the level of violence and casualties and so forth we were suffering, things like the attack on the Golden Mosque, that it wasn't at all clear the Iraqis were ready to take over. It was that sense that there was a sort of a conflict between what -- and Abizaid was very much of this point of view too -- conflict between what our senior commanders were thinking and doing [00:25:00] and executing, in terms of moving fairly

quickly to withdraw, and what I thought was a lot of evidence that the Iraqis weren't ready. That was a process that developed during the course of '06.

O'SULLIVAN: And if you can go to the Camp David meeting in June of '06. In your book, you mention --

CHENEY: Is this the one where the President went to Baghdad?

O'SULLIVAN: Yes. And so if we could get your thoughts on, do you remember what the objective of that meeting was, what you saw as the outcome of that meeting? In your book, you mentioned you had a nagging feeling about the strategy. Was it for the reasons you just articulated right now, or was there something else that was weighing on you at the time?

CHENEY: No, I think I pretty well cover it in the book and what I just said. The thing I remember about the meeting, and I think I've even got a picture in my book, [00:26:00] of Rumsfeld and Rice and myself, a microphone in front of us, and we're talking to the President, who's in Baghdad. It was hard, if you were a participant in that process, not to think about it. I think he told me he was going to go, but not to think about it, the meeting, as a cover for the President go to Baghdad. There was a certain element of that involved. I remember that more than I do the substance of the conversations that we had.

FEAVER: One of the things that happened at that meeting was the White House brought in, some outside folks to give mini briefs during a lunch hour or something. It's Eliot Cohen, Mike Vickers, Fred Kagan, Robert Kaplan. What did you see as their

role and what was the purpose of that effort, and what was your reaction to it, if any? I don't believe you cover that in the book. [00:27:00]

CHENEY: I remember a session, we were beginning, and I might have to go back and check, to nail down the exact timeframe, but I remember sessions where we were having outsiders come in, and generally programmed to have different points of view presented. That was an effort, I assumed, on the part of the NSC, to get debate going and to have the members of the NSC to think about what we were having to deal with.

I recall a session similar to that, that I do talk about in the book, that was probably later on, when we got former generals in there, like Barry McCaffrey, Wayne Downing, Jack Keane, for a session.

[crosstalk]

CHENEY: That was later on.

FEAVER: What we've just referred to is in December, towards the end of the strategy review.

CHENEY: I remember another session I don't think [00:28:00] I wrote about in the book, over at the Pentagon, at DoD, where we had some of these folks involved, Vali Nasr maybe?

O'SULLIVAN: I remember that, yeah.

CHENEY: I didn't write about that in here either, I don't think. So there were occasions when outsiders were brought in, sometimes in the Oval Office, in this case up at

Camp David. I always assumed that was a worthy effort and it was important for us to be looking at those suggestions and considering those alternatives.

FEAVER: Some of the folks who we've interviewed for this project said they thought that that effort, that Camp David meeting, might trigger a more thoroughgoing review of the strategy, as did happen later in the fall, and that these outsiders were partly there to catalyze. Was that your sense of it, that all of the -- you were about to say [00:29:00] something and I didn't want to cut you off.

CHENEY: Well, I was going to say, then the message might have been obscured in part because we just got Zarqawi. You know, we're trying to have the meeting and talk about the strategy and here we have just had great success killing --

O'SULLIVAN: And you just formed the government, right at that time as well, after six months.

CHENEY: That's true. But we got Zarqawi, killed the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq. That was a major success. So it wasn't as though there was just an unending string of bad news coming in, for those who were worried about the strategy or trying to organize debate and discussion about the strategy, their efforts were, to some extent, pushed aside perhaps, because of the success that we were having in some of the areas. Meghan mentions the political side, but I always thought of the victory over Zarqawi as a very significant event. [00:30:00] We'd been trying to get that guy for a long time. I've still got a brick on my desk, in my office in Washington, my home, that's got MBZ 6-7-07, the date he was nailed by our

special ops guys. It was an F-16 with a couple of 500-pound bombs. That was a milestone event. Somebody presented me with that brick. I can't remember who it was.

O'SULLIVAN: I still have the picture of all of us in the Rose Garden at the announcement, in my office.

ENGEL: Oh, no, go ahead, go ahead.

O'SULLIVAN: I wanted to go to the summer.

ENGEL: I do have a question then about Camp David. Could you walk us through your perception and your recollection of the significance of the President going to Baghdad in the middle of the meeting, because there has been a suggestion among people who we've interviewed before, who of course were not privy to that information beforehand, [00:31:00] that they were expecting two days of meetings with the President, and then suddenly he's gone. What do you recall from that? Do you think that that changed the nature of the process? Could it have -- you mentioned Zarqawi part which was very important, but if the President had stayed for two days, do you think you would have had a different outcome from those meetings?

CHENEY: No. I thought it was very important for him to go. He worked that account very hard. When I think of all the hours we spent on the SVTS with our people, especially later on as part of the Surge, with Maliki and his folks, it was sort of a hands-on way of doing business, and that's the way President Bush liked to

operate. He enjoyed that kind of contact. He felt very strongly about Maliki, and that he could help shape [00:32:00] the situation in Iraq by working with him, by having a personal relationship. I remember there was the trip to Jordan, where they had a meeting, and he felt he had a direct role to play, and if I'd looked at it, I would have said it was more important for him to be over there meeting with Maliki, while we do our thing here. He can meet with the Cabinet any time, his National Security Council. It took some effort to put together a session with the leader of Iraq, and under circumstances that made it possible for us to sort of encourage them down the road we wanted them to travel, and there was nobody better to do that than George Bush.

FEAVER: One last question about that event and then we'll move to Together Forward. The choreography of that trip, not everybody who was at Camp David knew that it was happening. The President, in his memoirs, talks about how you had a critical role of keeping those who weren't in the know entertained until they could find out [00:33:00] so that the secret for operational security could be kept. Do you have any comments on how you performed that role of keeping the rest of the group occupied? Do you remember that? You don't write about that.

CHENEY: I remember that was my role. I don't remember what I did.

LIZ CHENEY: Magic tricks.

CHENEY: Magic tricks, yeah.

ENGEL: I had presumed tap-dancing.

CHENEY: If you knew my dancing… I didn't have to do it for long. He'd flown off overnight and the next morning we gathered for the meeting in the Cabinet Room there at Camp David, and in short order, there's the President on the screen, he's 10,000 miles away.

O'SULLIVAN: So, you leave that Camp David meeting, Zarqawi has just been killed, a new government has been stood up. And then there's the summer period, and you remember that that was [00:34:00] when MNF-I was executing two operations called Operation Together Forward I and II.

CHENEY: Both in Baghdad, as I recall.

O'SULLIVAN: Both Baghdad-centric, yes. Do you remember how you felt that was going? Do you remember your sense over the course of the summer? If the strategy looked like it would be resuscitated, or is this sort of a death knell? What are your thoughts around that time?

CHENEY: Well, my recollection is both of them failed. I think that's what is in the book.

O'SULLIVAN: Yes, yes that's true. So, did you think that gave some impetus to a new look at the strategy?

CHENEY: I think it did. I think that again, I like George Casey a lot, he was a good man, but you begin to bring into focus the difficulty we were having between the view of those who thought the important thing was to remove U.S. forces [00:35:00] as an occupying force, as a source of irritation, if you will, to the locals, interfering with

the political process, and the reality on the ground. We were having serious problems controlling Baghdad.

FEAVER: Before we get there, one more thing from the summer. It came out in Steve Hadley's interview, that one important development during the summer was a change in tone or a change in aggressiveness in terms of the questions that were being asked from the White House to MNF-I. In other reporting, General Casey talks about his reaction to being in that SVTS and getting a series of questions. Do you remember that moment, and what was your sense of the rationale behind it and how it went. [00:36:00] This would have been July, 2006.

CHENEY: No.

O'SULLIVAN: No, it was August.

FEAVER: Was it August? July, August, 2006. In the midst of Together Forward -- well I guess by that point it was Together Forward II was unfolding, and the White House was starting to ask pointed questions of MNF-I.

CHENEY: I do remember a certain amount of frustration with the fact that it hadn't succeeded, and that at the same time, Casey was still talking about bringing home another brigade or bringing home a brigade by the end of the year. There was sort of a disconnect between our execution of a strategy that's going to lead to stability in Iraq on the one hand, and on the other hand, [00:37:00] this planning to begin withdrawing forces or bringing forces home relatively soon, before the end of the year as I recall. I think that's correct.

O'SULLIVAN: This is actually the period where we start beginning the review, and so in the early fall of 2006, there are a number of initiatives: JCS, State, we at the NSC start thinking more seriously about what a review might look like, what an alternative strategy might look like. These are uncoordinated events. But I'm wondering, to what extent did you have any visibility over these? Were you aware they were going on or were they more at the staff level? And did you ask people in the Vice President's office to start doing a similar type of review? This is the pre-official review period.

CHENEY: Right.

O'SULLIVAN: September-ish. [00:38:00]

CHENEY: The way I was involved, or the way I think about it, recall it, I was aware that the President had asked Steve to start to review the strategy and so forth, and set up his operation. I can't tell you exactly which started first.

O'SULLIVAN: It's a little -- yeah. It is later but it may just not have reached the radar screen.

CHENEY: There were people working away. I knew about the Council of Colonels, for example, and took advantage as that was getting established, to bring in Colonel McMaster, and get him over to the Vice President's residence. I spent a couple hours with him one afternoon. That was when he first came back to be part of that council, before they'd even met yet. I'm trying to remember who set it up for me. It might have been John Hannah, or Hannah with [00:39:00] Wolfowitz. But I'd

heard of McMaster. I knew what he'd done up at Tal Afar, on his earlier deployment. He's a guy who I perceived and was told had a different view in terms of what we ought to be doing, than was sort of the standard coming out of Baghdad. I'm trying to remember the exact timeframe. It may be in the book, the date. Do you remember what the date was?

O'SULLIVAN: I don't remember the date of your meeting with McMaster, but these efforts were happening in sort of the September time period, and then the President asked Steve to do a more formal review a little bit later, to try and get a sense of to what extent did these reviews kind of come into your comprehension I guess.

CHENEY: Let's see here, [00:40:00] if I can find the dates here [searches through index of memoir, *In My Time*].

LIZ CHENEY: What are you guys looking for?

FEAVER: Just the meeting with McMaster.

CHENEY: We had the dates.

FEAVER: McMaster's meeting at the Residence.

LIZ CHENEY: September 28, 2006.

CHENEY: For what?

LIZ CHENEY: McMaster.

CHENEY: McMaster, yeah, it's on page 440.

O'SULLIVAN: So that's when things are still every agency, kind of looking at this from their own perspective.

CHENEY: He was specifically brought back. I knew of him and his leadership during the first Gulf War, the Battle of, what was it, 63...

FEAVER: Easting.

TIM SAYLE: 73 Easting.

CHENEY: 73 Easting, it's still famous.

FEAVER: Right.

CHENEY: I ran into a guy the other day, who was a tank commander in 73 Easting [Battle of 73 Easting, February, 26-27, 1991]. I once was walking through the Denver Airport, and there was a colonel [00:41:00] wearing his camouflage, came running across the terminal and stopped me and thanked me for the greatest day of his life. He was a Reserve colonel who had been called back to active duty and I asked what that was all about and he said well, he said, "There I was, in my M1A1 Abrams. Down in front of me are dozens of Iraqi tanks..." He proceeds to describe the joy he felt, the sort of culmination of his whole career, and it was the Battle of 73 Easting that he was talking about, so it had a lasting impact.

FEAVER: Right.

CHENEY: So that would have been September, and he's come back. In January of '06 is when I stopped at Fort Leavenworth and visited with Petraeus, and he's revising the counterinsurgency doctrine. So we're thinking [00:42:00] about the need for a

change of some kind, as early as '06. I just talked with him in that regard and I got a copy of his draft. That fall, three other reviews underway at, the direction of the President. J. D. Crouch, Steve Hadley, that's your [referring to Meghan O'Sullivan] group. State and Defense, the Joint Staff, were involved in that effort.

FEAVER: So, let me just take you to --

CHENEY: And Hannah and Karem represented my office, Robert Karem.

O'SULLIVAN: Right. I wanted to ask you a little bit about that, but Peter might have a couple things.

FEAVER: Right. I just wanted to follow up on something you were saying about the -- this would have been still the August timeframe -- when the disconnect you saw between planning to bring home a brigade. One of the arguments that was advanced at that time was [00:43:00] the analogy of we have to take our hand off the bicycle, eventually the Iraqis have to do it and we have to be willing to take our hand off the bicycle. Do you remember that analogy, and what's the logic behind that and what was your evaluation of the logic behind that view?

CHENEY: The basic notion, analogy, would be trying to train your child how to ride a bicycle. Are you going to be close, are you going to want to hang onto the seat so he doesn't fall down? Sooner or later you've got to let go and release them and they take off on their own. It was intended as an analogy of we've got to get them up, ready to go, but they're never going to be able to go all by themselves until you let go of the bicycle. It was an analogy that was used frequently.

FEAVER: And in the August timeframe, August, September, the start of the review, [00:44:00] did your view of that, the wisdom of that insight change?

CHENEY: No. I guess the question was timing, that you could get general agreement, everybody to say yeah, the basic fundamental principle is we want them off on their own. We want to let go of the bicycle seat, but we can't do it until they're ready. There were those who emphasized, we can't do it until they're ready, and I'd put myself in that camp. We had others who said we're part of the problem. As long as we're hanging on to the bicycle seat, they're never going to get it right. Casey would have been, I suppose, more in that camp, that the important thing was to get us out of the way and start that withdrawal process.

ENGEL: [To Peter Feaver] Do you have one more on this?

FEAVER: No.

ENGEL: OK. If I could ask you then, before we move sort of forward chronologically, one of the things that you mentioned before we started [00:45:00] taping was the advantage that you had, given your position within the government, of being able to see not just security issues but other issues: political issues, other cultural issues, things going on. Just so we have a sense for the future historian again, when I say to you summer of '06, what goes through your mind? What else was going on that was on your attention, what else was driving your attention, what else were you concerned about at this time?

CHENEY: There was an election underway, off-year election. As Vice President, one my responsibilities was to do everything I could to support the troops. So you're out on the campaign trail, fundraising for House and Senate members who were running for reelection. I'm sure there were other things as well too, but that comes immediately to mind. I spent a fair amount of my time as Vice President with a quasi-legislative function. Because I'd been [00:46:00] part of the leadership in the House, one of the things that happened when I got elected Vice President, you automatically become president of the Senate, you get an office on the Senate side of the Capitol. Denny Hastert, who was the Republican Speaker of the House, and Bill Thomas, who was the incoming chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and an old friend from my days in the House, came to me right after the election and said they knew I was going to be president of the Senate, but they thought of me as a man of the House and therefore, they wanted me to have an office on the House side of the Capitol, not just the Senate side. Bill was moving in to take over Ways and Means and there were two offices, magnificent offices, that the chairman of Ways and Means was entitled to. One was down the floor below the main floor of the Capitol, on the west front, looking all the way up that Mall, magnificent view of the city of Washington, the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Monument, and a very large office, had a huge table in it, that was bigger than this room. [00:47:00]

The other was a room that's right off the Democratic Cloakroom. Those of you who spent time on the Hill, you know the way the Chamber is set up. As you approach the center door, over to the left, there is the door that comes out of the Democratic Cloakroom from right behind the Chamber itself, and just across the hall from that is what used to be the old Rostenkowski office, Ways and Means, and he had it as Chairman of Ways and Means when I was a member of Congress. I never even got in there. When I was a member of Congress, there were only three Republicans allowed to have offices in the Capitol. But I picked that office. He said, "Take whichever one you want," I picked that one, partly to aggravate the Democrats. [laughter] But for the six years that we had control of the House, I had an office, I think it was the only time in history that the vice president's had an office on the House side of the Capitol. [00:48:00] So I had close relationships with people like Trent Lott and Bill Frist and so forth. We were hunting and fishing buddies, on the House side, those guys that I worked with. They'd elected me without opposition five straight times to the leadership, and so I worked both sides legislatively.

What I thought about in terms of, I'm sure that summer, I would have been heavily engaged in trying to shore up our candidates, to raise money, because we obviously knew we were in trouble politically, partly because of the war. My role out on the campaign trail would have taken up a fair amount of my time as another set of issues I had to be concerned about.

ENGEL: Could you say a little bit more about that, in terms of the reaction that you received [00:49:00] and the information that you received from Republican candidates and Republican legislators, about how the events that we're discussing in Iraq were affecting their political prospects.

CHENEY: Well, there was -- and I talk about it some in my book, and it became more prevalent after we started the Surge, as we were actually implementing the Surge. In '06, by then, we'd been around for six years. It's not unusual that administrations lose some of their allure by the time you've been there for six years. We had members who were in tough races, and ultimately in the end, that election resulted in our loss of control of the Congress, both Houses. Some of it had to do, I'm sure, with unhappiness over the situation in Iraq. You had the ongoing controversy and debate about [00:50:00] "Where's the WMD?" We had questions about "Why did you go into Iraq?" -- whether or not it was justified. Some of that debate goes on today. So it played a role but I can't be precise about it.

ENGEL: Well, I guess that's what I actually was going to ask you, if you could just help us understand, with a little bit more precision. When you went on the campaign trail, when you went to Mississippi, when you went to Oregon, and you're speaking to the candidate before the event, how often did they say well you know, Iraq is causing us difficulty or jobs are causing us difficulty. Can you give us a

sense of the hierarchy and how important this was to people on the campaign trail?

CHENEY: I'd have to go back and look at some of the polls. It would have been important depending on the race. The fact of the matter is, most congressional races aren't competitive, 90-some percent get reelected, [00:51:00] but it doesn't take much. If you can get that up to only 85 percent get reelected, you start to have a bigger turnover, and then you have a change of control in the House. If you look at House races over time, as an institution, the characteristic that stands out more than any other is there are few really competitive races in any given year. My job was usually to work the competitive races in terms of being able to raise money. You'll go out and it depends on if you're in Mississippi or if you're down there in Fort Benning, Georgia, or if you're any place in Wyoming, they're going to be strongly supportive of what the President is trying to do. Other places that were really swing districts, evenly balanced, had previously been Democratic, there you're going to run into more hesitation and uncertainty and again, if you're doing a Republican fundraiser, [00:52:00] there aren't going to be many critics in the crowd. If they're willing to give money, they're probably supportive of the operation. It was different than '02, off year election, because we actually took seats, you know, that never happens, very rare, we actually took back control of the Senate. Remember, the Senate had been 50-50 after the 2000 election, it had been so close. So I would say as a general proposition, the '06 off year election was

our toughest one. Well, I can't say toughest, 2000 was head and shoulders above anything else in terms of being a close election, but it was an election where we were obviously feeling the heat. It was having an impact on our support around the country and it was affecting the prospects of our congressional candidates who were seeking reelection.

FEAVER: So three other topics that have been raised, either in our interviews [00:53:00] or in journalistic accounts that were going on at this time, that may have consumed principals' attention. One was on the domestic side, the stem cell decision, the President's decision on stem cell research. Then, in the international domain, the Lebanon War, the Hezbollah attack on Israel, and then Castro getting sick and questions about regime change in Cuba. Do you remember whether -- were those ones that occupied you at that time? Or not so much? Some of the other people we've interviewed have flagged those but I'm curious whether that was an issue for you.

CHENEY: Castro getting sick, no. He survived a lot before, but I didn't spend a lot of time on Cuba. Stem cell research, I was not involved, although I was struck by the depth of commitment of the President. He really devoted an enormous amount of time [00:54:00] to that and thought about it deeply, consulted a lot of people in terms of that decision. It was a big, big decision for him, which I agreed with, but I didn't have any role in the decision. I didn't work on that problem.

ENGEL: Did he discuss it with you personally, as he's consulting a lot of people? Did you have a private conversation with him on that?

CHENEY: No. I was aware of what he was doing and we may have talked about it at lunch someday, but I don't remember a particular session.

FEAVER: And the Lebanon War.

CHENEY: The Lebanon War, I had views about. My impression, again, and I can't remember. Do you remember, Liz, if we addressed it in here? I think we did. That my general view would have been to let the Israelis [00:55:00] go and to do all the damage they could to, I guess it was Hezbollah primarily, in Lebanon. That was at odds with the State Department view. The State Department, that's their job, and they wanted to pull the Israeli chain, to get them out, and as I say, my attitude was that the more damage we could do to Hezbollah, we had -- we, the Israelis, had every justification for doing so. They were well-equipped and well-prepared to do it. I'm trying to remember who was prime minister then. Ehud?

Liz Cheney: Olmert.

Cheney: Olmert.

FEAVER: But you didn't see that intersecting with the Iraq issue?

CHENEY: I didn't see it directly intersecting. I do recall a difference [00:56:00] of opinion. There was the view, and I think probably Condi expressed it, Secretary Rice, she was critical of the Israelis and I think she also raised some doubts, or argued that they weren't as effective that others thought they were. My experience

had always been they'd been very effective militarily, and from an intelligence standpoint. They usually had more at risk by the time they got into a conflict, just because of who they were and where they were, and I usually had a good deal of confidence in the Israelis. My recollection is Secretary Rice was critical of their performance from a military standpoint, and also pushed hard to get them to back off.

FEAVER: So, moving back to the Iraq strategy. One of the comments that has come up in other interviews and in journalistic treatments of the September, October timeframe, was that the separate [00:57:00] agency efforts were not talking to each other, it was compartmentalized. And some view that as a benefit, a positive feature. Others viewed it as a negative feature. What was your view of that aspect of the separate, compartment nature. So the NSC folks weren't interacting with the council of colonels, weren't interacting with the State Department, in this time period, so September, October.

CHENEY: I thought it was OK. I was aware that there were different operations in different places, but under the circumstances and given the complexity of the problem, the history that was involved and so forth to try to drive one central view this way and no other way, that this is going to be [00:58:00] the only study or the only analysis, would have been a problem. There came a time to solidify it all, and for the President to make a decision, but September, October was a little early yet. I think that there was a lot of good work being done out there, but imposing your

will at that point and saying, "This is what it's going to be," would have probably discouraged some of the diversity of thought. I think what he ultimately decided with respect to the Surge could conceivably even have been foreclosed.

I remember the Baker-Hamilton operation. This is a group that I guess Congress had authorized -- Frank Wolf, I think had set it up. I can remember Secretary Rice arguing for us to support it, [00:59:00] which the President did, and I think we finally agreed to support the Baker-Hamilton effort. We ended up with a meeting in the Roosevelt Room, that I think I talk about in here, and there, Lee Hamilton and Jim Baker, both friends -- I'd served with Lee on the Intelligence Committee for years. He was the only Democrat that I ever gave money to, from the Halliburton PAC, while I was in the private sector. Jim Baker, a close personal friend, I was with him this last weekend. Al Simpson was a long-time colleague from Wyoming. It was a good group, Gates was on there, Chuck Robb, and there was a lot of time spent by them, in terms of trying to think, as I recall, they reported back to us: diplomatic track, work with Syria, work, with the Iranians. [01:00:00] Almost as an afterthought, the prospect of a surge became a part of their recommendation. I think if you chop that whole process off too early, you might not have gotten a surge option out of the Baker-Hamilton taskforce. It was basically healthy. I didn't agree with everything that was in the report, and I talk about it in the book, but you had the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Pete Pace, working the problem with the colonels. It was good, it's important to know what

was going to come out of Defense, what Defense thinks. Are they any more ready to consider options and possibilities? The stuff we did with the outside advisors, when you would sit down and talk to a Wayne Downing and a Jack Keane and Barry McCaffrey, that's an important thing to do. Formers, but experts in their own way. The stuff that Fred Kagan and Jack Keane was doing [01:01:00] was very interesting, developed from the outside, but by two very thoughtful, influential guys who knew their business. Jack had been vice chief of staff and we tried getting him to be chief of staff of the army, and he stepped down at that point, for basically personal reasons. I talk to Jack still to this day.

So it was diverse, the people we were bringing in from the outside, Eliot Cohen and so forth, but that was basically healthy if you were going to get a positive result out of this. I think it was a positive, I don't see that as a negative. I don't think to have a successful sort of strategy review, or planning, assessment, or development of options, you need to have just one single, nice and neat, here's the way we're going to do it, organization chart. It's OK if there's some ferment out there.

FEAVER: One of the studies that you don't mention in your book but that was a part of this [01:02:00] effort, was what became known as the Luti study, Bill Luti was NSC staff.

CHENEY: I know Bill.

FEAVER: What is your recollection of that study and its role and what it contributed.

CHENEY: I remember talking with Bill. He used to work for me when I was over at the Pentagon, I knew him. I'm trying to remember what specifically he was working on. He was talking about force structure and so forth, what was possible.

FEAVER: Yes.

CHENEY: By way of what the military was capable of, in terms of what kind of forces might be available to undertake various missions. I was impressed with his work. Bill was a thoughtful guy, he had a strong military background, but he had an ability to keep working the military side, as well as function on the civilian side. That's how I perceived him, and that wasn't true of everybody. Sometimes, some people can cross that line successfully. Jack Keane is one who can. [01:03:00] I always thought Bill was pretty good at that.

FEAVER: One of the questions about that study that has been raised was why was this being done at the White House, rather than DoD. DoD, OSD, and JCS normally would do force generation studies. And so that was one of the questions. What would be your reaction to that line of questioning?

CHENEY: Well, it depends whether I'm speaking as a former Secretary of Defense or somebody at the White House. [Laughter] An example during that period of time that I think is relevant. I used to deal with Jack Keane. [01:04:00] This especially -- well, some of it obviously -- was before the decision was made. But after the decision -- and it's not part of your questions, but again I reference in the book -- I had an arrangement with Jack, who was a mentor to Petraeus, who traveled

regularly out to the region to spend time with Dave. He'd be out there for two or three weeks, actually be out in the field and so forth. Then he would come back. And whenever he came back, then he'd come and see me. Admiral Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, didn't like that, and at one point tried to put the hammer down and block Jack from going back to the field. But what it did, and I did it very deliberately, was it created a back channel that in effect, the President would know what Jack was finding out from Petraeus in the field, and it wouldn't be cut off anyplace up the chain of command, because every time he came back, he'd also end up [01:05:00] coming to see me, and sometimes I'd take him in to see the President himself. That was very deliberate on my part.

Now, if I had been running the Pentagon at that point, I might well not have been as enthusiastic about that. But I thought that was an important contribution, especially after we got beyond the decision and were in the process of actually executing. So it was something that again, I talk about in the book.

FEAVER: So it was a similar logic with tasking Luti with that, was to back-channel the Defense Department? Why not just simply task the Defense Department with that question?

CHENEY: I didn't task Luti.

FEAVER: No, no, no, I know. Why didn't the White House just --

CHENEY: Well, there comes a time when you're not happy with where you're at, and that the President has got a big decision to make, [01:06:00] as to whether or not he's

going to change course. We did consult with the military. You had Pete Pace involved with the council of colonels. He was working with Steve in some respects. You had the sessions, for example, the President and I went over, and I talk about it in the book, when we went over and met with the Chiefs in the tank. This must have been in December.

FEAVER: December.

O'SULLIVAN: December 13th.

CHENEY: Yeah, December of '06. Part of that reflected -- I'm trying to think how to state this. The role of the Chiefs had changed over time, and after Goldwater-Nichols, they were no longer in the chain of command. The chain of command went from the President to the secretary to the commander in the field, the CinC [Commander in Chief]. If I wanted an idea, and I always operated this way, you could [01:07:00] route it through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, you could. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was still the principal military advisor, both to the secretary and the President, but the Chiefs themselves were not in the chain of command. They were the go-to guys in terms of raising the force, training and equipping the force, and it was important to keep them in the loop in terms of talking with them and consulting with them, because a key part of the Surge was that we're going to put a significant strain on the force. Well, you've got a surge and you couldn't go find the brigades anyplace. They're not laying around out there waiting to go to war. You end up having to delay the return home for those

that are already there, and accelerate the deployment of those who are about to go. That puts a strain on the force.

The session we had in the tank was a very important one. The President heard from the Chiefs, what they were concerned about, and they voiced those concerns, as they should have, it was their job. In the end, he decided to go forward anyway, which was the right [01:08:00] decision, and then the Chiefs supported him, but it was because I think they were made a part of the process. The President's got to be able to interact with the department. He's got to have confidence in the secretary and in his senior military commanders. The situation, the way I thought about it, from a procedural standpoint, when I was Secretary of Defense: I wanted to have multiple sources of information coming to me. I did not want to have just one single pipeline coming to my desk. In the way, well, General Powell, when he was the senior military assistant back in the Weinberger days, he was one single pipeline to Cap [Caspar Weinberger]. That's the way they both liked it. My commitment to Colin, for example, when we were at Defense, was [01:09:00] I wanted multiple sources of information. I did not want anything coming through a narrow neck. I would never go downstream and pass out an operational order without going through him. He was always going to be in the chain of command going down, but I wanted multiple sources coming up. And I sort of thought about it in the same way, from the standpoint of what the President needed as we went forward. It was just the way I operated, and it was

sometimes messy or sometimes, you cross over lines. The vice president is either a pain in the neck (what's he doing on my turf?), or trying to see to it that the process functions effectively and that I was doing what the President wanted me to do and what he hired me to do.

FEAVER: So, we're going to move now to the J. D. Crouch, but before we do that --

ENGEL: But before we do that, I thought that was actually an extremely useful and extremely eloquent discussion of why there is a need for [01:10:00] a variety of sources of information. Can you think of any examples, and let's focus on this period, where you heard something from General Keane that changed your opinion or that was different than the information you were getting from another source and you had to try to work out that difference? Can you give us an example of this being particularly of use?

CHENEY: Well, Keane was of special value, and again, I go back to the book. When we dealt with the Chiefs and they voiced their concern about the possibility of breaking the force because of the strain we were going to put on it, there were sort of two responses to that. One was the President's response. His response basically was there's nothing worse for morale than losing a war; that would break a horse quicker than anything, which was very perceptive. The other was the contribution Jack Keane made, which was "we can do this." [01:11:00] He said the Chiefs will express concern about the status of the force, what you're going to do to the force. You had great guys over there like Pete Schoomaker, the Army, a Wyoming boy.

He was a football star at the University of Wyoming when he was in ROTC guy out there. But a great guy. He was in Desert I in 1980, he was in the first selection for Delta and just a superb officer. His force was severely strained and he spoke up very directly, of the problems he was having put on him. Jim Conway, who was Commandant of the Corps then, obviously was of a similar view, and they were the two that were having the biggest difficulty.

But Jack's contribution was to say to us, "We can do it." He said it will put a strain on the force. It's the job of the Chiefs to let you know what that is. Part of their concern was how do you reserve a contingency for unforeseen [01:12:00] developments someplace else where you have to commit forces. Jack said, "We have a global war on terror, it's a global war on terror, and we do whatever we have to do to win. And if that means 15-month deployments, so be it. If it means 18-month deployments, we'll get the job done." That was very reassuring, coming from a guy who had been Vice Chief of the Army, who had a tremendous amount of experience and judgment, was well wired with the Pentagon. He played a very helpful role in terms of his ability to give us a good -- the view of a military man no longer in the chain of command, but who knew more than most of the people who were in the chain of command, about what was and wasn't possible. That's why I relied on him as heavily as I did and why I used to take him in to see the President occasionally. I remember taking him in on one of our weekly lunches and getting Steve, Steve went in with us, and [01:13:00] it was, well, it was valuable enough --

there was a time when the President came down the hall to my office, he heard, I was meeting with Jack, and he came down to tell Jack to make sure that Petraeus was getting the support he needed and that he knew he had a clear channel with the President of the United States, that he wanted to make certain, that the President wanted to make certain that Dave knew that and made it clear to Jack that you're the channel.

O'SULLIVAN: And that's during the implementation of the Surge.

CHENEY: That's right, this is after the decision.

FEAVER: The other thing that was brought into the tank session was the so-called sweetener, the promise to raise the top line on the Marines...

CHENEY: Right.

FEAVER: ...the end strength which would, down the line, release the pressure. You didn't mention that in your [01:14:00] answer just now. Was there anything more to say on that?

CHENEY: No. I'm trying to remember exactly how that arose, whether it was a request from the Chiefs, maybe Pete Pace brought it up, or whether it was a proffer that the President laid on the table, whether it had come from Steve. Steve and the President and I all rode over to the meeting together, and I don't recall at this point, who exactly surfaced it, whether it was something the President went with, had in his pocket, or whether it evolved out of the conversation. Steve may have talked to Pete. I don't know the details or the background. I do know that it

seemed like a good idea when it was brought up, that the President could demonstrate his commitment to the force and doing whatever was necessary, and help ease the burden that the Chiefs were having to worry about.

FEAVER: So we want to get to the --

LIZ CHENEY: I'm sorry, can I just interrupt one second, I'm sorry. [01:15:00] I know you said you have to go to the airport. They just sent an emergency message that the road is shut. There's an accident at the intersection. So I don't know what time your flight is.

FEAVER: If you need to leave...

ENGEL: Yeah, my flight is at -- you guys are the local experts. My flight is at one-thirty. If I have to go the other way, do I need to take off?

LIZ CHENEY: I'm not sure what -- I mean, you go through the park, all the way up.

CHENEY: That's a tough way to go. It's a bad road, you come out at Park Headquarters, north of the airport, and then a half-turn and come back down towards town. And if this is the road, then people have got an idea, that could be as jammed up as the highway through town. I'd rather go through town.

LIZ CHENEY: That might be the -- the accident is right at the intersection of the 22 and 390.

CHENEY: What do you mean, down at the bridge?

LIZ CHENEY: It will be backed up everywhere. The main intersection, right as you cross the bridge, the main traffic light.

CHENEY: Right.

LIZ CHENEY: It says the traffic is shut in both directions.

CHENEY: I still wouldn't be inclined to go that way.

LIZ CHENEY: But I'm just saying, --

CHENEY: You might want to get out of town.

ENGEL: Carry on. [01:16:00]

CHENEY: We're not trying to get rid of you.

FEAVER: Yes, OK.

ENGEL: Oh, no, you've got the report.

CHENEY: If you change your mind.

ENGEL: OK, sir, thank you very much for your time.

CHENEY: You bet. Good luck.

FEAVER: So, we want to get to the J. D. Crouch led review and the Vice President's office involvement in that. One other event that you haven't yet discussed in this interview but you do discuss in your book, is Secretary Rumsfeld's departure. What connection did that have to the timing of the strategy review?

LIZ CHENEY: And you guys are interviewing Secretary Rumsfeld?

FEAVER: Yes, yes, so we will ask him this question too.

CHENEY: Sure.

FEAVER: But from your perspective, what connection did that have to the story that you've been discussing up until now?

CHENEY: I think of it as, well, I'm trying to think now. They may have been connected in the President's mind. [01:17:00] Obviously, I was close to Don, and there's a close personal relationship. I'd gone to work for him when I first went to Washington in 1969. I'd helped talk him into taking the Defense job in '75, when Ford fired Schlesinger. I had also helped talk him into taking the job when President Bush hired him, and then I also gave him the word that the President wanted to make a change. It's a complex relationship. We're still good friends.

There was a point at which Don had tried to resign, after Abu Ghraib. The President sent me over to the Pentagon to talk him out of it, which I did. Don had come to me in maybe '05, I think as early as '05, [01:18:00] and made it clear he was thinking about the upcoming election, that he wanted to make sure the President understood, if at any time the President thought he needed to go, that he was carrying an added burden because of Rumsfeld's role, all he had to say was give him the word and he was on his way. Then as we got closer to the election, the subject came up again with Don, in terms of his being concerned that if control of one of the Houses of Congress changed hands, that he would become a target for the Armed Services Committee in terms of the policy. He'd have to go up there and defend the policy regularly and he was perfectly prepared to step down any time the President said he wanted that to happen.

The President told me -- this is before the election -- that he wanted to make a change. The dates, I think, are in here, again [referring to memoir, *In My*

Time]. [01:19:00] And then shortly before the election, told me about Bob Gates, that he talked to Bob, and Bob was willing to do the job. At that point, he wasn't seeking my advice. He knew what my advice would be. He just wanted to let me know, and it was in one of those meetings after a meeting, where he pulled me aside and gave me the word. And then a few days later, when he had the deal all put together, then he called me and wanted to know whether or not I wanted to tell Don, or he could have Josh do it, and I said I'd take care of it. That was going on sort of in the run-up to and the immediate aftermath of the '06 election, just as the strategy review was underway that fall and so forth. I think Don was present in the meeting with the Chiefs in the tank, as I recall.

FEAVER: Yes.

CHENEY: He was there that day.

FEAVER: Because there was an interregnum period before Gates.

CHENEY: Before Gates took over. [01:20:00] I'm sure in the President's mind -- well, I can't, you would have to ask him. Steve would have a better picture on it than I would, in terms of thinking about any relationship between one, you're going to change the SecDef, and two, you're going to change the policy, that my assumption would be that they thought about those as part and parcel of the same thing, we're still changing out the commander on the ground in Iraq and bringing in Petraeus, Odierno. I didn't think of them in those connections, but then I had a separate relationship with Rumsfeld.

FEAVER: So the election happens, Secretary Rumsfeld announces his departure. The President announces a new -- not a new, but a strategy review that will be publicly announced. Before that time though -- that's J.D. Crouch -- before that starts, in the days [01:21:00] right before, there's a meeting that you describe briefly in your memoir, on November 9th, of just the senior leader team: so you, the President, Secretary Rice, Steve Hadley. Presumably, that was helping to set the terms of reference for the J. D. Crouch-led effort. Can you talk about that meeting? What was your sense? Was the Surge already sort of in view at that point, or what was the gist of that meeting?

CHENEY: Well, it would have been right after the election and after the decision had been made to change out the SecDef. I say, I remember, it's in the book, [01:22:00] I reference it, but I don't remember any of the details beyond that. This was one of our biggest issues facing us obviously. We had two more years to go and it was a huge deal. We were in a position where we just finished most of the calendar year '06, and all that entailed for Iraq and our efforts there. We'd lost control of both Houses of Congress, and that was significant. Life was going to be more difficult going forward. I'm speculating, but that we talked about those kinds of questions with respect to the policy going forward.

FEAVER: So, regardless of what was covered in the actual meeting, what was your sense of other people's views at the outset of the review, and what was your view about what was the [01:23:00] right answer to come out of the strategy review. That is,

did you already know what you hoped would be the endpoint decision? Did you know what other people's views were, Secretary Rice's, Steve Hadley's, the President's?

CHENEY: I remember those views being discussed. I'm hard to put it on an exact schedule or time. You guys had some kind of a calendar in the folder you gave me.

O'SULLIVAN: Yeah. So, in the post-election period, there was the J. D. Crouch review, which was at the deputy's level, and from your office, John Hannah and Robert Karem presented.

CHENEY: Right.

O'SULLIVAN: That kind of led to a series of, really, policy options to be debated, about different facets of the strategy. That went to the principals and then ultimately, to the NSC, the President, to you and others. Those meetings happened over the course of December. [01:24:00] So you had the November at the deputies level and then moving to the principals and the NSC at that time.

FEAVER: But my question was, at the outset, what were people's views. The reason is some of our –

O'SULLIVAN: going into the review.

FEAVER: -- going into the review. The reason I asked that is some of the people we've interviewed believed and told us they thought the deal was cooked, that the cake was already baked for a surge, and so the rest of the process was just gradually getting everybody onto the Surge lily pad. And other people thought no, it was a

blank sheet of paper and we didn't know what the end outcome would be, the process was really going to tell us. I was wondering where on that spectrum you thought you were and where --

LIZ CHENEY: This is his meeting in the -- upstairs in the Residence, November 9th, where it sort of lays out -- [01:25:00] I don't have the page numbers.

CHENEY: Four forty-four.

LIZ CHENEY: I don't know if this is helpful for you guys. This is a meeting right after the election. It's you, --

O'SULLIVAN: That's the November 9th.

FEAVER: Right, that was what I was just asking.

CHENEY: Yeah, the election was November 7th, and that was just two days later. Talked about the U.S. political environment.

LIZ CHENEY: And your concerns about what was going on in Iraq.

CHENEY: Right. Yeah, it said, "I went through a series of events I feared might signal to the Iraqis that the Americans had lost the will to see this through."

FEAVER: Right, right.

CHENEY: [Reading and paraphrasing from page 444 in his memoir, *In My Time*] "The press was portraying the Republican losses as a rejection of the policy. New Speaker of the House, [Nancy] Pelosi, new Majority Leader of the Senate, [Harry] Reid, had been very clear they would push for a withdrawal of American forces [from Iraq]. [Senator Joe] Lieberman had been purged," et cetera. "U.S. public

opinion polls had gone south on Iraq and were now pretty consistently showing majority opposed [...] The President had announced Rumsfeld's departure. [01:26:00] All these events were giving an overall impression to anyone paying attention that the Americans might well be getting ready to bail on Iraq."

FEAVER: And that could have been how the people interpreted the review itself, that that might be --

CHENEY: And that would have added to the --

FEAVER: Right. So that was, really that was my question -- was how did you see the terms of reference of the review?

CHENEY: Well, it says: "I was very concerned, especially about how all this would be read by Iraqis who wanted the U.S. to stand with them to secure the country. I maintained contact," et cetera. "They were voicing concern to me about security situation [and] America's will to prevail." Then I get on talking about the next day's --

LIZ CHENEY: Peter, was your question was that there was a real debate?

FEAVER: Well, right.

CHENEY: Did we debate options in that meeting? Not that I recall.

O'SULLIVAN: Not in that meeting. I think Peter is just trying to get at the sense of at that point.

FEAVER: At the outset.

O'SULLIVAN: At the outset, so before we go [01:27:00] through this multiple month process, did you feel the President already had his mind focused on a particular outcome, or was there really a desire to look at everything afresh?

CHENEY: Well, I'm trying to think. We had a series of meetings and I'm trying to think of the timing now. A session with the former generals, in the Oval Office. What day was that?

FEAVER: Right. A couple of weeks later -- that would have been a month later, in early December.

CHENEY: Early December. My session with Keane and Kagan.

FEAVER: Early December.

CHENEY: They had a well --

LIZ CHENEY: Sorry to keep doing this.

CHENEY: No, that's very helpful, you helped me write it.

O'SULLIVAN: And there was the Solarium meeting on the 23rd, which was a Sunday evening.

LIZ CHENEY: This [pointing to the memoir] is this whole issue about whether you can say victory, and then this discussion about -- [01:28:00] the debate between you and Condi, for example. I think it –

CHENEY: I remember –

LIZ CHENEY: I may have the timeframe different from what you guys are asking about, but the idea just strikes me as a kibitzer back here, that there certainly was vigorous debate. It wasn't --

CHENEY: Yeah, because the -- we clearly, I think, were headed in the direction of the Surge. I have a vivid memory, I mention it in here, of a meeting. This would have been, I guess the principals. The President wasn't there, I don't think. Condi had reservations about the Surge. She was concerned about the involvement of U.S. forces and the sectarian strife inside Iraq, between Sunni and Shia. [01:29:00] At one point, we talked about -- the role of the troops, of putting in more troops -- about she didn't want them involved in that conflict. And we had this argument, Pete Pace and I basically on one side and Condi on the other, with her saying that our troops shouldn't get involved unless they think that what is happening is a massacre, like Srebrenica. My response, as a former SecDef and Pete's as chairman of the Joint Chiefs was there's no way to operationalize that. What do you say to the sergeant? If it looks like Srebrenica, you can shoot; otherwise, pull back. I talk in here -- there was a meeting over in the old EOB, [01:30:00] there was a room over there we used occasionally, and then the next day, I think there was a meeting in front of the President, with the President, where what came to him was an emerging consensus, was the way it was described.

O'SULLIVAN: Yeah. This was the document that J.D. and I drafted, which came out of the first part of this review, where Robert Karem, John Hannah had represented

your office. That was supposed to kind of put forward a sense of, is there an emerging consensus. I think a lot of people have acknowledged that there wasn't a consensus at the time, there were very different views. Even before we go to that Solarium, how involved were you with John and Robert as they participated at the deputies level? They put forward a paper which I think was called the 80 percent solution, or was this idea focusing on the Shia just shoring them up as the majority. [01:31:00] Was that something that reflected your views or were you still not in a prescriptive mode at that point in time?

CHENEY: What I remember is I think John made a trip over that fall. What's the name of the senior cleric, the Shia?

FEAVER: Sistani.

CHENEY: Sistani, Ali Sistani. I can't remember the details of it now. John would have reported in on a periodic basis, I mean I would have met with him regularly. He was involved in virtually all the national security stuff and after Scooter left, he was my national security advisor, and Karem worked for him, so probably saw him several times a week. He would have kept me up to speed on what he was doing, what was going on in various areas. [01:32:00] Sometimes there would be an issue of some kind he needed guidance on or a decision on. It sounds like a paper he would have written, because of his travels over there. I don't remember the paper now, but that it was reflective of the ongoing debate, to some extent, of what kind

of relationship we ought to have with the Shia, in light of the fact that they had won the election; they were the majority.

O'SULLIVAN: The 80 percent referred to the Shia plus the Kurds, together saying we can align ourselves with those two groups, that we shouldn't be constantly pressuring them to bring the Sunnis in, to try to get a national unity government, which is inherently dysfunctional. That was the argument.

CHENEY: You remember it better than I do. I don't remember the details.

FEAVER: The other -- you had mentioned Condi's, Secretary Rice's position on the Srebrenica. The rest of that, the [01:33:00] State paper that was presented at the outset of the review, talked about focusing our efforts on FOBs, getting out of the sectarian violence.

CHENEY: FOBs, forward operating bases.

FEAVER: Exactly, yes. And then selectively working with Iraqi units as a way of husbanding our influence and leverage in the region, so as to be better positioned to confront Iran or other regional challenges. Do you remember that State paper and did you have a reaction to it?

LIZ CHENEY: Is this the emerging consensus paper?

FEAVER: No, no, no, this was before the emerging consensus. This is at the outset, the first week. Every participant sort of presented a different perspective on it, and John Hannah presented from the Vice President's office the 80 percent, and Phil Zelikow presented from the State Department, this --

LIZ CHENEY: Was that the clear, hold and build or something, or was that something else? [01:34:00]

O'SULLIVAN: That was a year earlier.

FEAVER: That was a year earlier, but it was --

CHENEY: This is something at the staff level, it sounds like to me, but I don't remember seeing it on my desk.

O'SULLIVAN: That's the deputies part of the review.

FEAVER: I'm just wondering if it had --

O'SULLIVAN: Which it make sense that you might have not been watching it as much as the second part of the review, which was at the principals level and the NSC, where the debates like the one you've referenced, about sectarian violence really had in the open. There was a series of meetings, again this is December, it's in the Roosevelt Room, you and the President and all of the national security team discussing various elements, various questions that needed to be answered by the President, before he made his decision. I'm wondering if you remember the sectarian violence debate. It's an important one. Do you remember other things that were discussed in that setting? Other issues [01:35:00] or debates that were had, between Pete Pace and others in the room? What were the uncertainties that people had about a surge-like approach, or some of the other views. I think Peter described the State Department view that was presented at the time.

CHENEY: Well, it strikes me that during that period of time is when we met with the Baker-Hamilton commission, that they came in at that point.

O'SULLIVAN: They actually -- they made their report while we're in those three weeks --

CHENEY: In the Roosevelt Room.

O'SULLIVAN: In the Roosevelt Room, yeah. And then actually, originally, the President was going to make his announcement of his new strategy, right after the Baker-Hamilton report, but he delayed it for a variety of reasons.

CHENEY: Well, partly to give Gates a chance to go out and look at it.

O'SULLIVAN: I think that was part of it, yeah, yeah.

CHENEY: I remember that.

O'SULLIVAN: So, we're just trying to get a sense of what the caliber of the debate was. How vigorous was it? [01:36:00] What were the things that --

CHENEY: I think there were -- I mention a couple of times in here, I remember I glanced at it last night, this question of whether or not we were seeking victory. I tell the stories in here a couple of times of once when the President was going to go out, I think with Blair, and do a joint press conference, and the draft statement that I had seen, that he was going to make at the beginning of the press conference, had added the word victory in it. When it came back and they were getting ready to go out to do it, victory had been taken out and I raised concerns about that, and the President agreed and put it back in. My argument being, and it's stated again in the book, that if the President got into the position where he's no longer has

victory as the goal or the objective, [01:37:00] it's awfully hard to justify sending troops into those circumstances, when the President is not supporting the goal of victory. The President, both times I recall that, supported that proposition.

I remember again, we're talking about -- I guess this was the President's announcement of the policy change, when the suggestion had been made to mention Baker-Hamilton in his speech. I thought it was important that this wasn't Baker-Hamilton that we were doing, it was Petraeus-Crocker, and there's a big difference. I was a big supporter of Petraeus-Crocker, i.e., The Surge, and Baker-Hamilton, while they had a surge option in their package, was more about diplomacy, renewing Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, et cetera, et cetera. [01:38:00] So there were some differences. The ones I remember, frankly, because I can go back and look at my book, those were my views, that it was very important for us to win in Iraq, that we were capable of winning in Iraq. Again, that was partly reflective of the thinking of people like Jack Keane, that I was talking to. That we were capable of getting the job done and then what the President was doing, he was swimming upstream and it was obviously a very tough decision, opposed by many people, an unpopular decision. Congress, a lot of congressional pressure. In my book, I talk a lot about the post-decision sessions, because we went through a period of months there where there were repeated attempts to soften the policy, [01:39:00] to make it clear that we were considering options, that we were going to try to bring forces home before the end of the year. That was driven in part by the

Congress, it was driven in part by the press, well, and the West Wing. There were people in the West Wing that were eagerly suggesting that we had to have an option B, a plan B.

FEAVER: Just clarifying on that. Who was in the West Wing that you were referencing just then?

CHENEY: You need to read my book [laughs] carefully, because I presented it delicately and it needs to remain delicate, all right?

FEAVER: I understand that, OK.

CHENEY: It tended to be more communicators who were worried about the political ramifications of having lost the election and doubling down on the forces [01:40:00] in Iraq. They thought that sent a signal that we hadn't gotten the lesson. I talk again about it, it's in the book, there'd be a story up here in the press. On at least one occasion, I say it in the book, Paul Ignatius wrote a column.

FEAVER: David Ignatius.

CHENEY: David Ignatius, that there was sort of a review underway, or a reconsideration, or looking for options. And when we went in for the morning meeting, I objected to that. I said, "No, this is bad, this is difficult. This is after the decision had been made for deploying forces and it looks like already, we're having second thoughts." After the meeting was over with, I went back to my office and Steve came in, closed the door, and he said, "Mr. Vice President," he said, "I'm the leaker." He said, "I did it at the direction of the President." [01:41:00] That story is in the book,

which is true, and the President was trying to respond. He had problems on the Hill, and he had political advisors in-house, suggesting -- and I'm sure there were policy types too, who thought this was a way to sort of soften the criticism. I saw it as a mistaken notion that would immediately send a signal of doubt about the policy, and it was undermining our commanders in the field. It also simply encouraged the cries for more reduction of forces.

I tell the story in here about Henry Kissinger coming to see me. He'd been approached by Dick Lugar, the Senator from Indiana, who asked Henry, on behalf, supposedly, of a group of Senators, Republican Senators, would Henry please come up with an option that was different than what the administration was pursuing so they, [01:42:00] the Senators who wanted to oppose it without directly opposing the President, but that they could avoid having to support the policy, and if Henry would come up with something and endorse it, then they could all rally around. Henry came and told me about the request and turned it down, obviously. He supported the Surge. So there was a lot going on that would lead reasonable people, to think gee, we need to have a plan B. But I looked at it, partly from my own experience at Defense, the enormous importance that there not be any daylight at all between the commander in chief at the top and that sergeant driving a tank in Iraq, about what's the objective, what's the plan, this is how we're going to win. Talk back in Washington about options and plans and so forth, can be devastating out in the field. And the other point is, you don't get any credit for

withdrawing troops. Henry always reminded me [01:43:00] of the experience in Vietnam; it's like salted peanuts.

FEAVER: Right.

CHENEY: You eat one, you can't stop.

FEAVER: So, this is a very rich vein, but we have some threads that we need to sew up from the December timeframe. One of the themes that's emerged from our interviews was the difficulty of getting to the Surge option while also having the NSC operate as an honest broker, while also not having any of the departments or agencies advocating for the Surge. So you had this challenge of a review, and none of the policy advocate departments and agencies were advocating the Surge, and yet that's eventually where they landed up. And squaring that circle was part of the challenge of the process. I'm just wondering if you had [01:44:00] seen that same challenge and what your views were on that.

CHENEY: It's partly an institutional problem. It happens in every administration. Just before I came over here, I glanced at this morning's *Post* or maybe yesterday's *Post*, on how foreign policy is really made inside the Obama White House.

FEAVER: Yes, yesterday's right.

CHENEY: I didn't get a chance to read it in detail, but the bottom line is the departments are totally cut out. John Kerry didn't know about X until somebody over in the White House told him about it. This isn't the first administration where that's happened. I always felt that in the first Bush Administration, that was very well

managed in the sense that you had a unique set of relationships among the principals, and we generally avoided that. Partly, that was because of Baker as Sec State, [Brent] Scowcroft [01:45:00] at NSC, the President, with all his background, my background at DoD. All of us had worked together before, in the Ford Administration, and Jim and Brent and I met every Wednesday morning for breakfast and there wasn't anything we couldn't discuss among ourselves and there were never leaks. That was unique. In our administration, I think we did a pretty good job generally. There are times when the President has got to assert himself, when the NSC will play a more aggressive role because he's got something he wants to do. He may have a Cabinet member who's not cooperative. We had generals. We got rid of Fox Fallon as CENTCOM Commander. I once fired the Air Force Chief of Staff for being out of line, in the early days of Desert Storm. [01:46:00] Sometimes you've got to do that. But I think my sense of it is, this time around, that as we went forward, we had a new guy at Defense, with Gates just coming in, you had Condi over at State, who was very close to the President, even though I felt she wasn't that supportive of the Surge. She was, nonetheless, had a very close relationship with him after her time at the NSC. I didn't -- I don't recall any loud voices of protest within the National Security Council, of what the President looked like he was headed for. The most that I can recall anybody really raising was when Condi had discussions [01:47:00] with Pete Pace and myself, for example, on what are the rules of engagement going to be, how are you going to

use those forces, et cetera. But I don't remember anybody else really, at that stage, the stage we're talking about, coming in and saying you can't do this. The closest that I remember sitting and listening to an alternative being presented is when Baker-Hamilton came in with a set of diplomatic initiatives or options they wanted to pursue.

O'SULLIVAN: Just on this point. You might remember MNF-I, General Casey actually arguing, and Zal. So from Baghdad, you were hearing, "No, this strategy is working."

FEAVER: The current strategy.

O'SULLIVAN: The current strategy is working.

CHENEY: But by the time we get past the election, my impression is that wasn't much of a factor.

O'SULLIVAN: Yeah. I think there was still a debate about how quickly we could transfer responsibility [01:48:00] to the Iraqis. This is my own recollection, but in those meetings, along with debates about sectarian violence, there was a big debate about how much can the Iraqis actually take on right now, with some people saying they're ready to assume these burdens, and other people saying that they're absolutely not. So Baker-Hamilton ends up being the strategy we want to follow, but we know we're not there yet, we know your preconditions aren't on the ground yet.

CHENEY: That's why we needed the Surge.

O'SULLIVAN: Yeah.

CHENEY: But I think -- I'm just trying to remember -- by the time the President has decided to ask Rumsfeld to leave, to step down, and he's gone out and recruited Gates to come in and take over, then the writing is pretty well -- the handwriting is pretty well on the wall that we're in for some -- he's been thinking about it, but he's ready to consider a fundamental change in strategy. [01:49:00]

FEAVER: So the other theme related to this picks up on what Meghan was just asking, is the difficulty of overruling the advice you're getting from your military commander in the field, who still believes in the strategy perhaps. The President, who up until that point has had full confidence in the commander, is now second-guessing the commander's judgment and reaching a different conclusion. Can you speak to that theme as well?

CHENEY: Well, he's getting ready to replace him. Casey's coming home, he's going to be the new Army chief. I think the President, by then, just thinking in terms of what was happening and my recollection of it, was that it was pretty clear the road he was headed down. Now, I may have some confusion between some of the things that happened after the election. [01:50:00] I'd have to go back and check the detailed timelines, but by then there's been ongoing debate and discussion, things happening. Two failures of the Casey operation in Baghdad, this is back in the summer, in August. That we've lost the election. I think that clearly was a

significant factor in terms of the President's thinking and willingness to consider a bold move.

O'SULLIVAN: Just on this point. So, we're trying to get a sense of a potential difference between being ready to make a big change and knowing exactly what that change is going to be. Maybe the Solarium meeting, is that one that you -- do you have a recollection of that?

CHENEY: This is a little bit like looking for, [01:51:00] "Well, when did you guys decide to invade Iraq?"

O'SULLIVAN: Well, we know there isn't -- well, maybe people have told us. There wasn't a specific moment when the decision was made.

FEAVER: The Surge decision.

O'SULLIVAN: The Surge decision. It was a culmination of different decisions about well, we are going to assume responsibility for the sectarian violence because the Iraqis can't do it themselves.

CHENEY: Right.

O'SULLIVAN: Are you able, in your recollections, -- to distinguish between being ready to do something different and knowing exactly what that different thing is going to be? That it's going to be a surge, rather than --

CHENEY: Well, I guess another way I would think of it is by the time we get through the election and we have that meeting in the Solarium, it's pretty clear that we've got to do something [01:52:00] different than what we've been doing. December was

then devoted to sort of nailing down what that was going to be, but that there weren't a lot of people in the room arguing that we shouldn't do anything. Casey may still be on the old track out in country. Rumsfeld wasn't much of a factor by then, he's gone. I can't remember exactly when Petraeus came into the picture.

O'SULLIVAN: He actually didn't come into the picture until he was appointed, which was around the end of December.

FEAVER: Right.

CHENEY: Yeah. But he was --

O'SULLIVAN: I mean he, he was having back channels.

CHENEY: Yes.

O'SULLIVAN: I spoke with him a lot.

CHENEY: Right. And I'd seen him, well as early as '06, in February of '06.

O'SULLIVAN: Yes, right.

CHENEY: I guess a way to describe it would be, if you were to try to put some kind of [01:53:00] box around it, would be after the election, it was clearly the time to move on and implement a new policy, and the next few weeks were devoted to that. By then, the President recruited a new Secretary of Defense and he was obviously in exchanges with the folks out in the field, that we had to have a new commander in Iraq. I can't remember when we -- well, that's a separate deal.

FEAVER: So, to follow up on one of the points you made, promoting Casey to chief of staff. What was your view of that and the rationale behind that decision?

CHENEY: Well, I think it was a view that George Casey was a loyal troop, a good officer. [01:54:00] I can remember, well there was a time -- and this was some time later, it's a side story -- when Pete Schoomaker left, and stepped down. This would have been when Casey is coming in as chief. After that, the tradition is your portrait is painted and hung up over in the hallway over there. Pete had a small gathering to mark the occasion and General Casey is there now, as the new chief, Pete's the outgoing chief. Pete had family members there, as I recall, he had a son and a daughter in-law or vice versa, who were captains, who had just been over serving and so forth, and he invited me. The rest of it was basically Army. But I went down and spent time BS-ing with a group around there for a while. But [01:55:00] one of the fascinating parts of it was that both Schoomaker and Casey had been in the first selection for Delta, back after Desert One, in 1980. General Casey had started down that track early in his career. Schoomaker stayed on it, he always was a special ops guy. There was a feeling inside the Army, and just from my -- I still had relationships from my time over there, that all of this was -- I'm sure there were some hurt feelings in various places, but I think George was ready to leave. He was a good choice because he was well regarded in the Army. It was a way to demonstrate that he wasn't being removed for cause, but to bring him over, you needed somebody. Pete was wrapping up his four years and we had to pick a new Army chief. It fit, it made sense all the way around, and I don't recall that there was any big debate about it. [01:56:00] I'm sure the President talked to Gates about

it. It made sense and it was a reward for Casey, if anything. He ultimately ends up retiring as Chief of Staff of the Army, and what better guy to have back in Washington, worrying about the Army, than the guy who's just been out there in the field leading the troops.

FEAVER: So, one last thread before we leave.

CHENEY: Go ahead.

LIZ CHENEY: How much time have you got left?

O'SULLIVAN: We're just about to wrap up.

FEAVER: The last thread is the President has made the decision for the Surge, but the last question for the team to decide is how big a surge, and if it's five, do we commit all five up front, or do we commit one and then with the promise of others as needed. That's the debate that takes place around Crawford, a meeting after Christmas.

CHENEY: The end of December, yeah. [01:57:00]

FEAVER: What was your view about that, and we know how the President ultimately decided, but what was your view of that?

CHENEY: My view, and again part of this goes back to my time at Defense, you didn't want to do dribs and drabs in terms of what's your announced intention. Well, I'm going to send one now and then maybe we'll send one later. The reality was, because of the way you had to do it, you didn't have a chunk of troops sitting down at Fort Benning waiting to do something. You had to be it by extending tours, and so the actual impact, in terms of the execution, is going to be spread out over time.

We didn't have the full Surge in place until some time in the summer. But you can announce it and your determination. So I was in favor of get it out there, say what you're going to do.

One of the things that was important through this period of time, as I recall too, was the Awakening out in Al-Anbar, and there were the Sunnis, the tribal sheiks. [01:58:00] I remember having a meeting with them in the Roosevelt Room. It was important to say to them, "We're here to stay." I felt the announcement of the Surge and of the policy, was instrumental in motivating them and convincing them that the President meant what he said and we're not headed for the exits. Don't worry about what the newspapers say or the election. We're here to stay and we're going to get the job done. And it was important, therefore, to announce a fairly significant plan.

FEAVER: And what was the argument on the other side? Why didn't -- what were people arguing against that view?

CHENEY: Well, there were people who didn't really agree with the policy. My own personal memory is that that was more a political argument on how do you deal with a congress. You've got a hostile congress now that the Democrats have taken over. How do you work with them going forward? What kind of package can we put together that the Democrats will support? [01:59:00] In my opinion, that was at odds with what's effective militarily. I thought the number one requirement had to be: we're serious, we're going for victory, we're going to win, we're going to

do whatever we have to do to win, and if you end up in an effort to placate critical Democrats by softening the message or reducing the size of the deployment of the Surge, that's directly contrary to what you need to say to the troops in the field and to your allies out there, what you're all about. I had strong feelings in those and again, I talk about it here.

FEAVER: So, stepping back now, the final 60,000-foot level question that historians might ask 20 years from now. Why didn't the administration reach the Surge decision sooner? What would be your answer to those [02:00:00] historians 20 years from now, asking that question?

CHENEY: Why didn't we reach the Surge decision sooner? That's a hypothetical kind of thing. You can't say -- I'm always leery of those kinds of questions. We did it when we did it, when it became an option, when the circumstances on the ground were serious enough, the dangers that we were running in terms of problems of trying to achieve our objective. The violence level was up in-country, the number of casualties that we were suffering. All of that led to that series of discussions and developments and so forth, through the last half of '06 and then [02:01:00] into the President's decision in '07. Why didn't we drop the nuclear weapon on Hiroshima six months earlier? Well, for one thing we didn't have it yet; that's probably not a good analogy. We did it when we did it, when the President was prepared to do it, but he clearly, it was his decision, and he was the guy who had to make the call. He did, it was a very courageous decision. I thought it was a very good decision. I

think it worked. I think if you look back now, the Surge and the policies we put in place in '07 stood us in good stead.

I go back now and read my book. You know at the end of that chapter we win. The end of the President's chapter on the Surge, we win. That was before Barack Obama took over and pulled all the troops out. [02:02:00] But no, as I look back on it historically, I think it was a significant event and I think we were on the right track. Unfortunately, developments after we left office have done an enormous amount of damage and we're faced with terrible circumstances today. My new book will be out at the end of this month and you'll understand it all then. [laughter]

FEAVER: So we can leave it there, or is there anything else you want to say?

CHENEY: Well, I do think it is important, from my perspective, as I think about the Surge, that period between when the decision was made and when we got Petraeus and Crocker back to testify in September, there was an ongoing political battle. As I say, I write about it in my book. I don't need to elaborate on it any more. There were efforts made by honorable people trying to do the right thing, but also concerned about their political prospects, [02:03:00] that led to this sort of steady, periodic news story from Sanger at the *Times* or Ignatius and others, that pointed in the direction of "they're getting ready, they're developing a plan B." It fed the tiger. Harry Reid would stand up and say, "This isn't going to work. It's a failed policy." Hell, it hadn't even been fully implemented yet. So I think some of the

work we did during those months, with the Congress, were important in terms of actual implementation and carry-through. OK?

O'SULLIVAN: OK, great.

CHENEY: Useful stuff?

[END OF AUDIO/VIDEO FILE]