# The Surge – Collective Memory Project

**Interviewee: General Peter Pace**
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2005-2007

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**[Begin Transcription]**

FEAVER: And we're in Washington, D.C., 20th, 2016. We're in Washington, D.C., and we're interviewing General Pete Pace. My name is Peter Feaver, from Duke University.

CRAWFORD: I'm Aaron Crawford, from Southern Methodist University, Center for Presidential History.

McCORMICK: I'm Evan McCormick, also from Southern Methodist University, Center for Presidential History.

FEAVER: General Pace, thank you for coming. Why don't we begin by you describing the role of the Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff for the Iraq War. What was your role in that?

PACE: Sure. The Chairman is the principal military advisor to the President, to the Secretary of Defense, to the National Security Council, and at the time, the Homeland Security Council, and his mission is, with his Joint Staff, is to basically be the communications link between the President and the Secretary and the field commanders. So the Chairman has no direct line authority, he's not in the chain of command, but all orders from the President and from the Secretary go through the Chairman, [00:01:00] to the field, and communications from the field, back to the President and the Secretary, normally go through the Chairman. So you don't have direct line authority, but you have a lot of opportunity to influence, and basically, it's how well you articulate your position, as to whether or not people listen to you.

FEAVER: And describe a little bit of the command or communications relationship between the Chairman, CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command]and MNF-I [Multi-National Force-Iraq]. How did that line work?

PACE: Well, I stayed very straight in that chain as far as talking to General Abizaid at the time, who was CENTCOM. On occasion, I would talk to General Casey. Normally, when General Abizaid was either traveling, or if they were both together, but I tried to always be very careful to go through the CENTCOM commander, so that I wasn't going down below his authority, so to speak. There was no problem with that. John Abizaid and I, and George Casey and I [00:02:00] are good friends, had no relationship problems at all.

FEAVER: And you took your position in October 1, 2005.

PACE: Correct.

FEAVER: So maybe describe what your sense of the Iraq War was when you took over as general.

PACE: Well, I had been Vice Chairman from 1 October, 2001, so I had been there from the very beginning, through the workup process, to go into Iraq, through all the things that we did and didn't do, leading up to the 2006 decisions, recommendations to the President, so when he made his decision about the Surge. But, clearly, by February of 2006, or subsequent to February, 2006, after the Samarra bombing of the mosque, from that point forward, it went downhill as far as sectarian [00:03:00] violence is concerned. It was about August of that year when John

Abizaid and George Casey, together in Baghdad, called me on the phone and said, we think that this is not going the way it should be, obviously it's not going the way it should be. We are supposed to be sending troops home this year, we don't think we'll be able to do that, and we may have to come back to the President and ask for more troops.

When they called me with that, sometime in July or it was August, I think it was August, I told them OK, when we get off this phone call, a couple things are going to happen. One, I'm going to see the Secretary of Defense, and tell him exactly what you just told me. There's no doubt in my mind that the Secretary is going to want to go to the President and tell the President, and so that will get done some time in the next couple days, with the President. I said, I would ask you to do this, George and John, if you would, General Casey in Baghdad, [00:04:00] start working on what you think the proper solution to the current problem is. General Abizaid, in Tampa, you please do the same thing. I will do the same thing here, with the Joint Chiefs, and what I'd ask is that for the first month or so on this, that we keep our efforts totally separated, so we don't end up sharing ideas too soon and perhaps preventing ourselves from having the best solution.

FEAVER: So, we're going to want to pursue each one of those threads.

PACE: Sure.

FEAVER: Before we get there though, I want to just do a little bit of the earlier period, so particularly the fall of 2005. Some of the people that we've interviewed begin the

Surge story in the fall, in surrounding Secretary Rice's testimony, where she used the clear, hold, build formulation, if you recall, but also the White House national sort of [00:05:00] white paper that was released from the White House, the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq. Some said that was an early review attempt and others said no, that was mainly a communications document for explaining strategy. How did that fall, 2005 effort look to you, both the Rice testimony and that document.

PACE: Yeah, well first of all, I should state upfront, I'm going to tell you the truth as I know it, but I also know that there's four of us in a room right now and when we get done with this interview, if you'd ask each of us to write down what we heard today, we'd have four different versions. So I'm going to tell you as I remember it.

FEAVER: Right.

PACE: But for historical purposes and for historians certainly, may want to take all of our memories and clues together, and come up with whatever the truth possibly is. But having said that, from the standpoint of discussions about the Surge, it was not possible, [00:06:00] in my mind, for it to even be as early as the fall of '05, and the reason is that the plan for '06 was to bring several brigades home.

FEAVER: Right.

PACE: We were talking about entering 2006 with the desire to have perhaps three, four, five Army brigades, fewer in Iraq than we had at the beginning of the year. So it wasn't until the middle of 2006 that a discussion about a surge, or the beginning of

the process to recommend the Surge even being had. I don't remember Condi Rice's speech or interview, whatever it was, so apparently it didn't have any impact on me.

FEAVER: Well, in some of our interviews from State, they were saying that in the fall of '05, they, State, had concerns about the campaign plan [00:07:00] and were hoping to stimulate a review of the sort that happened a year later. And so these two efforts, they said it didn't culminate in a review but they wanted it to, and I was just wondering if there was that sense from the Joint Staff, that in the fall of '05, things are not going well, we need to do a review, or whether it was later, that the Joint Staff had this view.

PACE: My recollection is that we didn't get energized about a thorough review until after the Samarra bombing in February of '06.

FEAVER: The other thing, moving forward to the spring, the other two episodes that loomed large in some of the other interviews we've done, one of them has been called in the media, the so called revolt of the retired generals. Do you remember that?

PACE: I absolutely remember that, sure.

FEAVER: Can you talk about that and your view of that?

PACE: Sure.

FEAVER: And what impact that had or did not have. [00:08:00]

PACE: Sure. First, you have to understand that the generals who were "revolting" were retired, and they, for the most part were retired because they no longer had an opportunity to serve or get promoted. The reason for that was in each case, they had not performed well in their last assignment. If you know Secretary Rumsfeld, if you show up to a meeting with him not knowing your business, not having done your homework, you don't have a good day. These individuals, to the man, had not performed their duties as well as I think they should have and as well as he thinks they should have. Therefore, they were all retired. For then, for retired general officers to think that they could somehow unseat a serving Secretary of Defense, in my mind is egregious. And had the President wanted, [00:09:00] for whatever reason, to have a new Secretary of Defense, once the retired generals started this campaign to replace Secretary Rumsfeld, it would have been wrong to let the perception be that somehow, retired general officers were able to unseat a sitting Secretary of Defense.

So when I was asked my opinion from the White House, about what we should be doing about the retired generals' comments, my comment was, I do not know what the President intends or does not intend with this Secretary of Defense, but it's got to be at least six more months before, if he wants to replace him, that he replaces him. Otherwise, it will look to everybody like these generals somehow influenced who ought to be the Secretary of Defense.

FEAVER: In the interview we did with [00:10:00] President Bush, he said that, that it stopped any thinking like that on his part, for precisely those reasons.

PACE: So if their intent was to get rid of the Secretary, they actually added, at a minimum, six months to his tour.

FEAVER: Explain though, for future generations perhaps, why -- you could imagine some that would say well these people saw close hand, the Iraq War, and so they had an insider insight, so why shouldn't we credit their views. What's the civil-military relations problem that you would have seen in the President listening to critics, because someone might say well, he's just listening to critics, and that's open-minded.

PACE: Actually, the retired generals were not critiquing his handling of the war; they were critiquing him as a leader. A big difference, a big difference. They, for the most part, were not privy to most of the war councils that took place. [00:11:00] So here you have a group of individuals who, one, are not performing their jobs as well as they should, and two, are not privy to the ongoing wartime planning; yet, they're outside now, looking back in, critiquing the leadership of the Secretary. I don't see a civil-military relationship problem there. What I see is officers who did not know what they were talking about, talking when they shouldn't have been.

FEAVER: The White House did not push back against them. You mentioned that they all had had problems with Rumsfeld in the past. That really didn't seem to come out in the media at the time.

PACE: No. There was no need to do that. I wouldn't even be telling you this now, except this is an interview for historical record, and since I know what I know. I would not go public with this, I would not go out in the press about this, that's not how I would normally [00:12:00] handle this particular event, but this is for folks looking at this five years from now or 25 years from now, 50 years from now, and they need to know the truth that I know, at least as I see it, which is that these general officers had not performed well and to the extent they critiqued the war, they were six months to two years out of service, and to the extent they critiqued the person, they were critiquing somebody who had found fault with their ability to do their jobs.

FEAVER: So moving forward. The other big event of that time period was the Camp David meeting, when the national security team assembled at Camp David. Do you recall this? There was a series of scheduled meetings for essentially an NSC out at Camp David, but also one session where they brought in outsiders; Eliot Cohen, Fred Kagan, Mike Vickers, [00:13:00] and Robert Kaplan. Do you remember that event and any reactions to that event?

PACE: I remember it. All those types of things, whether they happened at Camp David or at the White House or wherever, I always thought were extremely beneficial. You've got a nation at war. We have been now -- this is January, 2016 -- we've been at war, that we've known about, for 15 years, or coming up on 15 years, and we've actually been at war longer than that. The President needs to have as many ideas

and opinions as he can get, and the fact that he had outside advisors come in and be with us all and give us their thoughts and opinions, I thought was extremely valuable.

FEAVER: Some in the White House were hoping that that would catalyze a more formal, top to bottom, review, of the sort that happened three or four months later, [00:14:00] but hoped that the Camp David meetings would. Were you aware of that effort at the staff level?

PACE: No, no, but if there were folks like that, they should have spoken up. Really.

FEAVER: It did not produce that review at the time. One of the reasons that other interviewers have cited for that is that the surprise of the President appearing the second day in Baghdad. Do you recall that? Day one, he's at Camp David, the next morning's meeting he's reporting from Baghdad.

PACE: I do know that, yeah.

FEAVER: Were you privy to that secret?

PACE: I was.

FEAVER: The Chief of Staff was very pleased at how few people knew of it, including in the room.

PACE: No, exactly, there were a lot of surprised folks that day. The only reason I know is because I had to be doing some thinking about if things go left, if things go right, what we're going to do.

FEAVER: Right, right. [00:15:00]

PACE: But to get back to your comment about some folks in the White House thought. My role is a little more simple in that. If you've got a problem with something, speak up, if you think a review ought to be going on, speak up. Don't put people in a room, give them a catalyst and think that somehow, that's going to be the impetus. If you say one, two, three, four to me, I may be thinking five, but it may or may not be in my head. I really think that if folks really believe, at that time, whatever time it was, that we should have been conducting a complete review by then, everybody should have been saying something, because from our standpoint, General Casey, General Abizaid were on track. Things were not going as well as we liked, but we still had a plan we were executing, and it wasn't until again, around the February timeframe, of 2006, that we all realized, we have a major problem and this is not going the way we want it to, we really do need to do a scrub.

FEAVER: So, the other reason why it may not have catalyzed into a larger review, [00:16:00] is that immediately before, in other words the weeks leading up to it, first they seat, finally seat the Maliki government. They have been without a leader for four or five months, as the parties were cycling, but also got Zarqawi, and so the AQI leader, and that meant it was finally a chance to implement the longstanding, hundred-day plan that General Casey had developed to help the new Iraqi leader. So the timing may not have been right. We didn't know if plan A would work, because we hadn't had a chance to implement plan A yet.

PACE: That's fair.

FEAVER: Is that?

PACE: That's fair.

FEAVER: So, the next moment, we're going to get to the Council of Colonels, which you introduced, but there's one more sort of review, mini review moment during the summer, and this would have been in the [00:17:00] July timeframe, when the President and Steve Hadley, in a SVTS [Secure Video Teleconference System], are asking questions of General Casey, and Casey, in some of the Woodward and other reports, Casey describes himself as being frustrated with the probing of the questions, do you remember that episode in July?

PACE: We had two or three NSC meetings a week, almost every single one of them had either General Abizaid or General Casey, or both, on the VTC, so I don't remember a specific session where it was more probing than any other probing. I'm not aware of them being upset. I would say this, what I know of Woodward's books, if you like fiction, go ahead and read them.

FEAVER: The reports were that that was a time [00:18:00] when MNF-I and perhaps others, began to suspect the President was losing confidence in plan A, that that was a changed moment. Did you detect, and if not, if you can't remember that specific moment, but do you remember a time, over the course of 2006, when the President's expressed confidence in plan A was starting to change? Am I making sense?

PACE: No, I understand the question, I'm just trying to think. I think we all, collectively. I don't remember the President saying I'm not sure about plan A. We all collectively, by the summer, knew that the result of the Samarra bombing has been heightened, intensified conflict between the Sunni and Shia. So it was not a surprise to me when I got the phone call in August that they may need to be asking for more troops instead of fewer. When I went to the report that [00:19:00] to the President, with the Secretary, it did not surprise the President. I think we all collectively knew, without having to say exactly, this isn't going well. We knew it wasn't going well and we all knew we needed to be thinking through it the best way. I can't remember a specific event. Before, when I went in to tell the President what General Casey and General Abizaid told me, I don't remember a day before that where specifically, he said something along the lines of you know, I'm losing confidence in plan A.

FEAVER: Just to clarify, General Casey, according to reports, was inferring this from the tone of the question, rather than from an explicit thing that the President said.

PACE: Well the President, throughout -- I had the privilege of working for him, four years as Vice Chairman and two as Chairman. In those six years, not once did I ever hear the President say, do not do this, this way, [00:20:00] or say do it that way. The President always asked questions, and he asked questions until he was satisfied that he had gotten the answers he needed. So, during the workup to going into Iraq, for example, General Franks probably was in the White House 10

times, give or take. Each time, the President wouldn't say don't do that or don't do that or do this. He would, as General Franks would present the plan, the President would ask a lot of questions, and in his questions, absolutely, you could understand that either we had not explained this well enough, or we were not explaining it in a way that was satisfying to the President. So go back home, do some more pushups and come on back and report back what your answers are to his questions. The President was not directive when he was talking with his senior military. He was always solicitous of opinions and through his questions, we all knew whether or not he was comfortable. [00:21:00] So if General Casey is in Baghdad and he's hearing the questions of the President, and he's picking up on that, that the President is not comfortable with the execution of plan A, that would not be surprising, because none of us were satisfied with the way that it was going.

FEAVER: So drilling down, during that summer, and sort of immediately after the Camp David meeting, MNF-I launches Operation Together Forward. Can you describe a little bit, your memory of that, or what the purpose of that was, and then why we ended up with Together Forward II.

PACE: As best I recall, the purpose of it was to begin the process of turning over the battlefield responsibilities to the Iraqi armed forces, and the way to do that, that I recall, was not going to be just one day we've got it and the next day you've got it, [00:22:00] but to start working side-by-side, until we were able to feel the comfort

level, both in Washington and in Baghdad, that the Iraqi forces were ready to take it on by themselves.

FEAVER: Together Forward I is deemed -- Casey says he has to revise it, to do Together Forward II.

PACE: Say that again, I'm sorry.

FEAVER: General Casey says we need to revise Together Forward I, the original plan, and to do it a different way; Together Forward II, in the middle of the summer. Do you recall that evolution?

PACE: I recall having two bites of that apple. I don't recall the specific differences between plan A and plan B on that.

FEAVER: And in the end of August, when you get this call, beyond the general things are not going well, what -- and we probably can't stay on the withdrawal schedule. [00:23:00] Can you drill down in a little bit more detail, what were the things that were not working. What was the problem then?

PACE: Violence had increased in the major cities. The Iraqi army had not been performing to any level that we were comfortable that they could actually take over, and we did not want to just turn it over to them just because there was a time schedule. So, when General Abizaid and General Casey called me, it was basically: the violence is increasing, we cannot turn it over yet, to the Iraqis; we should not send any more troops home, given the increase in violence as we've been going

out; and at that time, oh by the way, we may, after we do our analysis, have to come in and ask for more troops, not fewer.

FEAVER: So, you described, mentioned earlier, now I want to go into detail on what became known as the Council of Colonels. Is that what you called it? Just tell me about the design of that study group [00:24:00] and how you set it up.

PACE: Well once we set up having a study group in Baghdad, a study group in Tampa, a study group inside the Pentagon, and I briefed the President and the Secretary on what we were going to do and report back to him, I asked the service Chiefs to give me two or three of their best colonels/Navy captains, guys and gals who had been in theater, had leadership responsibility, knew what it was to have boots on the ground there. Guys like me had common experience in other wars but not in this one, and if we're going to be looking at what we ought to do next, we ought to be hearing from the guys and gals who were really closest to the operations.

Now, colonels and Navy captains were about right in my mind, because they're close enough to the action to have participated and understand it, but they're also senior enough to be able to put it into strategic concept. [00:25:00] So the services did provide, to the Joint Chiefs, now the service Chief has got two hats. He's got his own service hat, which is he's Chief of Staff of the Army for example, but he's also the Joint Chiefs. So we asked the service Chiefs to give us two or three of their best folks, best officers, and then the Joint Chiefs benefited from that Council of Colonels. I can't remember how that term came about. I hope it came

from them, not from us, but regardless, that's the name that stuck with them, and they were very, very good at meeting with two to three times a week.

We told them to go and just start with a complete blank slate. Where we are right now is reality. Now, from this reality, without regard to what's already on the ground, what should we be doing? How should we be proceeding in this regard? And it was a give and take, back and forth, and in fact initially, I think the colonels, understandably, [00:26:00] weren't quite sure how to be talking to six four-stars who were the Joint Chiefs. So I went down a couple times to where they were working and said listen, when we ask you for your opinions, we mean your opinions. If we ask you to be critical, we want you to be critical. We need your unvarnished advice. Don't tell us what you think we want to hear; tell us what you know we need to hear. And it took a couple iterations like that, for them to, I think get the comfort level, to really kind of take the gloves off and give us a really good product.

MCCORMICK: Was there a historical precedent for an arrangement like this?

PACE: I don't know. Not to be overly glib about it, but we don't take over many countries. So, if there was one, it would have been a long time ago. I'm just not aware. All I knew is that the commanders in the field said they had a change in belief about the size of the force needed, and based on that, I knew [00:27:00] that part of my responsibility as Chairman was to do planning, and that I wanted to

have an independent view of that, and part of that process should be hearing the voices of the men and women who were closest to the action.

FEAVER: Were any of the men and women on that team, by direction from you? Did you pick any of the members, if you remember?

PACE: No, although what I did do was now: Admiral Mike Rogers, who is currently the head of NSA and the Cyber Command Commander, was a Navy captain at the time, on my staff, and I asked Mike to be part of that team, because it was important to me that the team, most of whom had never worked with me closely, I needed somebody, a peer of theirs, who knew me, who could reinforce with them, what General Pace wants is what he's asking for. To be able to help them [00:28:00] get the comfort level they needed to come with me, have discussions with me, be on the table with me, because we didn't have time for the several months it would normally take a leadership position, to get people comfortable with who you are and what you're doing. So I did insert, not as a formal member of that team, but as an advisor, so to speak, to that team, then Captain Mike Rogers, to make sure they understood who the Chairman was.

FEAVER: And was there any similar effort in OSD that you knew of, at this time?

PACE: Not in OSD that I knew of. I kept the Secretary informed. I do know that Steve Hadley, very soon after, I said to him what we were going to do on the military side. He said he was going to do a similar thing at the White House. He was going to have his deputy, J.D. Crouch, run that, and I said great; if you want some

military guys, I'll certainly assign them to you. [00:29:00] All I would ask, Steve, is what I've asked of everybody else, is let's keep our groups separate initially, let's let different ideas come forward. I'll give you military guys, but they won't be the military guys who are working for the Joint Chiefs. These need to be military guys, who are not tarnished, so to speak, by the thinking that's going on inside the Pentagon. So we did that and for the first month or two, each of the groups stayed separate and did not, to my knowledge, share ideas.

FEAVER: Just, I want to follow up on that specific point.

PACE: Sure.

FEAVER: But first, was there any coordination with OSD at all, for the Council of Colonels piece?

PACE: I'm not sure what you mean by coordination. I certainly made sure that --

FEAVER: The SecDef.

PACE: The Secretary knew.

FEAVER: But I mean Edelman, I'm thinking in OSD --

PACE: Eric and I got along well, Eric knew what we were doing. I didn't ask him to provide any people to that, because this was intended to be a pure [00:30:00] military planning exercise, to come up with pure military advice that could then be smoothed out through the policy and the political process. I just wanted to have an independent view of what had been going on there from now, from March of '03, until July, August, September of '06.

FEAVER: One or more of our interviewees expressed frustration with the compartmentalization during this period, sort of the August to October timeframe, when there were these separate but stovepipe. They saw that as a problem. What would you say to them, what were they missing?

PACE: Interesting, no I get it from their viewpoint. It was not meant to keep anybody out. It was meant to not pollute the pool. So we had four separate [00:31:00] things going on; three military and one at the White House. Plus, you had the Vice President getting views from other people as well. So there were lots of people looking at this. I feel bad if somebody felt like they were being kept out for a particular reason, because the only thing we were trying to do is keep the process pure.

CRAWFORD: I'm very curious, you've said that General Casey had told you that he probably would need a troop increase, and I'm curious what the reaction of Secretary Rumsfeld was, to that view.

PACE: He was not surprised. The President was not surprised. Listen, we were all together every day, all day, and certainly inside the building, the Secretary of Defense, the DEPSEC, the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, and we were with the President many times a week, and we all knew that this was not going well right now. So if anything, I think it was probably a reaction, at least for the Secretary of Defense, [00:32:00] of OK, we now have a process ongoing now, we're going to give ourselves a good scrub. To my recollection, there was no negative reaction to the

possibility of needing more troops. Nobody looked forward to that opportunity, but it was not, oh God, you can't be asking for more troops.

CRAWFORD: It's been characterized, even at the time and in some of these interviews, that he was an obstacle to the idea.

PACE: Who was?

CRAWFORD: Secretary Rumsfeld.

PACE: No, not in my mind, I mean I'm with the man hours every day, but he also wasn't about to go taking his checkbook out and writing a number of troops on it, without knowing what the plan is. So, clearly, he wanted, as did the President, to know, how is this going to work, what's the plan? [00:33:00] How many troops are you talking about, over what timeline are we talking about it? But I didn't, I never felt that Secretary Rumsfeld was opposed to it. I think he was from "Missouri," which was "show me" the plan, and once you show me the plan, I, as Secretary, will approve or disapprove and we'll take it to the President.

FEAVER: One of the advantages of keeping the reviews separate was to minimize leaks. You didn't mention that, but was that also one of the attractive features of the compartmentalized structure?

PACE: It might very well have been. That wasn't one of the reasons I did that. My sole purpose in having the compartmentalization was to have, in the military side, three different think tanks, so to speak, working on this problem. And it didn't last long, before we were able to start sharing ideas. We felt it was right to share

ideas, [00:34:00] probably six weeks to two months at most. By then, each group had come up with -- from their purpose, now General Casey's guys, they're in Iraq and they're looking at what we've got to do here. General Abizaid is looking at not only Iraq, but Iraq and his entire region. The Joint Chiefs are looking at Iraq, CENTCOM, and the rest of the globe. So each of us has a different perspective on this, which is why it was very important in my mind, to keep things separate for a while. I don't recall thinking to myself, this would handle leaks.

FEAVER: Some of our White House interviews expressed that there was concern at the White House -- and now I'm in the August, September timeframe of '06 -- concern that we did not want to undermine troop morale by it getting out that the White House was second-guessing this -- the commander [00:35:00] or second-guessing the strategy. The President publicly is expressing great confidence in the strategy and privately, there's the second-guessing roles. That would be a morale issue for the troops. Did you share that concern?

PACE: No, because it was the commanders on the ground who were coming back to us saying, we need to do a scrub on this. So if anything, it was a consensus between the folks in theater, the folks in the Pentagon, and the folks across the river at the White House. In my mind, there was consensus that this is not going right, we need to rethink it. I mean the President's actions were always extremely supportive of the troops. There's no way that PFC Pace in Baghdad would ever come away with the thought that his President, his commander in chief, was not

very supportive of what he was doing. So I actually appreciate the fact that some folks in the White House [00:36:00] were feeling that perhaps there could be a morale problem, but from my perspective, the morale problem was, we're not doing well. The troops on the ground know when things are going well and when they're not going well, and it's obvious to them that the plan we're executing isn't working the way we thought it would. So if anything, if somebody in the theater were to hear that the President was rethinking, if it happened to be a guy on the ground with a rifle, you're probably saying to yourself, thank God.

FEAVER: The other related way that it's been expressed by some of our interviewees is if, in rethinking the strategy, they end up deciding there isn't a better one, we're going to stick with this one, that it would be harder to mobilize support for that once you had already made it clear you had second-guessed it. Do you see the logic there?

PACE: I see the logic there, but at the end of the day, when you do a scrub of something, it means [00:37:00] that you understand that things aren't going well, and continuing to do the same thing doesn't make a whole lot of sense. And again, for the troops on the ground, they know reality faster than the guys in D.C. do, so any understanding on their part that things are being reviewed, I think would be seen in a very healthy light.

FEAVER: So, you mentioned that Steve Hadley told you about the reviews he was going to direct. There's two broad phases to that. There was the public phase, led by J.D.

Crouch, which we'll get to in a moment. But there was the non-public, the secret phase, that was in the September, October timeframe, before the election. The election is sort of the hinge, when things become public. So what visibility did you have into those efforts at State, and at the White House, [00:38:00] in the September, October, in the private phase, the quiet phase if you will.

PACE: Timelines aren't clear in my mind between September, October, November, December, as far as when it was that Steve Hadley asked me to provide him some military guys. In my mind, I vaguely remember that as being soon after, within a month of the time that I went over and told the President, maybe even quicker than that, that Steve asked me to have some guys assigned to the team he had over there. So, State, no knowledge of that at all, White House, certainly as best I know, as soon as Steve Hadley started thinking about it and talking about it, he was talking to me about it. The only thing I did not know about -- and it's fine it was going on, I just didn't know about it -- was the Vice President's team talking to guys like Jack Keane.

FEAVER: We'll get to that in a moment. [00:39:00] The only military guy on the White House team at this point, so the September, October timeframe, was General Bergner, who was a senior director under -- Kevin Bergner.

PACE: Yeah, I know Kevin.

FEAVER: -- Senior director under Meghan O'Sullivan, so he was already on the NSC staff. Did you have any interactions with Bergner during this period?

PACE: I'm sure I did, but not that I can recall specifically about any particular topic. He worked in the White House, he was part of the team, we always had interaction every week, yeah.

FEAVER: But not about this particular --

PACE: Not that I recall, no.

FEAVER: Steve Hadley, in his interview, he created two separate NSC reviews at this point, this would be in the quiet phase. One, led by Meghan O'Sullivan, reviewing the strategy, and one led by [00:40:00] Bill Luti, reviewing the availability of resources; what became known in the Woodward book as the Luti brief, the Bill Luti brief. I wanted to ask you about each of those separately. First, the Meghan effort. Did you have any visibility into that, or do you know what their charge was or how they functioned?

PACE: I didn't recognize them being two separate things. I knew that Steve had Meghan look into some stuff and I knew that Steve had Bill looking at some things. I thought that was all part of one group that was reporting to Steve, that he was asking me to support with some military officers for advice. So I wasn't aware of a bifurcation of responsibilities between the two.

FEAVER: The Luti portion was evaluating the availability of troops for surge, if that's what the President [00:41:00] decided, so basically a resources look. The phrase that was used at the time was, "Are we out of Schlitz?"

PACE: I know that phrase, yes.

FEAVER: Yes. So, were you aware that that was what he was looking at? When did you become aware of that aspect of the Luti?

PACE: I knew that Steve Hadley had his people looking at both policy, strategy on one hand, and resources on the other. I didn't realize he had separated the two.

FEAVER: Steve, in his interview, reports that he gave you the actual slide deck of Bill Luti's slides, and asked you to sort of give feedback. Do you remember that?

PACE: Vaguely.

FEAVER: Can you remember the view of it?

PACE: Vaguely. [00:42:00] I'm hearing these described as distinct events, but this is very much a multi-month, ongoing dialogue, and I never felt like I was anything other than on a team, inside the White House, and inside the Pentagon, so Steve Hadley and I shared things all the time. I certainly would show him the slides I was going to show the President, before I showed them to the President, and I certainly do recall him showing me stuff that Bill Luti was working on, but that was, in my mind, two guys on the same team sharing data.

FEAVER: Right.

PACE: Steve had his weekly, --I can't remember they had a term, it was a luncheon or something -- where several of us got together in Steve Hadley's office each week.

FEAVER: National security team, I think.

PACE: I can't remember the day. He had a lunch in his office and he would -- but those were all very much aboveboard. I never felt like we were [00:43:00] sharing secrets

that nobody else knew. I thought we were just sharing things with each other to get to the best solution. So yes, he did show me the Bill Luti data. I'm sure he showed it to me to see if I saw any errors in it or if I had anything to add. I don't recall any specific response to that. If I thought there were errors, I'm sure I would have said so, but I don't recall being happy or sad with the data. I just recall that as part of the process, we had lots of sharing going on. After we got to the point where, about a month and a half or two into this, sometime in the September, October timeframe, is when basically my viewpoint, the guys in Baghdad, the guys in Tampa, the guys in the Pentagon, the guys in the White House, were free, so to speak, to start sharing information. Before that, we were concerned about [00:44:00] averaging averages, and after that we thought that each group had done enough of its own homework to be able to help educate the other group.

FEAVER: So can you describe what the separate groups had sort of reached, before you cross fertilized them? Do you remember --

PACE: No.

FEAVER: -- the general out --

PACE: No, because I wasn't privy to any of that, other than the one that --

FEAVER: What about the Council of Colonels? The JCS one, before you cross-fertilized it, what was their outcome?

PACE: I don't recall. Listen, when you look at a military operation, you look at everything from surrender to nuke 'em, OK? And during this process, we looked at all that. I

can't tell you when things started to solidify around recommending to the President, a surge. I can tell you how we got there. I can't tell you exactly when that all became crystal clear, [00:45:00] because it was repetitive. We had two to three meetings a week in the Pentagon, with the Joint Chiefs, asking questions, going through this. We had meetings at the White House, asking questions, going through that. I'm sorry, that's not how -- it was a continuum, not a step and then another step and then another step, if that makes sense to you.

FEAVER: Sure.

CRAWFORD: Well, through these reviews, particularly when you're looking at the resources, we keep hearing the term that you're going to "break the force." I'm curious, what were your thoughts at the time, about what a surge could do, possibly do, to the health of the military in general.

PACE: I'm going to answer your question, but the way it's being asked is like it was an isolated thought, which it was not. It was all part of the process. The part of the process that we finally got to, and we'll get to it eventually, [00:46:00] through different questions. But at the end of the day, what we recommended was up to five brigades. But if you are going to do that, Mr. President, we would ask please, that you get the Maliki government onboard; that you get our own government, other than the U.S. Military, onboard; and that you increase the size of your military. Even though it won't come in time to help with the Surge, it will certain come in time to help the families know that you understand what you're asking of

your military. So, it might be useful if you let me talk you through the sequence without particular timelines on it, so you can see how I think it unfolded. And then you can go back to asking those kinds of questions, because troop strength, use of troops, certainly was a major factor in our dialogue.

Now, [00:47:00] one of the reasons we were at the size we were in 2006, of our Armed Forces, was because in 2004, we started looking at, do we need to ask for more soldiers and more Marines, in the Armed Forces of the United States. And as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, I remember saying, in 2004, to the Joint Chiefs: it will take us two years to build an Army division of 14,000 guys. That's 2006. If we're still in Iraq in 2006, we're doing something wrong. Now, I knew we would be in Iraq as support, as logistics, but if we're still doing combat operations in Iraq in 2006, we've done something wrong. I remember saying that in 2004.

So now we get to 2006 and we haven't started building a bigger Army, and now we're looking at needing to ask [00:48:00] for more. And we're talking about, if we do this, if we make this recommendation to the President, we're going to take the guys who are there right now, who think they're coming home in about a month, and we're going to say oh, not so fast, your 12-month tour is now a 15-month tour. And oh by the way, you brigades that thought you weren't going to go back again, you're going to have to go back again.

So that very much was part of the dialogue, the dialogue, which was why, when we presented our recommendations to the President, one of the requests

with that was for him to ask for an increase in the size of the Army and the Marine Corps, again. It was going to take two more years, but the message wasn't so much, we're going to have these troops available. The message was really to the families and to the troops themselves that no kidding, your commander in chief understands that this is an extra rock in your pack, and he's going to do what he can to alleviate that strain long-term, but we need you to do this now, this very important part.

So, [00:49:00] because the guys in Baghdad and the guys in Tampa, and the guys in D.C., military, had different responsibilities, we saw things differently. When the first information came up, we started sharing information, General Casey and General Abizaid wanted two brigades, and by then, we had gotten to the point where we thought maybe five brigades was going to be needed.

FEAVER: We being?

PACE: We being the Joint Chiefs. Their response, General Casey and General Abizaid, being right there with the Iraqi government, they believed that asking for that many troops would be telling Iraqis that we didn't believe that they could do it themselves, that going forward together just wasn't going to work and that we did not [00:50:00] trust that they could get the jobs off. So from their standpoint, with their needs to be able to be talking to the Iraqi counterparts day-to-day, they wanted to only ask for two brigades, because they thought that's all they needed.

The Joint Chiefs, with the help of the Council of Colonels, had gotten to the point where we believed -- some Chiefs believed and others believed otherwise -- that five was right. Some believed up to five, et cetera. Part of my responsibility was to give the President options to choose from, but also to give him consensus, if I could get there, from his military guys. So we weren't saying pick two, pick three, pick five. It took a long time. It sounds simple now, but it took a long time to get everybody comfortable with the phrase "up to five brigades." What that allowed the guys in Baghdad to say was, to their counterparts, we think we're only going to need [00:51:00] two, but they're giving us this extra cushion.

There's guys like me, who believed that among very important things was my remembrance of Vietnam, which was just 10,000 more guys, just 10,000 more guys. We did 10,000 at a time until we got to half a million troops. I wanted to make sure we were not going to get on that kind of a thing either, so my recommendation was, I wanted to say we're going to have five brigades available, but it made great sense to say up to five. That way, if you needed three, four and five, it was part of the plan, but if you said only two brigades and then you needed three and then you needed four and then you needed five -- now this new plan isn't working at all. So eventually, we got the guys in Baghdad, the guys in Tampa, the guys in D.C., the military folks, to agree with the phrase "up to five." Admittedly, and I told the President this, this phrase means something different [00:52:00] whether you're in Baghdad or you're in Tampa or you're in Washington,

D.C., but this phrase is a phrase that I recommend we use, because it gives us off-ramps if we are really being successful, but it allows us to stay on course if not.

After we had all those meetings and we got through to what we were going to recommend, about two days before -- this is December. About two days before we were going to brief the President at the Pentagon -- and oh by the way, the President was very gracious to go to the Pentagon. We, rightfully so, should have been going to him, but he was making a statement, in my mind, of support for the troops, and showing them that he was willing to do this. I went in and briefed the President and I said, "This is what you're going to hear from General Casey, this is what you're going to hear from General Abizaid," [00:53:00] because they were going to do a VTC with him the day before. Call it a Wednesday, I don't know what day it was. Two days before I went to the Pentagon, I'm in the White House briefing the President. The day before I go see the President at the Pentagon, he's hearing from the commanders in the field, although it might have been that morning, and then the last place he goes is to the Pentagon. So I tell him exactly what he's going to hear from his commanders, because you don't want the President surprised. The commanders in the field knew I was going to do this, I was going to pre-brief. And I also told the President that when you come over to the Pentagon, and I had the slides that I had already shown Steve Hadley, and I showed the President, this is a recommendation slide: up to five brigades, and please, get Maliki onboard, get our government onboard, get us more soldiers and

Marines. So the President knew, before he had any of these discussions, exactly [00:54:00] what was going to be recommended to him. I felt that was important for me to do for him, so that (A) he wasn't surprised, (B) he didn't think about it, and know what kind of questions or directions he wanted to give.

So when you read the -- again, your truth is your truth, right? When you read the President's book and you read the Vice President's book, it surprised me that the Vice President's take on the meeting with the Chiefs in the tank was that the Chiefs were against it, and the President's book was the way I remembered the dialogue going. But then I realized, when I briefed the President, pre-briefed him, when he went to the Pentagon, he knew that he was going to hear, we're going to need more troops, we're going to need this, we're going to need that. But he also knew, at the end of the day, we were going to recommend to him, this "up to five brigades." Whereas the Vice President [00:55:00] was not in that meeting, to my recollection and therefore, when he went in and started listening to the Chiefs, when the President— went around the table, "talk to me," when the Army Chiefs started saying, I'm going to need more troops, we've got to be careful of morale, etc., the Vice President was hearing it without -- in my recollection -- the certain knowledge of what the recommendation is going to be.

So if you don't know that we're going to be recommending let's do this, let's go up to five brigades, as you start hearing the concerns that the service Chiefs -- remember, the Chief of Staff of the Army is wearing two hats. As service Chief, he

owes the President what this is going to do to his troops, and his recommendation to what it's going to do to his troops. So the President heard from his Army Chief, his Navy Chief of Naval Operations, his Air Force Chief of Staff and his Marine Corps Commandant, as service Chiefs, and then he heard from me as Joint Chiefs and as the representative of the Joint Chiefs, what our collective [00:56:00] recommendation was. That to me, is the best way I can come up with why it was the Vice President came out of that meeting thinking that the Chiefs had said they'd rather not, and why the President's book says he understood that we were going to make this recommendation, but what we needed, if we could get them, these special things.

FEAVER: Now we've jumped over several months that I want us to drill down about.

PACE: Sure, I'm sorry, but I wanted to make sure I got that on the table.

FEAVER: Yeah, you got it out.

PACE: Because it's important.

FEAVER: So let's just stay there for a moment.

PACE: Sure.

FEAVER: And then we'll go back in time. Did the President tell you, in those pre-briefs, that he was coming with a willingness to raise the end strength? Did he signal that to you before the tank, do you remember?

PACE: No, and I didn't ask him. I tried never to ask the President to make decisions before it was time to make decisions.

FEAVER: But he did bring that -- in his memoirs, he talks about discussing that in the tank. [00:57:00]

PACE: We discussed it in the tank.

FEAVER: His willingness to do that, yeah.

PACE: Yes. In my pre-briefs with him, I did not ask and he did not offer, what he thought about what he was going to do. I wanted him to make sure he knew what he was going to hear, but I also wanted him to have the benefit, not only of me pre-briefing him, which was important for his mindset, but more important, that was for him to have the opportunity first, to hear from the guys in Baghdad, then to hear from the guys in Tampa, then to hear from his Chiefs, and then make his decision and be comfortable with whether or not he was going to go ask. So I really would not have expected him to, nor even wanted him to, make that kind of a decision without the benefit of all the military advice he was going to get.

FEAVER: And you weren't aware of where the [00:58:00] proposal to raise the end strength came from? I mean, not the rationale. The rationale for it was, but where the actual proposal came from.

PACE: We asked for it, in our proposal to him, to go up to five brigades. In that proposal were also: Maliki is getting onboard, get the rest of the U.S. Government, besides the military, to do what they are capable of doing, because this cannot be won with only U.S. Military, and please increase. Those are requests from us, to him, as our commander in chief.

FEAVER: But he had already come willing to do that, so there must have been a staff effort before that, exploring the raising of the end strength.

PACE: Well either, Steve Hadley -- you mentioned Steve Hadley's guys were looking at resources, maybe he got it there. But it would not have surprised me if -- it's possible, I don't know if it's true, you have to ask him -- that I told him what we were going to ask him for [00:59:00] two days before they asked him, and during the time he had a chance to think about it and he listened to his commanders in the field, and he listened to his regional commander and he listened to his Chiefs. And at the end of that process, he could very well, inside those two days, have decided yeah, we're going to do this and oh, by the way, I get the fact that we should be asking for more troops.

FEAVER: In both the Vice President and the President's memoirs, they described some vivid discussions back and forth, between the Chiefs and the President. Was the mood electric in the way they described them?

PACE: No.

FEAVER: Can you describe the mood?

PACE: It was very respectful, it was very calm, it was very comfortable, but it was also very direct, as you would expect the service Chiefs to be with their commander in chief. It was not all contentious at all, for sure. [01:00:00] It was, for example, the Chief of Staff of the Army was Pete Schoomaker. General Schoomaker was very forthcoming about his concern about breaking the force. His guys had been on

two, three, four deployments already, and their families -- and we're talking about an all-volunteer force, that's now going to go back and go back and go back. So he was making sure the President knew that from an Army standpoint, if we did this, he really needed to have, if the President would give it to him, more soldiers. Same thing from the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

But remember, they already voted, and I had already presented, the Chief's position to the President, and we already put it on a slideshow two days before and had given it to Steve Hadley and given it [01:01:00] to the President. This is what you're going to hear from your Chiefs, we recommend we go do this. But in the process of telling the President what we recommended he do, the service Chiefs, rightfully so, were also telling the President the impact that was going to have.

And oh by the way, President Bush was always very attentive to that. For example, in the Cabinet Room, before the President made the decision to go into Iraq in the first place, he got the service Chiefs, he got the Joint Chiefs, and he got all of his regional commanders together in the Cabinet Room, and he went around the table, one by one, and asked each of his military commanders, do you believe this plan can be successful and if I, as president, decide to do this, what do you need, in your area of responsibility, what do you need from me? [01:02:00] So that the guy in the Pacific was able to say, yes I can, but if we're going to do this we should probably reinforce South Korea a little bit, so the North Koreans don't get

frisky; things like that. The President was always interested in and solicitous of his commander responsibilities, so it was natural.

FEAVER: So, moving back now, to the two months we skipped over. It's the September, October timeframe, the Council of Colonels has produced their study, and do you recall coming over to sort of pre-brief Steve Hadley on an early slide deck from that study? I remember it because I was in the room, so I remember.

PACE: That's great, because I don't remember it, but again, the way the question is being asked is that there was somehow a final moment [01:03:00] for the Council of Colonels, but there wasn't.

FEAVER: Right, right.

PACE: It was a continuum.

FEAVER: But it had reached the point where you thought the findings were rigorous enough to share with the White House.

PACE: Fair enough, yeah, I hope I kept Steve informed about where we were.

FEAVER: And the slides had, "go big, go long, go home."

PACE: Yeah, I do remember that, yeah.

FEAVER: The other thing I remember about that meeting is you told us you hadn't briefed the Chiefs on this yet, that slide deck. This was sort of a quick look. Do you not remember that?

PACE: Yeah, I can't remember why the sequence was that way but yeah, it was just opportunity, more than secret. It was, we had a chance to be with Steve and you

guys and get you up to speed on where we were at that point in time, but to me it was always a continuum. So I have a hard time differentiating between slide deck one and slide deck thirty seven. [01:04:00]

FEAVER: Right.

PACE: I wouldn't have remembered that if you hadn't said something about it.

FEAVER: The other weedy question from this period. Were you aware of the staff support going into the NSC? As I mentioned, Kevin Bergner is one, but the other assisting Bill Luti's resource effort was Lisa Disbrow.

PACE: Yes.

FEAVER: Who was your detailee into one of the cells. Did you know that that was part of what she was working on at the time?

PACE: The short answer is yes. I certainly knew if the White House was looking at resources, availability. Why wouldn't you? Because we all knew we were operating with an all-volunteer force. We all knew that you have a size force, and if you want to send your entire force over and have them stay, like we did during [01:05:00] World War II, that's one option, but if you wanted to do what we had been doing, which is rotate people, then the best you could probably do is one third over, one third back and one third getting ready to go, but what we ended up with, with the Army and the Marine Corps, is half over, half back, getting ready to go again. It's port and starboard. So I can't think of a way to get any kind of decision without thinking about the resources.

FEAVER:Right. I was just saying, her role hasn't been in the public record until this project. I was just wondering if you would --

PACE: Lisa went there not so much specifically, as my response to Steve's request for a person for this review.

FEAVER: Right, right.

PACE: She went as a request from Steve, to have a permanent person assigned to the NSC staff. She was then [01:06:00] and still is, an incredible public servant, so I was happy to send her. I did not know specifically, that Lisa was working on that, but if she was the one working it, you couldn't have had a better person, because she did for me, when she was in the J-8, on the Joint Staff, she did our operational availability testing, which was if this war planning gets executed this year, how does that play out. She knew all the ships, all the planes, all the troops, all the everythings, and she had them in her head for the most part, so she was exactly the right person.

FEAVER: Now, one of the events we skipped over was the change of command at the Secretary of Defense, which happened of course.

PACE: December-ish, yeah.

FEAVER: No, this would have been November, right after the midterm election. So there's the midterm election, the day after the midterm election, Secretary Rumsfeld announces that he's stepping down. Did President Bush consult with you about that at all?

PACE: No, no. [01:07:00]

FEAVER: Do you remember when you learned this?

PACE: I remember exactly when I learned it, yeah. The Secretary called me up to his office. I walked in and he handed me a piece of paper, which was his letter of resignation to the President of the United States, and I read it and I was stunned. I told him I was sorry, that I thought he had served the nation incredibly well, and he said, "This is the right thing at the right time." Now, I knew that in the past he had offered the President to resign. I think he had offered – after Abu Ghraib, for example, I think the Secretary offered to resign. I didn't know, until he showed me that letter, that he had, that the President in this case, had accepted or was going to accept, his resignation.

FEAVER: Did you know about Steve Hadley's effort to persuade -- well, [01:08:00] Steve Hadley and the President's effort to persuade Bob Gates to take the job?

PACE: No.

FEAVER: So you learned that the same time?

PACE: Correct. I think one of the beauties of the way that the Bush administration operated, was that everybody went way out of their way to keep politics and military separate. So if I was in a meeting, for example, and the topic was going to get political, that topic was either shelved until the end of the meeting, in which case it continued after the military guys left, or we were asked to step out for a minute. But rarely did any political discussions enter the meetings in which I was,

and I appreciated that, but that meant that I got to give pure military advice, which was my responsibility, and the President got to think about everything else he was hearing, to make [01:09:00] his decision. The only time that I can remember being asked about Secretary Rumsfeld in a keep-the-job/not-keep-the-job mode -- and I think I would remember if I was asked more than once -- was when the Council of Colonels was -- I'm sorry, when the retired colonels were --

FEAVER: Retired generals.

PACE: I'm sorry, you're right, the retired generals -- I'll get it right -- were demanding that he be replaced, and I was asked, I was asked by Steve, and Steve said he was asking for the President, so I took that at face value, what I thought should happen with Secretary Rumsfeld.

FEAVER: The other big announcement was the public announcement that J.D. Crouch would be chairing an Iraqi strategy review, a formal review that would be all agency, at least all national security agency, [01:10:00] and effectively, a standing deputies committee, to look at the Iraq strategy. This was announced roughly the same time as Rumsfeld's departure was announced. Were those two linked beyond the coincidence?

PACE: Not to my knowledge, but it was very much welcomed, that total government scrub.

FEAVER: You recall who were the JCS reps at that? It was your J3 and your J5, so General Doug Lute and Sattler.

PACE: John Sattler, yeah.

FEAVER: General Sattler.

PACE: Two great guys.

FEAVER: So they were the JCS people at the table for the J.D. Crouch. Do you recall what instructions you gave them or what their brief was? [01:11:00]

PACE: Knowing me, I probably didn't give them any instructions, because I didn't need to, because this is all part of a continuum, and it never was a we versus they, we need to protect something. Just go be part of the process. It was just another group at the White House, and I don't mean it glibly. But you've got the deputies meeting, you've got the guys below the deputies, and you've got the NSC and you've got groups that get together on call, to attack certain topics. So I don't recall feeling like I needed to give any guidance to anybody about going to the White House.

FEAVER: They presented a paper as the JCS paper, so several of the departments and agencies presented papers.

PACE: That's fair, and I'm sure I blessed that, whatever it was.

FEAVER: Do you recall what it -- the substance of it?

PACE: No, but if I read it, I said oh yeah, that was brilliant. [01:12:00] I'm sure, it better have, in my mind, have hit the drumbeat that we need all other elements of national power to play in this game; otherwise, we're going to lose.

FEAVER: It did, that was one of the --

PACE: Oh good, I told you it was brilliant.

FEAVER: Yes. I remember it vividly, because it was very different from the slide deck of the early peek at the Council of Colonels slide deck that you gave us. So it was separated by a week or two, and we, on the NSC staff, thought we knew what it was going to be, because we had seen the slide deck, and it was very different from that. It was not recommending different options or not even presenting different options. It was recommending a single option, which was to accelerate the withdrawal, so to accelerate the transfer of responsibility to the [01:13:00] Iraqis.

PACE: I don't recall that in isolation, but that certainly would have been the desired instinct, certainly would have been the desired instinct. Whether or not you could execute that is another thing, but if you're talking about the policy, what you want to the policy -- the policy would have liked to have had, would have been everybody in the U.S. Government doing their job, and doing it fast enough to get us out faster and rather than slower. That makes perfect sense to me policy wise. Execution-wise is something different, which is where are you really, and where we really are is we need a surge. So it doesn't strike me as being inconsistent, that you could have a policy discussion, looking for where would you like to be some time down the road, hopefully sooner rather than later, versus what do you need to do now to make it possible to be able to pursue that policy.

FEAVER: So it definitely did not recommend the Surge at this point.

PACE: No.

FEAVER: That came later, [01:14:00] that came later in the process.

PACE: Sure, because we were still talking about what the right solution was.

FEAVER: Right. The other paper was from the State Department. Do you remember the State Department paper?

PACE: Not without some help, because I mean this is one of 5,000 papers.

FEAVER: This one was the hunker down on the FOBs [forward operating bases], and let the sectarian violence burn out basically.

PACE: Yeah, I do remember. I recall hearing about that. That would not have been my preferred solution.

FEAVER: What is the problem or what was the problem with that, from the JCS point of view?

PACE: I'll give you my answer based on today. I think what you're asking about more specifically is what we were saying back then.

FEAVER: Yes.

PACE: And I don't recall exactly what we were saying back then, [01:15:00] but certainly hunkering down around FOBs, it provides security for yourself, but it doesn't provide security for the people you're there supposedly helping. So the Iraqis are going to be outside this wire fending for themselves, and we're going to be nice and secure inside the wire, as I hear the question. Again, this is 2016, that was 2006, ten years ago. I can remember continuums, I can remember where we finally got to, I can remember how we got there. I cannot remember paper one, paper

three, slide deck 16. It was all day, every day, get up at four-thirty in the morning, go to bed at ten, get up the next morning, do the same thing, for six years. So, does somebody work the specificity of it? Yes. But for me, [01:16:00] I can't get there.

FEAVER: One of the General Lute and General Sattler pointed out from the JCS point of view, a problem with it was that the military might have a legal obligation, and certainly would have a moral and morale obligation, to not stand by while you know, Srebrenica is happening outside the wire. They expressed that this would be problematic from a military order of discipline example.

PACE: That's certainly what I personally believed then and believe now. If you're someplace and you're a U.S. Military person, and you see abuse or an atrocity, or something that should not be happening and you have the power to stop it, you should stop it.

FEAVER: So, when we interviewed the State people about this, they said the premise of that paper was they believed we were out of Schlitz. [01:17:00] They believed that there weren't available forces to surge, even if you wanted to, and so they were trying to come up with a strategy on the premise that the Surge is physically impossible. Do you recall when you realized that there were, if you tweaked the rotation schedule, that there were up to five available, that it was physically possible?

PACE: Well, there was more than that available. The President could have said everybody who's there stays, everybody who's not there, goes. We could have doubled the size of the force if the President wanted to, and then they would have all stayed until he decided they would all come home.

FEAVER: Why was that not considered as an option?

PACE: Because, to take all the ground forces of the United States and put them in one place for X number [01:18:00] of years, when they are an all-volunteer force, and we have other threats around the planet, would not have been prudent. You can certainly go for a period of time, but you also have real requirements globally, for places like Korea and elsewhere. If you got to a point where you believed that was necessary, and I would have certainly done what I was told, and the next request would have been for conscription -- if the nation is in that place, where it needs to send all of its troops to one location on the planet, then the nation is in a place where it needs to do more than just take volunteers. It needs to do what nations do, which is grow their armies, grow their Marine Corps, grow their force. But [01:19:00] just inside the constraints of what was physically available, the President certainly had the authority, if he had wanted to, to take that risk, take the global risk and reinforce.

FEAVER: The number five meant that the ground reserve, global ground reserve, would be all committed.

PACE: Yes, exactly.

FEAVER: This is one of the issues that came up in the tank.

PACE: And so you had forces that were committed to Iraq, you had forces that were on the hook for, call it Korea, and then you had this small reserve force. When we recommended to the President, that he do up to five brigades, those five brigades basically then had used up all the troops that were either already committed or were now about to be committed. [01:20:00] Does it mean we could not have also, down range a bit, shifted troops that were focused on Korea, back over to Iraq? Sure you could of, but just as far as doing the math was concerned, it was all in.

FEAVER: You said that the JCS position, one of their points of emphasis was get the rest of the government all in. Can you explain more, what you're referring to, what was the problem?

PACE: Sure, sure. The problem was that only the Armed Forces in the United States and maybe a couple of three-letter agencies, had the authority to order people overseas to do certain jobs. So now you take Baghdad or Afghanistan, but you have Iraq, you have Afghanistan, and what you need now is not more troops. You need people who can help build a judiciary, you need people who can help build lawyers, schools, police forces, things that the U.S. Military does not do. [01:21:00] And what you end up with, because you could not get the right people there, somebody who can run the waterworks, Major Pace, who is an infantry guy, is there. You are the occupying force, therefore it's your responsibility. So you've got

your military guys doing things that they shouldn't be doing. This is not a finger point at the rest of the government, it's a reality.

What you end up doing then, if you happen to be in Treasury, to pick any other department, is they went out asking for volunteers, to go beyond Ambassador Bremer's staff for example. And what did you get? You got great Americans. What Americans did you get? You got young folks who were still looking for some kind of excitement, some kind of an expedition, so to speak, I'm using the wrong word. You didn't get the experienced professional [01:22:00] who could actually go in and help the Maliki government with judiciary and those kinds of things. So the problem we had in the military was, even when we developed these teams that I can't remember the names of.

FEAVER: PRTs [Provincial Reconstruction Teams].

PACE: Yeah, when we did that, the intent was, there were going to be ten or twelve people, a couple or three would be military and the rest would be from other government agencies. And what happened was, the other government agencies couldn't order their people over, didn't get enough volunteers to go do that kind of stuff, so out of a ten or twelve-man team, eight to ten were U.S. Military, because that's all you had that you could order over there. So from the military standpoint, we were doing not only the job we were supposed to do, but we were holding on as best we could, in the jobs for which we'd never been trained. And if we were going to surge with the military, then we were going to buy time. But buying time for

other military officers to do what they don't know how to do made no sense. Buying time [01:23:00] for the rest of our government to do what it knows how to do made a lot of sense, and that's why we were asking for help from our President in trying to figure out how to get the right kind of expertise overseas.

I thought Condi Rice's idea was a great idea. It would have taken a little while to implement, but she thought about -- and I can't remember the term she used, but she had basically a civil reserve corps.

FEAVER: Right.

PACE: Right? And she was going to have doctors, lawyers, policemen, all in the reserves, like military reservists, but when the country needed them, either in wartime or in natural disaster time, they could be ordered overseas to go do the kinds of things. That's what I mean by getting the rest of the government. It wasn't that the rest of the government was going, Well, tough. That wasn't it. The rest of the government did not then, and does not now, have the mechanisms [01:24:00] to get our talented, non-military people to go help countries where our military has done something and now it's time for us to help them build.

FEAVER: That was one of the very first issues that the Crouch review resolved, was State said we can't send people because the RSO (Regional Security Officer) won't let us send them. We need organic security provided, and mobility, provided by the BCTs, and it was the Joint Staff that said OK, we will require the brigade combat

teams to provide organic security and transportation for the PRTs, to get the civilians deployed.

PACE: And that did make great sense and it would have been effective, had the teams that they had been protecting been other than mostly military guys.

FEAVER: So during this period, you had the distinction [01:25:00] of being a chairman with two secretaries of defense.

PACE: Yeah.

FEAVER: Can you talk a little bit about that and how you worked that part of the problem.

PACE: Well, I had one Secretary of Defense at a time.

FEAVER: But you had, one was a lame duck.

PACE: No. No, no, no. I had one secretary. I had Secretary Rumsfeld until I had Secretary Gates. It was a change of command. I had 100% loyalty to Secretary Rumsfeld, until he gave up the responsibility, and then I had 100% loyalty to Secretary Gates. I never had two anythings.

FEAVER: Wasn't Secretary Designee Gates in the room at the tank session?

PACE: Oh sure, yeah, absolutely, as well he should have if he's going to become the new Secretary of Defense, but I'm not focused on him at all, I'm focused on my Secretary.

FEAVER: Were you concerned about the delay? We've identified Gates but he's not taking over before he --

PACE: No, no. But see, it sounds glib but it's not. [01:26:00] Military guys are either coming and going themselves or their bosses are. So in a course of 40 years, I've had so many bosses, and they come at their change of command date, and the old boss is gone and new boss is there, and it's just the way military guys are. So Secretary Rumsfeld was Secretary Rumsfeld until he wasn't, and then Secretary Gates was Secretary Gates, and there was no problem there.

FEAVER: I know your time is limited, so we're just going to drill down on two final questions.

PACE: Sure.

FEAVER: The first is, as you presented it in the briefing that you gave the President in the tank, was up to five, but the President's decision on January 10th was all five at once.

PACE: No it wasn't.

FEAVER: OK, so clarify that, because there was some discussion of whether it would be five, would it be two. What would the President announce? So, this is the [01:27:00] issue I want you to talk to.

PACE: Fair enough. So, the recommendation was up to five. Oh by the way, reality was, we could only get manned and equipped and send one per month. So, whether you said two, four, five, it was going to be one, two, three, four five. The President understood that. So by saying up to five, which is what he said and what his guidance to us was, we got those mechanisms going. We then got all five brigades

alerted, we had them all on a timeline, they all knew they were going, but we also had the opportunity to go back to the President and say Mister President, there are three brigades there now, the job is going fine, thank you, we won't need four and five.

Now, I believed we would need all five. Importantly, Dave Petraeus, who had not yet taken command but whose opinion we had absolutely asked for and received, Dave believed that he was going to need all five. [01:28:00] We believed we needed all five, but the President did not say I'm sending five. The President said we'll send up to five, and we alerted all five and started getting all five equipped and trained to go month after month after month.

FEAVER: And can you speak to the personnel shift that also coincided with this; so General Casey moves over to Chief of Staff, General Abizaid moves on, and General Petraeus is named as MNF-I. What was the thinking there and what was your role in those decisions?

PACE: First of all, all very healthy, I think. Let's not forget that General Casey left an 18-month tour on his 30th month, so it's not like he's being replaced out of cycle. He's actually one year beyond what he was asked to do in the first place, but General Casey, being the soldier that he is, kept on soldiering until [01:29:00] he was replaced. General Petraeus had spent the time between tours in Iraq, his last tour in Iraq and his next tour in Iraq, at basically an Army think tank, so to speak, developing the doctrine for how to do this right, based on his lessons learned. So

he was, in my mind the perfect choice to go in. A brilliant guy, who had learned lessons, having been a division commander over there, and then having -- I can't remember if he had a corps or not, but he learned lessons on the ground as a general officer on the ground over there, had written the doctrine with his team, at Leavenworth, and was mentally prepared and ready to take on that command. We all viewed that as very positive.

FEAVER: And there wasn't concern that General Casey [01:30:00] getting promoted would send a signal or a wrong signal, or not getting promoted would send the wrong signal?

PACE: For me there very definitely was a concern that General Casey not getting promoted would send a bad signal.

FEAVER: What would be that bad signal?

PACE: Now, the decision about who the next Chief of Staff of the Army should be, was made by the Secretary, as a recommendation to the President, and the Chairman and Vice Chairman certainly participated in that dialogue.

FEAVER: The new Secretary or the outgoing Secretary?

PACE: I think it would have been Secretary Gates. That part would not have been a problem. Had Secretary Gates wanted somebody other than General Casey to be Chief of Staff of the Army, had General Casey come home from the war and retired, that would not have been a problem, signal wise. [01:31:00] General Franks came home and retired, lots of folks come home from wars and retire. That was

not the problem. The problem that presented itself was after the Secretary made his decision, made his recommendations to the President, and the President recommended General Casey to the Congress, to the Senate, for confirmation, that's when the voices in Congress who didn't want to approve him, in my mind, would have a detrimental effect. Specifically, Senator McCain had little regard for General Casey's handling of the war, and Senator McCain said he was going to oppose the General Casey nomination. I believed that it was wrong to blame General Casey for all the ills in Iraq. Had the military made mistakes? Yes. But as I pointed out, [01:32:00] the rest of our government was not able, for whatever reason, to do their part of making Iraqi lives better.

So I went to see Senator McCain and I told him that I understood that he was not happy with the outcome of General Casey's thirty months of effort, but that the Secretary of Defense and the President of the United States were recommending him to be the next Chief of Staff of the Army. He'd be a great Chief of Staff of the Army because he had had all that time in combat, and that if he, Senator McCain, blocked it, he was basically dumping all the problems of Iraq on the U.S. Military, and if he did that, I would resign.

FEAVER: Interesting. This would have been in the January timeframe then perhaps. [01:33:00] Now, sort of a step back.

PACE: Actually, I said that wrong. I'd retire. I wasn't about to resign but I would retire. A small difference in retired pay.

FEAVER: Yes. Some of the criticisms of the Surge process was that it took too long to reach this conclusion, and was circuitous.

PACE: Too long, which conclusion?

FEAVER: Reach the answer of --

PACE: Oh, OK.

FEAVER: And the President, when asked about this, President Bush, said that he didn't want to jam the military; that he wanted to get all of the people on the same page. But to an outsider, they might say, why didn't the President just order this in September or something, and we could have cut through a lot of [01:34:00] painful review. Can you speak to the civil-military dimensions of that? The President was clearly making a civil-military decision about not wanting to jam the military.

PACE: If the President -- in the six years I worked for him, never jammed the military. He always asked the questions. Let's just say for the sake of argument, that in September he said go do it. We still would have had to do all that work to figure out how to do it. So, even if he had jammed us, it wouldn't have gotten us to the -- the proper way to actually get these five brigades lined up, get them trained up, get them equipped, because now you're keeping everybody who's there. You've been swapping out equipment as brigades come and go. Now they're going to stay and you're bringing more brigades in, which means more equipment.

So this, even if the President wanted to, you couldn't move too much quicker than we did. Could you have come perhaps, could you have pushed the

planning cycle a bit more? Sure, you can always push the [01:35:00] planning cycle. But I think the President stuck to, what appeared to me to be one of his fundamental leadership principles, which was that he was going to keep asking questions and keep asking questions, until he was satisfied with the answer, which he did. And once he made a decision, then he was going to resource that decision and then he wasn't going to second guess it; he was going to support it. As a military guy, you cannot ask for more than that. I can't imagine a wartime president being more, I want to use the term "understanding," but that's not fair to the President. He's the President of the United States, he can do what he wants. But he was always very attuned to his leadership style and how his leadership was going to impact his subordinates.

So again, you would have to ask him, his thinking on this, but [01:36:00] – [phone rings]. Sorry. The result of how he did it was that he then had his entire military team recommending to him, and having planned through it, a course of action with which he was comfortable, obviously, because he said go do it. And now we're all pulling on the oars together. Anybody who's a leader can say go do it, and you can force that to happen, but the way he did it -- he had complete support of all his Chiefs, just like he did before he went into Iraq. He never asked, nor should he have asked, should we go into Iraq. That was his decision to make. What he asked each of his four-star commanders was, do you support this plan, meaning is this plan going to be a success, [01:37:00] and if I, as president decide to

do this, what resources do you need from me as your commander in chief. Those are the kinds of questions. So by the time everybody walked out of that meeting in early 2003, and by the time we all got done with the Surge briefings, it had been a very collaborative workup to this thing. Everybody knows the President can decide any time he wants, but the way he did it had everybody together, everybody understanding where we were going, how we were going to get there, and doing the same planning, and everybody saying this is the right thing. Even guys who, understandably and knowingly, defined up to five brigades differently.

FEAVER: Right. Last question, I know we're out of time. Did you detect a change in the President over the six years you worked with him, in the way he interacted with the military, perhaps in the level of confidence that he had interacting with the military? [01:38:00] He must have grown in his knowledge, of course, of these things.

PACE: Sure.

FEAVER: Did you detect a change over time?

PACE: The short answer is no, but the reason for that is I was with the President two or three times a week, and so I think, had I seen him once every six months, I might have seen the difference. But it's like gaining weight. When you look at yourself in the mirror every morning, you don't see a change. When you look at yourself over a six-month period maybe you do. That may be a bad analogy, but because I was with the President all the time, whatever incremental changes, if any, that he

was making in his relationships with the military, I was part of. I'm sure I was also changing the way I was reacting to him and presenting data to him, based on how I was learning about how he absorbs data. Yeah, so the answer has got to be "must have," but for those of us who were [01:39:00] like this, with him all the time, I don't know.

FEAVER: Well, I know we have to let you go, but this has been great, thank you so much.

PACE: Thanks. I do want to first of all, thank you for doing this. Second of all, I do believe that hearing all the voices is really important, and if it turns out historically, that my memory of an event is inaccurate, that won't ruin my whole life, but I've tried to give you the best I can, in the way I remember.

I did make a glib comment, which I would like to just clarify, and my glib comment was about Woodward's books. The reason I'm glib about it is because the White House asked us to be open with him when he came over, for a couple of his books, and we were, but it became clear to me that at least [01:40:00] about the things I know the facts, that he would have a predisposition. He would have written the conclusion in his mind, and he would only then accept comments, interviews, statements, that supported his predetermined outcome. And for a man to be able to say that so and so was thinking this, and then he was thinking that -- think about the hubris it takes to put words into people's minds, when you're pretending to be presenting history. You want to call it a novel, I'm with you, you want to call it fiction based on fact, I'm with you, but if you want to call those

things historical documents that scholars 25 years from now should be going to, to know what was really going on, that bothers me, because from my perspective, it was prewritten and then researched.

FEAVER: OK, we've got that clarified. Thank you.

PACE: Thank you.

MCCORMICK: Thank you so much.

**[END OF AUDIO FILE]**